



Finding and fighting for road-free refuges in the National Capital Region

Ottawa Urban Turtle Sanctuary



Just 15 minutes south of Parliament Hill, in the nation's capital you can find the Ottawa Greenbelt.

A place where the federal and municipal governments have managed to preserve local biodiversity and habitat integrity, their contribution to the future.

- Medeola Woods (Ottawa's largest, stand of old growth trees)
- Monarch Waystation (city of Ottawa, owned)
- SAR Turtles

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Eight species of turtles live in the Province of Ontario.

Four of these species live in these wetlands.

The turtle habitat contains:

Blanding's Turtles (THR),
Northern Map Turtles (SC),
Painted Turtles and
Snapping Turtles.

While each one of these species is special, 50% of them are on the Province and Federal Species at Risk list.

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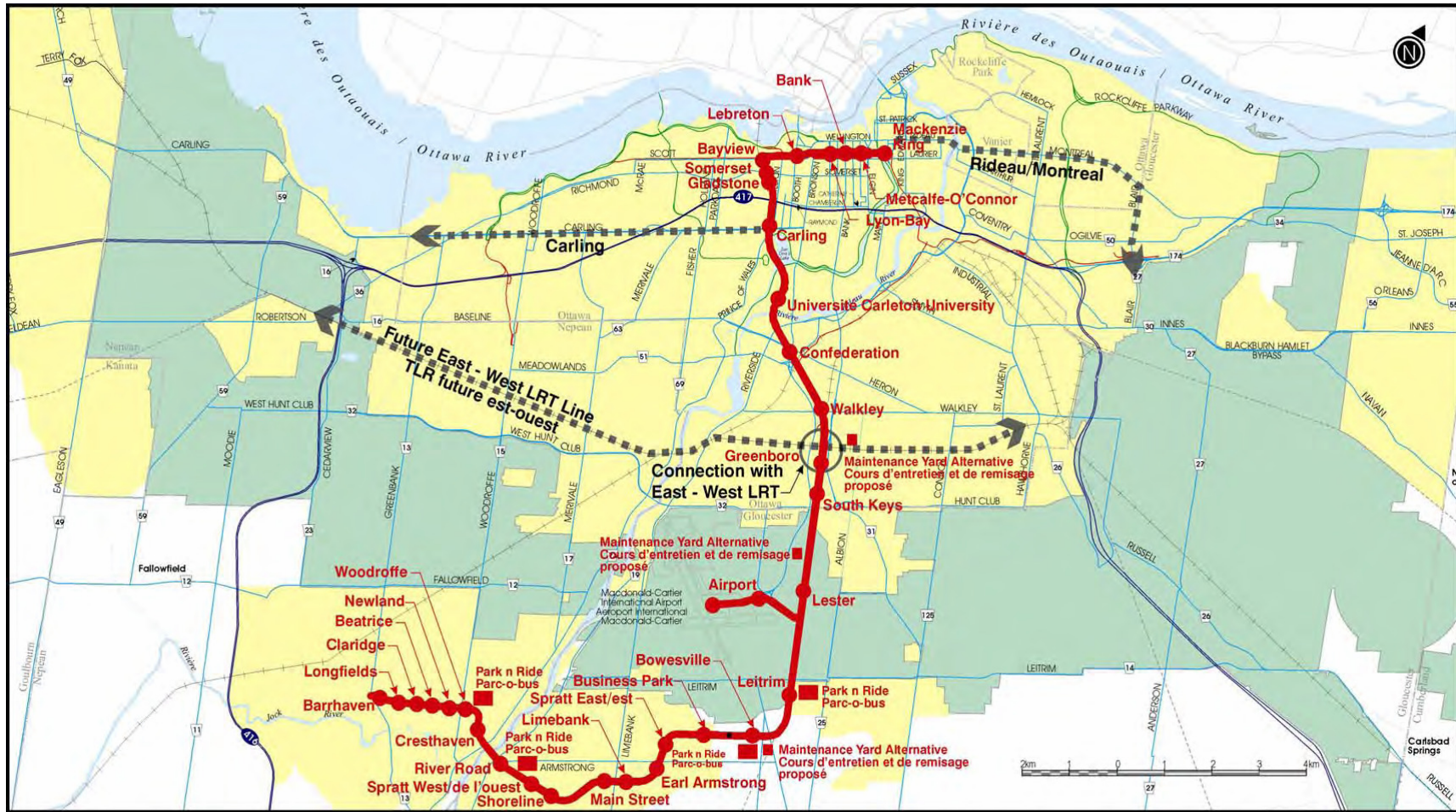


