

## Turtle awareness signs go up in North Hastings

**By Sarah Sobanski**

New road awareness signs warning of turtle hotspots are going up in North Hastings thanks to area residents.

Think Turtle Conservation Initiative founder Kelly Wallace has announced six turtle awareness signs will be put up in the area.

They're a direct result of her work recording sightings from locals and sending them off to the Ministry of Transportation.

The signs will be put up along Hwy 62 between Hwy 7 and Hwy 28, she said.

‘It’s so cool. It’s one thing to be told you’re going to get them but then to actually see them there, it’s so cool,’ said Wallace

explaining sign locations include near Marble, Tait, Robinson and Spring lakes. She said this is the ideal time to get the signs up as cottagers and tourists who aren’t familiar with area turtle populations are returning.

‘It doesn’t necessarily mean that the turtles aren’t going to get hit – they still are, it’s a reality – but it may save a few turtle lives and it’s a start towards permanent mitigation which is obviously the goal – to get all the animals off the road.’

Last summer, Wallace put out a call for people to report turtle sightings so she could record hotspots of activity for the Ministry of Transportation. She said more than 75 people responded to her call.

‘I actually had more people submit to me than I was able to submit data for, because some of their data was incomplete,’ she said.

‘There’s a lot of people in this community that care, it’s just amazing.’

Wallace said that she’s seen a turning in the tides for turtle awareness in the community. More people know that they can call the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre, also known as the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, if they find an injured turtle. She said awareness is key.

‘Already there’s been 76 turtles admitted (to the centre this year), but it’s sort of two-fold,’ she said. Last year the centre declared a state of emergency for turtles, more than 900 were hospitalized.

‘On one side, that’s bad because obviously the turtles getting struck by motor vehicles, however on the other side, the good part is that the information is getting out there about where turtles need to go if they’ve been injured. That’s great because the reality is that some of them are going to get struck by motor vehicles.’

Wallace said ‘things are changing.’ She asked that the community keep an eye on the signs in the coming months and suggested calling Crime Stoppers if anyone sees someone attempting to steal them or take them down. She said some people aren’t supporters of protecting turtles and it’s a possibility the signs will be taken down in some form or another.