



Algoma Highlands
Conservancy

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY



MISSION AND CORE VALUES

“Guided by core values of conservation, silent sport recreation, environmental research and environmental education, the AHC’s vision is to conserve and protect the unique beauty and ecological integrity of key areas within the Algoma Highlands region.”

CONSERVATION

Conserve the ecological integrity of the Algoma Highlands

SILENT SPORTS RECREATION

Facilitate low-impact, non-motorized recreational activities to foster appreciation of the natural environment

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Promote knowledge and understanding of protected ecosystems and the species that live within them

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Enhance public awareness and appreciation of environment

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

Kees van Frankenhuyzen, *President*

Dave Fanslow, *Chair*

Cathy Larsen, *Treasurer*

Laurie McBay, *Secretary*

Brian Anstess, *Director*

Ruth Koskenoja, *Director*

Desiree Keene, *Director*

Jay Kerr, *Director*

Michaela McIntosh, *Administrator*

Roxanne Bergeron, *Canada Summer Jobs Student*

Juni (Hayley) Rechter, *Contract - Data Analysis*



JOIN THE AHC BOARD

POSITION TO FILL:

There was no change in the Board of Directors during 2025. There are 4 officers and 4 members at large. The AHC would like to recruit an additional member who has a background in legal issues or conservation.

STAFF

Michaella McIntosh, *Administrator* → *Executive Director*

Michaella worked as the AHC administrator in 2025. However, her title was changed at the end of the year to “Executive Director” due to her dedication to her role and recognition that Michaella exceeded her job expectations by employing strategic thinking. Her part-time contract using her new title was renewed for 2026.

Roxanne Bergeron, *Summer Student*

Roxanne worked with the AHC again as the Canada Summer Jobs Student in 2025 and for the third summer in a row. She assisted with the data analysis for the wildlife research project.

Juni (Hayley) Rechter, *Contract - Data Analysis*

Juni is a masters student in the department of Integrative Biology at the University of Guelph. In 2025 she was hired by the AHC on a contract basis to do data analysis using the images retrieved from the trail cameras. The goal was to develop a classification algorithm to automatically identify the species in the image. Juni had a break from doing strictly data analysis when she visited Sault Ste. Marie in October for a week of field work. Her final report was submitted in December.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A quiet year is sometimes good and can be a well-deserved breather after a few fast-paced and eventful years. In 2025 we continued on paths charted in previous years and saw some of those come to a satisfying conclusion.

A key achievement in 2025 was putting away \$90,000 of donations in our Stewardship Endowment Fund. Interest accrued from these permanently invested funds will be used to secure payments of recurring stewardship expenses (like property taxes and insurance) which need to be independent of unpredictable operating budgets. Our fundraising continues and is now aimed at replenishing our land acquisition reserve for future purchases. Thanks again to all our donors and members on both sides of the border for your generous and ongoing support.

About \$95,000 in new research funding obtained during 2025 underpinned our continued commitment to conduct ecological research, at several levels:

We initiated analyses of the data collected during the 2021-2024 study on wolves and their prey by hiring Juni Rechter on a 9-month contract. Juni contributed to an earlier phase of the study by developing an AI-based model for automated recognition of objects in trail camera images as part of her MSc degree at the University of Guelph.

Juni made great strides in getting our heads wrapped around the information gathered from 1.6 million images supplemented by digital location data from our three GPS-collared wolves. The analyses will require another year for completion.



Caught on camera, a GPS collared male wolf and his mate travelling together.

An overview and preliminary synopsis of research findings were presented at the Second International Wolf Research Conference in June 2025 in the Netherlands.

We joined Ontario Nature, Garden River First Nation, and the City of Sault Ste. Marie as a partner in the Sault Ste. Marie and Garden River Ecological Corridor Project. Parks Canada identified the Sault Ste. Marie and Garden River region as a national priority area for ecological connectivity, recognizing that it plays a critical role in supporting wildlife movement in the Great Lakes region.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CON'T

With the ongoing analysis of ecological data from our wildlife study, we were uniquely positioned to contribute a strong foundation to this project and to regional conservation planning for safeguarding corridor habitats. You can read more about this project on our [blog](#).

