

RIVER TALK

jan / feb 2025

RIVER SAFETY
ENVIRONMENTAL
AWARENESS
COMMUNITY SUPPORT



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Photo Credit: Joyce Medcalf, Ice on Hill Island

From the Editor

As we launch into 2025 and begin a serious countdown to the end of winter, it's worth noting that the off-season isn't all rest for the Board of the TIA. I hope you will notice the all hands-on effort to bring you another information-filled River Talk. We truly admire and appreciate the effort from each and every one of our contributors this month.

While we do our best to cover a variety of topics from all corners of the river we are always open to feedback. Drop us a line anytime with news, photos and requests at thousandislandsassociation@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Stephanie Scott, Editor

Cover Photo Credit: Duncan Rawlinson

Duncan lives in the Thousands Islands area. Many of his images are photographed using drones, others via small aircraft or helicopters. His inspiration is the relentless quest to learn and explore the area.

You can find more about Duncan and his exceptional images on his website: Duncan.Co




President's Message

Peter Fitton

As February unfolds its wintry embrace, we find ourselves in the heart of the season. This month, often the coldest of the year, offers us the last full stretch of winter to enjoy the refreshing outdoor activities that define our cherished region – a true winter wonderland, perfect for ice fishing, perhaps snowshoeing & sledding, and even alpine or cross-country skiing.

As we look ahead to the rest of the month, let us not forget the significance of February's key dates. Groundhog Day on February 2nd, the day Punxsutawney Phil in PA and Wiarton Willie in ON come out of their holes marking the end of hibernation. If they see their shadow on this day, there will be six more weeks of winter, and if they do not, spring and TIA rock shoal markers will be out early. For those thinking there should be a better indicator, click here for [10 Other Famous Groundhogs](#).

Valentine's Day on February 14th offers a moment to share warmth and affection with loved ones, even as the cold persists outside. Click here for [“Ideas for Celebrating Valentine’s Day”](#) inside in a warm home!



Goodbye El Nino, Hello La Nina! “Winter With a Heart of Cold” has been forecast by the Old Farmer’s Almanac.

Some New Year’s resolutions of mine are improving health & fitness, spending more time with friends and family, and developing new skills. Tips for keeping resolutions include breaking big goals into smaller, more manageable tasks, and sharing them with others for mutual support.

Your volunteer TIA Board is back at work planning & budgeting for its 2025 programming. Stay tuned for upcoming announcements about improved rock shoal marker durability and visibility, fire pumps and AED training, river clean dates, the July AGM, and the next Dock, Deck & Den Tour event.

If not done already, click [here](#) to renew your 2025 tax deductible TIA Membership. We rely on and thank you for 90 plus years of supporting our essential services – river safety, environmental awareness, community support. We stand strong together as an international organization!

Stay warm, stay active, and enjoy the beauty of our winter landscape. Less than 2 months until the first day of spring, a gentle reminder that warmer days are on the horizon!

In the Works for 2025

C.P.R & A.E.D. Instructional Day

By: Alec Turner

Once again TIA will be organizing a C.P.R and A.E.D. Instructional Day this summer.

Last years event was very successful. Several trainees saw the crucial part A.E.D.'s can play in life saving, resulting in a few A.E.D's being purchased for use in the Islands.

Let us know in advance if you are interested in your name being added to a list for the training session, and keep reading River Talk and following TIA's Social Media for future details.



Fire Pump Information and Training

By: James Côté



In conjunction with the TLTI's Fire Services, this summer TIA is planning to provide information about, and clinics in the use of, the types of water pumps best suited to contain island fires.

Stay tuned for further information as it becomes available.

Stay Tuned...



GLAM GREAT LAKES—ST. LAWRENCE RIVER
ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Update- IJC/GLAM

By: Ross Stewart

As readers of River Talk know, TIA is represented on a Public Advisory Group (PAG), whose broader goal is to review the current regulation plan (Plan 2014). Plan 2014 set rules and operational guidelines that govern the outflows from Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River... and ultimately can have an impact on water levels in the Thousand Islands Region.

Key highlights over the last 18 months include the development of sophisticated data models, processes, and potential climate change scenarios. These new data/models have allowed for the review of a great number of alternative plans and their potential impacts on water levels, with a focus on high and low water years. Recommendations will be put forward to the International Joint Commission for approval by the Canadian and US governments this coming spring.

Readers of RT can expect an upcoming article that will outline these key recommendations, and as importantly, we will seek your input to the public review and feedback phase.



