

HELPING CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY IN THE ADIRONDACKS
THROUGH COLLABORATION AND THE ADIRONDACK ALL TAXA
BIODIVERSITY INVENTORY

**The Center for Adirondack Biodiversity and
Adirondack Biodiversity Project (ATBI)**

Strategic Plan

2009-2011



The Center for Adirondack Biodiversity Mission

Mission

The Center for Adirondack Biodiversity was established to conduct scientific research aimed at conserving biodiversity in the Adirondack Park with a particular focus on collaborative approaches that connect stakeholders; to help citizens value and understand the natural world through participation in the Adirondack All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory; and to integrate applied conservation research into the curriculum of Paul Smith's College.

Rationale for this strategic plan

The Center for Adirondack Biodiversity (CAB) was started in January of 2009 as a research center based at, and supported by, Paul Smith's College. A large part of the impetus for starting the center was to help further develop the Adirondack ATBI (now known as the Adirondack Biodiversity Project). By having a designated individual as Director of the Center, we can now move the Adirondack Biodiversity Project agenda forward more rapidly. This strategic plan is designed to focus the efforts of CAB and the Adirondack Biodiversity Project on a clear series of activities for 2009-2011, as well as defining the role that ATBI stakeholders will play during this period. For a more comprehensive vision of the Adirondack Biodiversity Project, we direct readers towards the 2006 Adirondack ATBI project plan.

1. Introduction: CAB/ATBI activities in 2009-2011

In 2009 and 2011, we will focus on two main areas:

1. Collaborative research between ATBI/CAB members focusing on inventory and monitoring of biodiversity in the Adirondack Park. The filter used to select projects includes those involving multiple stakeholders; a clear link to the goals and objectives of CAB and the ATBI (see Appendix 1 and the 2006 ATBI Project plan); the potential for student involvement; and the potential for involvement by the general public. Timelines, methods and deliverables from these projects are developed on an individual basis.

Because these projects are developed using conventional approaches in biodiversity research, we do not provide further details in this document

2. Biodiversity inventory involving the general public through the adopt-a-plot and adopt-a-transect schemes

While we will continue to explore other opportunities as they arise, these two activities will form the bulk of our efforts as a group. Once we have the adopt-a-plot/transect scheme well-established, we will focus on adding new projects involving the general public in the ATBI. The most feasible way for us to develop additional projects during the next two years beyond those mentioned above is for individual members of the ATBI to take the initiative and project lead.

2. Taxonomic Working Groups in 2009-2011

Introduction: Taxonomic working groups (TWIGs) are the expertise on which the ATBI is based. For these groups to function effectively, it needs to be clear what role we are asking TWIG members to play, and what they can expect in return beyond the satisfaction of involvement in the ATBI.

What is a TWIG (in 2009-2011): TWIGs are groups of individuals with expertise in specific taxa, organized under a TWIG leader. This leadership role does not reflect the status of this individual within their field in relation to other members of the group, rather is someone who can serve to organize the TWIG and represent the opinion of the group to the ATBI in general. We see TWIG's as self-organizing, i.e., not being reliant on the CAB Director to facilitate communication within the group, and taking the initiative to recruit new members when appropriate. We also hope that TWIG's will raise issues relevant to their taxa (for example imminent threats, or ways in which we could improve our activities) with the overall ATBI.

The role of TWIG members in 2009-2011: We would like to involve our TWIG's in the activities of the ATBI in two principle ways: (1) Through collaborative research as documented in section 1., above; and (2) through asking for the TWIG's expertise in developing appropriate sampling methodologies and focal species for the adopt-a-plot/adopt-a-transect schemes.

In addition to these activities, we would also like to contact TWIG's when there are conservation activities within the Park that link to the goals of the Adirondack ATBI and where their individual expertise may be of help, for example bioblitzes organized by groups outside of the Adirondack ATBI.

Responsibilities of being a TWIG members: We ask that those interested in being members of TWIG's commit to being active members of their groups, by which we mean at the least responding to communications from other group members and the ATBI advisory board.

We also ask that TWIG members involve the ATBI in projects that were instigated at our meetings and maintain the key aspects of research under the auspices of an ATBI (principally that data is housed in a centralized location and made available to those who wish to use it- see the 2006 Project Plan for further details). This does not mean that members of the ATBI expect to be authors on publications, or will disseminate data without the permission of the researcher. We also expect that many of the collaborations developed within our group will lead to long-term working relationships outside of the ATBI. Importantly, however, it does mean that the ATBI and Center for Adirondack Biodiversity maintains an oversight role in these initial projects and is able to take partial responsibility for their existence. If the ATBI group and its meetings primarily result in individual research agreements between group members without meeting the overall goals of the project, we will not be able to survive into the future.