We completed the first year of monitoring the health of ecosystems on our lands, using trail cameras in a network of permanent monitoring sites. This is a key component of our stewardship responsibility to track conservation and recreation values.

And finally, we started a new collaboration with Hydro One, Batchawana First Nations, and Algoma University to study the occurrence and activity of bats in various habitat types along the Sault-3 powerline right-of-way, a project that will be implemented over the next two years.

Our research activities are possible only because we have highly committed volunteers to conduct the field work. Our long-time volunteers Paul McBay and Joe Meating merit special mention, having donated many hours of their time and personal equipment (trucks, ATVs, snowmobiles). Special thanks to Joe also for donating his 2019 Honda side-by-side to the AHC!

Towards the end of the year, we said goodbye to Gaylen and Susan Byker as owners of Stokely Creek Lodge, and welcomed Andy Levin, Mary Freeman, Tim Kunin, and Josh and Deanna Plath as new owners. We want to thank Gaylen and Susan for their many contributions and generosity, which over the years have played a foundational role in shaping the Conservancy.

Facilitating the purchase of our King Mountain property and the rebuilding of Norm's cabin are just two examples of how their generosity, when matched by Conservancy members' commitment of volunteer hours and personal resources, enabled achievements that secured the well-being of both corporations. We look forward to building similar partnerships with mutual benefits with the new owners.

I invite you to read about other aspects of our 2025 year in the pages that follow. Our newly appointed Executive Director, Michaella McIntosh, will continue to do her magic to keep you, our supporters, entertained and informed of our activities and new developments. Please check her [blogs](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates and news. We look forward to your continued support!

—Kees van Frankenhuyzen, AHC President



ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

At Algoma Highlands Conservancy, ecological research is the foundation of effective land stewardship. Through long term monitoring, collaborative partnerships, and field based study, we work to better understand the forests, wetlands, waters, and wildlife that define the Algoma Highlands. From tracking species presence and habitat use to assessing ecosystem health and climate resilience, our research helps guide informed conservation decisions that protect biodiversity while supporting responsible, low impact recreation.

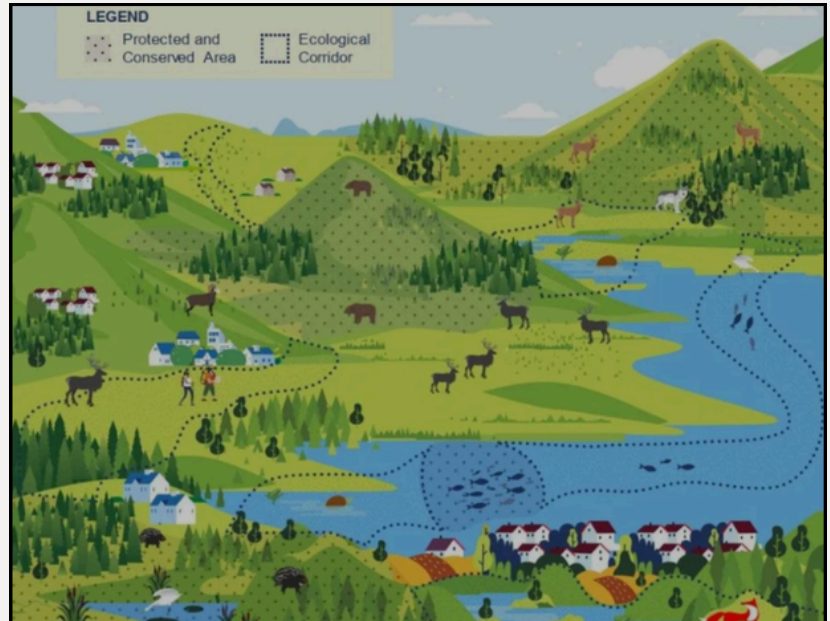
OUR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Ecological Corridors Project

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy collaborated with other agencies, including Canadian Forest Service, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Garden River First Nation, to conduct a 3-year study aimed at investigating how wildlife uses linear features such as electrical transmission lines, roads, and trails in relation to the human use of those features. Field work was conducted in 5 study areas of ~400 km² each stretching from Lake Superior to Iron Bridge. A total of 1,605,573 images were collected over 69,297 camera days, of which 85,371 contained animal images.

