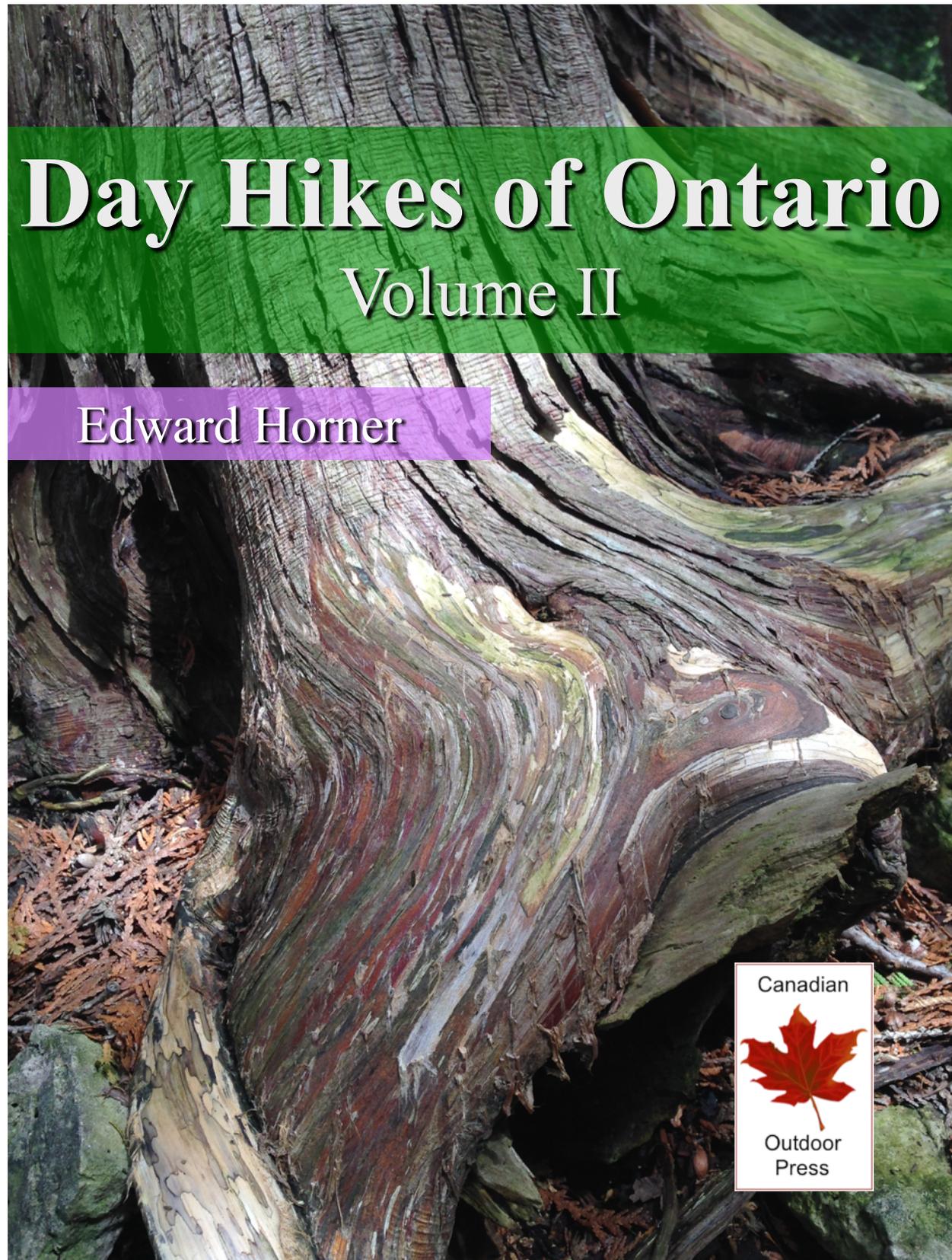


Day Hikes of Ontario

Volume II

Edward Horner





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All outdoor activities occur in a changing and unpredictable environment, so there is always an element of risk, injury or even death. Rain, flood, erosion, extreme weather, and other variables can combine to create hazardous conditions. It is ultimately the sole responsibility of the reader to determine which (if any) trails or areas are suitable for their particular skills and physical conditioning on any particular day. The reader should also be aware that conditions and circumstances in any given area or on any given trail may have changed since researching and writing this book. Always exercise caution and discretion. Maps used in this book are not to scale, do not show all features and should not be used for navigation. Obtain maps from official parks sources. Land owner agreements change frequently and affect the course and path of trails. The author and publisher will not be held liable for any injury or loss caused by use of this book.

We know that web links change, get hijacked, break or disappear and for those reasons, despite the best efforts of the authors and editors, we cannot be held accountable for the accuracy of any links suggested in this book. While we have made every effort to provide accurate phone numbers, for various services, they too change and so we cannot be held accountable for their accuracy.

It must be clearly understood that Ed Horner is not medically trained and any advice offered herein is strictly anecdotal and based on his personal experience in the field. Should real emergencies arise you must seek out professionally trained medical practitioners. Always carry and know how to use a first aid kit.



Day Hikes of Ontario
Volume II

Dedication

First, this book is dedicated to my loving partner, Audrey. Having you share many of these hikes, planning the day, packing our lunch, taking photographs, holding my hand along the trail, exploring the towns and attractions together, laughing, sharing the driving and indulging my passion for the outdoors with unflagging encouragement and enthusiasm is all appreciated more than you know.

This book is also dedicated to anyone who has ever thought about or taken the time to get out of town and walk upon the soil, over rocks and tree roots, through fields, along streams and under a sky that isn't blocked by tall buildings.

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”

– Henry David Thoreau, *Walden Pond*

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Introduction

Nothing can replace the intensity of the outdoor experience. Planning, routing and gearing up for your next trip are important, sometimes critical aspects of your next trip, but in the end, all the reading and preparing is only an overture to the main event in which you get out and take in that authentic outdoor experience.

Planet Earth is the only home humanity has ever known. It's the only planet in the universe that has the proven ability to sustain human life. There is no planet for humanity to migrate to, at least in the foreseeable future. For good or bad, Earth is our home.

Since writing [*Day Hikes of Ontario Volume I*](#), a lot has changed. In the last three years, the carbon dioxide¹ in the atmosphere has risen from 396ppm to 410ppm and the rate of increase is accelerating, sending us ever nearer to a global warming temperature increase of 2C or more, a temperature, by-the-way, that climate experts, the World Bank and leaders of major business have identified as something of a tipping point, creating considerable doubt that we will be able to continue the plush Western lifestyle that most citizens of Ontario have come to know and love.

Still, there is hope. Progressive energy companies are building wind turbines and solar energy farms to help supply Ontario with sustainable, renewable electricity. Ontario has, finally, replaced

¹ The science is proven and well known. Carbon Dioxide gas (or CO²) is a known greenhouse gas (GHG) which is causing the atmosphere of the Earth to absorb more heat from the sun than it radiates outwards into space. This net gain in heat, as slow as it is, will, inevitably, cause the global atmospheric temperature to rise to a level that will make it difficult for humanity to live in the same way that we have for tens of thousands of years. Increasing sea levels from the melting ice caps and glaciers, increased rainfall during thunderstorms and hurricanes, major and irreversible climate changes and shrinking arable land will cause food shortages, to name only a few, highly probable outcomes - unless we get a handle on our CO² emissions. For more information about human-caused global warming (AGW or Anthropogenic Global Warming) see my 2014 paper on creating an [LCE](#) (Low Carbon Economy).

all coal-fired electrical generation plants and gone on to refurbish the Darlington nuclear powered electric plant, making the province one of the cleanest in Canada, at least when it comes to CO² emissions from electricity production.

Also on the positive side, American Entrepreneur Elon Musk has begun producing his least expensive all-electric car to date, the Tesla Model 3 – a car that people are actually lining up to buy – and it runs essentially free of CO². France, under the leadership of Emmanuel Macron, has just announced a ban on sales of diesel or petrol burning automobiles by 2040. This announcement was immediately followed by a similar target for Britain. India, China and Norway have also announced aspirational targets to sell only electric vehicles, although no dates have been set.

So, while not every government agrees on the urgent need to protect our environment, specifically by curbing the use of CO² producing fossil fuels, things are getting done in Canada, and around the world, by individuals, volunteer groups, responsible companies and NGOs, that will help protect and sustain the natural environment upon which we are all totally dependent. Let's just hope the momentum continues and the pace of innovation picks up before we do more irreversible damage.

What's New in Volume II

- 20 **new** hikes and hiking areas are introduced from Hardy Lake Provincial Park in the North to the Warsaw Caves Conservation Area in the east to Dundas Valley and the Dofasco 2000 Trail to the south
- We've included an **expanded first aid** section with the addition of diagnosing and treating; heatstroke, dehydration, sprained ankles and more
- Greater detail around navigation and trail ratings. **Maps have been enlarged, improved** and marked with elevation and GPS coordinates
- Any hiking in an area as populated as south and central Ontario calls for caution around drinking ground water and for this reason we've included a **new section on how to treat water for drinking**
- As our urban environment expands further into wild territory, we may well come into contact with more wild animals, so we've **expanded the section on managing bear and coyote encounters**
- How to get to the great outdoors can be a hassle, not to mention expensive, so we've included a section on **transportation alternatives.**

DAY HIKES OF ONTARIO VOL II, HELPS THE READER

- **Prepare** for a day in the outdoors
- **Learn** how to enjoy the trails, be safe and appreciate what this province has to offer
- **Discover** a wide range of topography and geological features, hikes and local attractions
- **Master** the skills and knowledge that is needed for a day on the trail.

Ten Reasons For You To Get Outdoors

Fresh Air

Granted, some areas of the world, and indeed, even parts of Canada, have poor air quality. This summer, as we've been editing this book, the air quality in China (esp. Beijing) has been so bad that the government called for a shut down of industry and a cut-back of transportation to help get it back under control, affecting tens of thousands of people. The air quality that we enjoy in Ontario is almost always better outdoors than inside. We can enjoy the freshest air in the forest, where trees actually produce oxygen, cool the air and provide shade and greenery.²

Sunshine

Beside helping the brain produce serotonin, sunshine also helps the body produce vitamin D, which in turn helps the body more easily absorb calcium and phosphorus, two critical elements which encourage proper development of bones and teeth.

Physical Activity

Walking in the forest is not the same as walking on a treadmill at your local Planet Fitness™. Not that an indoor workout is a bad thing, but varying terrain, changing scenery and fresh air make the outdoor workout so much better. In the spirit of full disclosure, I am a member of Planet Fitness and the express workout I do there two or three times a week definitely help on the trails, all the more so as I age.

Reduced Sound Pollution

Simply, there is less. Subways, streetcars, honking cars, ringing cell phones, office background noise, printers, MUZAK™, hissing espresso machines, radio, air-conditioning and dozens of other

² https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/benefits_trees.pdf

sounds are conspicuous by their absence in the forest. This allows us to concentrate better, think sharper and feel less stress.

Improved Vision

There are quite a number of studies that show a strong correlation among children spending time *indoors* and earlier onset of poor vision. The opposite is also true ... spending time outdoors actually seems to improve eyesight. It seems that “pulling focus.” or allowing the eyes to focus on distant objects actually helps reduce near sightedness as a 2014 article in the American Academy of Ophthalmology, written by David Turbert, concludes.³

Restored Mental Energy

Fresh air, exercise and a little sunlight have proven to help restore mental energy and invigorate our thinking. ^{4, 5}

Scent

Not a single person that I’ve ever taken hiking has said, “Ugh, I miss the smell of the city.”

Improved Self Confidence

Pushing the comfort envelope, observing new things, making your way under your own steam, learning and applying new skills and information has proven time and again to help boost an individuals level of self confidence.

Stress Relief

³ <https://www.aaopt.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/time-outdoors-reduces-nearsightedness>

⁴ The Restorative Benefits of Nature: Toward an Integrative Framework, Stephen Kaplan, 1995

⁵ The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting With Nature. Marc G. Berman, John Jonides, Stephen Kaplan

Not only does getting into the outdoors, among the trees and trails help reduce stress, but just looking through a window at a forest scene, while at work, has proven to be stress relieving.⁶

Reduced Risk of Early Death

This one has special appeal to me. So long as you can avoid falling off a cliff or being drowned in a river, there is a measurable improvement in one's life expectancy when time is taken outdoors, as part of an overall health plan.⁷

⁶ The Influence of Forest View Through a Window on Job Satisfaction and Job Stress, 2007

⁷ Effects of short-term forest bathing on human health in a broad-leaved evergreen forest in Zhejiang Province, China. Mao GX1, Lan XG, et al.