Common Name	COSEWIC Status	COSSARO Status
Blanding's Turtle	THR	THR
Common Musk Turtle (Stinkpot)	THR	THR
Northern Map Turtle	SC	SC
Spiny Softshell	THR	THR
Spotted Turtle	END	END
Wood Turtle	SC	END

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June 2005
Juin 2005

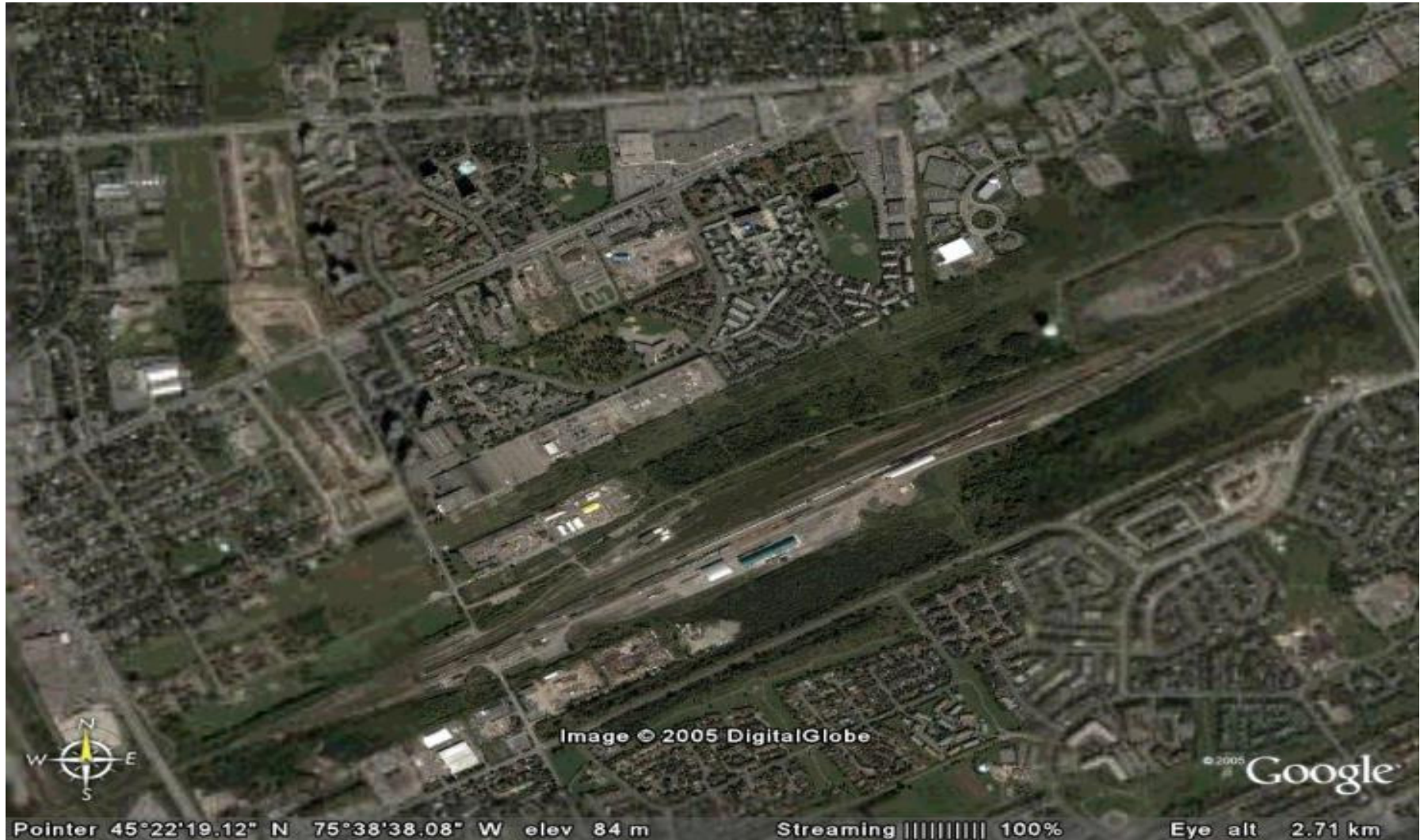




Maintenance Yard

- Heavy maintenance for the full 2021 (105 vehicle) LRT fleet
- Washing facility of the 2021 North-South LRT line fleet;
- Storage for the 2021 North-South Light Rail Transit line fleet;
- Administration and driver facilities;
- Communication and control facilities; and
- Employee parking.

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The EA was written with the Greenbelt site as the preferred site. Corridor alignment around the maintenance yard was never an issue, nor was it to be discussed.

Unfortunately for SAR Blanding's and Map Turtles, alternative alignment corridors through wetlands was never to be an option, But environmental concerns elsewhere in the project corridor were accommodated for trees.

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MOE mandated the city to put together a Public Working Group to find the best maintenance yard alternative.

The 23 member PWG consisted of community members, environmentalists, and land stakeholders (OAA, NCC, Ottawa Central Railway) were selected.

During the time the PWG were meeting, we found the MOU for the project. The location was to be the north side of Walkley train yard – an existing Brownfield location.

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After 2.5 months, the PWG voted unanimously to use the Brownfield location. Same location as specified in the MOU.

Ottawa city staff introduced a fourth site for a maintenance yard. A site that was never evaluated as part of EA, nor open to the public for public review.

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May 2006: Contacted the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) to intervene in the project.

The CTA is a regulatory agency:

1. Maintenance yard choice - not the one specified in the MOU
2. Alignment problems through the wetlands in the Greenbelt – knowledge of turtles living in wetlands was growing.

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After Blanding's discovery on June 2nd, submitted new report to CTA (June 7th). This time the finding of the adult Blanding's Turtle was brought to their attention.

City staff replied by stating that no documented facts of Blanding's Turtles in the area.