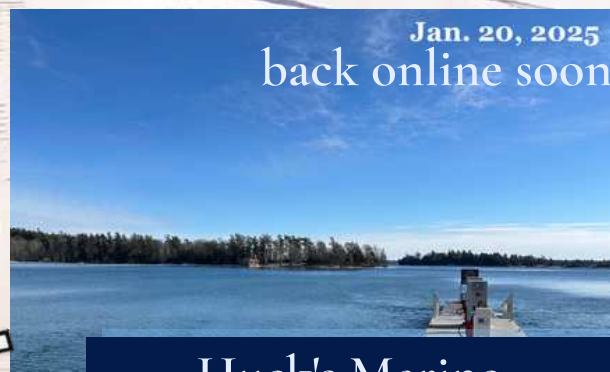
Alex Bay Docks



Holiday Island



Block House Island



Huck's Marine

Live Views of the River

If you don't live near the River, separation anxiety can feel very real. Our favourite way to stay connected is to check out the local webcams. Watch the ice come and go and count the days down until spring in real time from your comfy chair at home.

Better yet, install your own webcam for next years entertainment. This little fox was caught on camera on an island in the middle of the river.



The Winter of 1876

By: Paul Côté

That winter was somewhat similar to the conditions we are experiencing this year. As of today (Jan 10th) the main channels are wide open despite the up and down weather we have been having. But back then people used the river ice much more than we do today, and appeared to have been much braver in crossing the ice to get to the islands and in crossing to Clayton. This led to some interesting outcomes. In Dec of 1875 a cold snap froze the river out to the islands off Gananoque.

By the 3rd of Jan the channels were open again and the following item made the local paper: "it was so pleasant a day that many were tempted out upon the water, and among others a party of ladies went up to Mr R Brough's summer residence on Turcotte's Island - Camp Iroquois - and entertained themselves very pleasantly for several hours in picnic style. This is the first time that we have known of a picnic to the islands in the winter season."

But not all activities were so pleasant. The same issue reported that a young man went through the ice while skating across one of the channels. He was in the water for about half an hour before being rescued. Not to be deterred, in mid-January two girls, the Misses Brough, skated to Kingston, avoiding weak patches of ice. The warming weather, though, made them take the "horrid stage" back to Gananoque.

In the beginning of February it turned cold and snowy. One man, who was moving from Clayton to Gananoque, broke through the ice at the head of Grindstone and lost his horse, sleigh and all his household goods. By mid-February it was mild again with heavy rain turning to wet snow. The bright spot was that "sleighting is pretty good."

By the end of March even the bravest were calling it quits: "The ice is getting unsafe for travel, a horse broke through yesterday on the road to Parmenter's Island." On the 15th of April it was noted that "The water is higher by over two feet than it has been for several years past." It appears that fluctuating water levels was an issue well before the Seaway and the bureaucracy that it spawned.

Winter 2025 Topics: Levels, Lake Effect & Making Ice

Vince Barton, Ken White, Ross Stewart

Current Water Levels

The current water level in Alex Bay is about 1 foot above chart datum. It's up nearly a foot from our prior River Talk and close to average for this time of year. Winter level predictions for the next 6-months are pretty meaningless for what will happen in the spring, so we won't include the standard 1-year water levels graphic.

The Georgian Bay Connection

Did you know, water in the upper Great Lakes (Lake Huron) can take a shortcut, skipping Lake Erie and Niagara Falls, to arrive in the Lake Ontario Basin? The radar below tells the story as the NE wind blew mid-day January 4th.

This moisture, riding aloft on rapidly moving winds, is what makes "Lake Effect" work. The formula is a cold wind blowing over warmer water for a long reach (distance) fuels evaporation as the wind picks up lots of moisture. Then an eventual rise in elevation "squeezes" the moisture into dry fluffy snow.



Moisture from Lake Huron's Georgian Bay Connection arrives aloft, on strong winds directly from the NW. Then the elevation rise of the Tug Hill Plateau dumps snow on the SE corner of Lake Ontario, between Oswego and Syracuse. Normally, the prevailing westerly winds, aligned with the long "reach" of Lake Ontario, deposit lake effect snow just south of Watertown on the East end.

Did you know that the big lake effect snow storms from Lake Erie are already over, since ice cover blocks strong winds aligned with the lake from picking up moisture through water evaporation?

