

TURTLES

To Whom It May Concern

Turtles have been roaming these parts long before land development, roads and motor vehicles. Ideally it would be great if the Turtles would stay off the roads. A notion that seems highly improbable but not impossible as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is now focusing efforts on the strategic conservation of ecosystems and species at a landscape level. Engaging in such mitigation measures as installing barrier walls designed to prevent Turtles and other small animals from accessing the roads and eco-passages have been designed to re-route Turtles as well as other wildlife through passages under existing roads. These measures are costly and intended as permanent fixtures to be coordinated with infrastructure upgrades so it will take time to address hotspots in these ways.

An intermediate

strategy to help deter Turtles and other small animals from accessing the roads is the geo-textile reptile and amphibian fencing being installed along roadsides that is more and more becoming a part of the landscape. This can be costly as the fencing needs to run long expanses to combat the persistence of Turtles attempting to find a way around the fencing. It takes time for road assessment surveys to be conducted and for the installation of the fencing to be carried out which encompasses many considerations for proper installation. It is imperative that the fencing is routinely checked for damage and sagging and repairs are done prior to the start of nesting season as the effectiveness of the fencing is dependent on it's condition. The fencing, eco-passages and barrier walls are all undergoing monitoring to assess their effectiveness. There is widespread support throughout Ontario for the aforementioned mitigation approaches and others and there is no doubt that various identified hotspots will be addressed using these approaches and others in the foreseeable future, which is great news.

In the meantime,

implementing more immediate measures such as "Turtle Awareness Road Signs" in Bancroft, L'Amable and the surrounding area may help to reduce the number of Turtles injured and killed on the roads. Although area residents may be familiar with some of the wanderings of the Turtles on the roads and locations more prone to Turtle activity; Turtles are still getting struck by motor vehicles. During cottage season which coincides with nesting and hatching season tourists from near and far flock to this region of Ontario for the beauty and splendor it has to offer but most are not familiar with the Turtle activity. The placement of Turtle road signs would serve to increase overall awareness in aid of ensuring more Turtles have a future.

I am currently in the process

of gathering data in conjunction with the Lead on Wildlife Mitigation Policy at the Ministry of Transportation regarding various high-risk road mortality locations in Bancroft and L'Amable and the surrounding area. The aim is to have these locations identified and validated as road mortality "hotspots" to be approved for the installation of "Turtle Awareness Road Signs". This validation is to be conducted by the Ministry of Transportation in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

This has been a particularly bad year for Turtles. On July 10, 2017 the Ontario Turtle Conservation Center (home of Kawartha Turtle Trauma Center) "Declared a State of Emergency in Ontario" after

treating nearly 600 injured Turtles this year that were struck by motor vehicles. This does not include the number of Turtles that never made it to the Trauma Center and died on the roads and the number of Turtles that have been treated or died since July. The Trauma Center has treated double the number of Turtles they treated last year at this time.

For the most part, the Turtles seen on the roads are the adult females on a mission to get to the nesting sites they favor. Personally I can't help admiring the kind of determination these Turtles display in getting to where they aim to get no matter what obstacles are put in their way. I just wish this did not include roads and motor vehicles. With 7 out of the 8 species of Turtles native to Ontario at risk it is crucial that the adult female Turtle's gets to their nesting sites. If you have ever stopped to help a Turtle cross a road you know they don't think they need help but they do and that is where we come in.

If you are a person that has taken note of "any" Turtles on the roads this year or last year alive, injured or dead I would very much like to speak with you. Your knowledge of the Turtle activity in the Bancroft, L'Amable and surrounding area would be considered very beneficial for the purposes of further validation.

Please contact Kelly by text or phone at 647-606-9537 or e-mail me at kkwalrus@yahoo.ca. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this notice. I look forward to possibly hearing from you.

Just to let you know my concern for Turtles and interest in getting Turtle awareness road signs installed is by no means recent. I have wanted to pursue this matter for a number of years but for many reasons was reluctant to do so while the hunting of Snapping Turtles was still legal. With the hunt being terminated on March 31, 2017, the timing to pursue the matter of road sign placement in this community felt right and I began taking the necessary steps to do this as of April 2017. While patiently waiting for the hunt to be terminated I tended to Turtle Conservation in other ways.

So what are my suggestions? Well, I am not familiar enough with Hastings Highlands and the area it encompasses to be able to identify the exact high-risk Turtle road mortality locations but I do know that the threats to Turtles throughout Ontario are numerous and road mortality "hotspots" are a growing concern as evident by the increased number of Turtles being struck by motor vehicles each year resulting in severe injuries or death. This has been a particularly bad year for Turtles.

I would like to suggest the Grant Committee submit an application for funds to be invested in and allotted to some kind of Turtle mitigation for identified "hotspots" in Hastings Highlands. By reaching out to the residents of Hastings Highlands they will collectively be able to pinpoint the precise high-risk road mortality locations as they routinely travel the effected roads. These locations

can then be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry district office for validation. Depending on the outcome and the amount of funds available to invest in Turtle mitigation measures taken could range from integrating barrier walls or eco-passages into infrastructure upgrades, installing geo-textile reptile fencing along roadsides, strategic placement of road signs, awareness-raising campaigns such as ads in the newspapers and/or posting in local venues warning the public to watch for Turtles on the roads from May to October and/or awareness seminars instructing concerned citizens how to help Turtles on the roads while considering their own safety and the safety of others on the roads. The general idea being that any steps taken to increase awareness to the Turtle activity on the roads in the area could help to prevent the deaths of many Turtles in the future.

When my niece and nephew come to visit from Toronto the first thing they want to see is the Turtles on the log. It is such a delight to see how much joy seeing Turtles in their natural environment brings to two little kids. With 7 out of 8 species of Turtles native to Ontario at risk and the situation for them getting worse each year it concerns me that in years to come catching a glimpse of a Turtle will be a rare occurrence and my niece and nephews children will seldom if ever get to experience the same joy their parents did. In this life it is easy to lose sight of the simplest pleasures until they are gone. It is my hope that this is never the case with any of the 8 species of Turtles or any other animals for that matter. In the times we live we have redesigned the land to suit our needs it is time we strategized and did some redesigning to meet the needs of the Turtles and other animals in harmony with our own.

In closing, thank you very much for your time to indulge me in my efforts to remind communities that Turtles need our help. If you require any additional information please let me know. I look forward to possibly hearing from you.

Kind
Regards,
Kelly Wallace
647-606-953