

Conservation Matters

A publication of the
Canadian Thousand Islands
Heritage Conservancy

www.1000islands-conservancy.on.ca

Spring 2004

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 29, at the Rockport Recreation Hall. The Meeting will begin at 9:30 am, and will be followed at 10:00 am by the workshop on Special Places Planning. Please join us for coffee at 9:00 am. The AGM agenda will include reports of our finances and stewardship activities, as well as the election of our Board of Directors.



Cottage Tour

Once again, the Conservancy will be organising our annual Cottage Tour fundraiser, which will be on July 24th. This is a very popular event, and each year we have received very positive feedback about this great day out. Similar to other years, we meet at the departure point along the River, then embark on the tour boat for a leisurely 3-hour cruise through the islands with a land tour of three different properties. Each of our gracious hosts literally opens their doors, and they are on hand to share the stories, their experiences, and in some cases the historic collections, of their unique cottages.

This year, organisers have arranged for us to visit **three cottages in the Admiralty Group of Islands, near Gananoque**. In this particularly scenic section of the river, individual islands were originally named after members of the British Admiralty by island surveyor Capt. Wm. Owen, in an attempt to curry favour with them. Leaving from the Gananoque Inn, there will be a choice of morning or afternoon tour, with lunch at the Inn included in the tour price of \$75 per person.

For tickets, contact

Bud Andress at (613) 659-2227 or

Marnie Ross at (613) 659-4590.

There are a limited number of seats so book early – this event is a sell-out every year!

Special Places Planning

The Thousand Islands Heritage Conservancy helps property owners and municipalities make good decisions regarding the long term protection of our natural heritage. With this in mind we are hosting a workshop entitled *Special Places Planning: Landscape & Waterfront Conservation*.

The workshop will be held at the **Rockport Recreation Hall, on Saturday morning, May 29**, immediately following our Annual General Meeting.

At 10 am, Don Ross, biologist, author, and a member of our Board, will outline the agenda for the workshop, and introduce our speakers. Presenters will speak on three topics:

- Waterfront planning and the role of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority;
- Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs); and
- Special Places Planning in the Official Plan for the Municipality.

There will be ample opportunity to ask questions of the speakers, as their presentations will be followed by a question period and a panel discussion. **There is no charge for the workshop, and a light lunch will be provided at 12:45 pm.**

We encourage you to attend, and please invite your neighbours.

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This publication was produced entirely by volunteers.

CANADIAN
THOUSAND ISLANDS
HERITAGE CONSERVANCY



St. Lawrence Islands National Park: A Vision of Preservation in Our Community



One hundred years ago, as the cities of North America were developing, with their inherent problems of pollution and overcrowding, many people sought to escape to the countryside. Those with means searched for natural areas they called wilderness, a place not too far away with clear, clean water and fresh air. They longed to banish their fatigue and commune with nature.

The Thousand Islands since the 1860's had been a tourist destination, especially for those who enjoyed fishing for bass, northern pike, and muskellonge. By the late 1800's, most of the Thousand Islands had been sold off by the government for cottage development. There was a great fear amongst the local population that there would be no public space left in the islands and all the land would be in private hands. Local citizens pressured their representatives and lobbied the federal government to keep land public and create a park reserve in the Thousand Islands. A petition from local citizens in Prescott and Brockville to the Governor General stated that "people are afraid that if the islands are sold the timber now growing on them will be destroyed, their beauty spoiled and the source of health and recreation they now afford to the public will be utterly destroyed."

Finally, nine islands and a small piece of property at Mallorytown Landing donated by the Mallory family, were put together to form the nucleus of the national park. The nine islands Gordon, Endymion, Camelot, Georgina, Constance, Beau Rivage, Aubrey, Mermaid, and Adelaide (plus Stovin Island that was added in 1905) had been held in trust by the Federal Government for the Mississauga Indians since the 1850s. These island preserves had been used by local people for camping and picnicking for generations and had been protected since the 1870's by Island Guardians hired by the federal government.

By Order in Council on September 20th 1904, St. Lawrence Islands National Park was established as one of the first national parks in Canada.

