

RIVER TALK

n o v / d e c , 2 0 2 5



THE WONDER DOG STORY
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS
UNCOVERING CRAYFISH



Contents

03	FROM THE EDITOR
04	PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
06	COTTAGE SAFETY
09	TIA SUPPORTER: GEORGINA RATCLIFFE
10	HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE
12	TIA ANNUAL APPEAL
14	UNCOVERING CRAYFISH
16	TRIMBLE, STAEBLER & BAKER
18	INVASIVE - DOG STRANGLING VINE
20	OUR SPONSORS

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.

From the Editor

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Well, maybe tied for that spring day when the boat goes in the water again.

I'm confident it IS a wonderful time to be thankful for the many volunteers that keep TIA running smoothly all year long. Some volunteering hours every week to keep thousands of river people connected and safe. For Peter & the Board, I am truly grateful.

I'm also very thankful for my River friends from both sides of the border. You are an integral part of what makes every year so special. To you, I send my sincerest wishes for a safe and Happy Holiday.

Stephanie Scott.
Editor

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.



thousandislandsassociation@gmail.com
Canada: P.O. Box 2764, Gananoque, ON K7G 2T8
USA: P.O. Box 616 Clayton, NY 13624





President's Message

Peter Fitton



As another remarkable season ends, TIA extends warm holiday greetings to all who call our river home—whether on the Canadian shore, the U.S. side, or among the islands themselves.

Our cross-border community is one of the greatest strengths of this wonderful place, and we're grateful for the spirit of cooperation and friendship that flows as steadily as the river between us bringing together generations of families, lifelong friends, and new faces who share in the beauty of our islands.

This year, we continued our mission of River Safety, Environmental Awareness, and Community Support, and we thank our Membership, Business Sponsors and Grant Partners for helping make that mission possible. From our flagship rock shoal marking program, which helps keep boaters safe throughout the season, to our support of local emergency services that provide critical medical and firefighting response for island residents, your engagement and generosity ensure these efforts thrive.

We are proud to sponsor CPR and AED training sessions, strengthening the preparedness of our community and helping ensure that neighbours can care for neighbours when it matters most. We are equally proud to educating our community on Environmental Awareness of invasive species, returning species and those at risk, turtle nest protection, fishing line and lead anchor recycling, and trash free river partnerships.

These programs highlight what makes TIA so important: a shared commitment to protecting one another and the river we love. December is National Giving Month, and it revolves around organizations making a difference in society by helping others. The TIA Annual Appeal has become a critical component to balancing our budget, and we thank you for considering TIA as a worthy charitable cause for annual support. All donations receive Canadian and American tax receipts. Please Donate [here](#).

As winter settles over the Thousand Islands and our cottages grow quiet, may the memories of warm evenings, calm bays, and shared laughter carry you through the colder months ahead. We look forward to the time when we can all return to the river we cherish. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season, a peaceful New Year, and safe travels wherever the holidays take you. May the spirit of the river follow you home!