How to Get to the Outdoors

Let's face it, owning and operating a vehicle is an expensive and time consuming undertaking. Granted, having a vehicle, or easy access to one, is a very convenient way to get to where you need to go for your hike or trip. But owning or leasing a personal vehicle isn't the only way to get out there.

Another thing about not owning or leasing a private car is that it's so much easier on the environment.

“Car sharing contributes to a more efficient and rational mobility (with lower number of vehicles per capita among members, lower demand for parking space, lower fixed costs and a complement to public transport). Additionally to the lower consumption of physical and economic resources, car sharing can also contribute to the reduction of energy and environmental impacts (added to the direct ones from the changes on vehicle ownership and usage patterns).”⁸

Park Bus

[Park Bus Website](#) 1-800-928-7101

This is a relatively new travel service (2010) created and put together by a couple of young entrepreneurs who knew the cost and hassle of getting out of town to a provincial park or conservation area.



Introducing Park Bus; a bus service that picks you up at various locations in and around Toronto at pre-determined times, takes you to the park, drops you off, then picks you up later in the day for the trip home.

As I write this, in July, 2017, a roundtrip fare from Toronto to Dundas Valley Conservation Area will cost \$45 for adults and a bit less for student and seniors. That's a good deal.

⁸ Patrícia Baptista et al. / Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 111 (2014) 28 – 37

Not only is the price right, but you can sleep on the way there and on the way home. You don't have to worry about driving. You can meet and talk with fellow hikers who may be going to the same area. I own a vehicle, so I don't use Park Bus much, but I did take it to Albion Hills a couple years back and it was a great experience and I highly recommend it.

Rent a Car

For one person, this can be a pricey way to get out for a day. If you have a couple of buddies who want to get out, you split the cost and all of a sudden, this is a good deal. Again, there is no hassle of vehicle ownership, insurance, maintenance and storage. Essentially you reserve a vehicle type of your choice ahead of time and just pick it up ... in fact, they'll typically come to pick you up and then drop you off at home after you've returned the car. If only a couple of you are going, you can order up a small vehicle and save money on gas. If you have four friends, plus yourself going, you just order a larger vehicle and travel in style. With the cost split 5 or even 6 ways the cost per person falls quickly.



Auto Share Services

If you only want to get out to, say, Rouge National Urban Park, you might consider becoming a member of an auto sharing service like Zip Car, Enterprise Auto Share, Car2Go or similar.

These car sharing services have vehicles parked at locations around the city, usually very close to subway stations and any member of the service can reserve a car (for a specified time), pick it up, drive it where you need to go, then drop it off at the parking spot again.

The cost to use the vehicle includes everything - gas, insurance, maintenance and even road tolls (but not tickets). There's usually a gas card in the glove compartment and if the tank falls below



1/4 then you gas it up using the card. You can even wash and vacuum out the car and get reimbursed for that. Typically these services aren't economical for much more than 4 or 5 hours at a time, so if you plan on longer periods, renting might be a better deal.

Toronto Transit Commission

High Park, Rouge National Urban Park, Highland Creek Trail; these hiking areas and more all all accessible by the transit system in Toronto. While I can't offer specifics here, their website helps the user navigate the system, making getting to and from your destination not only easy, but pretty cheaply to boot. Give their [Trip Planner](#) a try or visit ttc.ca/Trip_planner/index.jsp



Car Pooling

Sharing a ride with others who are looking to get outdoors is a great way to save money and help minimize your impact on the environment. You might look into [SmartCommute](#), for example, for your travel needs.



GO Train/Bus

The [*GO Transit*](#) system takes the rider much further afield than the TTC. Barrie, Stouffville, Milton, Hamilton, Aldershot, Brantford to name but a few destinations. Their train and bus service can be used to get you to or very close to many hiking areas in this book.



Co-Ownership

Sometimes neighbours or family can share the cost of a vehicle, splitting the costs on a per use basis or it might just be a 50/50 arrangement with each agreeing to use the vehicle every other week, for example.

Outdoor Clubs

One of the many advantages of becoming a member of an outing club is that transportation can be arranged for a very low cost, through the group. Sometimes, members are driving to a hiking area on their own and sharing the cost of gas is a cheap way to get outdoors. The clubs are especially nice for people new to hiking and the outdoors, for they often have experienced hike leaders who can offer advice and assistance for the neophyte.

Toronto

[*Toronto Outdoor Club*](#)

[*Outdoor Club of East York*](#)

[*Toronto Hiking and Conservation Club*](#)

[*High Park Hiking Club*](#)

[*Toronto Bruce Trail Club*](#)

Oakville

[*Pathfinders Hiking Group of Oakville*](#) (Oakville program for seniors)

Burlington

[*Halton Outdoor Club*](#)

Hamilton

[*Hamilton Trail Blazers*](#)

[*Hamilton Naturalist's Club*](#)

Vaughan

[*Oak Ridges Trail Association*](#)

So, as you can see, there's more than one way to get yourself into the great outdoors. You don't need to own or lease a car.

What to Take Along

This is somewhat of a loaded topic for what to pack for your day hike is dependent upon your destination, weather conditions (present and forecast), outdoor skills and experience, risk factors as well as how much you want to carry on your back. But let's start with a few basics.

A Day Pack

This isn't a shoulder bag, or "cross body bag" that you sling over one shoulder, but a pack that fits properly over both shoulders and can be adjusted for fit and comfort. Few packs are waterproof, but they will be highly water resistant. If you need to keep something dry, pack it in a plastic bag, inside the pack.

If there is a high chance of a prolonged rain, I'll take a 30 litre "dry bag" and slip that into the backpack and then pack everything into that, seal the top and presto, we have a completely waterproof compartment for everything.



Pack sizes are typically expressed in volume as litres. For example a typical day pack would be 30L or thirty litres of volume. I have one favourite pack that I take on most non-winter hikes, the Osprey Comet 30. Lots of pockets, adjustable and removable hip belt, lots of grab handles, reflective tagging, durable zippers, comfortable and widely adjustable shoulder straps. I especially like it for the padded laptop sleeve so I can use the bag for daily commuting. There's lots of other features, but you get the idea. I think it cost me about \$125 a couple years ago.

For winter day hikes, requiring more cold weather gear, I used a pack from The North Face, the Patrol 34. It's a little more specialized and has some great features for winter hiking.

At any rate get some advice from your local hiking store about what you'll need.

Below is a partial list of items you might want to include in your pack. Again, it's dependent upon all the variables noted above.

- Cell phone (*fully charged*)
- Camera (*with spare batteries*)
- First aid kit (*with instructions*)
- Cold pack⁹
- Emergency blanket¹⁰
- Rain jacket
- Emergency Whistle¹¹
- A bit of cash
- Extra socks
- Compass and map (*if you know how to use them*)
- Water (*1L per person per day - more if it's hot weather*)¹²
- ID
- Trail snacks (I carry around an extra 2,000 calories of energy bars)
- Insect repellent
- Small folding knife
- Sunglasses
- A bit of toilet paper (*just in case you're caught short*)
- Hat

⁹ I only take one along during hot and humid weather. This is a plastic pouch that contains two chemicals, that, when combined, makes the pouch contents cold. Last year I was hiking with a small group, when, near the end of the walk, an older fellow began to suffer symptoms of heatstroke. The group eventually decided to get him to sit on the banks of a stream and dangle his legs in the cool water while we cooled him with damp towels, to get his body temperature down. He was fine, but it was an inexpensive lesson for all of us to keep an eye out for symptoms of heatstroke. See separate article in the first aid section.

¹⁰ This is a waterproof, flexible, super thin, reflective plastic sheet. It reflects radiant energy back to the user for warmth in difficult conditions. Printed with emergency survival tips on the back. Specifically I use the SOL Survival Blanket.

¹¹ Three short blasts on a whistle or horn is the universal signal for help.

¹² If I'm off for a longer day hike (4-8hours) I also take along electrolyte powder and a small container to mix it in - all the more so if it's a hot humid day and sweating profusely is an issue. No need to dehydrate and encourage heat stroke. Learn more about dehydration and heatstroke in the first aid section of this book

- Sunscreen
- Any personal medicines
- Pencil and paper
- Hiking/walking poles

Obviously if you're going out on a cold day, you'll need to add other clothing items. Same for snowy days. As the conditions get more difficult, you'll need to add more emergency equipment to your pack.

Hiking/Walking Poles

During nice weather and easy (day) hikes, I rarely take hiking poles along with me. However, during the winter months where the footing is unsure, even with mini-crampons on my boots, hiking poles provide greater stability. When I carry a heavy pack, especially over difficult terrain, I also use poles for balance and a bit of extra support. I've taken to using the MSR Talus TR3 pole. It's a three piece, telescoping affair that has easy length adjustment making it easy to alter their reach while on the fly.



Not only do trekking poles help a bit with balance and stability, but they have at least a half dozen other uses;

- **Depth gauge.** On more than one occasion, it was useful to know the depth of snow or water
- **Tent pole.** When setting up a temporary tarp against inclement weather, the adjustability of trekking poles means you might be able to use them at one or both ends to support a simple shelter

- **First Aid.** With length adjustability, a pole might be used as a splint to immobilize/stabilize a broken or sprained limb
- **Communication.** When beyond earshot, two poles held overhead in an X means, I need help immediately. Alternatively, two poles waved (usually frantically) overhead can mean the same thing. Just get your signals straight. After crossing a stream, the leader might put both poles in one hand, held in the middle, raised over the head to signal OK. Again, just get your signals organized before time
- **Self Arrest.** In winter, while crossing or descending steep snowy slopes, carry one pole horizontally in both hands. In the event of a fall and subsequent slide, you can dig the sharp end into the snow to slow or arrest the slide
- **Animal Deterrent.** When it comes to scaring away animals, there's nothing like looking bigger than you really are. Waving your poles above your head while yelling and acting like a crazed maniac usually does the trick
- **Selfie-Stick.** Yes ... a selfie-stick. If you can't go for a walk in the woods without taking a picture of yourself, then get one of those camera mounts from *Stick Pic* and mount it on the end of your pole. Clickty click.

Clothing

Much can be written about apparel for hiking, but to make a long story short, Ill just offer a few general observations and comments;

- Avoid cotton clothing, especially socks, when hiking. Cotton does not have the wicking properties to pull perspiration from the skin and transfer it to the outside for evaporation, keeping you comfortable. In nice weather, this is only an inconvenience and slightly uncomfortable, but in cold weather, this lack of

wicking can allow the skin to remain wet, contributing to the hypothermia¹³

- Do wear lightweight synthetics with their moisture wicking and quick drying properties
- Long sleeved shirts and full pants whenever possible for sun and bug protection
- Wide-brimmed sun hat to avoid sunburn and help shade eyes.
- Wool socks (preferably merino wool) wick moisture from the skin, keeping the foot drier and minimizing blistering. The anti-microbial properties of wool means you can wear them for a few days and they won't get stinky. SmartWool, Icebreaker and Darn Tough are a few brands to look for
- Merino wool underwear share the same properties as socks and are highly recommended, especially in cold weather.

Some Trail Safety Notes

- Always let someone responsible know where you are going, who you're going with, what route you plan to take, which trails you plan to walk and when you expect to return. Then, when you return, give them a call or otherwise let them know you're home, so they don't call the police to get out a search party for you
- Do not deviate from your planned route, unless strictly necessary
- Do not take "short cuts" unless you are intimately familiar with the trails and terrain
- Be prepared for changing weather
- When hiking in small groups, don't get too strung out along the trail. It isn't a race. Faster hikers should slow down or at the very least wait for the main group to catch up at pre-determined intervals or locations

¹³ A condition in which the body loses heat, faster than it can replace it. Hypothermia can result in severe shivering, hallucinations, confusion and even death. For a more complete discussion on hypothermia and it's symptoms, see the [Mayo Clinic](#).

- Less experienced or slower hikers should not be left alone. Always put an experienced hiker or hike leader with them
- Take it easy. Don't push yourself or group too hard. Hiking is a great way to get or stay in shape, but you'll hurt yourself if you don't pay attention to signs of fatigue
- Do not stare at the heels of the hiker ahead of you. Be aware of your surroundings
- Do not wear earphones or earbuds while hiking
- Do not feed, pet or play with wild animals, under any conditions¹⁴
- Be aware of the time of day and how many hours of sunlight you have before nightfall
- Know when to call it a day and turn back
- Stay in one place if you become lost or separated from your group
- Do not drink any surface or ground water that you come across, no matter how inviting it seems ¹⁵

¹⁴ See section on handling bears and coyotes elsewhere in this book.