St. Lawrence Islands National Park represents the unique natural features of the Frontenac Arch, the portion of the Canadian Shield that extends down in to Eastern Ontario and crosses the St. Lawrence River forming the Thousand Islands. Some islands have three microclimates with southern and northern species within meters of each other separated by rocky granite outcroppings. Today, the national park has twenty one island properties between Brockville and Kingston that afford the visitor the opportunity to experience the natural and cultural heritage of this area. Each island has docking, hiking trails and most have camping. Mallorytown Landing on the mainland offers exhibits and programs as well as an 1815 gunboat and exhibit.

St. Lawrence Islands National Park offers a year round educational program to visitors and local residents so they can learn more about the special flora and fauna of the area and about the ongoing efforts to protect these unique species. For example, the park monitors species at risk like the Black Rat Snake and Map Turtle as well plants that are rare like the Deerberry and Beach Bean. Hopefully through our education program, we will develop a greater interest in stewardship of the land and water of this unique area of Canada. The park is working closely with other conservation groups and agencies in the area to ensure long term preservation and protection of significant habitat. Recently, the Thousand Islands-Frontenac Arch World Biosphere Reserve was established of which the national park is a core protected area.

**This coming year will be a very important milestone
for St. Lawrence Islands National Park. Come celebrate with us!**

SPECIAL DATES IN THE CENTENNIAL YEAR

at St. Lawrence Islands National Park

2004

- May 16th** Tree Seminar ..how to choose, how to plant and nurture native trees 12:30 to 4 pm at Mallorytown Landing Visitor Centre ..cost \$6.00
- May 29th** Doors Open 10 am to 4 pm –special exhibits, speakers, hikes, launch of centennial history album, music, refreshments- free parking- Mallorytown Landing Visitor Centre.
- June 18-25th** Art Show and Contest at Mallorytown Landing
- July 1st** Celebrate Canada's Birthday- 11 am to 3 pm- highlighting the park centennial, games, walks, special films and cake! Free parking - Mallorytown Landing.
- July 17th** A Community Fair-10 am to 4 pm - natural and cultural heritage exhibits, speakers, arts and crafts, games, food and lots of music.- free parking- Mallorytown Landing.
- Sept. 19th** Official Commemoration of the Establishment of St. Lawrence Islands National Park- 10:30 am to 2 pm - Plaque unveiling and reception- Mallorytown Landing.

Call **Kathleen Burtch** at St. Lawrence Islands National Park for further information at 613-923-5261.



Filling the Gap in Trust Coverage

There is a growing awareness in Canada of the special programs available through Land Trusts which can protect special and vital natural landscapes on privately owned land. The Conservancy is fielding an ever-increasing number of calls from landowners who are seeking some form of conservation measures for their properties.

Since 1993, the Conservancy has served the Thousand Islands region, south of highway 2, from Gananoque to Brockville. For almost as long, there has been another Land Trust busy along the length of the Rideau Canal, but the "land between" has been without such a conservation organization to help landowners. A growing number of our calls are coming from property owners between the St. Lawrence River and Rideau Canal, especially from Charleston Lake and the Gananoque waterway.

In recent board meetings, the Conservancy has explored the feasibility and implications of extending its operating area inland from the river. After meeting informally with the lake and waterway associations, and with discussions with the Rideau Waterway Land Trust and the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the Canadian Thousand Islands Heritage Conservancy has decided to find the best way to fill the gap in Trust coverage of this ecologically and historically rich region. The intention is to find the mechanisms and relationships with other area groups that will improve the network of protected spaces, and at the same time strengthen the capacity of the Conservancy to work with landowners. Hopefully, this will fall in place by the 2005 Annual General Meeting. We'll be meeting with associations over the coming weeks and months.

Membership Fees

Thank you to the many members who have paid your membership fees for 2004. We rely on the fees to offset several recurring expenses, including postage, printing of the newsletter, rising insurance costs, and municipal property taxes. As you know, we are subject to the same property assessments, and increasing property taxes, as other property owners. If you have not paid your membership for the current year, please fill out the enclosed information slip and send your cheque as soon as possible. Thank you.

Conservancy projects rely on your support through donations, volunteer work and in-kind contributions.

Your membership payment covers a variety of costs, including:

- insurance, which covers all Conservancy activities
- taxes on properties owned by the Conservancy
- ever-increasing postage costs
- printing and stationary
- office rent
- memberships, in the **Ontario Land Trust Alliance**, and in the **WaterShed** coalition
- computer software for word processing and for tracking membership.