With funding from the Ecological Corridors Project, Juni Rechter was hired as Data Analyst from mid-March 2025 until the end of December 2025 to analyse the camera trap data and GPS location data. The goal of the analyses was to develop spatial habitat suitability models for two species of special interest to the project: grey wolves (*Canis lupus*) and moose (*Alces alces*). Wolf and moose camera captures were analysed in relation to habitat characteristics. GPS locations of two collared wolves were used to validate connectivity models.

We also collected supplementary data on wildlife incidence and movement by installing trail cameras in each of three Priority Areas: Trout Lake Preserve, Goulais river flats and Haviland Peninsula, and Robertson Lake to Sheppard Creek. The 25 cameras collected 72,930 images over a total of 2910 camera days between June and late October, recording 14 species of wildlife.



Graphic by [Parks Canada](#) demonstrates how eco-corridors act as natural bridges, linking fragmented landscapes and providing lifelines for wildlife.



Collected trail camera footage of wolves (top) and moose (bottom) offers insight into wildlife movement and habitat use within focus areas, helping reveal how species interact with and navigate these landscapes over time

OUR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Ecological Monitoring of AHC holdings

Managing our 1314-hectare holdings for the overarching objective of protecting its ecological integrity while supporting public use in the form of non-motorized recreation requires the collection of base-line data to ground policy decisions aimed at balancing the two mandates. Monitoring is an essential component of our responsibilities as stewards of the land. This includes collecting data on how our lands are being used by animals (tracking of conservation values) as well as humans (tracking of recreational values and illegal trespass).

A network of 19 permanent sites was established across the King Mountain, Robertson Cliffs and Ebare Tract holdings. Sites were selected to reflect the range in habitats (wetland, mixed forest, deciduous forest) and topographies (creek valley, slope and plateau) within 3 site types (Wetland, Forest and Trail). At each site, a Bushnell trail camera was installed. A total of 23,381 images was collected over 6734 camera days between early October 2024 and late October 2025.

A notable result is that Canids (wolf, coyote and wolf/coyote mixes) were the most commonly observed objects, accounting for 21% of the 715 animal observations. We also observed that the more people used the trails, the fewer animals were recorded. This was particularly true for Canids and deer and to a lesser extent for foxes and moose. Our data suggest that non-motorized recreation may impact conservation values. We will continue to monitor these relationships over the coming years.