¹⁵ See section on obtaining safe drinking water, elsewhere in this book.

Iconography and Trail Rating Explanation

Near the beginning of each hike description, you'll find icons that suggest what facilities and allowable activities will be available at or near the trailhead, or along the trail itself. While every effort has been made to provide accurate information, facilities and allowable activities change seasonally, are weather dependent and alter over time. Few, if any, activities are supervised.

 Hiking/Walking trails	 Fishing on site, permits may be required
 At least some trails or portions of trails are Wheelchair accessible	 Campgrounds on site
 Cross country skiing in winter on at least some trails	 Pokémon has been spotted
 Snowshoeing in winter on at least some trails	 Bird watching, scenic views
 Horseback riding on at least some trails	 Orienteering and/or Geocaching
 Swimming in natural bodies of water or artificial pools. Rarely, if ever, supervised.	 Washrooms on site
 Canoeing/Kayaking	 Payment for some facilities may be Required, usually car entrance or parking
 DG Disc golf course	 Food or snack bar
 Bikes allowed on at least some trails	

TRAIL RATING SYSTEM

Under no circumstances should you take these trail ratings as a completely objective or accurate predictor of what any given trail will be like on any given day. There are many variables that will affect trail conditions and subsequent ratings, including, but not limited to; weather, your physical conditioning, trail condition from heavy use, local floods or erosion, fallen trees, missing foot bridges, detours and re-routing, private land access changes and of course how any individual subjectively experiences the hike. My ratings below are based upon my experiences with these trails. Your experiences will vary.



Easiest - Suitable for people of all ages, including children and seniors in fair, physical condition¹⁶. Good for casual walks. Little to no preparation necessary. Trail surface hardened, usually with crushed limestone and relatively even. Often wheelchair accessible.¹⁷ Little to no elevation gain. Way-finding rarely, if ever, required. Trail is well marked and defined. Trail length typically (but not always) less than 2km requiring less than 2 hours to complete, with fair weather.



Easy - Suitable for people of most ages who are in fair to good physical condition.¹⁸ Some preparation is usually necessary. Trail surface generally firm and even. Some elevation gain likely. Way-finding unlikely, but possible. Trails well-marked and defined. Trail length usually (but not

¹⁶ I cannot emphasize this strongly enough; if you ever have any question about your physical health or ability to participate in outdoor activities, such as hiking, consult your doctor or health care professional.

¹⁷ Always call ahead to confirm accessibility for walkers, wheelchairs and similar.

¹⁸ Excluding young children.

always) 2-3km requiring 2-3 hours to complete, with fair weather.



Moderate - Suitable for people of most ages in good physical condition who have hiking/trekking experience.¹⁹ Preparation required. Notable elevation gains. Way-finding likely necessary, but trails usually well-marked and usually well defined. Trail surface variable. Trail length usually 3-8km taking 3-5 hours to complete, with fair weather.



Challenging - Suitable for people of most ages who are in very good physical condition.²⁰ Terrain will be hilly and trail surface largely uneven. Way-finding usually required. Trails usually well marked, but there may be sections which are poorly marked or not marked at all. Trail length 8-12km requiring 5-7 hours to complete, with fair weather.



Difficult - due to a combination of terrain, special/changing conditions, length and relative remoteness. Trail surface predominantly uneven and difficult. Significant elevation gain. Should only be undertaken by experienced, fit, adult hikers with proper equipment and skills. Preparation and planning definitely required. Way-finding necessary. Large sections of trail may be poorly marked or not marked at all. Map reading and compass skills necessary. Trail length greater than 12km possibly requiring numerous 6 hour days to complete, with fair weather. There are no “difficult” trails in this book.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Way Finding

This is not meant to be a course in navigation.

In the simplest terms, way-finding, or navigating, is any system of signs, symbols and/or maps that helps one determine their location, orientation and direction of travel (heading), relative to a destination or departure point.

For example, when using the Bruce Trail system, one should know that the main trail is blazed in white and the side trails blazed in blue and that there is a marking system to indicate left or right turns.

The difficulty of course is that systems vary from one place to another. Signs and markers in one province may be different in another province. Even within Ontario, there are numerous signs and markers for various trails that are administered by various organizations. There is no one system that everyone adheres to. For that reason, familiarity with a number of different systems is important if extensive way-finding is required for any given hike.

Knowing how to use a compass and map is one of the more important skills for way-finding, but is beyond the scope of this book. There are plenty of books, videos and courses that will help you learn map reading and orientation skills.

Measurement

All distance and measurements in this book are in the metric system; millimetres (mm), metres (m) and kilometres (km), unless otherwise stated.

Elevation

All elevation figures noted in this book or found on the maps are in meters Above MEAN Sea Level (AMSL) and are taken from the interface of Google Earth.

GPS Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude)

Like the elevation figures used in this book, these are pulled from the Google Earth interface and are expressed in degrees, minutes, seconds (DMS). Other GPS coordinates could be used, (such as the DMM or MM systems) but I grew up using the DMS system, so I've used it here. While they have been checked and double checked, always use your common sense if navigating with smartphone GPS. An explanation of latitude and longitude is beyond the scope of this book, but good videos can be found on YouTube.

Notes on Cellphone Location Services

I see a lot of people using the location and positioning systems on their smartphones - and that's great. Still, be aware that smartphones are not infallible and can prove unreliable in the woods or in remote areas. If your health and safety are going to depend on knowing where you are, get suitable map and compass reading skills.

Smartphones determine their location in a combination of ways. Sometimes they will use only one system and at other times they may combine the methods noted below.

GPS. Back in the late 1990s cell phone began to have the ability to detect the signals from a constellation of US satellites (originally NAVSTAR) that sent time and location signals to receivers in GPS units (from such companies as Garmin). When a cellphone can pick up three satellite signals, they can, through triangulation, determine a 2 dimensional location on the surface of the earth. If they can pick up at least four signals, then they can also calculate elevation. Other GPS systems include the Russian *GLONASS*, the Chinese *BeiDou-2* and the European *Galileo*, to name a few.

Augmented or Synthetic GPS. Cell phones now have an enormous amount of computational power and memory. They can store present and future location data for many GPS satellites and use that information for hours, days and even weeks ahead. You turn on your cell phone, but you might not be able to receive satellite data. Your cell phone has stored the location of the orbiting satellites in its application memory and can pull that info out to determine location and possibly elevation. Not as accurate as real-time data, but a good approximation.

Cell ID. Carriers (like Rogers or AT&T) already knew how to locate phones before GPS. They knew which cell tower any given phone was using and through triangulation, could come up with a pretty good estimate of location. Most smartphones use pings to and from cell towers to determine your position and as such, they are only estimates. Usually fairly close, but the more cell towers, the more accurate they tend to be. When out in the woods, your cell phone will not be particularly accurate or reliable as any given tower might cover an area of many square kilometres.

WIFI. Not too dissimilar to Cell ID, but since WIFI covers a much small area, and are more numerous, locations tend to be more accurate. Typical home WIFI routers transmit signals about 45m indoors and up to 90m outdoors. These figures are much dependent upon the physical nature of any obstructions and the frequency upon which the transmitter operates. WIFI is a rare commodity in the wilderness or remote areas.

Inertial Sensors. Cell phones today are usually equipped with a chip or chips that can help determine location even when no outside signals are available. Most have a compass (magnetometer), an accelerometer (to determine direction of

travel) and a gyroscope (to determine moments of turning). Combined, these sensors can give a good estimate of where you are, but only for a matter of minutes. The longer you use the system, the less accurate it becomes. A good example of how it might work for you is if you walk or drive into a tunnel and are no longer able to receive a cell signal. The chip set knows your direction of travel and rate of speed and can sense if you turn or stop. It would probably give you a good indication of how far through the tunnel you've gone, but the longer the tunnel the less accurate it becomes. This is handy if you're using your cellphone for navigation outdoors in a canyon, say, or along the base of a cliff where cell reception might be poor to non-existent.

There are a few other ways a cell phone can determine its location, including; bluetooth beacons, WIFI fingerprinting and ultrasonic, but these are not really suitable or usable out on a hiking trail.

The Bottom Line in Way Finding

All the best electronic gear in the world is no substitute for common sense, observations, reasoning skills and experience. When you have a map and compass (on your smartphone or an actual compass) know how to use them and can check your cellphone, you can get a pretty accurate take of where you are at any given time, but it takes practice and experience. I've made every effort in this book to provide good guidance on the hikes and overview of the area, but you need to take local conditions into account at all times. You need to observe and make conclusions about your position and then act with the best information you have available to you. This book and associated maps are not a substitute for a proper topographical map, a compass, good navigation skills and experience. The maps in this book should not be used for navigation or risk assessment purposes.

Navigating the Bruce Trail

The Bruce Trail is a major multi-use trail running from Tobermory in the North to Niagara Falls in the south. For the most part it runs along the Niagara Escarpment and so features in at least a few of the hikes in this book.

Knowing how to navigate on the Bruce is important for full enjoyment and safety of this well known and well used trail.



The Bruce Trail is maintained by various Bruce Trail Club chapters all along the trail and the work is done by volunteers. They are the ones who instal and repair bridges, stairs and stiles. They also negotiate land use rights with land owners and prepare the maps and reroutings of trails. It's a lot of work for these people and users should keep in mind their efforts when using the trail.

The work is overseen by the Bruce Trail Conservancy and they put out a substantial map book that is usually updated every year. The sale of that book is a major source of income for the conservancy. If you intend to use the Bruce Trail more than just occasionally, I strongly suggest you pick up a current copy. The full reference guide (binder included) sells for \$39.95 to non members and \$34.95 for members. Annual membership in the Bruce Trail is \$50. Contact them for details.

As you traverse the various sections of the Bruce Trail you'll come across trail signs that not only help you determine your location, but help you with important information.

Bruce Trail Navigation				
Main Trail Blazes In White				
				
Side Trail Blazes In Blue				
<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Straight B Right Turn or Bear Right C Left Turn or Bear Left D Tuxedo Blaze to help Markings stand out On light colored trees 				

Many side trails are named after volunteers who have served in the organization for a long time or have contributed in some important way. Cam Snell, Tom East, Glen Cross and John Haigh are a few of the names you'll come across on the side trails.

Other signs may include warnings, re-route notices, distance to major roads or next town, etc. There will also be posted maps



The sign here (left) indicates there is a side trail, off the main trail and will be marked with blue blazes. It gives the name of the side trail (Lookout Side Trail) the length (1.1km), what can be seen there (a prominence of land (lookout point), 1650 ft. above sea level) and whether or not it joins onto the main trail further ahead, or loops or is just an out and back linear trail.

along the way, indicating where you are, what's nearby and supporting or related trails.

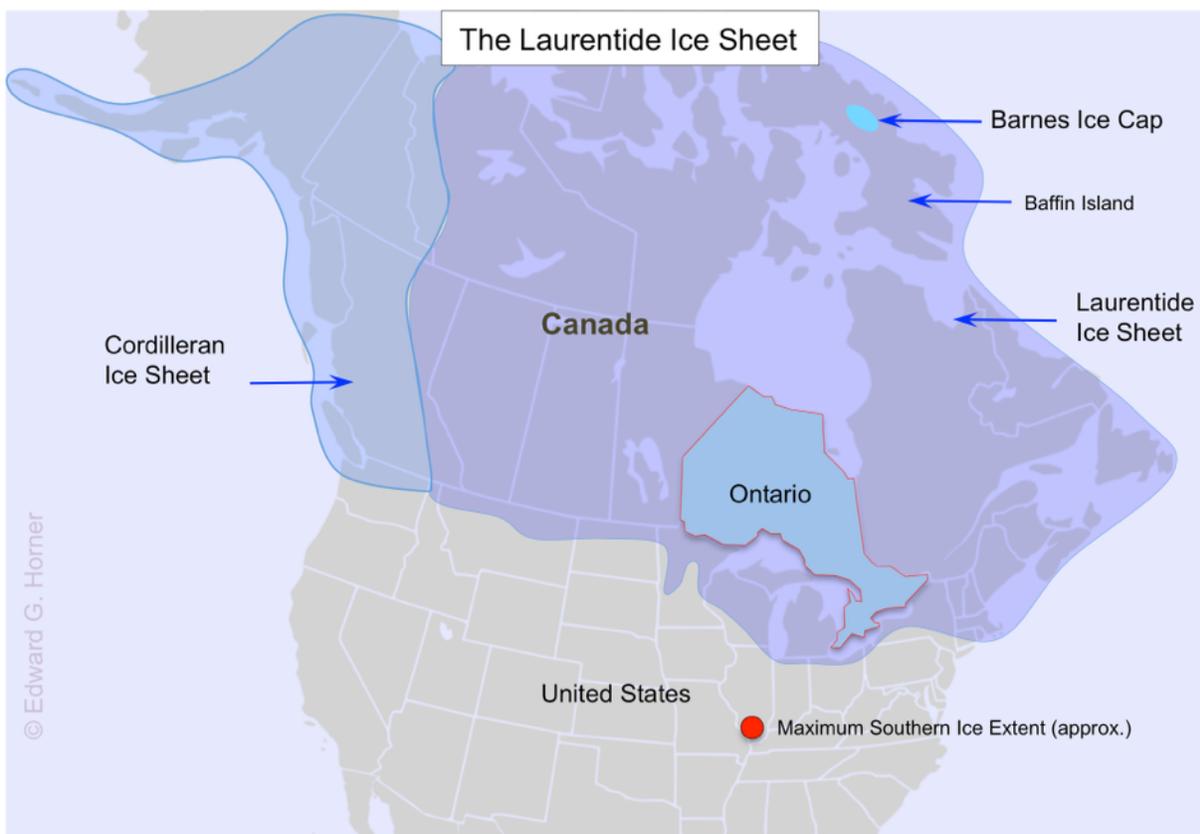
One of the things I've noticed about the Bruce Trails signage is that it's occasionally in feet and miles rather than the usual metres and kilometres. No big deal, as any smartphone can calculate or convert one to the other. I mention it only because you have to be careful of the distances. You may also notice that sometimes the signage will be placed by either the Bruce Trail *Association* or the Bruce Trail *Conservancy* ... I don't think there's a practical difference from the hiker's point of view.

