

Vaudreuil-Soulanges Green Corridor

Toward a **GREENER** forest



Landowner's Newsletter

Vol.24 November 2018

This newsletter offers insights into the project and informative articles to learn more about the Vaudreuil-Soulanges natural areas. Enjoy!

The Green Corridor team

New basking sites for the northern map turtle

As part of a habitat protection project for the endangered northern map turtle, our team installed basking structures to mitigate the lack of basking sites in the region. Initial work in partnership with the town of Hudson was carried out in 2016 and 2017 in the Ottawa River, along Jack Layton Park. In 2018, other sites were added in Choisy Bay in Rigaud and in an arm of the river at Vaudreuil-Dorion. We are extremely grateful for the vital cooperation of the municipalities and property owners involved.

What is a basking site?

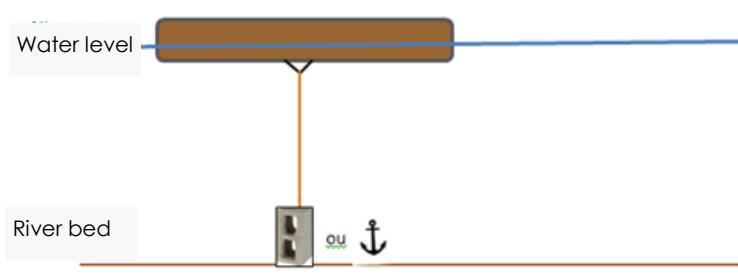
The northern map turtle is an ectothermic species, meaning that its body temperature is regulated by its environment. So it must bask in the sun in order to absorb heat from sunlight. Regular exposure to sunlight also helps the species rid itself of algae and parasites. Female turtles need a great deal of sun in the spring. When they emerge from hibernation in April, and before laying their eggs, they may spend several weeks warming up in the sun, which increases their metabolism and promotes the development of eggshells. This in turn gives baby turtles a better chance of survival.



Turtle warming up in the sun in Hudson © NAQ

In springtime, basking sites are found primarily in the wooded swampland around Lake of Two Mountains. As water levels drop during the summer, these sites become inaccessible, so turtles seek out emerging rocks. This is why it is not unusual to see them on rocks or floating tree trunks. Because of the northern map turtle's endangered status, the installation of such necessary basking sites can only benefit the species.

What are basking structures?



The installed basking structures are made of logs attached to the riverbed with a metal or concrete anchor to prevent them from drifting. According to the terms of the authorization permit granted under Québec's Environment Quality Act they are installed in the spring but must be removed in the fall.



Parc Jack Layton
Hudson © NAQ



Baie de Choisy
Rigaud © NAQ

Encouraging results

During our follow-up visits in 2018, we observed turtles on some of the installed structures. Unfortunately, we were unable to take any photographs – further evidence of these turtles' extreme shyness. The landowners who contribute to the project by, among other things, allowing us to access their property, also confirmed that they had observed turtles basking on the installed structures.



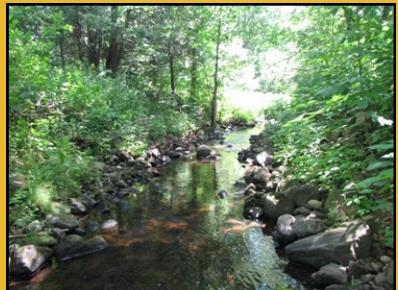
Promoting wildlife

Do you have a woodlot on your property? This is excellent habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. Here is the second in a series of tips to help make it even more attractive to wildlife.

Streams and wetlands – source of life

Preserving streams and wetlands is extremely beneficial. In addition to irrigating soil, they provide places for wildlife to feed, find shelter, and breed. Some species, such as amphibians, depend on water at one stage or another of their development. And many species of waterfowl (aquatic birds such as ducks) use wetlands to reproduce in the spring and to feed during the fall migration.

To protect and avoid disturbing these natural habitats, which are vital to maintaining a rich biodiversity, mark off a zone of 15 to 20 metres around them in which any work is limited. If the forest cover around wetlands and streams becomes too open, they can dry out. It is also preferable to avoid traveling through these areas with machinery or making trails through them; the fragile soil in these habitats is damaged and compacted by machinery or other vehicles. We thus recommend waiting for the ground to freeze before travelling in these areas. It is also important to use bridges and culverts to cross streams to avoid damaging their beds and creating erosion.



Ruisseau à Charrette,
Pointe-Fortune © NAQ

Chimney Swift inventory



Example of chimney used
as a roost

This summer, the Vaudreuil-Soulanges Green Corridor team carried out an inventory of Chimney Swift nesting sites in Vaudreuil-Soulanges. This swallow-like endangered species once nested and roosted in snags (large, standing dead trees). But since these have become increasingly rare, swifts gradually began using the brick chimneys of houses and large buildings (schools, churches, convents, and factories) for nesting and roosting, which is why they are called "Chimney Swifts" today. The inventory in Vaudreuil-Soulanges in July 2018 examined 10 chimneys. July is the ideal time to find nesting sites, because the eggs have hatched and the nestlings must be fed frequently, generating a lot of to-and-fro activity by the adult birds. This helps to spot chimneys used as nesting sites. It should be noted that the presence of birds does not damage the structure of the chimneys. The good news is that the inventory confirmed that swifts are nesting in five chimneys in Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

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