From Santa 80 Ideas For Holiday Family Traditions





Summer Vacation and Rental Cottage Safety: What Owners Should Know

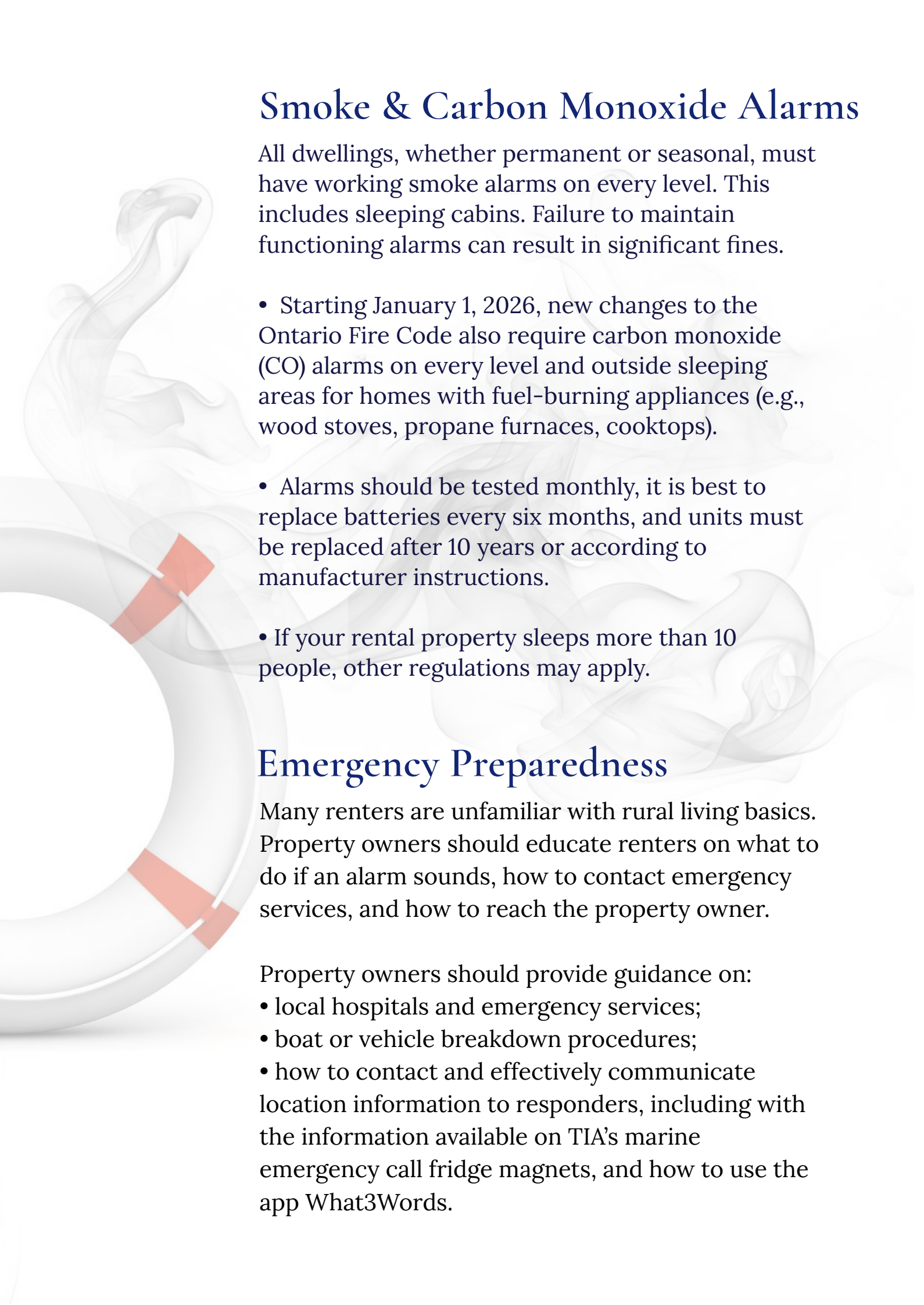
Doug Richardson, Fire Prevention Officer
Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services

In recent years, short-term rentals of cottage and island properties have become more common in this area, including Airbnb rentals. However, an analysis of our 2025 call statistics has revealed a need to educate short-term rental property owners and renters about their fire and life safety responsibilities. Many vacation property owners appear to be unaware of the regulations and best practices that help keep their tenants and property safe.

Open Air Burn Permits

Residents must obtain a free Open-Air Burn Permit to burn within the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. Permits must be renewed each year after January 1, either online or in person. If you plan to burn in a burn barrel, incinerator, or brush pile, you must also call 613-704-1812 each time before you burn to activate your permit for 24 hours. Campfires are exempt from the call-in requirement; however, property owners are still responsible for informing renters about current fire conditions and restrictions. Please note that if the fire department responds due to a by-law violation, the property owner—not the renter—may be charged for all associated fees.





Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarms

All dwellings, whether permanent or seasonal, must have working smoke alarms on every level. This includes sleeping cabins. Failure to maintain functioning alarms can result in significant fines.

- Starting January 1, 2026, new changes to the Ontario Fire Code also require carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on every level and outside sleeping areas for homes with fuel-burning appliances (e.g., wood stoves, propane furnaces, cooktops).
- Alarms should be tested monthly, it is best to replace batteries every six months, and units must be replaced after 10 years or according to manufacturer instructions.
- If your rental property sleeps more than 10 people, other regulations may apply.

Emergency Preparedness

Many renters are unfamiliar with rural living basics. Property owners should educate renters on what to do if an alarm sounds, how to contact emergency services, and how to reach the property owner.