[The Bruce Trail App](#). You can carry the full trail in your phone, all 42 topographical maps, all updates, re-routings, cautions and closures. Also tips, accommodation, tracking and planning. You can switch between Apple maps and Bruce Trail maps. Map pans as you move. Developed by Johnson Outdoor and at least part of the proceeds go to the Bruce Trail Conservancy. Last time I looked, it could be downloaded for \$19.99 for iPhone, iPad.



The Laurentide Ice Sheet

Much of the surface geology of Ontario and the adjacent northern American states can't be talked about without discussing the Laurentide Ice Sheet. The thawing/freezing and advance/retreat cycles of this huge ice field helped form much of Ontario's topography.



From about 2.5 million years ago up to about 20,000 years ago, much of Canada and the northern US experienced various ice ages. Ice thickness ranged up to 3.2km. and total surface area of nearly 13,400,000 km² (combined Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheet). While there were thawing periods over that span of time, the generally accepted southern extent of the ice was the Ohio and Missouri River valleys.

As ice advanced and retreated, it scoured out valleys, left glacial deposits in the form of moraines, eskers, kettle lakes and drumlins to name but a few of the geological features of southern Ontario. Not only was the landscape affected by the movement of ice, but as the ice retreated, vast quantities of meltwater poured across the landscape gouging out ravines, eroding rock and generally marking the landscape with its presence. The karst topography of the *Warsaw Caves Conservation Area* is an outstanding example of the power of the meltwater.

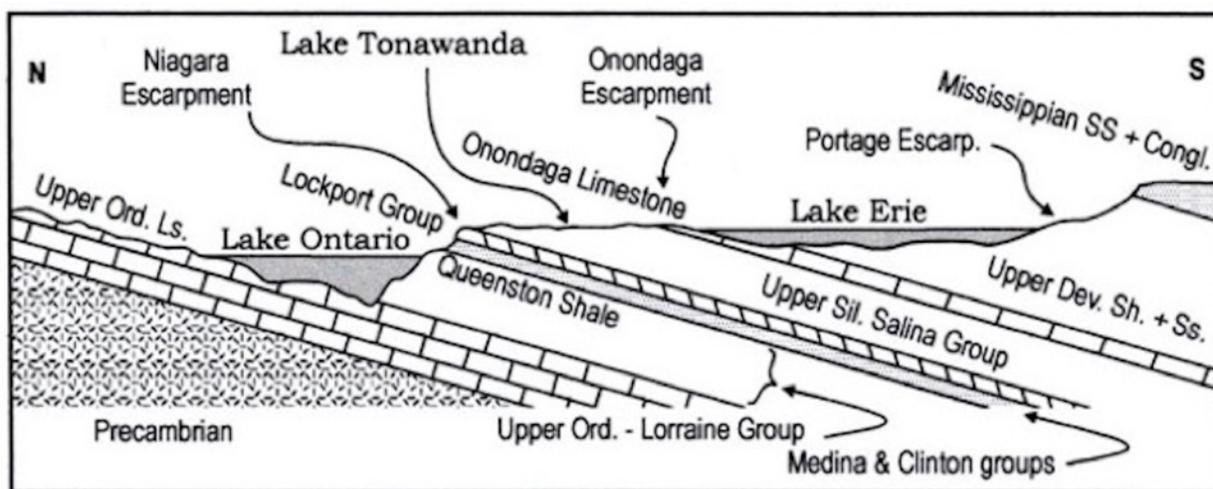
The final retreat of the ice sheet was some 20,000 years ago and what was left on the landscape is very much what we see today.

The Barnes Ice Cap, on Baffin Island, is Canada's oldest ice and last surviving remnant of the Laurentide Ice Sheet.

The Niagara Escarpment

A number of hikes in this book will take the traveler along, up and over the escarpment to experience some of the more interesting geology of this section of the province.

The Niagara Escarpment is one of southern Ontario's major geological formations, running from Niagara Falls, northwards for 475km to Tobermory on the Niagara Peninsula. In general, it's about 100m in height, but this varies along its length.



Schematic courtesy of <http://www.amherststatepark.org/ASP/geology.html>

Although this formation looks as though it was an 'uplifting' of land or a 'displacement' upwards of the land, it is in fact, the result of unequal erosion.

The escarpment's cap rock is a relatively hard *dolostone*, or limestone, while the underlying formation is a softer, and more easily weathered, shale. As rivers and/or glacial melt water, eroded the dolostone, it exposed the weaker underlying shale, causing it to erode or wash away over millions of years. Large pieces of the cap rock would separate and form "crevice caves," caverns and outliers along the edge of the escarpment. This 'calving' is quite evident in areas like Mono Cliffs and Devil's Glen

Provincial Parks or the Nottawasaga and Rockwood Conservation Areas, to name just a few.



View from atop the Niagara Escarpment at the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area

The Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt

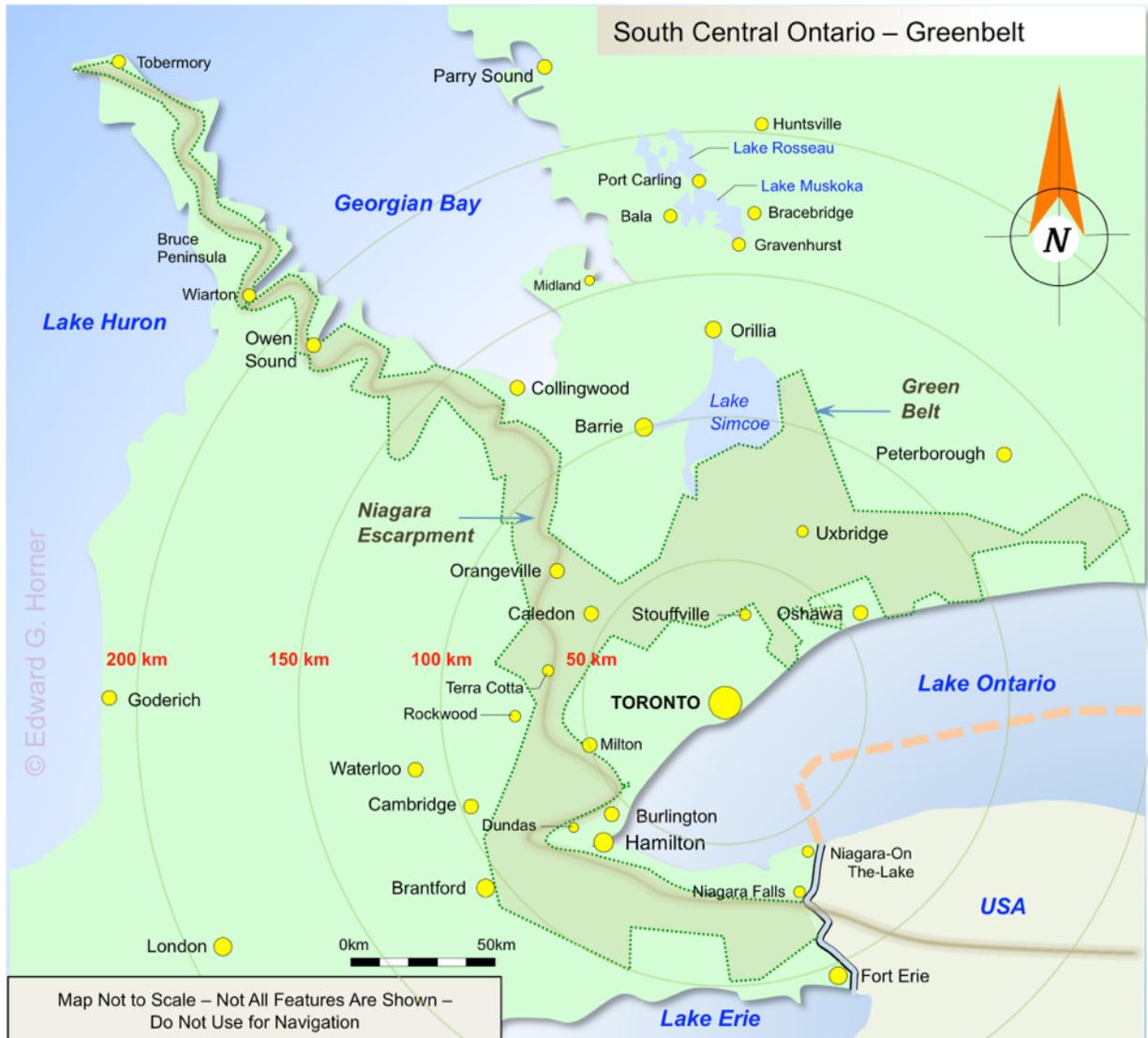
Some of the hikes in this book take you along, through or over the Oak Ridges Moraine. In geological terms, a “moraine” is a deposition of unconsolidated glacial debris, typically containing rocks ranging in size from large boulders to tiny “glacial flour.”²¹ Formed some 12,000 years ago, The Oak Ridges Moraine extends from Caledon in the west to Rice Lake in the east - covering some 190,000ha, and, like the Niagara Escarpment, is a major geological feature in southern Ontario.



A map showing the Oak Ridges Moraine in southern Ontario, Canada. Map created by NormanEinstein, May 27, 2005.

In 1989 a coalition of twenty-five citizens groups formed *Save The Oak Ridges Moraine* (STORM) with the main goal of lobbying the Government of Ontario to create legislation to protect the ecologically sensitive moraine. Their efforts have had a major impact on the government creating and enforcing legislation that

²¹ Rock flour, or glacial flour, consists of fine-grained, silt-sized particles of rock, generated by mechanical grinding of bedrock by glacial erosion.



helps protect the moraine from excessive urban, industrial and commercial development.

The Oak Ridges Moraine (combined with the Niagara Escarpment) form the backbone of the protected land that essentially rings Toronto and the Golden Horseshoe, forming a protected *Greenbelt* zone. This zone is a permanently protected tract of green space, farmland, wetlands, forest, field and watersheds roughly outlined on the map above.

Some of the Oak Ridges Moraine has been protected through outright purchase of land, through the *Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust*. Among the goals of the land trust is to preserve or create habitat connectivity so various animal species can find their way from one habitat to another. This helps preserve biodiversity and create natural lands for a wide range of species to flourish.

Outdoor Photography Tips

A lot of people like to preserve the memories of their trips, in part for themselves, but also to share with friends and family. Others like to write blogs, post pictures on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. This community and practice of sharing, is, I think, a good and fine thing. When people see others having fun in the outdoors, it may encourage them to take a trip. When people are taken on a hiking trip or a walk in nature, they quickly learn to respect and appreciate the great outdoors.

When I hike, I take along a notebook and pencils and at least one digital camera in addition to my iPhone. I also pack a spare battery for the camera and a full, recharge pack for the iPhone. No reason to run out of juice.

TIPS FOR TAKING DIGITAL PICTURES WHILE ON THE TRAIL

You may just be taking a relaxing day hike around Christie Lake or a leisurely stroll along the at the Terra Cotta Conservation Area, but there are some great shots to be had and stories to be told from that time well-spent.

