

ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY



2016 Annual Report



ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

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

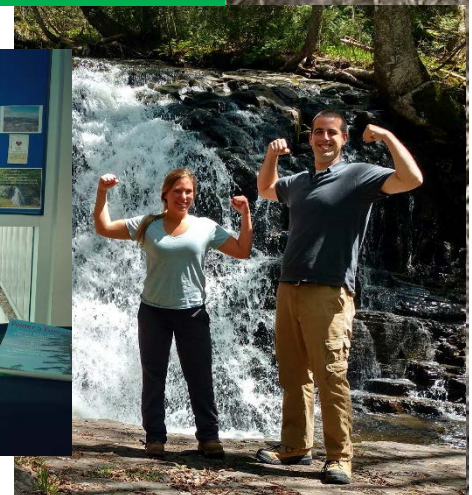
Elisa Muto, *President*
Kara Webster, *Vice-President*
Bob Beggs, *Treasurer*
Laurie McBay, *Secretary*

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

Staff

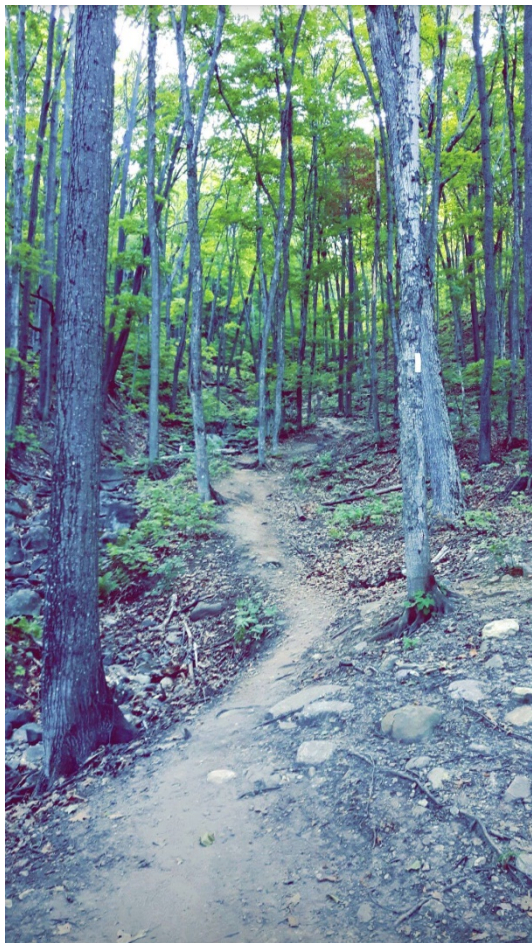
*Shannon Ramsay, *Environmental Education Coordinator*
*Carly Breckenridge, *Business Intern*
*Deirdre Loughnan, *Pollinator Project Biologist*
*Sydney Mellett, *Field Technician*
*John Rankin, *Field Technician*
*Sirpa Tarsassen, *Volunteer Bookkeeper*
*Jennifer Cross, *Part-time Director*

Left: Carly Breckenridge represents the AHC at the 2016 Seedy Saturday event.



Right: Summer Field Technicians Sydney Mellett and John Rankin.

Message from the President



Robertson Lake Cliffs trail in August.

Photo Credit: Sault Hiking and Outdoor Group

Dear friends,

This year marks my first official year as President of the Algoma Highlands Conservancy (AHC). I first joined the AHC in late 2013 and since then I am continually amazed by the dedication and energy of our staff, volunteers, members, supporters and our active board of directors. As I sit back and write this letter, I am extremely proud to outline our recent accomplishments as 2016 was a year of growth and significant changes.

Here are a few highlights:

Growing and growing! – One of our biggest highlights is that the environmental education program continued to grow for the third year in a row! In the 2015/2016 school year, this program welcomed approximately 2389 students from ADSB. The success and popularity of the Environmental Education program can be attributed to the tireless efforts of Shannon Ramsay, our Environmental Education Coordinator. Shannon's energy and enthusiasm set the stage for a positive and enriching outdoor learning experience that will undoubtedly last a lifetime for many of these young students.

Room to grow in ecotourism – Norm's Cabin became available for rent in late 2015. This year, with the help of Eco-tourism Intern, Carly Breckenridge, we focused on marketing this magnificent cabin as a one-of-a-kind ecotourism destination in the Algoma Region. Imagine putting your feet up near the fire after a long day on the ski trails or lounging by Bone Lake after a bike ride on the trails? I encourage you to check out our website to see what Norm's cabin has to offer.