Coyote



Black Bear



Bobcat



White-tailed deer

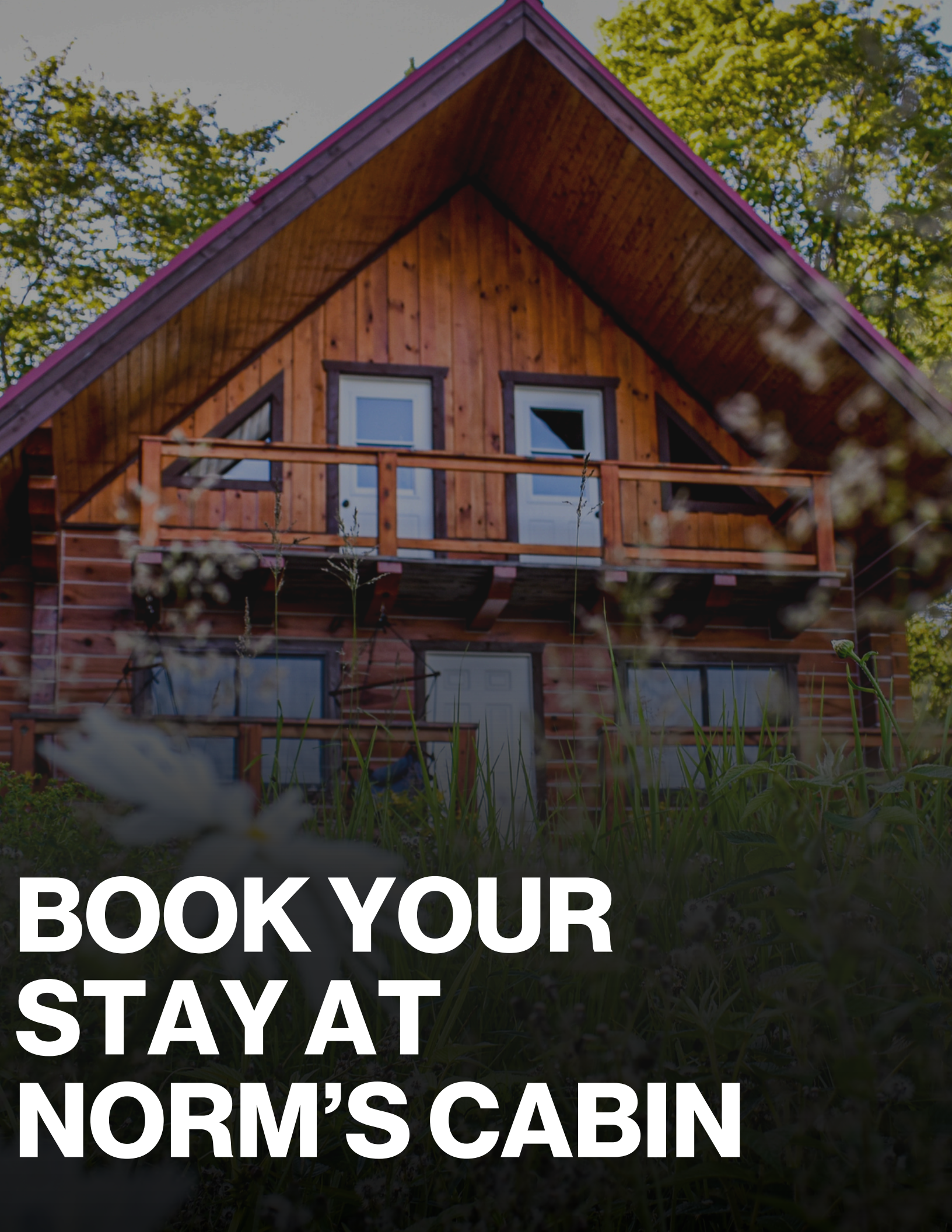


Silent sport recreationalist



Grey Wolf

Through our trail cameras, we're provided a glimpse into land utilization by animals and humans.



**BOOK YOUR
STAY AT
NORM'S CABIN**

NORM'S CABIN

Norm's Cabin is a wonderful retreat for backcountry travellers who enjoy silent sport recreation. The majority of guests ski to Norm's cabin but outside the winter season visitors can either hike or bike to the cabin.

The major improvement in 2025 was the addition of solar power. A generous donor provided solar panels and additional funds to cover the costs of the installation. Dave Fanslow took the lead on this project and 2 solar panels were positioned on the railings of the upper floor in September.



Let there be light! Dave and Paul installing 2 solar panels on the balcony at Norm's Cabin.

Then, later in the fall the propane fixtures were replaced by solar lights over both tables and the kitchen counter. In addition, a USB charging port was installed beside one table. The goal is to add some solar lights to the upstairs level.



Dave Fanslow installing solar light over kitchen counter.

Forest the Canoe has been managing the summer and fall rentals for Norm's Cabin and a total of 19 nights were booked in 2025. It seems that the weekends in August were the most popular times. Two groups of four people cycled to the cabin while the remainder hiked in.