Adventure photography is almost unique in the world of photography in that it's almost exclusively undertaken by the participant. Race car drivers don't usually take their own photos while racing and baseball players don't usually get to capture themselves as they slide into second base. In contrast the vast majority of adventure photographs are taken by the person doing the activity, from climbing Half Dome to trekking the West Coast Trail. Adventure photographers are doers!

Being a participant in the activity puts the photographer in a unique position to cover not only the content of activity, but also the drama and back-story.

Planning. Every trip is unique. From the first time kayak paddler to the experienced mountaineer, each person will be telling a different story. Start planning what you want to show and tell about the trip long before the trip itself. Maybe you want to capture shots of your four buddies enjoying a beer while pouring over topographical maps of the hiking trip they're planning, then a few shots of them trying on packs at their local outfitters and a shot of the garage bill to get the muffler fixed and the car ready for the trip. Don't forget the shot of Buddy, sitting in the back seat sleeping, while his "friends" take a permanent marker to his eyebrows – you get the idea.

Environmental. When you're out enjoying the activity a lot of opportunities for great shots will present themselves. Sometimes you just want to jump in and "get the shot." Often that's OK, but weigh "getting the shot" against the safety of yourself and the person you're trying to capture. No picture is worth endangering the safety of any member of the party.

The Gear. I can't begin to suggest what camera to use, as there are so many great products and resources out there. What I do know is that some great photographers, like Ansel Adams, dragged 16 stone worth of camera gear and equipment through the wilds of Yosemite Canyon, but in those days, he had to – there were no such things as a Cannon PowerShot ELPH 130 IS – a point-and-shoot camera more capable than anything Adams could have dreamed of, in a package about the size of a deck of cards. Mind you, a digital SLR sporting 20 mega-pixels of resolution is more capable still, allowing for quick lens changes, filter additions and greater control over light, but you still have to be willing to lug all that around with you – and maybe you are.

I'll tell you I use a little Cannon, PowerShot SD1400 IS with 14.1 mega pixel resolution and that's plenty for my type of

photography. Its main advantage is minimal size, of course, but it also has settings for snow, beach, low-light, stop action, etc, making it a snap to pick just what I need for any given circumstance. It even has a video mode to take action shots. As a back-up, I have my iPhone 5 packing an 8 mega pixel auto-focus camera and as such, I have to say it's taken a lot of great shots and, while housed in an Otter Box protective case, survived a 10m bounce down the side of a steep, rocky gully. Sweet.

I generally carry my little camera around in a shock and water resistant pouch attached to my belt. It's easy to get to but protected against most weather. More importantly, it's handy if I think there's a shot to be had.

Light.

Early morning or late afternoon often presents rare lighting opportunities for interesting shots. Sometimes light fog will make familiar subjects look totally eerie and alien. If you're above the fog with the sun behind you, try taking a shot of your shadow as it plays out across the fog. If you can protect your camera, don't be afraid to get out into the rain where you'll find lots of interesting shots just waiting for you.

Sometimes, the sun may be shining on the tree tops and out in open areas, but once you get into a forested area, light can be tricky. If you're using a compact point-and-shoot with built in flash, be aware of the limitations of that flash. Rarely, do these types of cameras have a flash that goes much beyond 3m – usually less. That means if your subject is more than 3m away, the flash will be pretty much useless. In fact worse, since the shutter speed will automatically increase as it's geared to the flash – usually resulting in underexposure.

In low-light, you either have to brace yourself against a tree to

minimize camera movement or use a tripod. In low light, the camera shutter will be slower, allowing for greater exposure time, so any motion will cause blurry pictures.

Some of the more sophisticated point-and-shoots have a low-light setting mode which can be turned on and off. I've learned to use this feature on my Cannon. My camera also has a warning light that comes on if the camera is moving too much for a good shot, but it can be over-ridden by pressing the shutter release. Read the manual and figure out how to use it.

Generally, you should have the light source at your back with the subject facing into the light for best results.

People

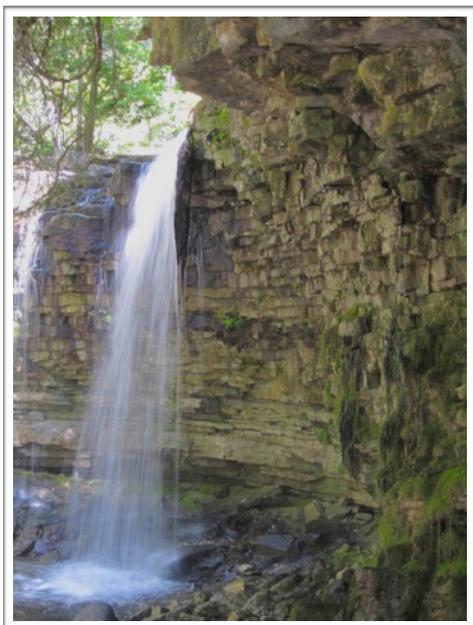
Be sure to get some good shots of your friends and hiking companions. In my experience anyone in the shot who isn't occupying at least 1/3 of the frame isn't going to be large enough for easy recognition. When you take people's photos, focus on them, not the surroundings. People love to see themselves in flattering photos, doing interesting things. Most digital cameras now have the ability to recognize when a portrait photo is being taken and will alter the settings, automatically, to bring the face into focus and slightly blur the background.

Around Water. It's almost needless to say, but shooting in and around water requires special care in the handling of your gear. One quick dunk into a creek and your standard camera is a paper weight. Water, however also offers some tremendous possibilities when shooting; currents, reflections, white caps, white water, waterfalls, rushing rivers. Look for reflections on calm water at sunrise and sunset. The best reflections are usually found when the water is between you and the brightest part of the sky. Try different photo speeds on moving water as

this can produce some interesting effects.

Waterfalls.

One of our favourite subjects is waterfalls, and why not? There's the interplay of colour and light. Then there's the motion and drama of the plunge. The foliage around waterfalls is often lush and plentiful. All good for dramatic shots.



Waterfall shot with a slightly slower shutter speed to enhance the motion of the water.

Hopefully your camera allows you to control the shutter speed. A slightly slower speed will allow a bit of blurring in the water motion, resulting in a beautiful cascade, but you have to hold the camera quite still or risk ruining the shot. Too slow a shutter speed and the water looks less like water and more like ice. Try a few shots with different settings and pick the best. Whenever I can, I use a tripod and then set the timer so I don't have to have hand my hands on the camera and risk movement.

Landscapes. If your camera allows for aperture control, set it smaller. This will increase the depth of field and bring the foreground and distance into focus at the same time. A shallow field of depth will have near objects in focus and further objects out of focus. Most point-and-shoots will have a "landscape" setting, which automatically sets the aperture smaller for that increase of depth of field.

Stand Still. On every trip, I make a point of coming to a complete stop for at least ten minutes. I focus on the ground immediately around me. I pay attention to small things that too often are

overlooked. I stoop and inspect. I take a twig and look under the leaves laying on the ground or at the bottom of mushrooms. I now carry a little mirror to inspect under low leaves to see what bugs are hiding there, without disturbing them. There can be a world of fascinating photo subject within two meters of your feet.

Macro Lens. If your camera is equipped with a macro setting you can use it to take really close-up pictures of, say, the bottoms of mushrooms, or little interesting bugs – all with crystal clear focus. Dark places (like the undersides of mushrooms) will often benefit from the flash.



The underside of a mushroom, using the macro setting on the camera, with flash.

Self-Timers. Almost every point-and-shoot, even the least expensive ones, now have a shutter timer. This allows you to set the camera for, say, 15 seconds before snapping the picture. This allows you to set the camera down, walk into frame, pose with your buddies and get a group shot. Also great for the solo hiker. You do have to take the time to ensure you know how they work. Setting the time has the added advantage of “hand free” operation, meaning that you don’t run the risk of a blurry shot from a hand-held position.



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Tripods. Get one and use it. You don’t have to have a great honking industrial set up, just one of the little “GorillaPods”

from *Joby* will work great. These are tripods that screw directly to the bottom of your point-and-shoot and have flexible legs that you can either use on a flat surface (as with any tripod) or bend and wrap around a tree branch, fence post or bicycle frame. Easily uncoupled (leaving the mounting bracket in place) the flexible short leg segment stores easily in the outside pocket of your pack. Generally less than \$25.



Black & white, using macro lens setting. What caught my eye, here, was the interplay of the lines in the hand and the lines of the stones.

Batteries. Always carry a spare set or two with you. I know the lithium-ion, proprietary ones are expensive, but weigh that against not having a spare when that perfect shot lines up. I also carry an extra memory card – they’re so cheap these days, I don’t know why anyone wouldn’t. Try amazon for good prices and relatively dependable delivery times.

Photoshop and/or iPhoto. These photo editing applications can enhance and improve many photos, but they can’t take a poorly composed or uninteresting photo and make it LIFE-worthy. You do still have to choose interesting material, take time to compose and light it and get the camera settings right. Still they can hide a lot of sins.

Practice, Practice, Practice

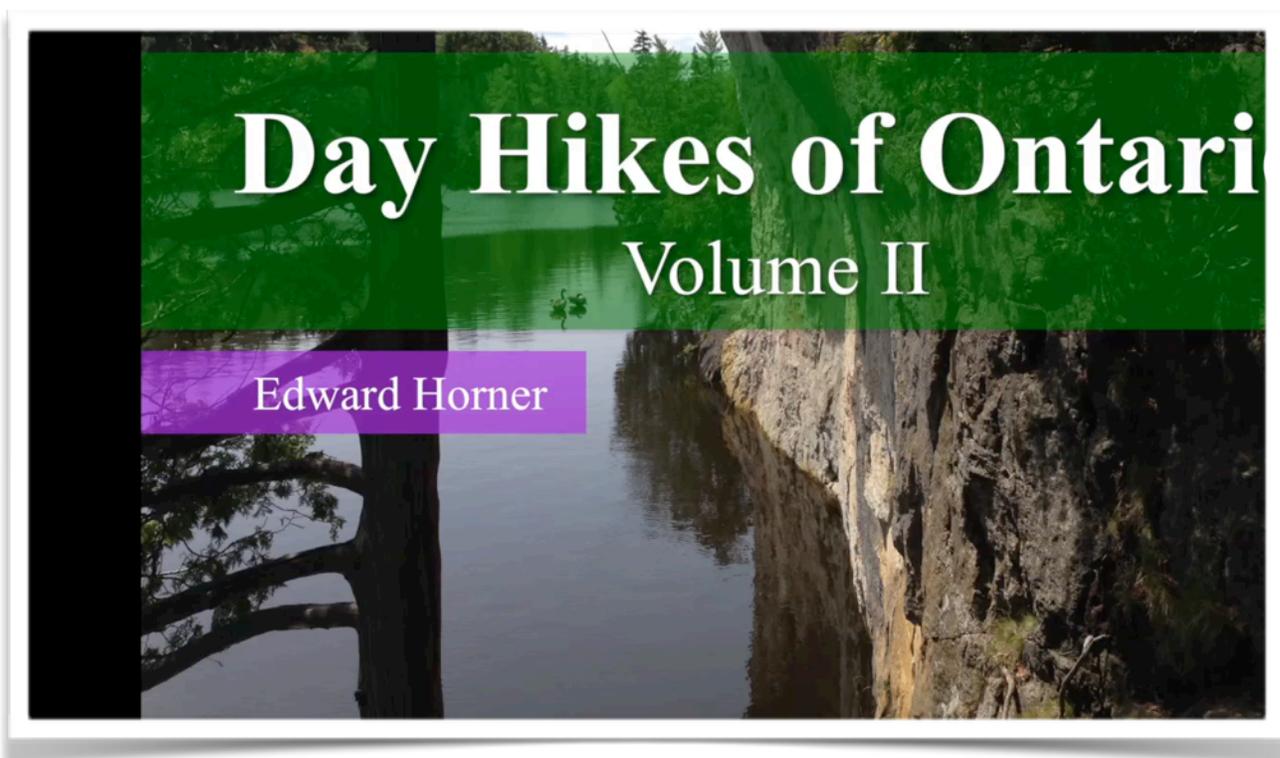
Back in the days of film, just practicing was a major expense – all that film and developing – never mind how long you had to wait for the film to come back from the lab. I won’t even mention the major undertaking of developing your own film. These days you just take the memory card out of your camera and snap it into the port on your laptop and download instantly.

Once into your computer you can make good use of the “delete”

key and get rid of the pictures that are out of focus, poorly composed or just plain dull. If something is over or under exposed, iPhoto or PhotoShop will take care of that by lightening or darkening shadows. You can then make black and white copies, add sepia tone or fade/enhance the colour. Lots of possibilities.