Changes to our Board of Directors – The AHC said a fond farewell to Dean Thompson in the fall of 2016, an active and energetic board member, who was responsible for the successful Norm's Cabin rebuild and who also oversaw the wood turtle research with Jennifer Cross. Dean will be happily enjoying his retirement, but I'm sure we'll see him on the AHC trails before too long. At the same time, we welcomed Kees Van Frankenhuyzen to the AHC Board. Kees is a past board member, who brings a deep knowledge of the AHC history as well as new energy and ideas to our Board of Directors. Welcome Kees!

A new research initiative – Following the close of a very successful wood turtle research project in 2015, we are excited to take on a new environmental research initiative. The pollinator project is a multi-agency collaboration examining local pollinator diversity and abundance on utility right-of-ways. The full story is featured on Page 3 of this report.

With all the *buzz* that's been going on at the AHC this past year, I am excited to see what's in store for 2017. I am truly honoured to be a part of a team of such amazing individuals whose passion for the environment and for the Algoma Highlands helps to preserve its integrity for now and into the future. Thanks for supporting the Algoma Highlands Conservancy in 2016!



AHC Highlights

The AHC Embarks on a New Research Project

A new and exciting research project was initiated by the AHC in 2016. Elisa Muto and AHC Conservation Technicians, Sydney Mellett and John Rankin, spent the summer documenting insect pollinators on utility right-of-ways (ROW)s in the Algoma Region to determine how vegetation management on ROWs influences local pollinator abundance and diversity and to identify which compatible flowering plant species can be used to enhance pollinator habitat on ROWs. Deirdre Loughnan, Pollinator Project Biologist, was also hired in the fall of 2016 to analyze the 2016 pollinator field data.

Pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, flies, etc., provide critical ecosystem services and other services that support healthy ecosystems. Loss of habitat has been documented as one factor contributing to widespread pollinator declines. However, utility companies employ integrative vegetation management (IVM) techniques under overhead power lines which favor low-growing early successional plant species. Due to these practices, utility ROWs are increasingly recognized as potential areas of habitat enhancement for pollinators. The overall goal of the AHC pollinator project is to provide regionally specific information on local pollinators and their preferred floral resources following vegetation management on utility ROWs.

The pollinator project is conducted under the Corridors for Life initiative in collaboration with HydroOne Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma Power Inc. (API), Sault College and the Pollinator Partnership Canada. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of this multi-agency partnership. The project is expected to continue into the 2017 field season.



Top: Bumble Bee on Spotted Joe-pye Weed.

Middle: Syrphid Fly on Oxe-eye Daisy.

Below: AHC Summer students John Rankin and Sydney Mellett setting up pollinator plots.

Photo credit all Page 3 photos: E. Muto



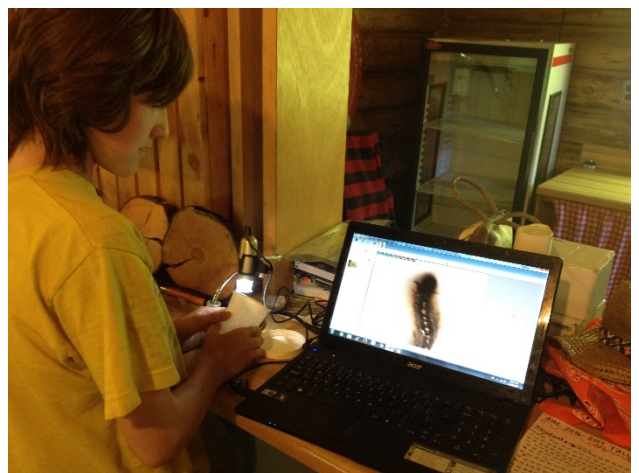
AHC Highlights *continued*

Environmental Education Continues to Shine in 2016

It has been a fantastic year of exploring and learning at the Algoma Highlands Conservancy! Students from all across the Algoma District School Board have journeyed to the AHC land to learn about Stream, Soil, Forest and Wildlife Ecology during every season and in all weather conditions.