Property owners should provide guidance on:

- local hospitals and emergency services;
- boat or vehicle breakdown procedures;
- how to contact and effectively communicate location information to responders, including with the information available on TIA's marine emergency call fridge magnets, and how to use the app What3Words.

Water Safety - Life Jackets Save Lives

Renters will be interested in boating, swimming, and other forms of water recreation. They need to be reminded that one of the simplest ways to prevent drowning and water-related injuries is to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) at all times on or near the water. Moreover, rental property owners should provide life jackets and clearly communicate the following safety rules to all guests:

- All boaters and paddlers must have a properly fitted life jacket. This includes kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, and small motorized boats.
- Children and non-swimmers are at highest risk—constant supervision and mandatory PFD use is essential.
- Cold water and strong currents can surprise even experienced swimmers; a PFD can be the difference between life and death.

Water safety, like fire safety, is a shared responsibility. By encouraging PFD use and safe boating practices, we can prevent tragedies and ensure everyone enjoys a safe summer on the 1000 Islands waterways.

Why It Matters

Providing renters with clear safety information not only protects lives and property but also ensures a safer and more enjoyable vacation experience. By educating both renters and property owners about fire, carbon monoxide, and water safety, we can reduce preventable emergencies and reinforce the importance of fire and life safety in the 1000 Islands. If you have any questions, please send them to fireprevention@townshipleeds.on.ca.



TIA Supporter Georgina Ratcliffe, Realtor

As a long-time Admiral Business Sponsor, I was asked by TIA to share a little about myself and my business. My family first came to the river in 1955. I've been an "Islander" all my life. While my company, Chestnut Park Real Estate, is based in Toronto, our reach extends across Ontario's cottage country and internationally through our affiliation with Christie's International Real Estate. I have a home in Toronto and am fortunate to have both an island and a farm nearby, which keeps me closely connected to the river and the local community.

I began selling real estate in central Toronto in 1986, never imagining I would one day sell in the Thousand Islands too. As time went on, Thousand Island owners asked me to market their waterfront and island homes. One of my earliest sales was Netley Island, gifted in 1917 as a wedding present to the then owner's parents—a privilege to help pass along such a treasured family property.

I focus exclusively on islands and waterfront homes. In the past five years, I have sold more of these than any other agent in the region. My marketing strategy combines professionally produced marketing materials with extensive online promotion. While print advertising remains useful, today's buyers are best reached through digital platforms. At Chestnut Park, we've embraced this shift, ensuring each property benefits from a strong online presence. Through Christie's, our listings are also featured on exclusive international websites, reaching buyers few brokerages can access.

Contact me if you would like to talk or visit my website

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

A Marine battery charger can make a practical and convenient gift for the boater in your life.



Custom boat wall art by Ocean Silhouettes. Order from one of their many designs or have your own boat crafted.



Customize a nautical flag hat or shirt with a boat or cottage name



Fender clips make repositioning your bumpers a snap.

This 10 in 1 Boating gadget comes complete with a gas cap tool





New games for family game nights. Why not try the new Clue game?



A portable, wooden Picnic Table perfect for docktails



There is nothing like shatterproof glasses for waterside beverages.



This ultimate cottage entertainment book is a great gift for the entire family.

Projector perfect for movie nights. (Bedsheet screen not included)



TIA Annual Appeal



Tuesday, December 2, 2025, is National Giving Day. We are reaching out with a simple request: please help TIA's programs make a lasting impact in our river community.

We have been serving the River Community for more than 90 years. Think about what the 1000 Islands means to you and the generations of people, family, and friends that love and care for this special place so rich in heritage and memories.

With your support, we can deliver on our three Mission Pillars. River Safety encompasses the essential services of rock shoal marking; promoting emergency preparation, response, and rescue; coordinating with local Fire Services in the promotion of fire pumps; and sponsoring CPR & AED training. Environmental Awareness includes organizing river cleanup days; providing fishing line recycling stations and turtle nest protectors; and promoting endangered species awareness. Community Support provided by TIA's social media and River Talk e-newsletters keeps us all connected and promotes local businesses and their contributions to our Mission Pillars.

As a nonprofit volunteer organization, we rely on the generosity of people like you to continue our mission. The TIA Annual Appeal has become a critical component to balancing our budget. By contributing you are telling us we are on the right path.

How You Can Help

There are a number of donation levels of support - Sailor, Cruiser, Mariner, Navigator, Pilot, and Commodore, or Donor specified.