Making Ice - Winter Operations Under Plan 2014

The International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River (ILOSRL) Board's biggest job during the early winter isn't adjusting flows to plan the spring's level, as right now they are essentially powerless. Instead, the key is managing (initially lowering) outflows to enable a stable ice sheet to form in critical sections of the River, including:

- The Beauharnois Canal- not far upstream from Montreal, yet downstream from
- Lake St. Lawrence - the forebay of the Moses-Saunders Hydro Dam (near Cornwall)

Once the stable ice is formed, outflows can be increased again to the plan-calculated flows. Why is it important to form stable ice? Without it, ice jams can cause serious localized flooding and infrastructure destruction in sensitive areas along the River.



2025 Ice Making Update - St. Lawrence River

So how is the ice on the River doing this year? It's still a work in progress, but a good amount of ice has already formed. Reductions in outflows first started on January 9th and went up and down a bit, but outflows are now back up to their plan-calculated flows as of January 23rd to wait for colder weather, which has since arrived. Some further reductions in outflow may be needed as ice continues to form, but things are looking good at this point. [Click here for more details](#) directly from the Board.

FYI the Great Lakes ice cover average is currently 20.8%. Lake Superior is 9.5% covered while Lake Erie is 58.2% ice & snow covered. Lake Ontario is the least frozen at only 7.1%, with an average peak expected at only 15% in the third week of February.

Renewing Cottage and Boat Insurance

By: Peter Fitton



Renewing your cottage and boat insurance is a crucial step in ensuring your leisure assets remain protected against unforeseen risks. Review your coverage annually to ensure peace of mind and safeguard against potential financial losses.

Assessing Your Current Coverage

Before renewing your insurance, review your current cottage and boat coverage. This assessment will help you determine if your existing coverage is still adequate or if adjustments are necessary to reflect any changes in circumstances or property value.

Coverage Limits: Ensure that the coverage limits are sufficient to cover the replacement cost of your cottage and boat. Consider any improvements or additions made to the cottage or upgrades to the boat that may increase their value.

Exclusions: Review any exclusions or limitations in your policies that could affect your coverage. This includes understanding the events or damages that are not covered under your current insurance.

Liability Coverage: Verify the liability coverage included in your policies. This is particularly important for boat insurance, as boating accidents can result in significant liability claims.

Seeking Professional Advice

Navigating the complexities of insurance renewal can be challenging. Seeking the advice of an insurance professional can help you make informed decisions and ensure that your coverage adequately protects your assets. An insurance broker or agent can provide personalized recommendations based on your specific needs and circumstances.

Comparing Insurance Providers

When renewing your insurance, it's beneficial to compare different insurance providers and policies. This comparison can help you find the best coverage at a competitive price. Consider factors such as coverage options, premiums, deductibles, and customer reviews when evaluating potential insurers.

Renewing your cottage and boat insurance is a vital process that ensures continued protection for your valuable leisure assets. By carefully reviewing your policies, considering your current needs, seeking professional advice, and comparing insurance providers, you can secure the options, premiums, deductibles, and customer reviews when evaluating potential insurers, you can secure the best coverage at a competitive price. Taking these steps will provide peace of mind and safeguard your investments against unforeseen risks, allowing you to enjoy your cottage and boat with confidence.



A map of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere region, showing the area between Algonquin Park to the west and Adirondack Park to the east. The Frontenac Arch is highlighted in pink, and the surrounding areas are green. A purple line outlines the boundary of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. The text 'ALGONQUIN PARK' is in the top left, 'FRONTENAC ARCH' is in the center, and 'ADIRONDACK PARK' is in the bottom right.

ALGONQUIN
PARK

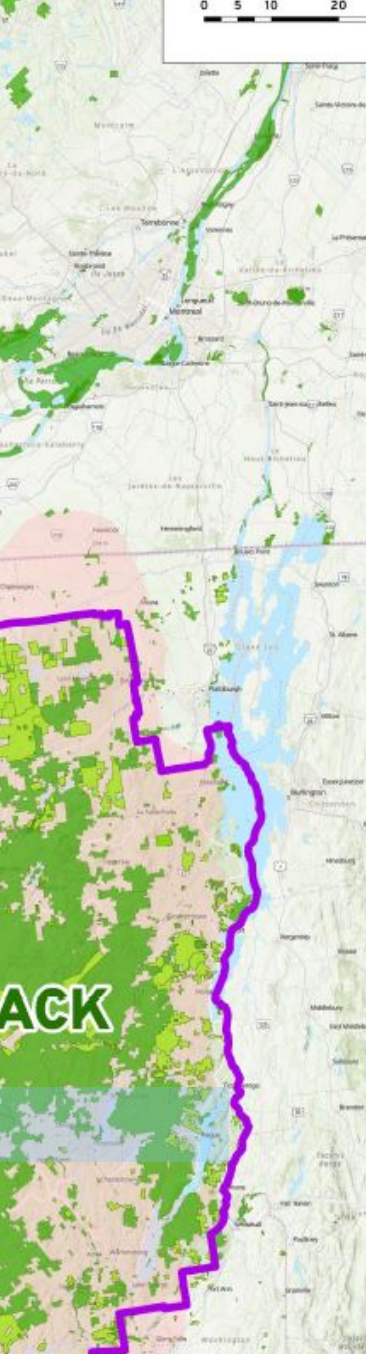
A2A Collaborative Receives Government Funding