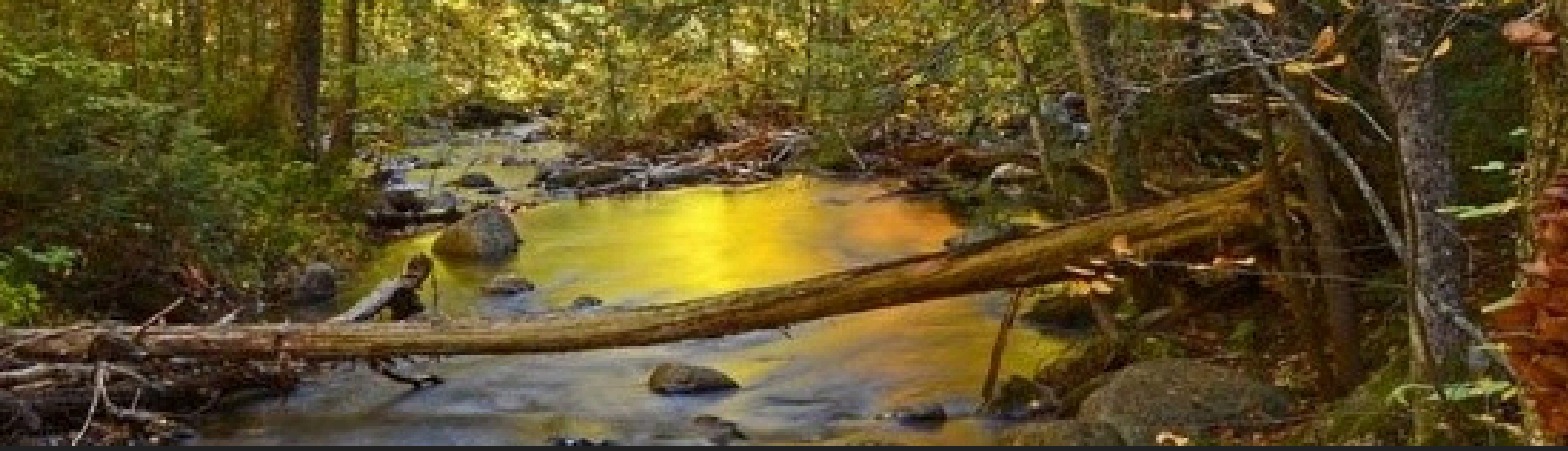
Four guests took advantage of hiking into the location where a canoe had been stashed and then paddled the last couple of kilometres along Bone Lake. Forest the Canoe shuttled in gear for all of the groups.

On weekends during the ski season the cabin offers a welcome refuge for day skiers to warm up by the fire. Kees van Frankenhuyzen, Paul McBay and Ronn Hann were hosts who provided tea, cookies and the opportunity to share tall tales. Up to 50 day skiers could be expected during the two days over the weekend and this could depend on the weather and trail conditions.

The hosts also undertake various maintenance tasks such as cutting and stacking the firewood and kindling, changing out the propane tanks, bringing in supplies and water for drinking, melting snow for dish washing, checking the outhouses and keeping the cabin clean and tidy.

A room in Norm's Cabin can be reserved during the ski season but the host does stay overnight on Saturdays. The cabin is a shared space in the winter but the whole cabin is rented out in the other seasons offering privacy for guests.

For information on Norm's Cabin, including how to make a booking please check out the **[AHC website.](#)**



SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

Education is one of the 4 core principles of the Algoma Highlands Conservancy. The Conservancy strives to achieve this goal through many initiatives, including annual scholarship gifts to local students. Awards are presented to deserving individuals from Algoma University, and Sault College that best fit the criteria:

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy Award shall be gifted annually to a student studying in the Natural Environment program area. This award recognizes an individual who best combines academic achievement with a commitment to one or more of the four core values of the Algoma Highlands Conservancy: conservation of the Algoma Highlands, environmental education and research, silent sport recreation, sustainable resource management.

OUR FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT!

