



Friends of Gatineau Park

2014-II

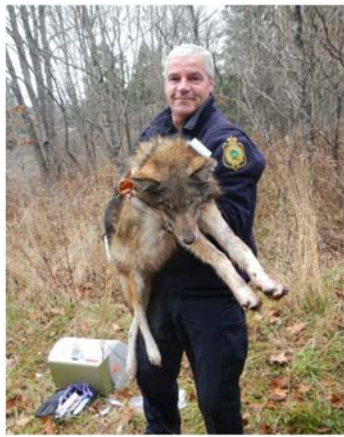
BIODIVERSITY

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Gatineau Park Canid Study Update

by *Christie Spence*

Since the winter of 2013, Gatineau Park biologists have been studying the park’s population of large canids (dog family). Several research questions were identified:



1. What species of large canid are found in the park? Eastern wolf (species at risk), coyote, and/or a hybrid?
2. Are there areas of the park used for habitat that are important to protect?
3. Where do they move within the park and when they leave it?

Phase 1: Population Estimate

Phase I of this multi-year project took place in winter 2013. Dr. Carolyn Callaghan was contracted to provide a preliminary assessment of the number and distribution of large canids in Gatineau Park. Working with NCC conservation officers and a handful of skilled volunteers, Dr. Callaghan conducted snow track surveys and used remote-sensing cameras to come to a conclusion that there were likely 3 packs of larger canids (more

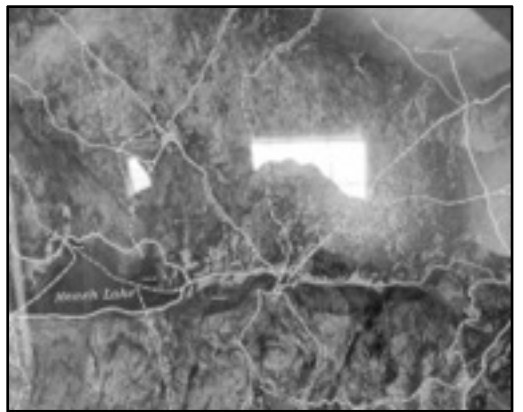
likely to be wolves) totaling 15 animals and three packs of smaller animals (more likely to be coyotes) totaling 10-12 animals using the park in winter. The team also collected scat and urine samples for genetic analysis. A hair snagging station was also set up to collect hair for genetic sampling, but none was obtained.

Phase II: Genetic Analysis and Satellite Tracking

Phase II involved live-trapping animals in order to obtain genetic samples and to install satellite tracking collars. Three canids were captured and collared in 2013 and another two were captured in 2014, though one was too small to be collared.

The animals were fitted with satellite tracking collars, which take a GPS fix of each animal’s location every 2 hours. This data is uploaded to a web-based mapping tool roughly every 24 hours. In particular, location data from the large male and smaller female captured in 2013 have been very instructive. A mated pair, these animals regularly move in and out of Gatineau Park towards the Ottawa River

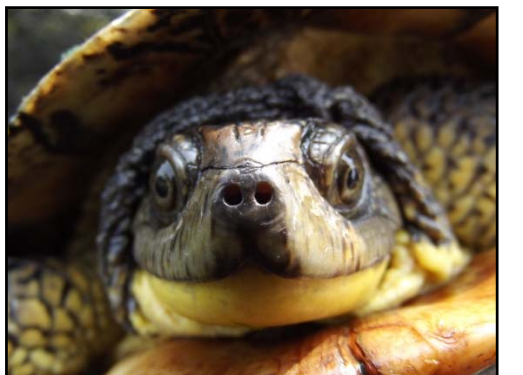
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Historical Map of Ski Trails

Mosaic of pictures taken in the 1920’s

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In Search of Blanding’s Turtle

Not easy to assess!

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using an identified ecological corridor and have a clearly defined home range. Starting in April 2014 over a two-month period, the pair was predictably found at a particular spot outside of the park boundary, indicating their use of a den site for raising pups. After the den site was vacated, park staff confirmed the well-hidden den site using the GPS location to find it.

Analysis of the genetic samples produced nine profiles of different individuals. Each of these animals was identified as an Eastern coyote – a species that originated when a remnant



population of Eastern Wolves (*Canis lycaon*) hybridized with Western Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) that arrived in the region about 100 years ago. The 72 lbs. male had a mixture of Eastern wolf (20%) and of larger Boreal wolf genes (16%), but with a majority of genes classified as Eastern Coyote. While these results do not conclusively show that there are no Eastern wolves in Gatineau Park, they indicate that the canid population in the region is the product of a variable mixture of canid genes, and it is unlikely that there is a viable population of Eastern wolves in the Park.