Whatever the amount you give, be assured your gift matters!

TIA is a registered not for profit organization in both Canada and the US and issues tax receipts for all donations. [Click here](#) for a link to our website Donation page.

For those electing to mail in their donation, we can be reached at:

Thousand Islands Association
P.O. Box 274
Gananoque, ON
K7G 2T8

Thousand Islands Association
P.O. Box 616
Clayton, NY
13624

We are grateful for all donations and thank you for recognizing TIA as a worthy charitable cause for annual support.

Your 2026 TIA Preview



CPR & AED Certification

Thursday, July 9, 2026. 10am-2pm

1000 Islands History Museum

Limited to 18 Participants

Sign-up on TIA website starting in May 2026

TIA is facilitating this event in support of its mission pillars of River Safety & Community Support.



Back by popular demand:

Tentative Date: Saturday, Aug 8, 2026 (Sunday, Aug 9 rain date) 10am - 2pm

Admiralty, Fleet and Navy Islands

Open for 10 Hosts to Volunteer by May 2026

This is a community event for the river people to come together sharing fellowship and river stories.

Consider becoming a host in 2026 and volunteer your slice of river paradise to be a treasured stop on this one-day water access only event. Our target is Ten (10) island or mainland properties in the greater the Admiralty, Fleet and Navy Groups. We will formally reach out in the new year!

Uncovering the Crayfish

By: Stephanie Scott



4 Interesting Facts About Crayfish

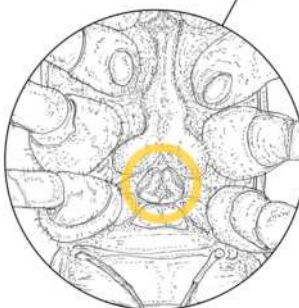
1. To grow, a crayfish must molt their exoskeleton and form a new one. It is very common for the crayfish to then consume the molted shell as it contains calcium and other nutrients.
2. Rusty crayfish females can lay between 80 and 575 eggs. Females carry sperm transferred from male crayfish until eggs are ready for fertilization.
3. Marbled crayfish are an invasive species that can reproduce asexually, meaning a single individual can start a new population.
4. Crayfish can regrow a broken claw or limb. This process takes multiple molts to return to full size.

Invasive Crayfish Species

There are at least nine crayfish species found in the St. Lawrence River watershed, including both native and introduced species like the Rusty Crayfish (invasive) and the Spinycheek Crayfish. Native species include the Virile Crayfish and the Northern Clearwater Crayfish.

Marbled crayfish | *Procambarus virginalis*

Marbled crayfish (or marmokrebs) originated in the aquarium trade and are often called the self-cloning crayfish. All marbled crayfish are female and the offspring are clones. This species is of high concern because a single individual can produce an entire population in a short time.

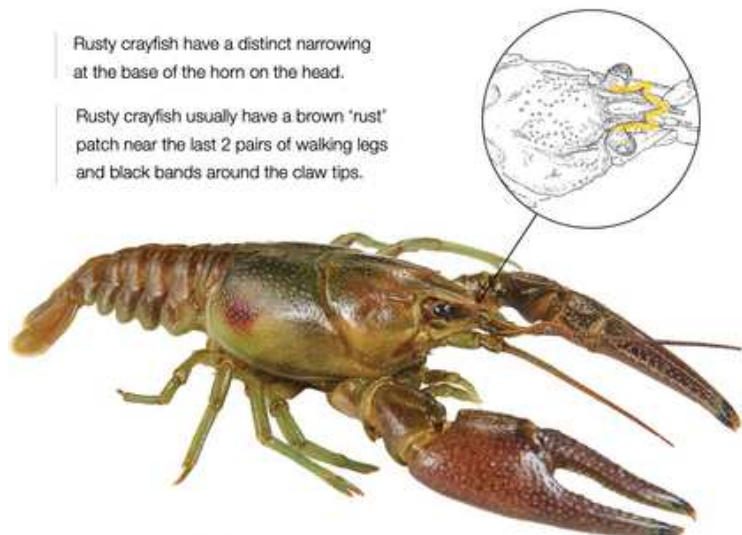


This species has a distinct marbling pattern, but other species may look similar. Male crayfish with this pattern are not marbled crayfish.