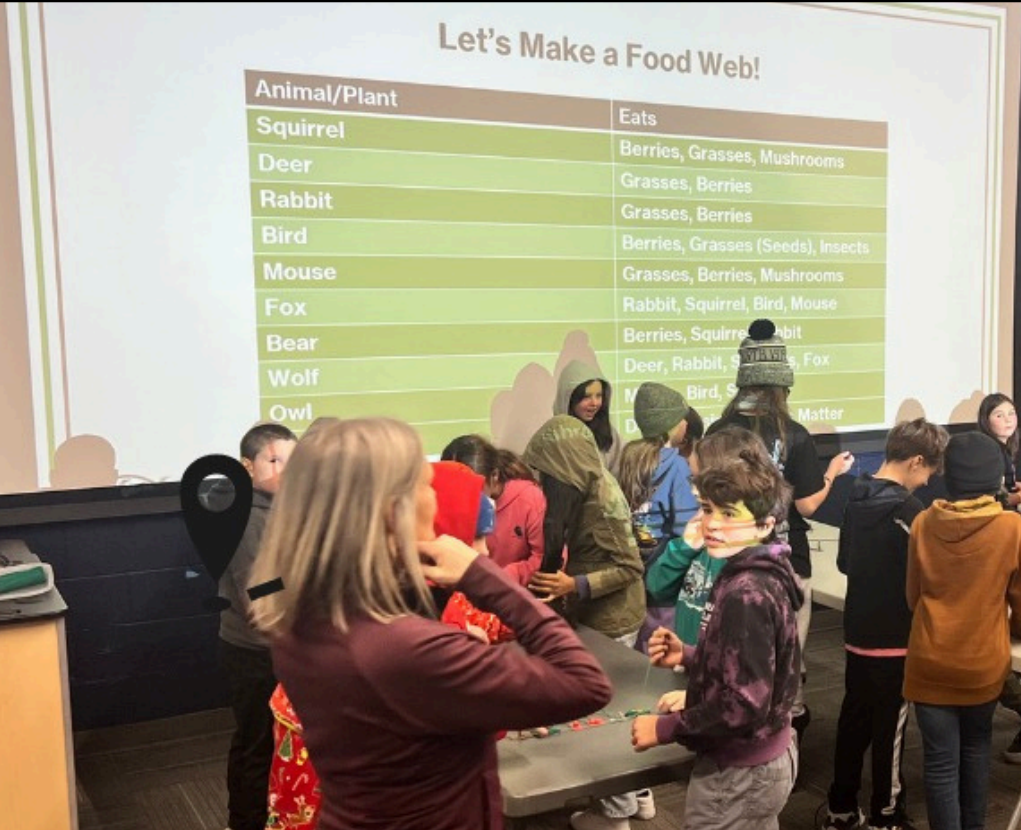
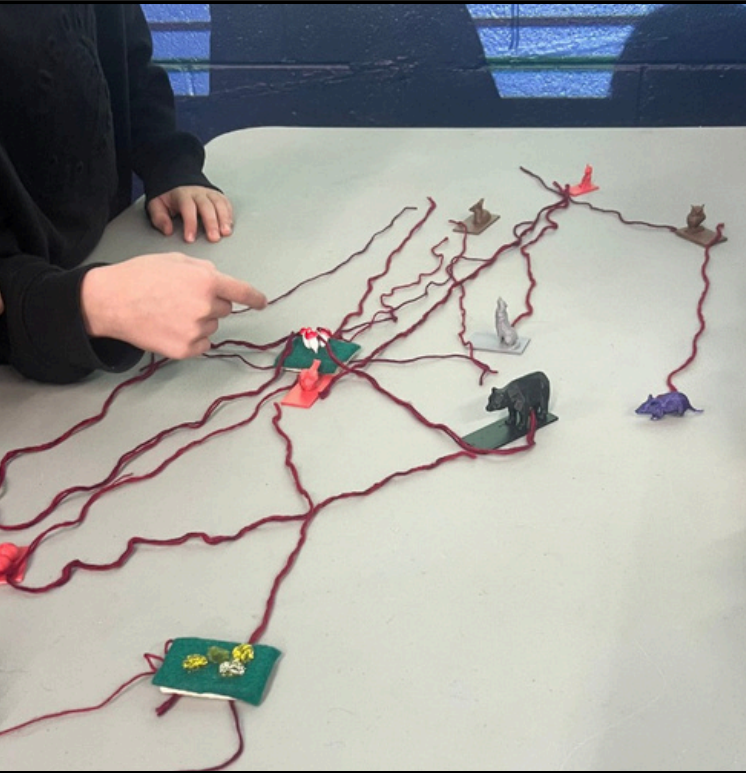
Mercedes Mazzuca, a biology student at Algoma University and the 2025 AHC Award recipient, brings together a strong conservation ethic, and the dedication of a varsity basketball player.