The collared wolves will continue to be monitored and further trapping may occur in the coming year.

Christie Spence is Senior Manager of Natural Resources and Land Management, Gatineau Park (National Capital Commission)

HERITAGE

Historical Map of Ski Trails

by Bill McGee

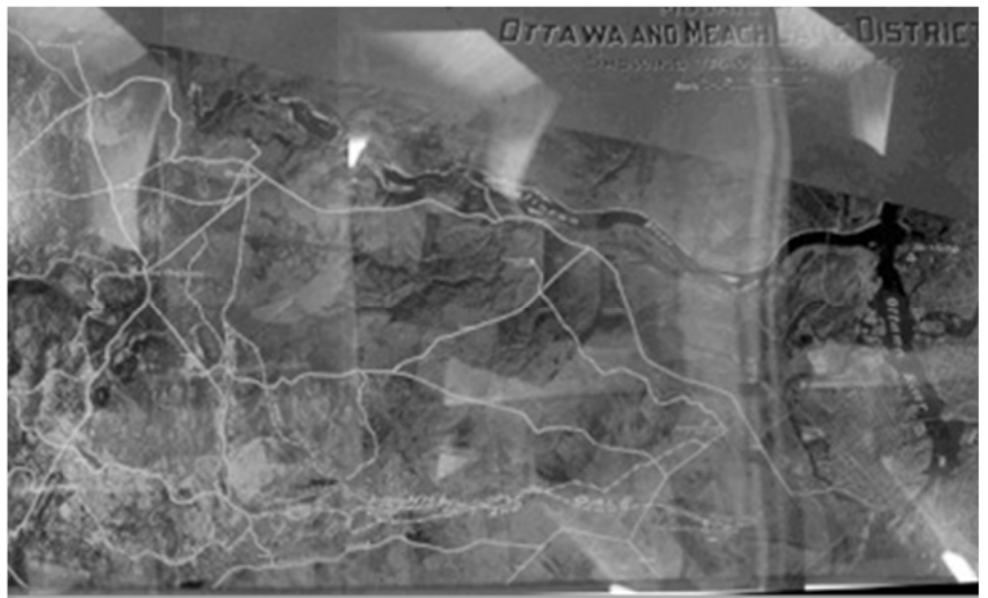
If you go to the second floor of Moorside on the Mackenzie King Estate, you will find a large frame with three photographs and a map entitled “Mosaic of Ottawa and Meach Lake District showing Travelled Routes”, RCAF and Topographical Survey of Canada.

The National Air Photo Library has the 119 air photo originals used to make the mosaic, dated 4 Nov 1925, and the Ottawa Ski Club Newsletter mentions the map in the Feb 1926

and a road now called the Meech Valley Road trail from P9 to O'Rourke's Clearing, and thence to Cowden Road. But these roads are fairly easy to find.

Apparently civil servants skied on Sundays, taking the train to various locations on the Gatineau River, skiing to a lodge, and then returning to Ottawa via Pink Lake.

The mosaic also shows five ski lodges: the



newsletter; evidently the map was a Christmas gift for the Prime Minister of the day! In the fall of 2013 I made several photos of parts of the map and stitched them together; the room had reflections, so the result is not perfect, but still useable. In the summer of 2014 I visited many of these old trail routes; usually, the trails are long gone.

The air photo mosaic has overlaid traced roads and trails in white. Some roads are very familiar: McClosky Road, Mountain Road, Notch Road, Mine Road, Old Chelsea Road, Meech Lake Road, Tenaga [Scott] Road, Freeman Road, Gatineau Road [Highway 105], Cross Loop Road, Pine Road, Cowden Road, Kingsmere Road [but still connected to Mountain Rd by Larriault's Hill]. There are several other roads no longer used: the Hermit Trail from Kingsmere to Notch Road, the Meech Lake Fire Road on the north side of Meech Lake, now most of the Discovery trail, but going to the Fox Farm at Pine Road,

Fortune, Pink Lake and Ironside (aka Dome Hill) of the Ottawa Ski Club, and the Keogan, and Birch Valley lodges of Cliffside Ski Club. As well, two jumps are located: Fairy Lake (Cliffside) and Rockcliffe (Ottawa Ski Club).