To determine if it's a female, look for a round pocket-like feature located on the underside between the last pair of walking legs. This is the sperm pouch (called an 'annulus ventralis').

Rusty crayfish have a distinct narrowing at the base of the horn on the head.

Rusty crayfish usually have a brown 'rust' patch near the last 2 pairs of walking legs and black bands around the claw tips.



Rusty crayfish | *Faxonius rusticus*

Native to the Ohio River basin, rusty crayfish were traditionally most prevalent in the bait trade but can still be found in the aquarium trade.

Info from The Great Lakes Almanac to Invasive Crayfish

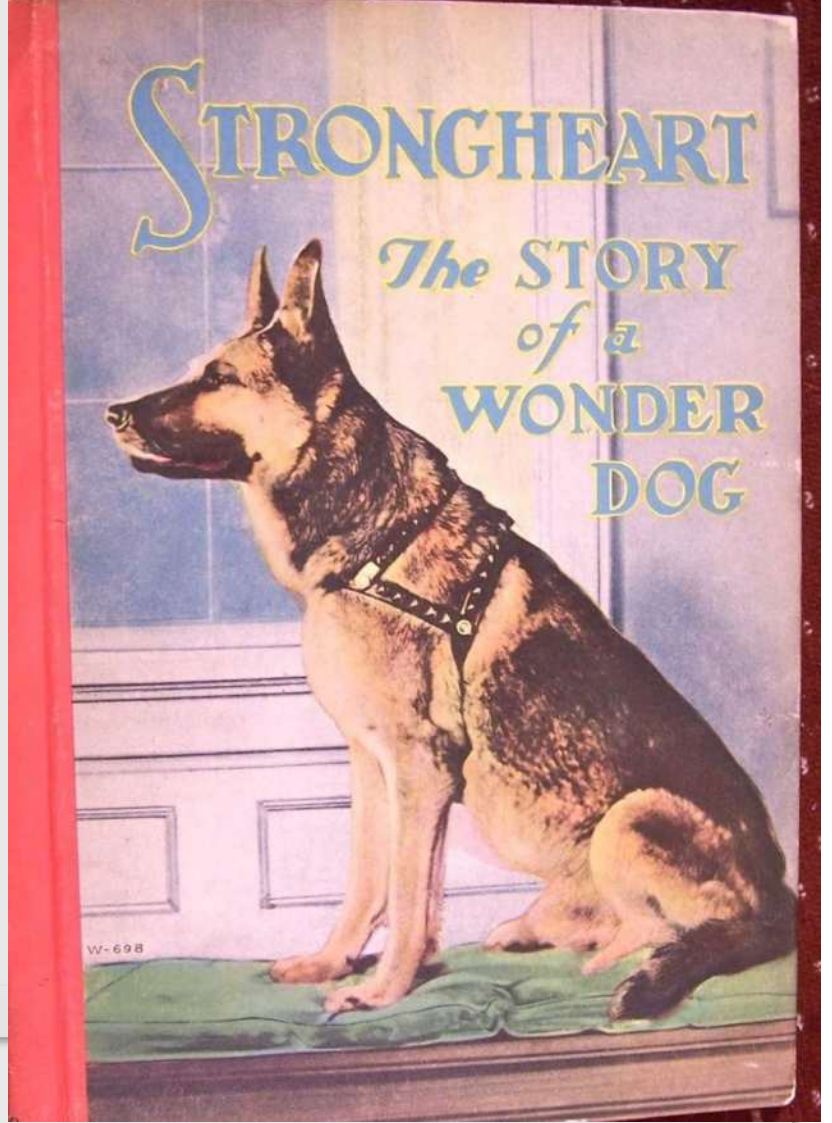
Crayfish play a key role in the St. Lawrence River food web providing meals for **Animals** (mink, otters, racoons), **Birds** (herons, loons, osprey), **Fish** (pike, bass, carp, perch), **Reptiles** (frogs, snapping turtles and snakes).

This crayfish buffet was enjoyed on a dock in the Admiralty Isl.



Trimble, Staebler & Baker

By: Karen Wand



Many fascinating people and their stories have visited the Thousand Islands, but they are now mostly forgotten. This is one such tale.