Tanner Fuller, a graduate of the Sault College School of Natural Environment, is now putting his skills to work in the field with the Holocene Trail Building Crew. His training in natural resource management and hands-on field experience make him a strong asset on the landscape.

Two exceptional recipients, and a proud reminder of how the Conservancy continues to invest in the future of environmental stewardship!



SPECIAL EVENTS



Jane Goodall Reasons for Hope - April & December 2025

AHC participated once again this year in this Science North initiated event at the Bushplane Museum, made more timely and poignant with the passing of Jane Goodall, an icon of conservation, hope and advocacy. Grades 7 and 4 students from ADSB and HSCDB engaged in hands-on activities, learning about conservation, ecological corridors, peregrines, wolves and food webs. This outreach saw over 200 students cycle through AHC's station. Positive feedback from organizers, volunteers, teachers and students was a testament to the success of our outreach.

SPECIAL EVENTS



Land Based Learning - January 2025

White Pines grade 7-8 Land Based Learning Class had a blast skiing in fresh powder behind Robertson Cliffs. Looking for scat, tracks, identifying trees, discussing adaptations of winter birds and animals, learning about conservation efforts, and the importance of ecological corridors were great educational tie-ins to an active day outdoors.

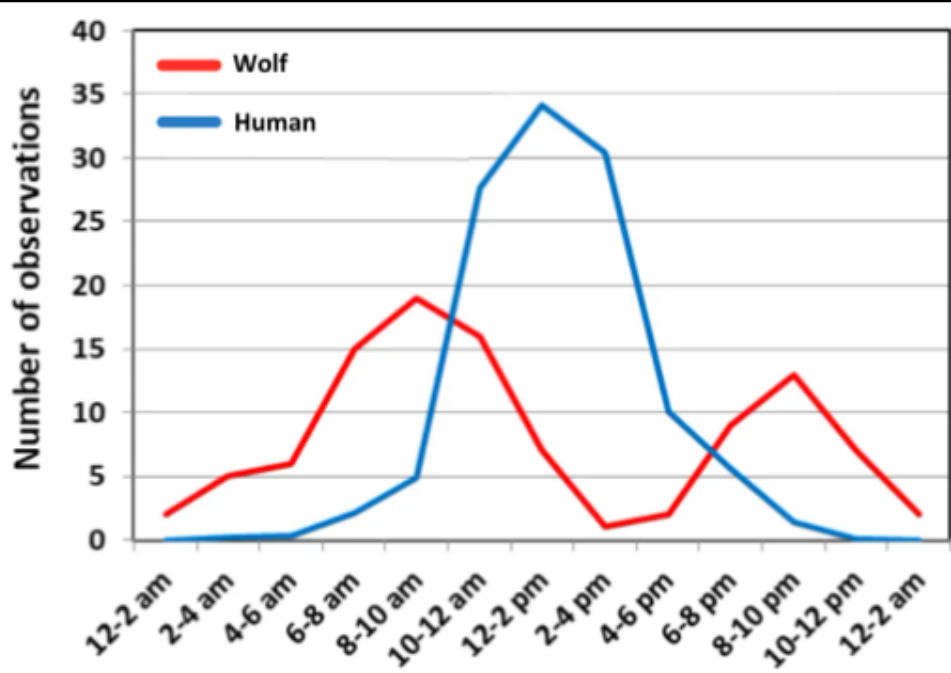
SPECIAL EVENTS



Hiking with Kiwedin PS's Grade 6 Class - May 2025

Shannon Ramsay's class came out for a hike that brought classroom learning to life in the forest. An especially meaningful stop was under a hemlock stand, as the tree features prominently in *Pack*, the series the class has been reading. Along the trail, students engaged in conversations about conservation and the important roles that species like wolves and peregrine falcons play in healthy ecosystems. Shannon introduced topographic maps and led a hands-on lesson in reading contour lines, using the surrounding landscape as a living classroom. It was a day of deep connection: to nature, to stories, and to the values of stewardship and sustainability.

SPECIAL EVENTS



Wolves of Southern Algoma Presentations: Stokely Creek Lodge - February 2025 Lake Superior Provincial Park Visitor Centre - July & August 2025

Kees led a series of workshops educating interested skiers at Stokely and campers at Agawa Campground on the AHC's wolf study. The Southern Algoma wolf populations stretch from the eastern shore of Lake Superior to Iron Bridge, Ontario. Discussion of ranges, habitat, behaviour, avoidance of humans, the importance of ecological corridors in dispersal were all topics of interest to captivated audiences at all events.

