

# ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY



**2015 Annual Report**





**ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY**

[www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org](http://www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org)

## Mission and Core Values

*"Guided by core values of conservation, silent sport recreation, environmental education and promotion of sustainable forestry, the AHC's vision is to conserve and protect the unique beauty and ecological integrity of key areas within the Algoma Highlands region."*

**SILENT SPORT RECREATION:** to facilitate low impact, non-motorized recreational pursuits such as: cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, hiking, trail running, wildlife viewing, nature photography and painting.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:** to realize the full potential of the Algoma Highlands as a *living classroom* where ecological concepts and conservation biology can be learned and observed first hand by current and future generations.

**PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT:** to balance environmental protection with the economic, recreational, and spiritual benefits humans can derive from forests. The AHC has committed to managing its land holdings primarily for nature conservation, in which natural processes of growth, succession, and species interactions are generally permitted to proceed without interference.

## Board of Directors

Elisa Muto, *President*  
Kara Webster, *Vice-President*  
Bob Beggs, *Treasurer*  
Laurie McBay, *Secretary*

Brian Anstess  
Dean Thompson  
Dieter Hohnke  
Doug Pitt  
Gaylen Byker  
Ian Phair  
Lisa Venier  
Rich Greenwood

## Staff

Jennifer Cross, *Executive Director*  
Shannon Ramsay, *Environmental Education Coordinator*  
Carly Breckenridge, *Business Intern*  
Anthony Sulpizio, *Field Technician*  
Pascal Tuarze, *Field Technician*  
Courtney Hopwood, *Field Technician*  
Sirpa Tarsassen, *Volunteer Bookkeeper*



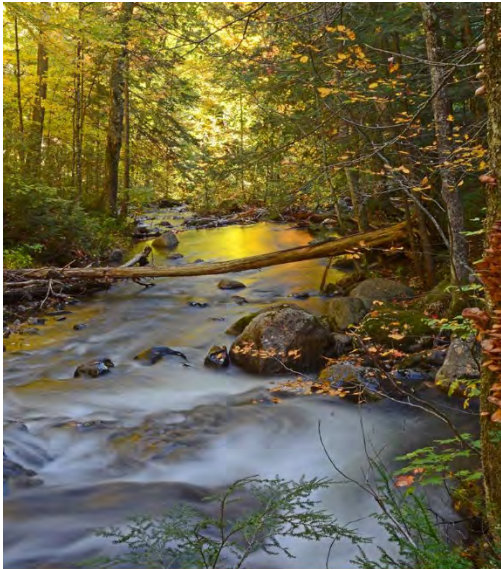
The 2015 wood turtle research crew: from left P. Tuarze, A. Sulpizio, & J. Cross (C. Hopwood missing from picture)



# Message from the Executive Director



J. Cross holds up a wood turtle, one of many the AHC has monitored as part of a research study aimed at protecting this endangered species. *Photo credit Anthony Sulizio.*



One of many spectacular autumn views within the AHC's conservation forest. *Photo Credit Chris Scherwinski.*

Dear friends and supporters,

After five rewarding years, my time as Executive Director of the AHC has come to an end. I am very pleased to report that 2015 was a year filled with positive developments for the Conservancy, one of which was the beginning of Board member Elisa Muto's term as President. I am confident that the AHC is in good hands under her leadership. Elisa has been a Board member for two years and in that time has repeatedly demonstrated reliability, dedication and willingness to take on new challenges.

The AHC is a wonderful community-driven entity and my job has been incredibly rewarding from the very beginning. The land we protect is open for the public to enjoy and everything we do is for the betterment of current and future generations. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

I'll take a moment now to thank our advocates, volunteers and supporters. Without you, there would be no AHC, plain and simple. Seeing, firsthand, the generosity and passion in so many of you has made me a better person, and I'll be eternally grateful for that!

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy will always hold a special place in my heart and I plan to stay involved and help out in whatever way I can, even if it has to be from afar. The future is bright for the AHC, and I have no doubt that the organization will continue to thrive and make meaningful progress towards its four core values of conservation, environmental education, silent sport recreation and sustainable resource management.