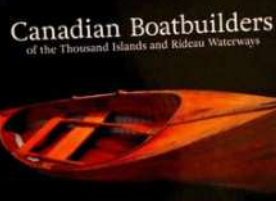
The American Vitagraph Company was established by J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith in 1897 in Brooklyn, New York. By 1907, it had become the most prolific American film production company, creating silent films. One of their stars, Jean or the Vitagraph Dog, was the first American dog to play a leading role in motion pictures.

Laurence (Larry) Trimble was a Hollywood director, writer and actor in those early days. He made 100 silent films between 1908 and 1926, but he was best known for his films starring his dogs, Jean and later Strongheart.

While visiting Germany immediately after the end of World War I, Trimble purchased a police-trained German Shepherd dog named Etzel von Oringer. In 1921, Trimble and Jane Murfin (a screenwriter for Trimble's films) formed Trimble-Murfin Productions with the intent of producing films starring Etzel von Oringer. Now known as Strongheart, he became the first true canine star of cinema, two years before Rin Tin Tin. Trimble trained the dog and directed him in four adventure films shot on location: *The Silent Call* (1921), *Brawn of the North* (1922), *The Love Master* (1924), and *White Fang* (1925).

There are a couple of stories; Trimble already owned an island in the St. Lawrence, which he was allowed to keep after the stock market “crash” of 1929, or his daughter's explanation that the “crash” drove her father out of Hollywood to settle on the St. Lawrence River. Whatever the reason, Larry Trimble did, in fact, spend time on McDonald Island, although a search of the land registry records shows that Trimble never owned any property there.

Eldon K. Staebler and F. Godfrey Baker, professors at Queen's University, founded their company, Staebler & Baker Ltd., in 1909. They produced their electrical power recording instrument at the cottage they built, known as Napoleon's Hat, on Hay Island and were acquainted with Larry Trimble. In fact, Mr. Staebler acquired a dog that Larry had trained, a large black Belgian shepherd he called “Sanko.” Sanko is remembered for crossing the ice from Hay Island, wearing a pack that carried orders for shipment. He would walk to the post office, where the goods were unpacked, their mail was inserted, and Sanko returned home to Hay Island with it.



Canadian Boatbuilders
of the Thousand Islands and Rideau Waterways

Karen J. Wood

Learn more about Karen and her new book exploring local boat building here.

Invasive Species Update – Dog Strangling Vine

By: Jean Dabros



The name “dog-strangling vine” refers to two invasive plants native to Eurasia – black swallowwort and pale swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*, *Vincetoxicum rossicum*). These members of the milkweed family were introduced to the northeastern United States in the mid-1800s for use in gardens but escaped into the wild. In recent years these perennial vines have spread rapidly throughout southern Ontario, southern Quebec and in several American states along the Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence River corridor.

Impacts of Dog-Strangling Vine

Dog-strangling vine forms dense colonies that overwhelm and crowd out native plants and young trees, preventing forest regeneration.

Interwoven vines form mats that are difficult to walk through and interfere with forest management and recreational activities. Leaves and roots may be toxic to livestock. Deer and other browsing animals also avoid dog-strangling vine, which can increase grazing pressure on more palatable native plants. The vine threatens the monarch butterfly, a species at risk in Ontario. The butterflies lay their eggs on the plant, but the larvae are unable to complete their life cycle and do not survive.

Black Swallow-wort

Vincetoxicum Nigrum

der,
ted
pods

Flowers have 5
wide, dark-
purple colored
petals.

Leaves are
oppositely arranged
& oval to lance
shaped.

Photo from
<https://www.sleloinvasives.org/invasives/tiered-species-list/black-and-pale-swallow-wort/>

On Dec. 4 2025 the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) is holding a zoom conference that all are welcome to attend. Register here

Eastern Lake Ontario

Swallow-wort collaborative



Linking People, Information & Action Through Enhanced Communication



December 4th, 2025

3 PM-4:30 PM EST Via Zoom

-Speakers-

David Harris, SUNY ESF

Spencer Busler, Thousand Islands Land Trust

Josh Van Wieren, Thousand Islands National Park of Canada

Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

-Topics-

Updates on *Chrysochus asclepiadeus* root beetles as a biocontrol
for swallow-worts.

Overview of swallow-wort management efforts in the
Thousand Islands Region.

Networking session



TIA Thanks Our ADMIRAL Sponsors



To learn more about any sponsor, click on their logo.



TIA Thanks Our ADMIRAL Sponsors



To learn more about any sponsor, click on their logo.