If you want to get involved in any CTIHC projects please contact : **Dave Warner** at (613) 923-2054, or **Don Ross** at (613) 659-4590.

Our Thousand Islands Bald Eagles – part of our natural heritage.

By Bud Andress*

The bald eagle is one of the largest birds of prey (raptors) found in North America. They stand about 30 inches high, with a wing span of 6 to 7 feet and weigh 8 to 12 pounds. Immature bald eagles lack the white head and tail and are mostly chocolate brown with varying amounts of white over the body, tail, and under wing parts. Maturity and full display of the white head and tail feathers usually occurs in the fifth year. Occasionally mistaken for the bald eagle in flight is the turkey vulture which has V-shaped wings when soaring, unlike the eagle's totally flat appearance.

Like so many species at the top of the food chain, bald eagle populations declined from heavy use of organochlorine pesticides, particularly DDT. The banning of DDT in 1972 and restoration programs have improved the outlook for bald eagles. The species remains though, protected under the Ontario Endangered Species Act.

Over the last three decades, bald eagles migrating south have stopped and overwintered in increasing numbers in the 1000 Islands, taking advantage of the swift open water holes in areas such as Ivy Lea. Winter diet studies for this area have shown the eagles eat fish, ducks, and various mammals found as carrion, including white-tailed deer. They have been observed roosting communally at night, in tree stands which are protected from severe cold winter winds.

Although the last known nesting pair disappeared from the area in 1937, a new pair took up residence in 1999. They have raised five eaglets between 1999 and 2003, and last year their eaglet was studied and "processed" at the nest. Besides being banded, weighed, measured, providing a blood sample, and being inoculated against West Nile Virus, the eaglet had a photo opportunity with the proud land owners before being carefully returned to its nest.

While the bald eagle is well known as a national symbol in the United States, this striking raptor is also part of our local natural heritage here in the 1000 Islands. We can all look forward to winter sightings and more nesting success in the islands.

** Bud Andress is a National Park Warden with St. Lawrence Islands National Park and a member of the CTIHC Board of Directors.*



Book Launch

To help celebrate St. Lawrence Islands National Park's Centennial, we have joined them in producing a history album of the Biosphere Reserve area. This diverse series of essays includes an overview of local industries such as the commercial fishery, potash and weaving; the Native presence; historic lighthouses; and the history of Jones Creek, Darlingside, and the St. Lawrence Islands National Park. Look for the book launch on **May 29th, 2004** and get your copy through the Conservancy.

Larue Creek – A Rich Legacy

Driving north on the Larue Mills Road from the Thousand Islands Parkway, you can glimpse the former mill pond and traces of the mills that dominated the creek two hundred years ago. According to family tradition, Billa Larue was captured by Indians near Sarasota NY, and was brought to Canada. He arrived in Upper Canada in the late 1700s, and in a short period of time, became a major landowner in the heart of the Thousand Islands. He eventually owned Lots 12,15,19,20,21, and 22 in Front of Escott Township along the St. Lawrence River, and Larue (Hill) Island. Larue's original home, with squared-timber walls covered with clapboard, still graces the land above the pond. He was buried along with his family under the shade of the walnut trees which he originally planted.

The old cart track to the mill is still visible, as are the piles of rubble marking the site of Billa Larue's gristmill and sawmill. At one time, pine logs which were rafted in from nearby islands along the St. Lawrence River were shunted up the creek through a lock system to be processed. During the War of 1812, Larue ran his gristmill Sundays and at night in order to provide flour for the troops stationed nearby.

Larue Creek, with its natural and cultural history, is an important part of the legacy of the Thousand Islands. Approximately 100 acres of Larue's original land adjoining the creek has been recently donated to the Conservancy by the Bliss family.

Oakworm Infestation – Landowner Information

Some islands in the 1000 Islands are experiencing a high level of infestation by the Short-horned Oakworm (*Anisota finlaysoni*). Local mainland property owners and interested individuals are invited to attend an Open House hosted by the Eastern Ontario Model Forest, OMNR, NRC, a local "Forestry" organisation and Parks Canada.

Date: Saturday, June 5, 2004,
10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: The Gananoque Curling Club,
300 William St., Gananoque, Ontario

Cost: **FREE**; complimentary light lunch provided

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