Jennifer Cross

## Message from the AHC Board

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy can never encapsulate, in a simple message, the full value Jennifer Cross has provided the organization. Her multiple efforts represent a shining example that we hope others working with the conservancy will aspire to. Her contributions were truly critical to keeping the AHC alive and vibrant over the last five years. She flourished in the position both as Executive Director and as a Conservation Biologist and we are confident that the AHC will benefit from her longstanding dedication for years to come. We were honored to have her as a member of our team and wish her only the best in the years to come. The strong foundation she has laid will be of great benefit for anyone coming in behind her, and the AHC looks forward to continuing on her notable work. Thank you for all the things you have done to make the AHC a continuing success story on so many fronts.

The Algoma Highlands Conservancy Board of Directors

# AHC Highlights

## Final Field Season for the Wood Turtle Project

This year marked the end of fieldwork for this multi-agency collaborative research initiative that began in 2012. Our very own Jennifer Cross played the lead role in planning, coordinating and implementing the study which partnered up with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, local power companies (Great Lakes Power Transmission, Hydro One Networks Inc., and Algoma Power Inc.), and the Canadian Forest Service. Wood turtles are a medium-sized, forest-dependent, freshwater species, designated as threatened at the national level in Canada and endangered in the province of Ontario. The over-arching objective of the study is to increase our understanding of northern Ontario populations for the development of conservation and management strategies aimed at encouraging the recovery of this species. Now that fieldwork is complete, Jennifer and Board member Dean Thompson will begin directing efforts into analyzing data and publishing peer-reviewed articles on different aspects of wood turtle population status and ecology!



Wood turtles are omnivores, capable of feeding both in the water and on land. *Photo credit Courtney Hopwood.*



Intern Carly Breckenridge and her dog Ruby enjoy rewarding views after hiking the Robertson Cliffs Trail.

## The AHC's New Intern

In the fall of 2015, we welcomed Carly Breckenridge as our eco-tourism business intern, thanks to funding from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. Carly's ecotourism background includes coordinating events for the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT). As a recent graduate from the Community, Economic, and Social Development (CESD) program at Algoma University, she has a good sense of what environmental sustainability means and her values fit within what the AHC strives to achieve. She will be focusing on the development of Norm's Cabin as an eco-business, and gaining client interest in booking reservations. Her skills will play a valuable role in expanding the use of the cabin into a viable self-sustaining business ultimately enhancing ecotourism of the naturally gifted Algoma Region.

## Robertson Cliffs Ambassadors

As many already know full well, King Mountain and the Robertson Cliffs are quite popular hiking destinations for the local community. Most people from the community of Goulais River and many from the nearby city of Sault Ste. Marie have ventured up to the top of Robertson Cliffs where the Algoma Highlands are showcased in all their glory. Each year, in the spring and summer, some have been lucky enough to see evidence of rare peregrine falcons that nest on the cliffs. As proud owner and steward of the 300 acre parcel that encompasses this ecologically and culturally significant site, the AHC offers free non-motorized access to the public so that anyone willing and able to make the demanding trek up to the top can experience the thrilling view first hand! This fall, volunteer board members acted as ambassadors at the bottom trail head and welcomed everyone who came to enjoy the day and our conservation land. We even had the local news cover the magnificence of the cliffs this season, right in the peak of autumn brilliance. You can find the video containing that footage by clicking this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcLHspG4\\_14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcLHspG4_14)



Several viewpoints on Robertson Cliffs and King Mountain are accessible year round by using our extensive trail network. *Photo credit Doug Pitt.*