By: Stephanie Scott

November 22, 2024 the Federal Government announced more than \$6 Million funding for 9 major wildlife corridors including the Frontenac Biosphere corridor spanning from the Adirondaks to Algonquin Park.

MP Mark Gerretson announced \$369,528 in funding for the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network to advance conservation planning and collaboration within the Algonquin to Adirondack (A2A) transboundary corridor. Combined with \$144,016 in matching funds, the total investment of \$513,544 will bolster ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation across this critical region.

The Ecological Corridors Project, is part of Canada's goal of conserving 30 percent of its land, inland waters and marine areas by 2030. Locally, it will see partners A2A Collective, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere and Plenty Canada working together to protect biodiversity and enhance landscape connectivity within the Frontenac Arch region.



Images from A2A
Collective communications



Dr. Kate Cleary, of the A2A Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative

was a speaker at the Save the River
Winter Environmental Conference
Jan 25, 2025. She discussed the A2A
Collectives efforts to improve
connectivity for wildlife through our
bi-national road ecology study in the
1000 Islands Region.



Recordings of this and other WEC
speakers are available for viewing
online.

[Click here for more.](#)



Pileated Wood Peckers

By: Stuart Arnett

The Pileated Woodpecker is very distinctive and easy to identify. It plays an important role in the well being of our deciduous forests.

Our largest of the woodpecker family is the Pileated Woodpecker, measuring an impressive length of up to 19 inches and a wing span of 30 inches. They are primarily black with a red crest; however, during flight their wings show white. They also fly in the characteristic undulating flight pattern of woodpeckers.

Now that we are well into our cold winter season, you may even see them more often as they do not migrate south and because of our leaf-less deciduous forests. In the winter they still search for insects, especially carpenter ants and wood-boring beetle larvae, but as the cold settles in and insects go deeper into cover they will also forage fruits, nuts, and berries, including poison ivy berries.

In the Thousand island area and most of Ontario, Pileated woodpeckers will lay their eggs, typically between 3 and 5 between mid-April and mid-May. Both parents incubate the eggs throughout the day while the male incubates them during the night. The young hatch in 15 to 18 days and fledge within a month.



Once the young fledge and leave the nest, the family abandons the hole and do not use it the following year. When abandoned, these holes provide future homes for many forest songbirds and a wide variety of other animals. Owls and tree-nesting ducks may largely rely on holes made by pileateds to raise their young. Even mammals such as raccoons may use them. Other woodpeckers and smaller birds, such as wrens, may be attracted to pileated holes to feed on the insects found in them.



No Red on forehead

No Red cheek

Female



Red forehead

Red cheek

Male

Frontenac Arch Biosphere

By: Jean Dabros



Photo: Jean Dabros

Whether you come from generations of “River Rats” or are just a visitor to this region it is hard to deny the pull of the mighty St. Lawrence River and the breathtaking beauty of the Thousand Islands. The rich diversity of the flora and fauna can make you stop and pull out your identification guide because you realize you don’t know what that bird/plant/tree/fish/turtle/reptile/amphibian/mammal could be and you don’t think you have ever seen it before. As relatively recent residents to the Thousand Islands (the bedrock is, after all, more than 1.2 billion years old) it is important to learn as much we can about what makes this area so unique.

The St. Lawrence River, draining the waters of the Great Lakes and sending them on to the Atlantic Ocean, cuts through an exposed strip of Precambrian rock that stretches roughly from Kingston in the west to Brockville in the east, on the Canadian side of the river. This section of rock, known as the Frontenac Arch, links the Canadian Shield from Algonquin Park in Ontario with the Adirondack Mountains in New York. The area of the Arch that cuts through the St. Lawrence River has left exposed granite mountain tops or outcroppings that make up the Thousand Islands.