If you follow the mosaic in a counter clockwise sense from the south west corner, you see Blanchet trail (62) and McCloskey trail (2), and a trail connecting the two, now bush, and Ridge road heading east.

Keogan and Fortune Lodges have many access trails. From Meech Lake a trail from the Alexander homestead to Keogan cabin; Ridge road from McCloskey and continuing as Murphy's trail down Booth Hill to Murphy's hotel on Kingsmere road [I cannot tell if Murphy's trail used Ridge Road and Booth Hill, or was just close to them]; George's trail from Fortune along Fortune Lane (4), past Sugarloaf Hill and to Kingsmere Lake; Dunlop trail from Fortune

to P10 near the current Dunlop Road, and Keogan's trail from Keogan's lodge to P10 north of the present Fortune Lake Parkway.

The Canyon trail started in Old Chelsea and took the present trail 1 up Suicide Hill to the Parkway when it veered to Kingmere Road (P5) and then went up 'Bald Hill' crossing the present Skyline trail to 'Top-of-the-World' and then down the so-called canyon to Fortune Lodge. The Bald Hill section was rerouted by the Federal District Commission in 1943, to eliminate some problems, to the current trail 1 using Wattsford's hill, and this part renamed Ridge Road.

Two interesting trails went to Black Lake, the one started south on what became part of Sentier Champlain in 1948, and then went East down the Crilly Hills to Black Lake; the other Sunset trail went from Keogan Lodge down the first part of Franks trail (17), swerved south of a hill and then to Black Lake roughly along the current Champlain Parkway. The trails then combined and went to Kingmere along the current hiking trail from King Mountain to Kingmere.

There was much activity near Pink Lake, the site of two lodges. Two trails came from Kingmere, the Mica Mine trail (5) and the Hermit trail (part of 15). One trail crossed Pink Lake and then went north across Mine Road near the Forsyth Mine. The 'Lower' trail went from Birch Valley Lodge by the eastern tip of Pink Lake, crossed to Mine Road, and continued to the Chelsea station. The Birch Valley trail came from Chelsea, crossed Mine Road and went close to Notch Road for a while. Two trails led from Pink Lake to the city; The Pink Lake-Wrightville trail of OSC to Wrightville tram stop, and the Hill and Dale of Cliffside club to Fairy Lake. Both trails headed from Pink Lake for the Radmore field near Mountain Road, and, skirted it on either side.

The ski run to Ironsides Lodge was popular since it was short and close to the city, useful on Saturday afternoons.

There are other trails shown going to Chelsea Station that are now outside the Park.

Many trails headed to P10, including a trail from Tenaga, McAllister's trail from Kirk's Ferry (now both blocked by Highway 5), and Coopers trail from Larrimac, which trail now goes under Highway 5. There were routes shown to the Carbide Willson Mill from the Cooper trail, and two routes from Burnet, one to the Mill, and one to O'Rourke's clearing.

Two routes shown led from the end of Cowden Road, the Hope trail to Hope Bay

and the more northerly Lake trail to Meech Lake.

Two routes led from Macdonald Bay to Pine Road. The more westerly started north along the current Discovery trail (36) but then headed east, and the other went along a route named 'Charcoal trail' by Mr. Thomson who later cottaged nearby.

The mosaic shows several routes in the northwest corner. Trails from the Hyde Farm and the Healey Road/Cross Loop intersection met at the top of the hill. Then they split into three, the most northerly near the present snowshoe trail to Healey Cabin, the other a straight route to Healey's farm, and a third to the Fox Farm.

The use of these routes decreased as automobile and bus access improved. Any trail through the bush needs annual maintenance and attention turned to other trails (Merry-Go-Round, Highland, Western) and alpine skiing. Ottawa Ski Club maps of 1931 detail these choices.

A 20 kB Google Earth KMZ file of my estimate of the trail locations is available from wfmcgee@sympatico.ca.