# AHC Achievements

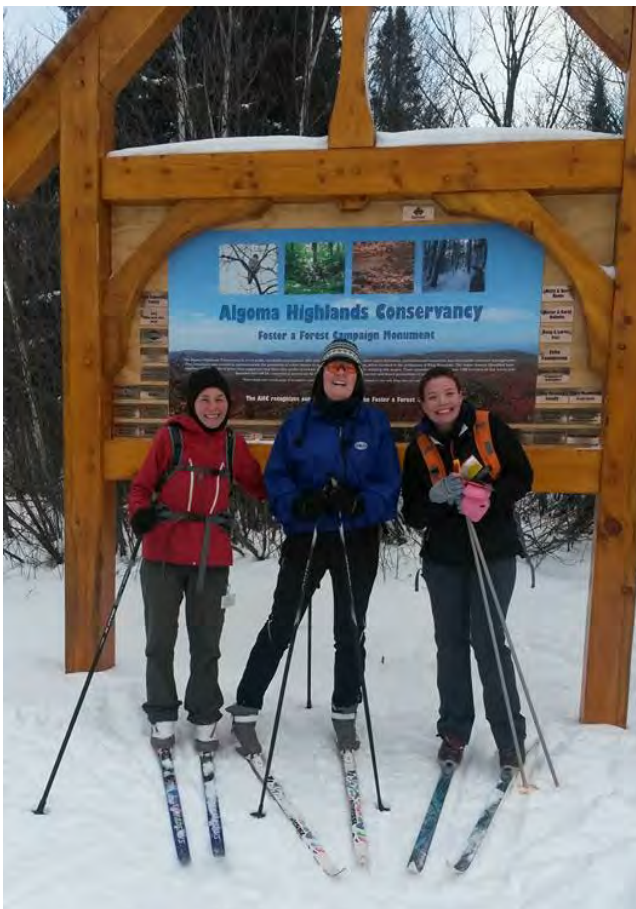
## Environmental Education Booms in 2015

Of the AHC's many accomplishments in recent years, its Environmental Education Program stands out as having the broadest uptake and the greatest potential for sustained positive change in the local community. Our coordinator, Shannon Ramsay is having an indelible influence on the environmental awareness and thinking of the myriad students she interacts with.

Shannon manages this program for the Algoma District School Board, which aims to connect students to nature and ecology while making direct ties to Science, Health and Physical Education, even Mathematics and Visual Arts curriculum. Throughout the school year, Shannon engages students and teachers in activities such as soil and water sampling, hiking/snowshoeing, ecological concept game-playing, and identification of trees, aquatic insects, and animal tracks. The AHC is proud to report that we were fully booked with ADSB groups in the 2014-2015 school year, equating to approximately 1748 students experiencing hands-on learning in our *natural* classroom.



Education Coordinator Shannon Ramsay teaches elementary students about stream ecology. *Photo credit Jeanne Lepage*



## Foster a Forest Trailhead Monument

In late 2015, we erected a beautiful trailhead monument to commemorate major donors to our Foster a Forest Campaign. The campaign began in 2012 with the sole purpose to eliminate the debt incurred with our purchase and protection of the King Mountain property. We commissioned local master builder, Richard Kargl, to construct the monument, which is reminiscent of his many beautifully crafted timber creations located throughout Stokely Creek Lodge's ski trail system (including the new Norm's Cabin). The monument is located in the "Beaver Meadow", just a quick 1 km (ish) walk/bike/ski from Stokely Creek Lodge following the creek upstream, down Eva's Way trail. The monument is strategically placed at this important recreational hub, where many of Stokely's most popular trails, such as Peterson, Walker and Evans, Erling Strom, and Dustin begin. The site is also fitting because King Mountain is clearly visible from it and it is at the core of our conservation land. Spaces are still available on the monument for those that wish to make a donation of \$500 or more to the FAF program. See our website at <https://algomahighlandsconservancy.org/foster-a-forest> for more information.

Executive Director Jennifer Cross, AHC Secretary Laurie McBay, and former AHC Board Member Karen Streich stopped to appreciate the newly erected FAF Trailhead Monument on their way to Norm's Cabin.



# AHC Achievements *continued...*

## Norm's Cabin Open for Business

Norm's Cabin is a popular silent sport recreation destination that was purchased by the AHC from the local legend himself, Norm Bourgeois, in 1996. In early 2013, the AHC partnered with Stokely Creek Lodge in an ambitious endeavour to completely rebuild the famous cabin, which had sadly, in recent years, deteriorated beyond repair.