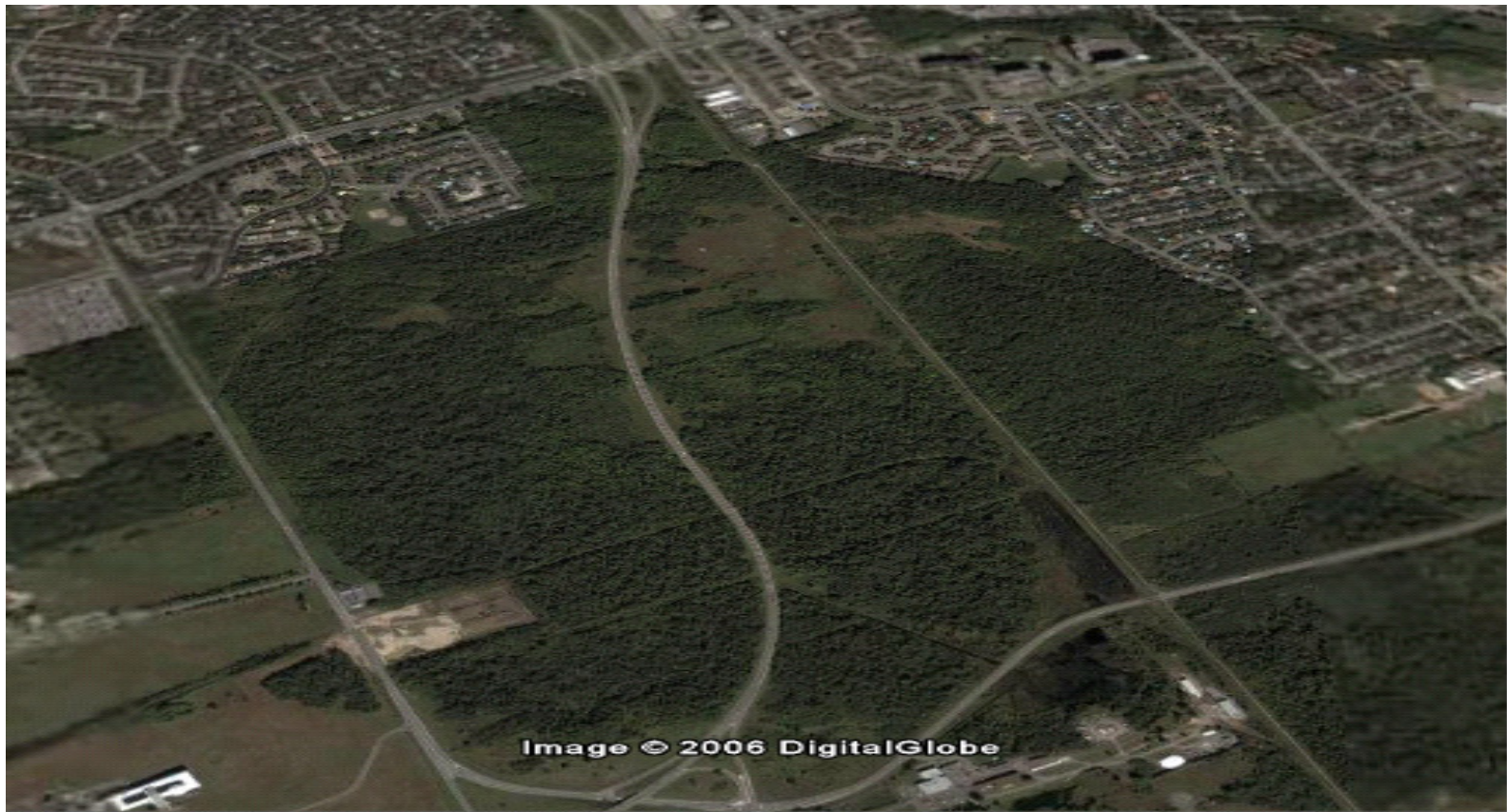
July 10th, I logged my findings of the Blanding's and Map Turtles with NHIC.

CTA gave preliminary approval to proceed with the project – but were open to new environmental facts.

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Acts and Policies – Land owners



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Federal: The Species at Risk Act protects Threatened Blanding's Turtle habitat on Federal lands.

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Provincial: According to the Provincial Policy Statement 2005, development and site alteration are not permitted in significant habitat of endangered and threatened species.

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City of Ottawa OP: According to the plan, “Ottawa preserves natural habitats and has a network of green spaces... [It] sustain[s] natural systems by maintaining natural features and natural functions.”

Notwithstanding any policies elsewhere in this Plan, no development or site alteration will be permitted in significant portions of the habitat of endangered and threatened species, as identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Furthermore, the 1854 rail corridor in which the turtles live is considered a heritage major recreational pathway. The plan describes it, in section 4.6.5, as “an off-road network for pedestrians and cyclists,” and says in section 2.3.1 Policy 14 it “may also be used by commuter cyclists.”

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- June 2, 2006, sighting of mature Blanding's Turtle at 5:15 am
- June 8, 2006, sighting of female Map Turtle, laying eggs on the soft shoulder

-June 19, 2006, With Dr. Schueler and Aleta Karstad's help we organized a "Blanding's Turtle" education evening.

Dr. Schueler talked about turtle behaviour, nesting habitats, answered questions of turtle eggs, predators, and hibernating issues.

Dr. Schueler encouraged children to take photos of turtle sightings.

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On June 14th, 2006, sighting of a female Snapping Turtle, laying eggs on the soft-shoulder of Lester Road

On June 22nd, 2006 Dr. Schueler and associate, walked on the east and west side of the Airport Parkway. They found no evidence of turtles living, nesting, and no road kill on the Airport Parkway.