We have had a record number of visits this year, with 2389 students from grades 3 through 12, joining us in 2016 for action-packed days of learning in the outdoors. This was our first year that every single ADSB school within Sault Ste. Marie came to learn, as well as having Echo Bay Public School, Central Algoma Elementary School and St. Joseph Island Public School join us for the first time. The program is always booked to capacity with groups on waiting lists to get a spot to come out for the day!

This year, students took part in a watershed study, which included the creation of watershed models, and participation in a simulation oil spill clean-up right in the creek, which was very exciting and resulted in some extremely dedicated and wet students! Students conducted water testing and collected macroinvertebrates from Stokely Creek to test the health of the water system. During the Soil Ecology program, students learned to identify different types of soil and enjoyed their time in the soil pit learning about the dynamic ecosystem right under their feet. The winter programs were very popular, and every day involved snowshoeing for at least part of the time. The bird (and squirrel) feeding stations were a hit, and an introduction for many students to the bird species that are all around us. The Animal Survival role-playing game was expanded, and students "became" a particular animal during the game, needing to identify particular trees in the forest that their animal depended upon, as well as satisfying their food and water requirements in order to survive. During all seasons, the students went home exhausted and happy, both from the knowledge they had gained during the day and also from the physical demands of hiking, exploring and snowshoeing through the beautiful Algoma Highlands Conservancy property.



Top: Class participating in stream ecology lesson.

Middle: Students holding soil samples from different soil horizons in a soil pit.

Bottom: Student looking at forest tent caterpillar with digital microscope.

Photo credit all Page 4 photos: S. Ramsay

Robertson Cliff's Trail

Robertson Cliff's Trail continues to be a very popular year-round destination for those who enjoy the outdoors. The view is spectacular from the high locations especially in the fall. However, there has been evidence of some problems including graffiti on the rocks, people lighting fires, the use of ATV's on the trails and reports of people getting lost. Improved trail signage was put in place to address these concerns and the return loop has yellow markers directing people back to the trail head. One of AHC goals is for the public to enjoy the non-motorized use of our trails in a safe manner. Trail remediation and upgraded signage and parking will be addressed in the future.

Norm's Cabin Receives Finishing Touches

Although already open for business, with several groups already experiencing overnight stays, Norm's Cabin received a few final touches in the summer of 2016. A team consisting of Board member Dean Thompson, volunteer Paul McBay, and summer student technicians Sydney and John, worked diligently to construct a new 30 foot floating dock (using materials generously donated by AHC friend David Kreutzweiser), replace decking material through swamp area to provide easy mountain bike and pedestrian crossing in summer, and install two culverts supplied by Stokely Creek Lodge to improve the trail between Norm's Cabin and Bojack Creek. The team also completed repairs of Bojack Creek Bridge to allow safe and easy access by ATV for maintenance and client shuttle support activity.

Staying at Norm's Cabin is a unique experience in the area with hiking or cycling being the only permitted means of access. The total distance to the cabin from our base at Stokely Creek Lodge is approximately 10 km, although there are longer route options for the ultra-keen. Negotiations are currently underway with a third party (Blaq Bear Eco-Adventure Routes) to handle the logistics associated with running Norm's Cabin as a tourist destination on the AHC's behalf.



Top: Beautiful fall view from the top of Robertson Lake Cliffs. Photo credit: C. Sherwinski

Middle: Robertson Lake Cliffs additional trail signage added by the AHC to aid in navigating the loop portion of the trail. Photo credit: L. McBay

Left: Norm's Cabin in July 2016 with new floating dock. Photo credit: L. McBay

2016 FINANCIAL POSITION (CANADA)

(Notice to Reader)

ASSETS	2016	2015
Current Assets	\$52,485	\$48,556
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	\$252,767
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,875,811	\$1,871,882
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Accounts Payable	\$14,239	\$12,721
Long Term Debt	\$45,940	\$76,940
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$1,815,632	\$1,782,221
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$1,875,811	\$1,871,882
REVENUES	\$133,409	\$249,418
EXPENSES	\$99,998	\$168,571
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$33,411	\$80,847*

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

2016 FINANCIAL POSITION (U.S.A.)

(Notice to Reader)

ASSETS	2016	2015
Cash & Receivables	\$55,825	\$14,432
TOTAL ASSETS	\$55,825	\$14,432
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Accounts Payable	\$1,200	\$1,200
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$54,625	\$13,232
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$55,825	\$14,432
REVENUES	\$52,776	\$53,035
EXPENSES	\$11,383	\$44,422
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$41,393	\$8,613