What benefits are there to being a TWIG member? Being a TWIG member offers the benefits of being involved in collaborative research that is typically more than the sum of its parts (i.e., where no single researcher would be able to conduct research of a similar scope). This can allow us to target grants that we otherwise would not be eligible for; to provide key areas of expertise to other group members; to use volunteer efforts as match for grant applications; to further the individual missions and objectives of stakeholders and their host organizations; to share data for combined analyses; to allow us access to non-state owned lands; to co-publish peer-reviewed articles and technical papers; an opportunity to help engage the general public in biodiversity research that is of most value to individual taxa; and in general to increase our overall effectiveness in conserving biodiversity within the Adirondack Park.

3. Opportunities for involvement by the general public in the Adirondack ATBI in 2009-2011

Introduction: Involvement by the general public and providing opportunities for education, outreach and community-capacity building is a core principle of the ATBI initiative. In 2009-2011, we would like to invite participation by the general public in the ATBI activities in two principle ways: (1) by becoming a member of a TWIG; and (2) by taking part in our adopt-a-plot/transect scheme as outlined in section 4 below. To become a member of a TWIG, either contact the relevant TWIG leader if you know who they are, or contact Dave Patrick (dpatrick@paulsmiths.edu) and he can help put you in touch with the relevant group

4. The adopt-a-plot and adopt-a-transects schemes

Goals and Objectives: In a nutshell, both the adopt-a-plot and adopt-a-transect schemes will involve the general public in gathering baseline biodiversity data within the park, with the expertise of the TWIG's being used to ensure that these data are of the greatest relevance to conservation management in the Park. The adopt-a-plot scheme will be based at locations identified by participants either on their own properties, on private properties with the permission of the land-owner, or in the state-owned portion of the Adirondack Park. The adopt-a-transect scheme will harness recreational hikers on trails in the Park, primarily through collaboration with the Adirondack Mountain Club.

The adopt a plot and adopt a transect schemes meet the first two goals of the ATBI Theme 1 [**Biodiversity survey**] namely 1.1 "Biodiversity Inventory within and ecosystem and conservation framework" and 1.2 "Co-ordination among TWIG's and the biodiversity inventory process"; and the first goal of the ATBI Theme 2 [**Citizen participation**], namely 2.1 "Community involvement and active citizen participation"

Partners:

The adopt-a-transect scheme is developed in partnership with the Adirondack Mountain Club, and with the goal of providing the Mountain club with valuable data relating to biodiversity along trails.

Overview of methods:

Adopt-a-plot: Participants are encouraged to choose sampling locations to which they have easy access (for example walking distance from their home) or where they like to go (for example a favorite trail). For adopt-a-plot locations, the center of the plot should be in forest (i.e., where trees form the majority of the vegetation) at least 50 feet from the edge of the forest. Participants will mark the center of their plot using a handheld GPS when available, or locate on a map. They will also be encouraged to establish a photo-monitoring point.

Adopt-a-transect: Participants can sample any of the many trails within the park along which they hike. A written description of the trail will suffice (i.e., I surveyed the trail from the trailhead at X to the junction with X).

What will be sampled at the site or along the trail? Both schemes are based on recording readily-identifiable species **using a research protocol developed with our TWIG's**. For adopt-a-plot, participants will have the option of choosing to focus on whatever groups of species are of most interest to them, and then follow the guidelines provided on that group. For the adopt-a-transect scheme, participants will be asked to record any of the list of species provided to them on the laminate card.

Data collection and management:

Participants will be given the option of either entering data online using a datasheet provided in Microsoft Excel, or using paper data sheets and mailing them to David Patrick. Initially data will be collated and managed by David Patrick with advice and guidance from Stacy McNulty. Data will be stored in a fashion that allows them to be readily integrated with the comprehensive data management framework currently under development at SUNY-ESF

Project outcomes and deliverables:

Both these projects will provide valuable baseline data on focal taxa within the park including patterns of occurrence and relative abundance and changes in biodiversity over time. These data will be made available to the taxonomic working groups and individual researchers working with these taxa and will form the baseline for ongoing biodiversity monitoring projects currently under development within the ATBI/CAB. The data will be disseminated to citizen-scientists via our website, with annual updates and reports on the status of focal taxa, and presentations at local outreach centers. We will also work with the Adirondack Mountain Club to produce scientific

publications and reports in relation to the adopt-a-transect scheme.

Appendix 1

Goals and objectives

The strategic goals of the Center for Adirondack Biodiversity encompasses six interrelated program areas (research, biodiversity database management, coordination, outreach and education, integration of the Center's activities into the curricula at Paul Smith's College, and conservation policy) and two organizational areas (impact and reputation, and organizational capacity). The Adirondack ATBI forms a core part of all of these program areas. These components form the structure on which our strategic plan for both the immediate future and long-term is built and ensure that we will continue to achieve our core mission.