Slide Shows and Movies

Using Apple's own Photo app, for example, you can select photos from your most recent trip (or combination of any photos and any trips) and make a slide show to share with others. You can even add royalty free music, from websites like bensound.com to enhance the mood.



If you want more professional looking presentations, you might want to try Apple's iMovie, where you can edit sound, add photos or video, try various transitions between the elements and round it

all off with credits before and/or after the movie. Websites like looperman.com can provide short instrumental audio clips that are royalty free, to registered users. Above is a 2 min. clip of such a movie.

Then when you're done editing, iPhoto allows you to easily organize your photos by date, place, event or person. You can even put together albums and slideshows with the built in features. When ready, select the photos you want to share, compose an e-mail and send them. Edward Weston never had it so good.

As an outing participant and adventure seeker you are in a unique position to capture all the fun and drama of your next trip. Take some time, do a bit of planning and get the shots that everyone will talk about.

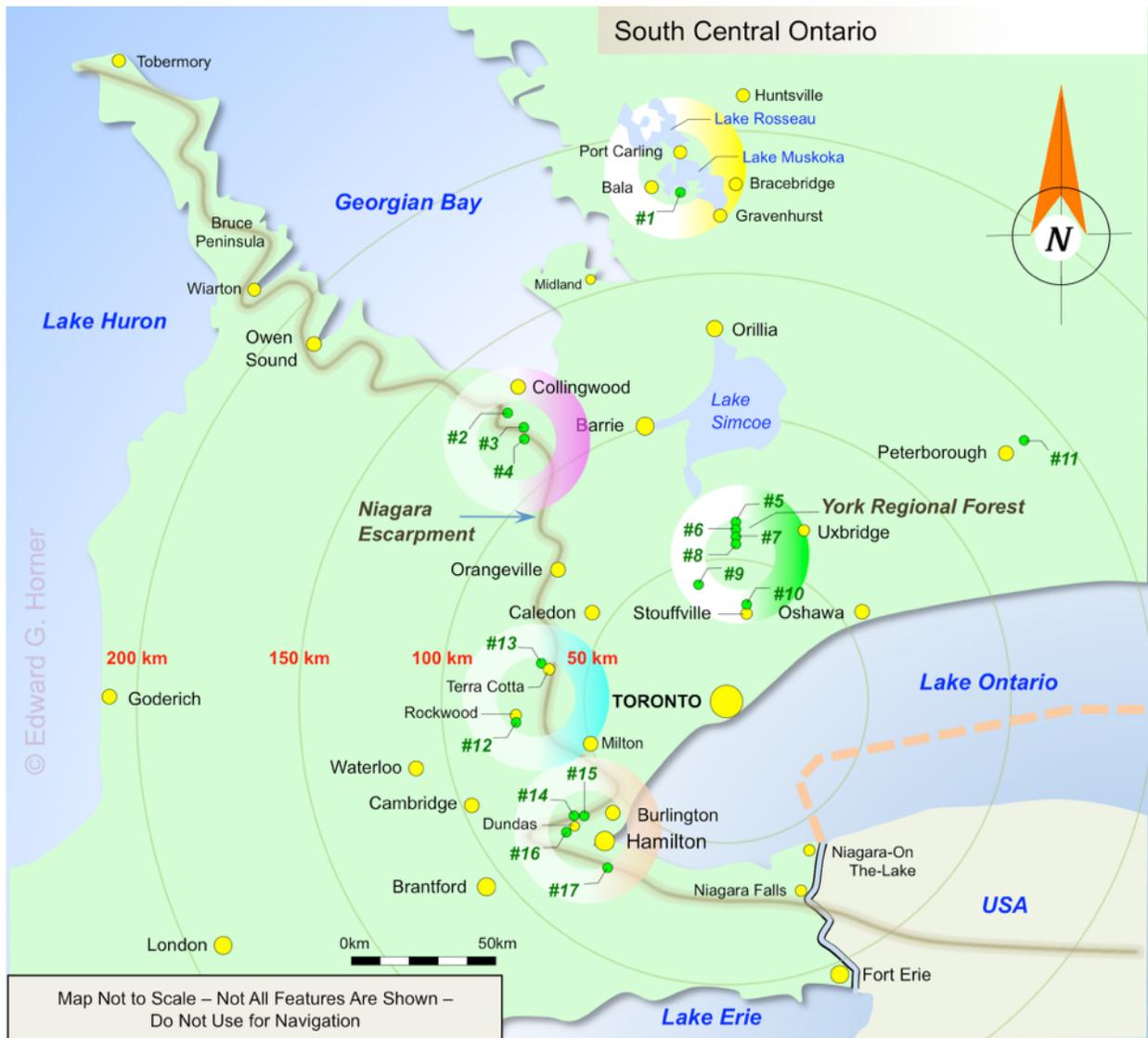
THE HIKES



“Between every two pine trees there is a door leading to a new way of life.”

~ John Muir's marginal note in volume I of Prose Works by Ralph Waldo Emerson.²²

²² This volume is located at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University.



The hikes in this book are primarily in four areas, clustered within 150km of Toronto designated on the map above;

- Hardy Lake Provincial Park, in yellow
- The *Collingwood* cluster, in mauve
- The *York Regional Forest* cluster in green
- The *Terra Cotta* cluster in aqua and
- The *Hamilton* cluster in tan.

Then there here are three hikes within the *City of Toronto* itself and, finally, the Warsaw Caves, near *Peterborough*, about 150km NE of Toronto.

#1 Hardy Lake Provincial Park Torrance, ON. (Gravenhurst)



Hardy Lake Provincial Park is a “non-operating park.” This means that within its 730ha there are, no supported facilities or activities. There are marked trails and some interpretive signage, but not much more than that. The swimming is at your own risk, so use

caution and good sense. Don't let kids swim alone.

Hardy Lake was formed during the last melting of the Laurentide Ice Sheet about 20,000 years ago. For that reason, at least in part, there is a healthy community of Atlantic coastal plain species present in the park. As the ice sheet retreated and ancient Lake Algonquin drained, left behind was a remnant section of Atlantic coast plant species. As the land tilted and bounced back from the crushing weight of the ice, this section of Ontario rose up, taking with it these plant species.²³ Also in the park is a relic of the displaced Georgian Bay shoreline. Geological interest aside, the park is a lovely spot for a hike.

In the most general terms, the park seems to have dry, granite ridges, supporting Red Oak and Pine interspersed with bogs on its eastern half, while the western half seems to have deeper soils that help support larger trees, such as maple and hemlock.

Special Cautions

While it's always good advice to hike with a partner, it's all the more so in this park, especially in the less traveled northern

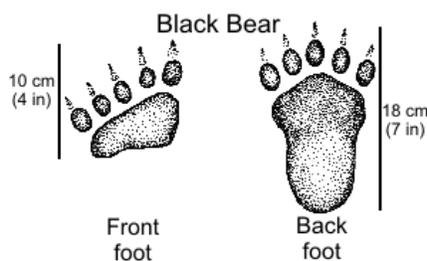
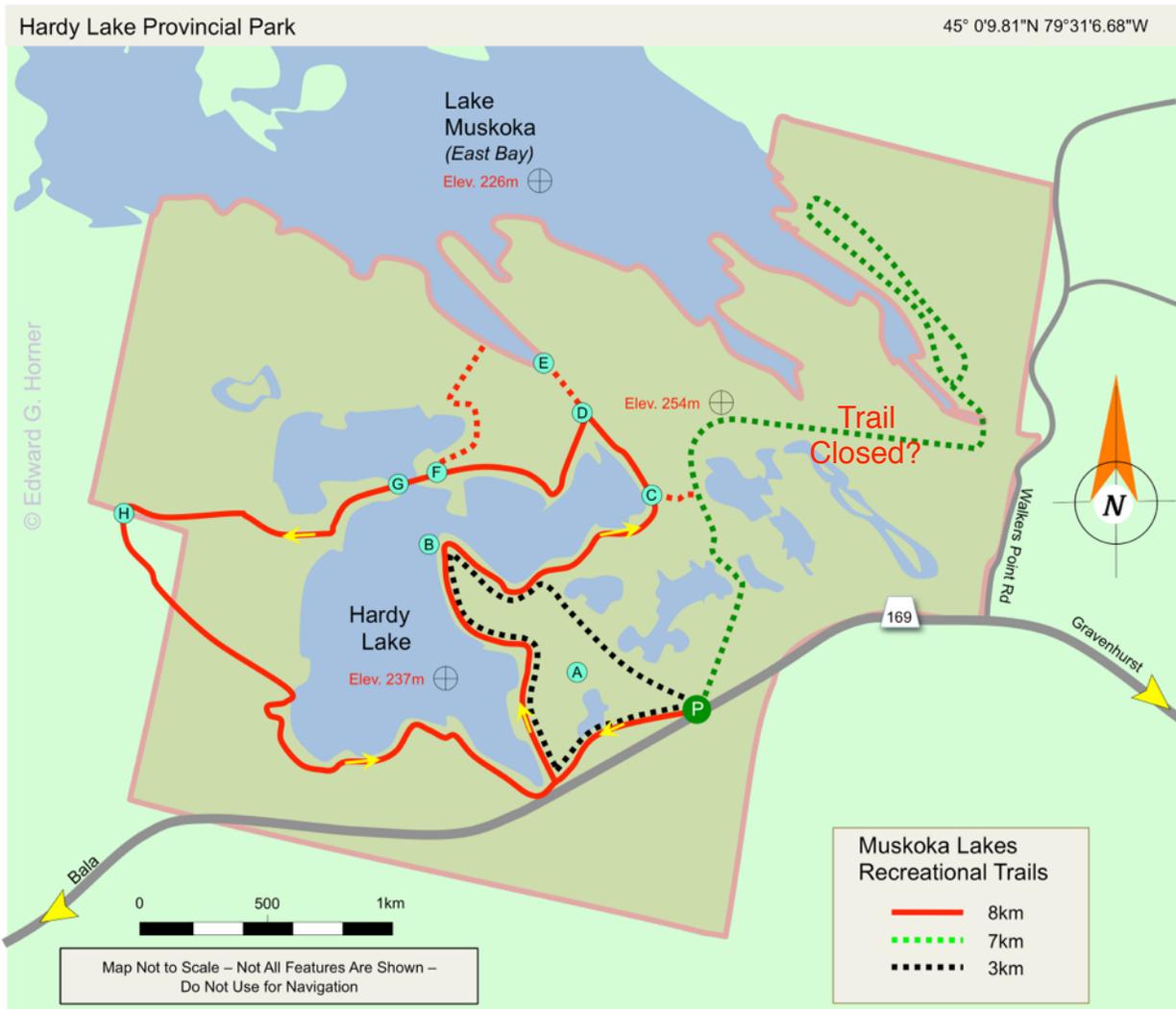


Image courtesy of "[Living with Black Bears in Ontario](#)" by M. Obbard, Ministry of Natural Resources

section. Hardy Lake is in the middle of the Muskoka resort region, so many visitors think it's a bear-free zone, but in fact there is quite a bit of bear activity in the area. According to a [2014 report](#) from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Hardy Lake area is within the F2, ecological zone for bears and bear density is 24 per 100km². That's the 3rd highest level in the province.

²³ A Geological History of Glacial Lake Algonquin and the Upper Great Lakes, Curtis E. Larsen, 1987. US Geological Survey Bulletin 1809.



On our last trip to Hardy Lake the first week of Sept. 2017, we spotted a few black bear tracks, of varying sizes, in the soft soil alongside the trail. While bears are rarely a problem, especially with a group of people, do be bear wise - don't surprise them, feed them or get between them and their young. If you encounter one, back away.

See separate section, near the back of this book, regarding bear safety.

3km Trail Loop



If you take this one, (indicated as the dashed, black trail on the map at (A) be sure to keep an eye on the signage as it splits off onto the 7km trail. Leaving the parking area, walk northward through the forest. It's the shortest route to the swimming area at (B).

7km Trail



If you want to hike this trail, check the map and information board at the parking lot. Last time we were there, it was closed beyond the “shortcut” at (C) on the map.

8km Trail Loop (longer if you take the side trail to Lake Muskoka)

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ – Definitely not for the novice hiker. Compass and map skills highly recommended. Some way finding may be necessary.