Dr. Schueler's findings of road kills, abandoned nesting holes, help identify where the turtles live.

On June 22nd, 2006, Dr. Schueler counted all road kill (5 found).

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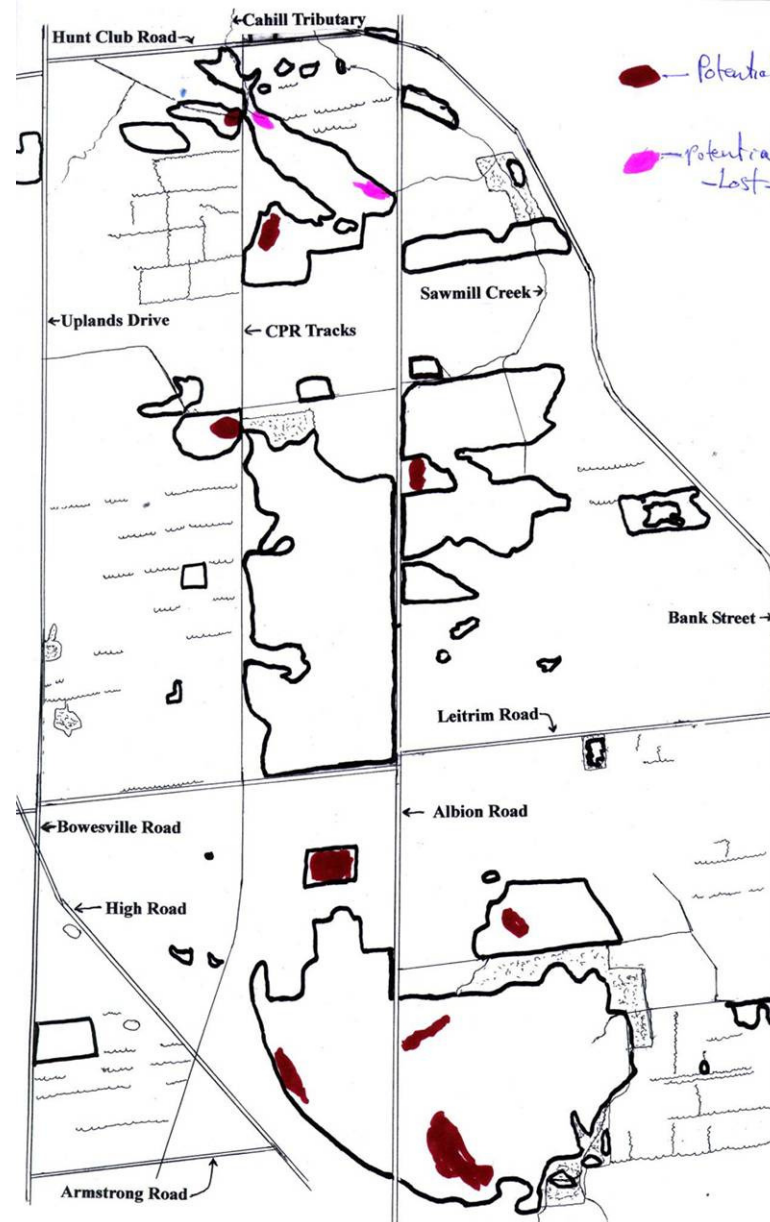


September 16th, 2006, with the help of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, we added the Blanding's Turtle wetlands (Sawmill creek Tributaries 8, 9, 10) as part of the overall Sawmill Creek clean up crusade. We found four road kill on Lester Rd.

