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October 25, 2010

Dr. Paulo Correa
Chair, Concord West Residents Ad Hoc Committee
42 Rockview Gardens, Concord, ON L4K 2J6

Dear Dr. Correa,

The Blanding's turtle, *Emydoidea blandingii*, is a North American freshwater turtle. Its range is centred around the Great Lakes, extending west to Nebraska, and east to Nova Scotia. In Ontario, it is listed as "Threatened" under the Ontario Endangered Species Act, and in Canada it is "Threatened" under the Species at Risk Act. Primary threats include habitat loss and road mortality, both of which are severe throughout its range in southern Ontario. The Blanding's turtle is truly a "landscape" turtle, as it needs large areas of wetlands, often linked by streams, which the turtle uses throughout the active season.

On September 27, Alexandra Correa contacted Bob Johnson, the Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians at the Toronto Zoo. He confirmed that a photo she had sent depicted a Blanding's turtle, which was photographed near Vaughan, Ontario, at 43°48'01.66"N 79°29'08.49"W elevation 196 meters. The property on which the turtle was discovered lies between Highway 407 to the south, a CN railway line to the west and Highway 7 to the north. The greenspace is currently owned by the Province of Ontario and is managed by the Ontario Realty Corporation. The residents of Concord West are currently engaged in talks with numerous local and provincial groups to try to have this pocket of habitat permanently protected. They would like to officially join it up, under the auspices of the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, with the Langstaff Ecopark and Bartley-Smith Greenway, with which it is naturally contiguous. They have created a website - saveconcordwest.org - to document their findings and progress.

On Saturday October 16, I visited the habitat and location of the Blanding's turtle sighting with the Correas. Although the property itself does not contain excellent Blanding's turtle habitat, it could be an important corridor between suitable habitat to the north and south, which we intend to investigate more thoroughly in the springtime. I also visited the Keffer Marsh, which is about a kilometre north of the property; it contains suitable summer, nesting, and winter habitat for Blanding's turtles. Aerial photos show areas of potential habitat to the south. In an environment where suitable wetland habitat is ever dwindling, corridors between them become more important, especially for "landscape turtles" like the Blanding's.

Good luck with your efforts, and by all means consider us as a resource for contributing to the ecological understanding of the property, especially with respect to turtles and wetland habitats.

Brennan Caverhill