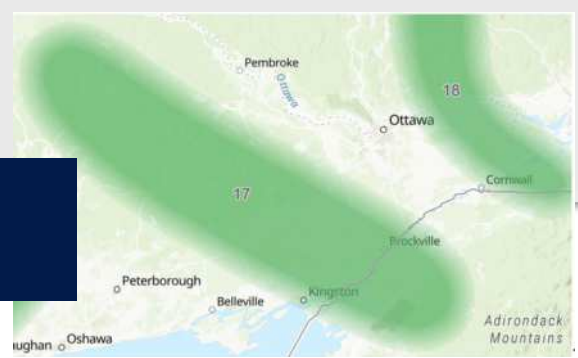
This Frontenac Arch, and the Thousand Islands in the St. Lawrence River Valley, mark the convergence of two major migration pathways. Five diverse forest regions connect at this location and the natural north/south bridge that the islands provide allows for the mixing of a unique blend of flora and fauna. Add to that the region's complex geology and unique climatic conditions and the Thousand Islands provide an impressive ecological diversity. They have become a refuge for many species at risk.

One of the major themes at the Parks Canada 2020 Round Table was the development of ecological corridors across Canada. Parks Canada developed a map of national priority areas where ecological corridors were most urgently needed in Canada to conserve and/or restore connectivity. The Frontenac Arch and Lower Great Lakes was determined to be an important ecological corridor:

“...this priority area has high potential for wildlife movement on either side of the St. Lawrence River and contains numerous opportunities to connect large protected areas and natural habitats. The Frontenac Arch provides a regionally important forested connection between the Appalachian Mountains and the Algonquin highlands. The islands and islets of the Thousand Islands archipelago act as a land bridge to cross the St. Lawrence River and around the Great Lakes allowing a narrow area of passage through this landscape.

The forests and wetlands of this priority area support high biodiversity and numerous species at risk. Notably there are many reptile and amphibian species such as the eastern ribbonsnake, five-lined skink, gray ratsnake, northern map turtle, and snapping turtle. Mammals with large home ranges such as moose, fisher, black bear, Eastern wolf, and Canada Lynx also use the habitats in this priority area to move across the landscape.”

**Check out Parks Canada
corridor priorities here**



TIA Community Board

River Talk is introducing the Community Bulletin Board to allow organizations, businesses and persons to post notices, events and meetings relevant to the River Community.



THE NEWS

THE MOST IMPORTANT NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

January 16, 2025

**The Township of
Leeds and the
Thousand Islands
Approved a 6.8%
Property Tax increase
for 2025**

**Thousand Islands Playhouse
released its 2025 Season lineup**

Mary Poppins is coming
to the Playhouse next
summer! Check out the
other productions online





Membership Matters

Did you know that TIA is the sole organization responsible for the spring placement, seasonal maintenance and fall removal of over 220 orange and white ROCK markers between the eastern tip of Howe Island and Brockville?

Contrary to what many still believe, this work is done by TIA, NOT Parks Canada or the Canadian Coast Guard.

Beyond this, TIA also provides the funding for an additional 100 markers that are placed in American waters each season by Save The River between Cape Vincent and Morristown.

Established in 1934, TIA is a not-for-profit organization that relies heavily on membership to fund the work we do each summer.

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

\$25 - Student - River Rat Cadet
\$50 - River Rat Individual
\$75 - River Rat Couple
\$125 - River Rat Warren (Family)

\$250 - Mariner(s)
\$500 - Navigator(s)
\$1,000 - Pilot(s)
\$1,500 - Commodore(s)

**PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW
YOUR EXISTING MEMBERSHIP TODAY**



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Photo Credit: Joyce Medcalf, Ice on Hill Island

Thousand Islands Association (TIA)

Due to seasonality, varying water levels, vandalism and equipment failure, the Thousand Islands Association (TIA) disclaims any liability for the absence of any of its shoal markers from time to time.

The Thousand Islands Association (TIA) is a not for profit organization that is proactive in addressing safety on the river, promoting environmental preservation and supporting the interests of the Community for the benefit of the 1000 Islands region of the St. Lawrence River.

thousandislandsassociation@gmail.com

P.O. Box 616
Clayton, NY 13624
United States of America

P.O. Box 274
Gananoque, ON K7G 2T8
Canada