Programming 2015

Approximately 40 activities are planned over the year by the programming committee of the Friends and are covering the following broader categories:

- **Snowshoe under the Stars**
- **Dusk series**
- **Wilderness skills**
- **Special events**
- **Speaker series**

More details at the following link: <http://friendsofgatineaupark.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FOGP-2015-web-calendar.pdf>

Friends of Gatineau Park, a registered charity, publishes articles on a selection of ecology and heritage research undertaken in the Gatineau Park, particularly that funded by us as well as related to our other educational programs. Published twice a year, the Newsletter is archived at friendsofgatineaupark.ca and deposited with the National Library **ISSN 1926-6537** (print) + 1913-7648 (online). Comments, suggestions, stories: send via friendsofgatineaupark.ca or 33 Scott Road, Suite 227, Chelsea QC J9B 1R5 Tel. 819-827-3113. Editor: Julien Raby; layout: Jean-Philippe Rheault; printing: Imprimerie Vincent. Printed on recycled paper. Thanks to all volunteer contributors to this edition.

BIODIVERSITY

In Search of Blanding's Turtle

by Milaine Saumur

The Ottawa Valley region is rich in wildlife, especially in terms of herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians). These species are typically the most sensitive to environmental changes, making them more vulnerable to the disruptions that bring about habitat degradation and fragmentation. Recent inventories of species under threat found in the Outaouais region include the Blanding's Turtle, Map Turtle, Stinkpot Turtle, Northern Water Snake, Eastern Ribbonsnake, Eastern Milksnake, Four-Toed Salamander, Western Chorus Frog and the Pickerel Frog.

Nature Conservancy of Canada conservation activities are undertaken according to a given area's conservation value, which is based on factors such as species richness and the state of the natural environment. The first step in the identification process is to conduct a preliminary assessment to help focus conservation efforts on ecological priorities.



technicians from Nature Conservancy and the Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, assisted by volunteers. The inventory was conducted in two stages, including two weeks in the Isle-aux-Allumettes area (Île du Grand Calumet, Portage-du-Fort, Davidson and Sheenboro) and two weeks in the Gatineau Park Natural Corridors (Northern Corridor and Bristol Corridor).



The inventory encompassed over 260 ha of wetlands spread over 27 individual sites. Between 4 and 30 traps (fyke nets) were set at each site, depending on the surface area, the number of high-potential locations, site accessibility and the number of fyke nets available. Each trap was lifted daily to count the number of specimens captured and to replace the tins of sardines that were used as turtle bait. Inevitably, the traps often held Painted Turtles and Snapping Turtles, both of which are commonly found in the area and are opportunistic and voracious feeders. The traps also often held various fish species, including pumpkin seeds, rock bass and brown bullhead.

The location of target species can also play a key role in identifying priority 'hotspots'. This is notably the case with the Blanding's Turtle, whose habitat requires a diverse combination of natural features to satisfy all aspects of its life cycle. This requires that Nature Conservancy conduct detailed ecological inventories, typically in cooperation with several partners, to identify priority conservation areas.

During the summer of 2014, field research teams were sent to find or confirm the presence of Blanding's Turtle populations in specific locations in the Outaouais region that had not previously been inventoried. The research teams included biologists and wildlife

Despite intense inventory efforts and given the relatively short sampling period (20 days), few Blanding's Turtles were captured. Only two specimens were found in the traps during the inventory. This low rate of capture may be explained by the fact that the selected sites were for the most part located outside of areas

known to contain Blanding's Turtle populations. This would significantly reduce the probability of capture as the Blanding's Turtle population density would likely be lower in these specific areas.

It is worthy of note that one of the specimens was captured in a wetland adjacent to the expansive Bristol Marsh, which is known to contain one of the highest densities of Blanding's Turtles in the Ottawa River Valley. This area is located north of the Bristol Mine, and although the probability of detection was higher at this location than elsewhere, these results confirm the presence of this species and may prove useful in support of future actions to ensure the protection of this area of Bristol. The second specimen was captured in Sheenboro, within the confines of a Nature Conservancy owned natural habitat area located close to the Ottawa River. This observation was also quite informative, as it was located beyond the western boundary of the known range for this species. This new information essentially redefines the confirmed distribution range for the Blanding's Turtle in the Isle-aux-Allumettes area.

The Gatineau Park Natural Corridors hold considerable wildlife potential given the availability and quality of the habitats they contain, and the integrity of their ecosystems. In fact, during the inventories described above, at least three species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable were confirmed present in specific areas of these natural



corridors. They are the Northern Water Snake, the Pickerel Frog and the Olive-sided Flycatcher. This shows that today, more than ever, much is to be discovered and much to be done to preserve our natural heritage!

Milaine Saumur is Biologist and Project Coordinator at Nature Conservancy of Canada – Outaouais Region