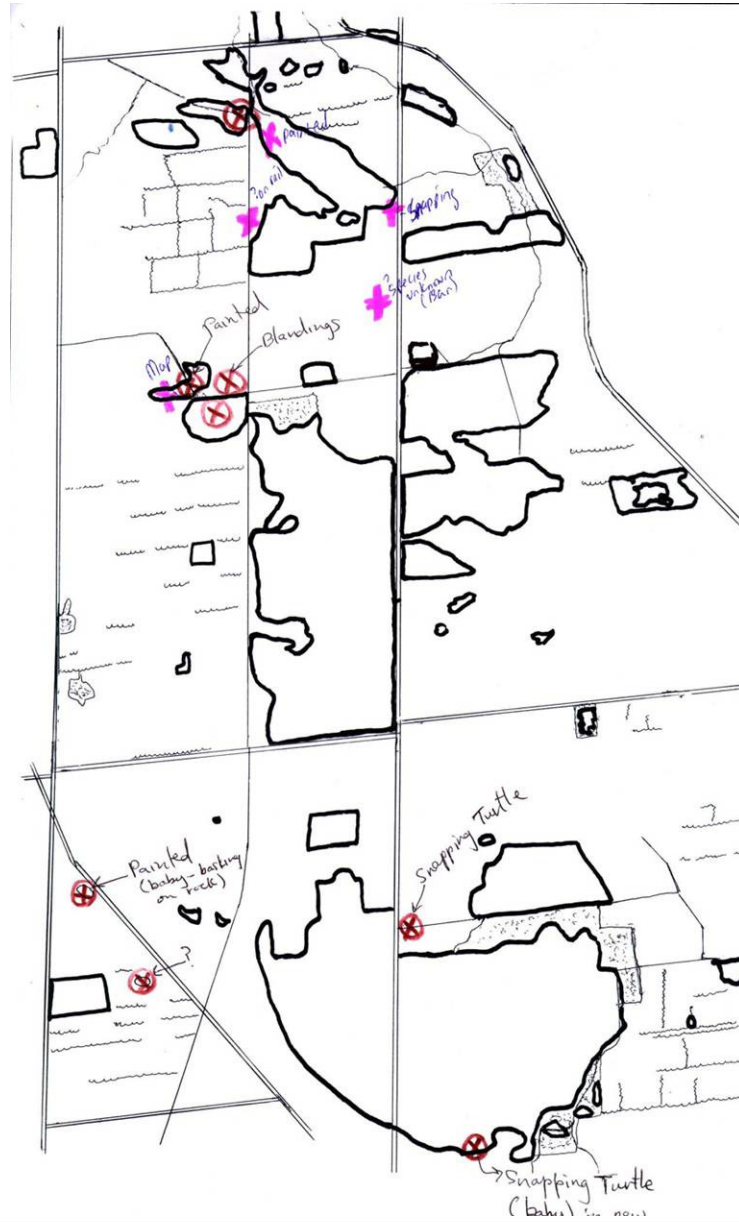
The fall of 2006, the city of Ottawa mounted three Turtle Crossing signs

October 17th, 2006, children found another four road kill on Lester Road. One of the road kill was a juvenile Blanding's Turtle.