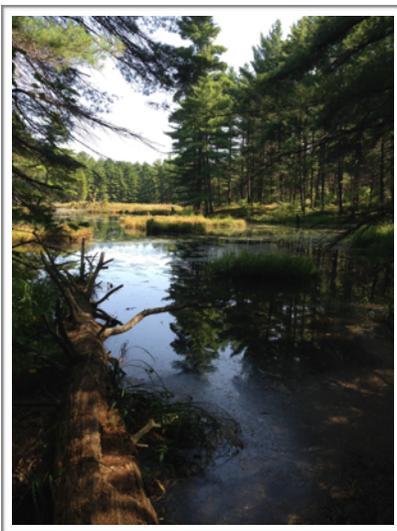
Indicated on the accompanying map as the Red Trail with a solid line.

On Our Last Trip to Hardy Lake

We pulled into the parking area just off hwy. 169. If the lot is full, parking on the shoulder of 169 seems common, but might not be entirely legal. On our last trip, there was a portable washroom at the trailhead. Even though we had a topographical map with us, we grabbed a map from the information kiosk (little mailbox). Pay attention to the fire danger warning sign at the parking lot. You should start no campfires in the park.

We proceeded to walk west, along the old road and were surprised how easily and seemingly quickly, nature was reclaiming the asphalt and returning it to a natural state.

In about 500m we swung north and started up the trail that takes you along the eastern shore of Hardy Lake. Fairly easy walking, lots of water views and varied forest. We stopped for about 20 minutes at the northern end of this section (B) and enjoyed dipping our feet while we polished off a Thermos of coffee.



We carried on along the trail in an eastward (more or less) direction towards the "shortcut" at (C). When we got to (D) we carried on northwards on the side trail (broken red line on the accompanying map) all the way to Lake Muskoka at (E). We spent about half an hour, taking photos, talking, sitting, etc. We then returned southwards, back to (D) and turned right (west) and crossed the bridge at (G). Alternatively, you might want to try the slightly longer side trail to Lake Muskoka which begins at (F), although I have not personally traveled this side trail. We carried on westward towards the border of the park, where it turns

southwards, goes onto private property, (H) then SE, around the bottom of the lake and back to the parking lot.

Total distance was close to 9km and we were out for about 4 1/2 hours. It wasn't an easy walk but most trails sections were well marked and obvious. We found a few blueberry bushes along the shores of both lakes, but the blueberry season was over, so we had to hunt a bit for some that were still clinging to the bush. The weather had been rainy recently and some of the trails were quite soft. We noted two occasions where there were bear prints, in the soft soil, crossing the footpath.



How to Get There

45° 0'9.81"N 79°31'6.68"W

Hwy 400 to Barrie, ON. Follow 11 northwards, once you get north of Barrie, all the way to the Gravenhurst cut off at Bethune Dr (169). Just after the cut off, bear left and go onto Muskoka Rd South. Drive over the train tracks to Bay Street and turn left. Follow signs for 169, down to the harbour, past the Segwun Steamship dock, through Gravenhurst and continue on 169 to Hardy Lake Provincial Park.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the parking area on 169

Torrance Barrens Dark Sky Reserve – 12km Distant

One of the darkest places in Canada. This region is set aside as a dark sky preserve that allows for night viewing of the skies without little to no interference from urban light pollution. A couple of very nice hiking trails. No camping. Few facilities.

44°56'29.66"N, 79°30'48.85"W. Southwood Road (Hwy 13), Gravenhurst, ON. No phone, but you can keep in touch and get updates through their Facebook page.

Grace and Speed Boathouse– 16km Distant

View up to 20 antique wooden boats at this on-the-water museum. These are the boats that help define the Muskoka tourist region that we know today. 275 Steamship Bay Rd, Gravenhurst, ON. 705.687.2115

Johnston's Cranberry Marsh – 16km Distant

A highly recommended spot to visit. We loved it. Not only do they have everything you can possibly imagine regarding cranberries, but there's also a winery on site. Cranberries in all forms from fresh to preserved and more. We bought a bag of dark chocolate, dried cranberries and had them finished up by the time we got back to Toronto! 1074 Cranberry Rd. Bala, ON. 705.762.3203.

Muskoka Place Gallery – 25km Distant

Local and regional artists constantly rotate through this popular gallery. Art classes, lectures, workshops and events. 1182 Foreman Rd. Port Carling, ON. 705.765.1048

Santa's Village – 36km Distant

Almost due east from Harding Lake Provincial Park, directly across Lake Muskoka. Sounds far, but it's less than a half hour drive. This is a great spot to take the kids if the weather cuts a

hike short. Midway style rides, beach and splash pad, aerial adventure, entertainers, animals, games, souvenirs, etc. Be sure to visit Santa in his cottage/cabin. Tenting, rustic cabins, RVs and they even have a yurt. 1624 Golden Beach Rd, Bracebridge, ON. 705.645.2512#1

#2 Pretty River Valley Provincial Park

Nottawa, ON.



Total distance about 8km.

Time; about 4 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.



Pretty River is classified as a “natural environment” with little in the way of facilities. Camping is not permitted. Like many parks and natural areas on the escarpment it’s part of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and as such, “... is a nationally and internationally significant landform that includes representative



and scientifically valuable examples of sustainable relationships between human activities and ecosystems.²⁴”

The park is significant as it sits right on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment and has, within its 808ha, geological formations including, waterfalls, rivers and streams, deeply eroded valleys from glacial meltwater and great rock faces - not to mention one of the best views south of Collingwood. Also, just along the John Haigh Side Trail is the highest point on the escarpment at some 540m. The Bruce Trail passes right through the park and offers hikers the chance to see and experience some of the best features of the park, including; numerous stream crossings, cedar, pine and deciduous forest passages, steep climbs, tremendous views and easy access.

On Our Last Visit

In October, 2016, Audrey and I took a day trip to Pretty River Provincial Park. It was a great day with lots of sun and 22C. Not bad for Oct 6th.

We parked on the road about 2km west of the Collingwood-Clearview Townline Rd. (C) and easily found the blue-blazed Bruce Trail access footpath at this point which leads northward from the road.

As an aside, There is a proper, well marked parking area just east of the park at (A) and if you park there, you might want to access the trails a little further west along the road at (B). In the winter, this lot seems to be primarily used by snowmobilers to park their vehicles and trailers as they access the park.

After a couple hundred meters it intersected the main Bruce with it's white painted tree blazes and we turned west (left) at (D) and started the climb up the escarpment, back and forth across the

²⁴ Niagara Escarpment Commissions, <https://www.escarpment.org/NiagaraEscarpment/UnescoWorldBiosphereReserve>

gently flowing river, through the abandoned apple orchards, and up to the snowmobile trail at 1.5km (F). We stopped for a brief rest, a bite to eat and to dip our feet into the brook.

At a time not so long ago, this area and points north towards Collingwood, were major producers of apples, pears, plums and all manner of fruit.

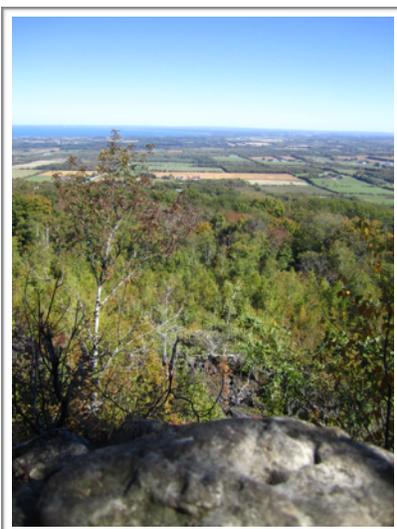


The abandoned apple orchards have been infiltrated by poison ivy. See section on first aid near the back of this book for treatment and precautions. Don't let the poison ivy stop you from picking a few apples from the trees. We had a couple and they were delicious.

We carried on up the escarpment, generally heading north. About half way along the trail to the top of the escarpment, we came to the blue blazed Pretty River Side Trail, on our right, that headed off in an eastern direction (G). Make a mental note of this as you'll be returning to this juncture later in the day and heading back down along that trail.

We carried on up the trail and when we got to about 2.3km (H) and the John Haigh Side Trail, we had to decided whether or not we wanted to walk to the highest point on the Bruce Trail. Since the day was wearing on and we hadn't yet gotten to the lookout, we decided to take a pass.

Just after we made it to the top of the escarpment, we came to the Russ McConnell Side Trail, (I) which takes you out to 6th Concession. We passed on that as well and carried on to various lookouts between (J) and (K). As we followed the trail we could see numerous crevice caves that had been formed during the retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet. As the glacier retreated and generated huge amounts of meltwater, the freeze/thaw cycle cracked huge pieces of rock from the Niagara Escarpment to create these crevices.



From (J) you look mostly SE out over the eastern end of the Pretty River Valley, while, as you approach (K), you take in the view towards the east with Georgian Bay to the far left.

We were rewarded with beautiful fall colours - not at their peak, but soon. Stopping to take a lot of photos on the way, it took us about 2.5 hours to the top, but the way down was much quicker.

We returned to the previously noted blue blazed Pretty River Side Trail and followed it down to its termination at (E). We then

followed the white blazed main Bruce Trail southward, back to the car parked on the road at (C).

Alternatively, from (K) you can walk westward along the little used, Concession 6 to the Russ McConnel Side Trail, make a left turn (southward) at (L) and follow the trail down to the main Bruce Trail at (I). turn right (west) and follow the trail down to (E) as above.

Total walking time just shy of 4hrs. Great day and well worth the effort.

How to Get There

There's a lot of ways to get to Pretty River Valley Provincial Park, but from Toronto, I like to get to Orangeville, via the 410/10 combination. Go through Orangeville on Hwy. 10 until you get to Hockley Road. Turn onto Hockley and take it all the way over to Airport Road (about 11km). Turn left (north) onto Airport Road and follow it all the way to Stayner (about 46km). Turn left in Stayner onto Main Street (Simcoe 91) and follow westward to the village of Duntroon (about 8km). Once in Duntroon, turn right (north) onto CR124 and follow about 5.4km to Sideroad 33/34 Nottawasaga. Turn left onto 33/34 and follow 5.8km to the parking area at (A) on the map. It's about another 1.5km to the secondary parking area at (C)

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the side-of-road parking area at (C)

Blue Mountain

As a tourist destination location, blue Mountain offers scores of attractions. There's so much to see and do at Blue Mountain that I'll just list a few;

- Smash Ping Pong Nite Club (yes, it's a thing)
- Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory (yummy)

- Timber Challenge, High Ropes (pretty much what it sounds like)
- Rock Climbing Wall (exactly what it sounds like)
- Wind Rider Zip Lines
- Low Ropes at The Woodlot
- Mountain Biking
- Segway Mountain Top Tours

Devil's Glen Conservation Area

See hike #3 below.

Scenic Caves Nature Adventure

The big attraction here, at least for me, was the caves, caverns and fissure walks. You slither through cracks, crawl over rocks and climb up and down ladders. A real adventure in the summer, but it also has a separate program in the winter. Be sure to make your way to the pedestrian suspension bridge. Proper footwear/hiking boots are required prior to admission to park. 260/280 Scenic Caves Road, Blue Mountains, ON. 705.446.0256

Blue Mountain Ridge Runner Mountain Coaster

Scariest \$16 I've ever spent, but I'd gladly do it again. You drive a sled from the top of Blue Mountain, down a 1km track, but you're generally in control of the speed with the brake bar. It's actually a lot of fun and I was breathless at the end. Don't forget to breath. Size, age and weather restrictions are in effect. Call ahead for details. 156 Jozo Weider Blvd. Blue Mountains, ON. 705.445.0231

#3 Devil's Glen Provincial Park to Glen Huron
Singhampton/Glen Huron, ON.



Option A

Trail Length out and back 7km.

Time; about 4 hours

Option B

Trail length loop (via main Bruce Trail on the return leg) about 9.5km. Time; about 6 hours.

Difficulty option A and B ★★☆☆☆

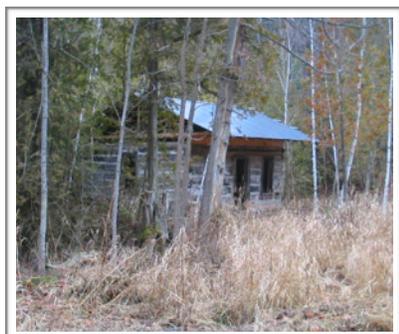
Parking lot at .44°21'41.18"N, 80°12'29.35"W
3.7km east of Singhampton on CR 124

Devil's Glen encompasses an area of roughly 60ha and straddles the table land and steep slopes of the Niagara Escarpment, a few kilometers east of Singhampton ON. Like so many provincial parks in Ontario Devil's Glen houses and helps to protect naturally or geologically significant features, in this case a deeply incised river valley that was formed from glacial meltwater some 20,000 years ago. There are also rock outcroppings, forested slopes, and finally wetlands that are habitat to various water fowl.