SPECIAL EVENTS



Guided Family Hikes - September & October 2025

A family friendly guided hike below the cliffs was an opportunity to discover the wonders of nature - looking at the plants, trees and animals that thrive in this unique ecosystem. This trail is perfect for little legs and curious minds.

ALGOMA REGIONAL ENVIROTHON

Fall, Winter & Spring Workshops & Spring Competition

Sept 2024 - June 2025



Envirothon is an international team-based environmental learning competition for high school youth.

Through the years Envirothon in Algoma has reached thousands of students, helping influence post-secondary education and career decisions, enabling a connection with the outdoors and the development of environmentally responsible citizens. 2024-25 was an active Envirothon year with new partners who joined our dedicated core group. The October workshop, held at the Red Pine plantation, just north and west of the Hiawatha office, focussed on soils, forests and the special topic.

Sault College was the venue and organizer for the winter workshop in March of 2025, with 2nd year students in the Wildlife Management courses leading workshop events. Val Walker, of the Sault Naturalists, was the special topics presenter - speaking to the importance of the Boreal Forest in forest stewardship.

The May workshops and competition, held at Stokely Creek Lodge, saw 50 students from 5 area high schools take part in the two day overnight event that was supported by multiple community partners and a fleet of volunteers. We love having students on AHC land using the forest and creek as a living classroom!

2025 FINANCIALS CANADA

NOTICE TO READER

	2025	2024
Assets		
Current Assets	\$182,530	\$137,920
Property	\$2,107,059	\$2,107,059
Due from AHC (USA)		-
TOTAL Assets	\$2,289,589	\$2,244,979
Liabilities and Fund Balances		
Current	\$54,903	\$10,593
General Funds	\$90,113	\$71,440
Invested in Capital Assets	\$2,107,059	\$2,107,059
TOTAL Liabilities and Fund Balances	\$2,289,589	\$2,244,979
Revenues	\$111,510	\$89,408
Expenses	\$111,210	\$55,018
TOTAL Revenue over Expenses	\$300	\$34,390

2025 FINANCIALS USA

NOTICE TO READER

	2025	2024
Current Assets	\$12,148	\$542
Liabilities and Fund Balances		
Current	\$1,199	\$1,200
Due to AHC Canada		-
TOTAL Liabilities and Fund Balances	\$1,199	\$1200
Revenues	\$13,607	\$13,620
Expenses	\$2000	\$9,225
TOTAL Revenue over Expenses	\$11,607	\$4,395