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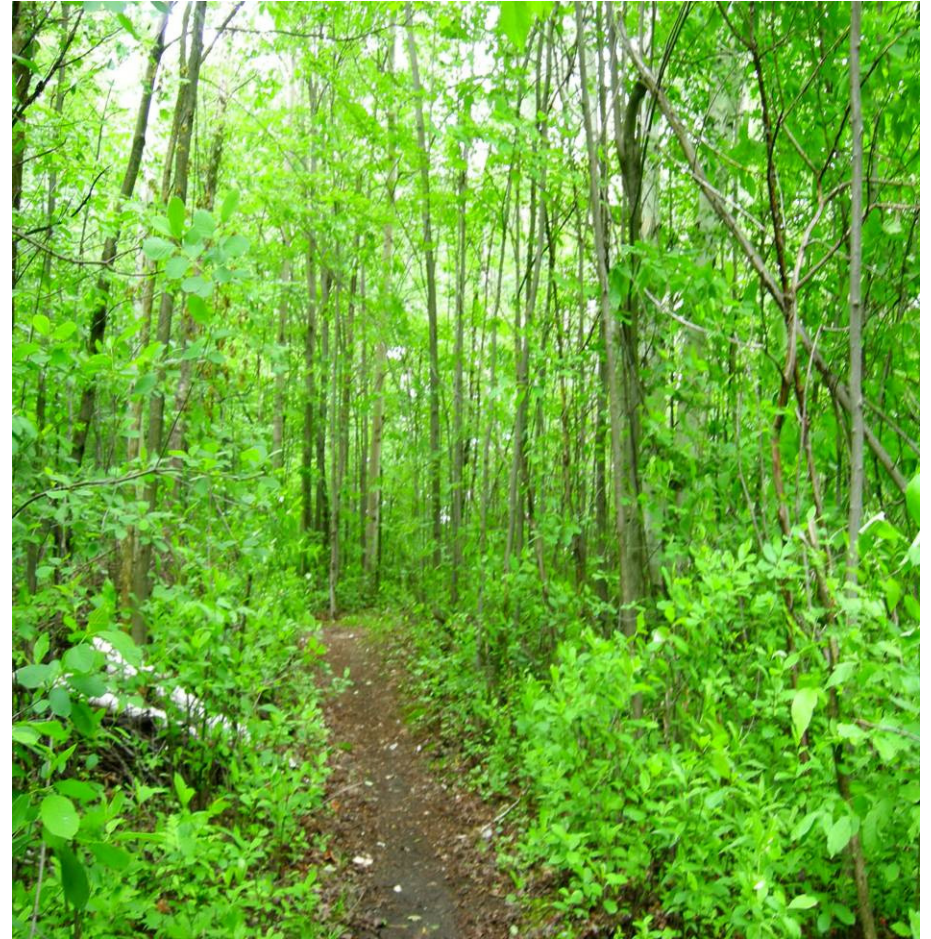
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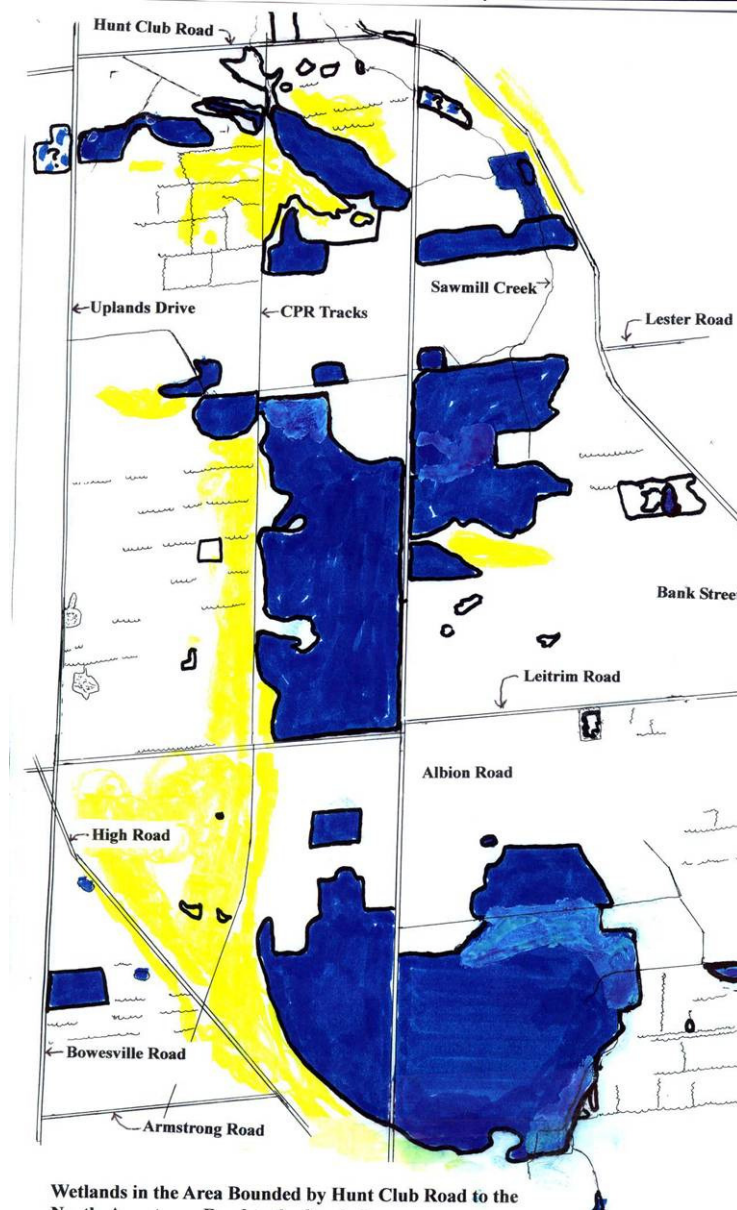
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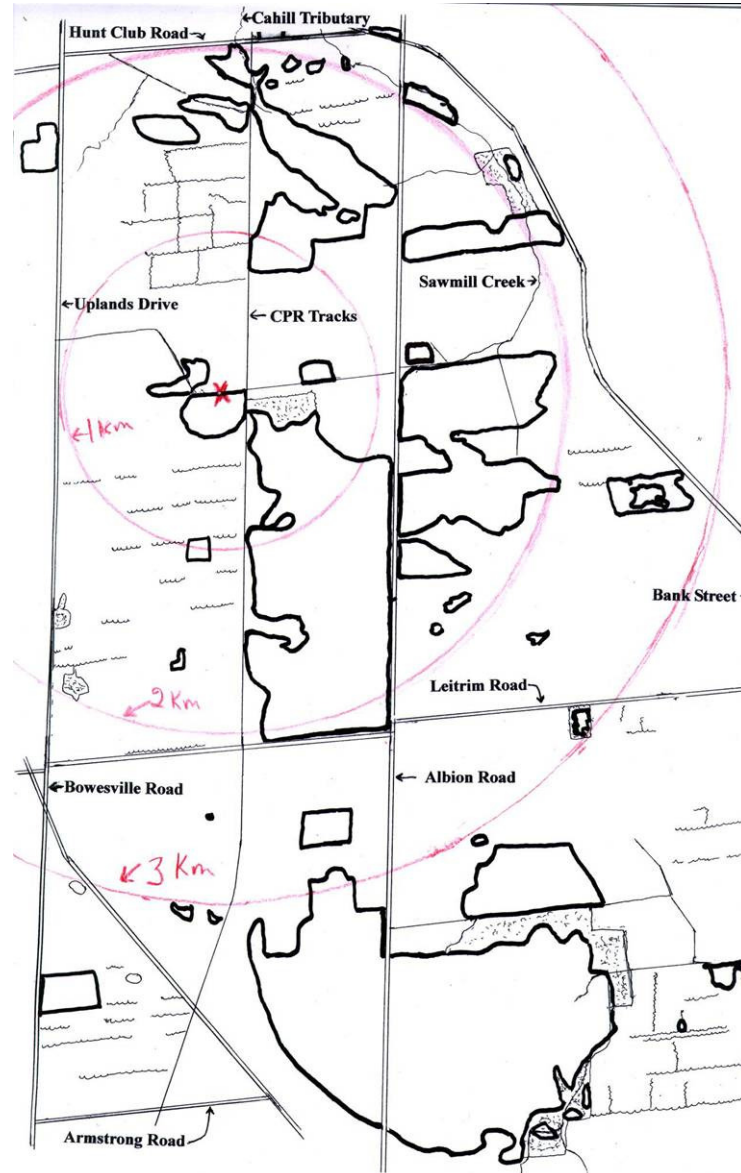
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Where do we go from here?

- Proper protection of SAR habitat
- Education with children
- Road clean up
- Understanding how and where the turtles travel (radio telemetry devices)?
- Turtle road fences – which kind is more effective?
- Installation of basking wharfs
- Landscape architecture design – enhancing habitat



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Acknowledgements

- Dr. Frederick Schueler
- Aleta Karstad
- Mr. Albert Dugal

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- and the Blanding's Turtle