Like the original cabin, the stunningly beautiful new multi-purpose facility will continue to be open to Stokely Creek Lodge skiers and snowshoers, serving as a destination/safe refuge throughout the winter months. The AHC has committed to staffing the cabin every weekend during the ski season, following Norm's standard traditions – sharing a warm hearth, a cup of tea, cookies, and of course, friendly company. The cabin will also provide infrastructure supportive of regional ecotourism and our continuously developing environmental education program. The remote but accessible location of this high quality cabin, combined with the associated silent-recreational opportunities (hiking, mountain biking, canoeing/kayaking, skiing, snowshoeing etc.) that exist in the immediate vicinity, provides a unique ecotourism "wilderness get-away" experience.



View of the completed cabin from Bone Lake. *Photo credit Anthony Sulpizio.*



This undertaking would not have been possible without major funding support from FedDev (Community Improvement Fund) and NOHFC (Infrastructure and Community Development Fund), as well as generous financial support from a number of local donors and businesses (SooMill, Bioforest Technologies, Joseph Meating and Michael O'Toole). Critical finishing work was executed by volunteers Dean & Nicolle Thompson and Paul & Laurie McBay. Our sincerest appreciation goes out to Richard Kargl for his unyielding commitment to quality craftsmanship and special thanks to the many people involved, both paid and volunteer, for helping us make this dream a reality.

A group from Sault Ste Marie Michigan stayed at the cabin over the long weekend in August this year. They mountain-biked to the cabin and were very pleased with the accommodations and gear shuttle service. *Photo credit Chris Scherwinski.*

## 2015 FINANCIAL POSITION (CANADA)

(Notice to Reader)

| <b>ASSETS</b>                           | <b>2015</b>        | <b>2014</b>        |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Current Assets                          | \$48,556           | \$55,658           |
| King Mountain Property, at cost         | \$1,522,147        | \$1,522,147        |
| Robertson Lake Cliffs, at cost          | \$48,412           | \$48,412           |
| New Norm's Cabin, at cost               | \$252,767          | \$245,446          |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                     | <b>\$1,871,882</b> | <b>\$1,871,663</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>       |                    |                    |
| Accounts Payable                        | \$12,721           | \$31,591           |
| Long Term Debt                          | \$76,940           | \$138,698          |
| Unrestricted Net Assets                 | \$1,782,221        | \$1,701,374        |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b> | <b>\$1,871,882</b> | <b>\$1,871,663</b> |
| <b>REVENUES</b>                         | <b>\$249,418</b>   | <b>\$301,134</b>   |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                         | <b>\$168,571</b>   | <b>\$138,887</b>   |
| <b>Less Grant Advances</b>              | <b>\$0</b>         | <b>\$19,000</b>    |
| <b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b> | <b>\$80,847**</b>  | <b>\$143,247*</b>  |

\*2014 Note: \$50,000 of the \$143,247 surplus for 2014 was paid towards the mortgage, the majority of the remainder was used to build the New Norm's Cabin.

\*\* 2015 Note: Surplus was used to pay down the mortgage and finish off Norm's Cabin.

## 2015 FINANCIAL POSITION (U.S.A.)

(Notice to Reader)

| <b>ASSETS</b>                           | <b>2015</b>     | <b>2014</b>    |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Cash & Receivables                      | \$14,432        | \$5,819        |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                     | <b>\$14,432</b> | <b>\$5,819</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>       |                 |                |
| Accounts Payable                        | \$1,200         | \$1,199        |
| Unrestricted Net Assets                 | \$13,232        | \$4,620        |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b> | <b>\$14,432</b> | <b>\$5,819</b> |
| <b>REVENUES</b>                         | <b>\$53,035</b> | <b>\$2,780</b> |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                         | <b>\$44,422</b> | <b>\$1,397</b> |
| <b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b> | <b>\$8,613</b>  | <b>\$1,383</b> |