During this last trip, we parked at the Devil's Glen parking lot at (A) and walked out to the valley lookout at (B) and took a few pictures. We then walked back towards the car, but turned left and down the steep stairs into the valley. We followed the path downhill to eventually emerge at the Mad River and carried on downstream until we came to the bridge at (C). We then crossed over to the ski area property, made a left, and continued past the rectangular reservoirs (D) and further down the valley.

When we got down to the old log cabin (E) the path/road was very muddy, but thankfully someone had built a boardwalk for us. To get onto the boardwalk we had to traverse a narrow plank, rickety and slippery as it was. We had to use our hiking poles to maintain our balance. Thankfully no one ended up in the mud.



John Sly lived in this area from the late 1800s to 1920, when his log cabin burned to the ground. During his time in the region, Sly logged the Glen Huron Gorge and nearby areas. The cabin we see today is a replica, placed and maintained by the Hamilton Bros. of Glen Huron.

We explored the cabin for a bit, took a few pictures and carried on. We eventually made it down to the Glen Huron Reservoir at (F) and the dam (G) and the town of Glen Huron itself.

We explored the town a bit, ate our packed lunch as we sat out behind the general store, on the banks of the little mill pond. It was probably private property, but there was no fence, so ...

We then headed back across the road and past the Hamilton Brothers Mill with the intention of simply retracing our steps, but we ran into a couple of other hikers coming down the valley, who suggested we take the main Bruce Trail (**H/I**) back to our car.

They pointed out on our map a part of the Ganaraska Trail at (**H**) and described how it made its way up the road, through Devil's Glen Ski Area and back down into the ravine, just west of the ski area. They did tell us the climb up the road was rather arduous.

We checked our map and time, then decided to take that route, as it was still early in the day. It did add a couple of kilometres to our trip, but it didn't prove too difficult, overall, but, as we were cautioned, the first section out of Glen Huron, up the road was a *steep climb* and it was a hot day. We got to the top and really had to rest. Be sure to bring along plenty of water. If you wanted to return from Glen Huron, via the same route you came out on, you'll save yourself about an hour.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the parking area at (**A**)

Giffen's Country Market – 4.3km Distant

- Situated in its own orchard, Giffen's makes the best fruit pies I've ever had. Buy fresh or frozen. Wide variety of locally grown apples. Locally sourced meats, honey, cider, cheese and produce also available. Good spot for a dine-in lunch or breakfast. Lots of parking. Less than 1km east of Glen Huron. 55 Station Street. Call for off season hours. 705.466.3080

Creemore Springs Brewery – 10km Distant

Take a tour of this micro brewery and then enjoy tasting samples. Buy direct from the source. Be sure to try the uniquely coloured and rich tasting *urBoch* brew. 159 Mill Street, Creemore, ON. 705.466.2240.

Affairs Bakery and Coffee House – 10km Distant

The butter tarts here are almost as good as the ones in Warsaw, ON. Warsaw had more variety, but these were pretty good. They also know how to make, and serve, a proper espresso. Nice little patio out front as well. 148 Mill St. Creemore, ON. 705.466.5621

Creemore Jail – 10km Distant

Billed as North America's smallest jail, although the jail in Port Dalhousie on Lake Ontario is also a contender, along with the jailhouse in Coboconk, ON. This 15' x 20' building was erected 120 years ago at a cost of \$425.20. It's first resident was a black cow, but most of the "guests" were incarcerated overnight to "dry out". It stopped serving as a jail in the early 1940's. 152 Liberty Street, Creemore, ON.

Rawhide Adventures – 17km Distant

I have no interest in horse riding, but this does look like fun. River Ride - This half day of western pleasure riding takes one down to the Pine River for a lunch beside the River! \$175 per person 638135 Prince of Wales Road, Creemore, ON. 519.925.0152

#4 Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area Singhampton, ON.



Total distance about 10km.

Time; about 4 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆

I rated this “moderate” as on this particular hike we explored the Keyhole crevice caves and the ground was still slippery with ice in

the deeper sections. Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.

* The only picnic facilities we found were at the campsite (G).

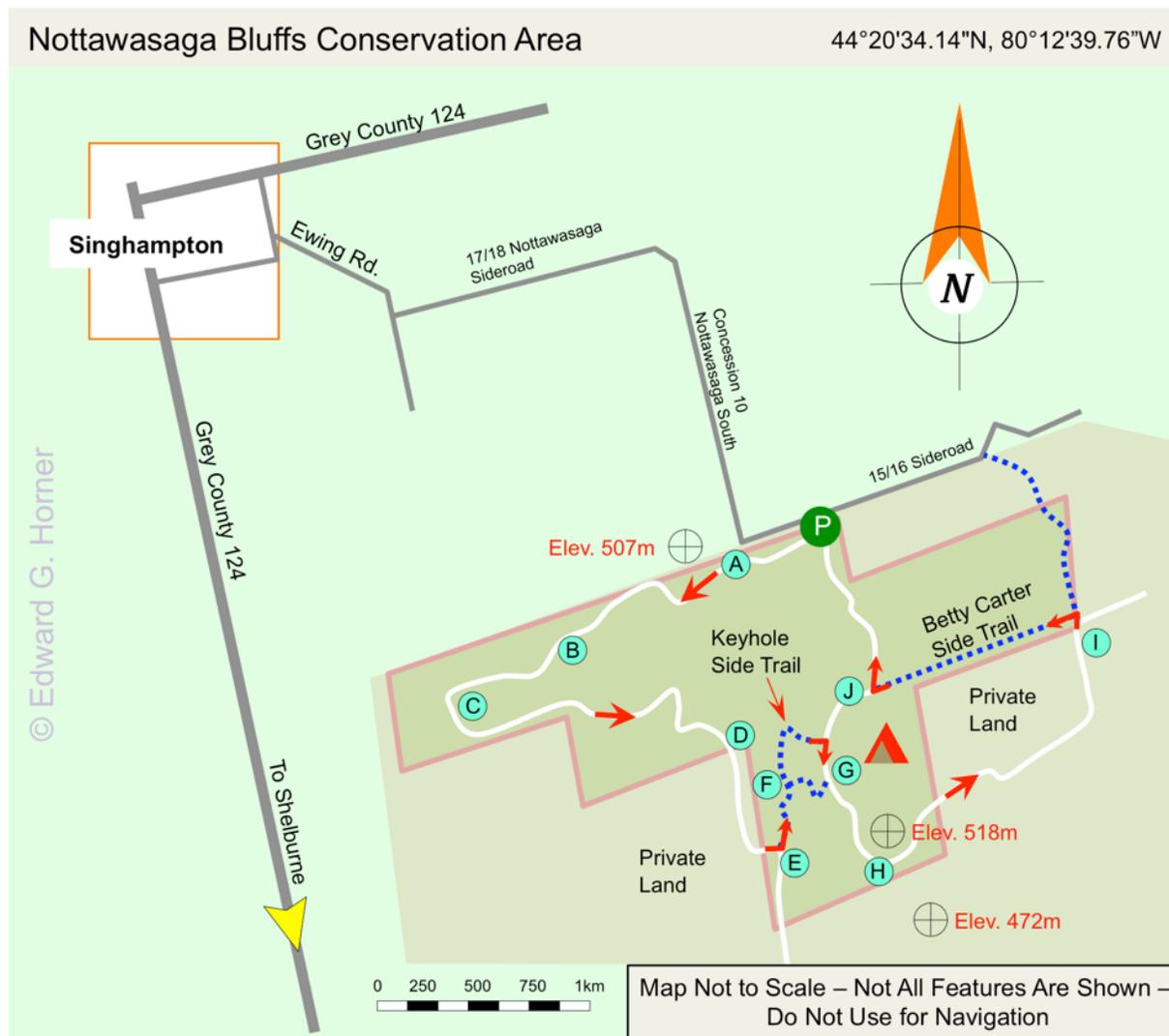
** Walk in camping only. No vehicles. Limited spaces

The conservation area is some 160ha right on the Niagara Escarpment. It's a fascinating area, if only for the numerous crevice caves and canyons that you can hike through and explore. Dark, cool, green and mossy these caves are a pleasure to explore and present fabulous photo opportunities. There may even be snow in some of the deeper canyons even into June. But the caves are only the beginning; there's great views from the top of the escarpment and local settler history to explore. Lime kilns are still in evidence as is one of the original stagecoach roads that ran through the area 100 years ago, but now only making an appearance to the keen eye.

Our last visit to the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area was May of 2017. Myself and five co-workers made our way up in the venerable Honda Odyssey. It was an overcast day with temperatures ranging from 10C in the morning to 14C by 2pm. It had rained the previous day, and so there was quite a bit of groundwater on the trails and the streams were flowing happily. We arrived about 10am and were off the trails by 2pm.

Special caution; some sections of this hike are over very uneven ground, strewn with rocks. Good hiking boots are recommended, or you'll have to be very careful with your footing to avoid twisting an ankle. Texting while hiking should be avoided.

From the parking area and trailhead, (A) we started out west along the white blazed Bruce Trail. The path winds its way down the face of the escarpment and you can see large rock



outcroppings on your right as you descent the trail. Before long you'll come to an area where the ground is white. This area used to be a lime kiln, in which limestone was heated to tremendous temperatures at which point a chemical reaction took place and the material *calcinated*. The resulting output was known as quicklime and was used extensively in mortar and cement production as well as basic steel making. In this area it was likely used as a stabilizing agent in the clay soil through which the roads passed, increasing their load-carrying ability.

Depending on the time of year and recent weather, you'll pass a pond on your left. (B) This area was quite buggy on our most recent trip, so we didn't spend too much time here, although there were some nice photos taken by the group.

Eventually the trail makes a turn to the left (south) and descends down a short, grassy hill. At the bottom of this hill on the right, (C) are the ruins of one of the original settlement houses in this area.

Continue southward along the boardwalk, over the swampy area to eventually emerge onto an old road where the trail then veers left to head back east. After walking through the forest, you'll eventually come to a field with a trail sign that indicates you are about to enter private property. (D) Continue along the white-blazed trail, respecting the land over which you are passing. Also reflect that much of the Bruce Trail only exists because of negotiated agreements with landowners over which the trail passes.

Before long, the trail dives back into the forest to the left and you'll come to a direction kiosk with map. (E) The white-blazed Bruce Trail continues south, but we now turn onto the blue-blazed Nottawasaga Bluffs Lookout Side Trail.

Down the hill we went to a footbridge at the bottom of the vale. (F) We continued northward to a fork in the trail. To the right the Nottawasaga Bluffs Lookout Side Trail continued, but we went on the left fork towards the blue-blazed Keyhole Side Trail.

Before long we were clambering in and out of deep crevice caves, under low passageways that you could only get through by crouching and maybe removing your pack. These were great photo opportunities. This early in May, there were a number of places where slippery snow and ice were still on the ground, so

we had to be careful of our footing. We could have followed the blue blazes of the trail, but we went on a few detours and explored a bit, before carrying on up the slope and out the top to another section of white-blazed Bruce Trail (G).

At this juncture we turned right (south) and followed the trail out to the main lookout.

Now this is where we got turned around. We (mostly me) were not paying attention to the trail blazes and started out down the blue-blazed trail. After about ten minutes, we checked the compass and it was revealed that we were heading SW, back towards the footbridge we had crossed earlier - something was wrong. We should have been going south. We retraced our steps back to (G), checked the map against the compass and started down the white-blazed trail, almost directly south. An important reminder to constantly check your orientation when hiking on unfamiliar trails.

Once we arrived at the lookout (H) we spent some time enjoying the view taking photos and exploring the rock caves and crevices.

Special Caution; Be careful around the cliff edge, especially with children and pets. There are no protective barriers and It's quite a drop.

We continued eastward along the white-blazed trail, as it winds its way along the edge of the cliff.

Special Caution; Don't venture too far off the trail at any given location, as there are numerous deep crevices along this route and falling into them is a real possibility.



Soon you'll come to an old farm road that cuts across the trail and continues south, down the hill. Don't follow this road, but continue across it and carry on along the fence line, keeping the fence on your right. The trail will turn northwards and take you along the eastern edge of a field.

Just after you enter the forest on the far side of the field you'll come to a three way trail intersection at (I). The white-blazed Bruce Trail continues east and the blue-blazed Hamilton Bros. Side Trail continues northward. You don't want either of those.

We turned left (westward) and followed the blue-blazed, Betty Carter Side Trail for about 1km back to the main white-blazed Bruce Trail at (J) on the map. Turn right (northward) at this point and it's about 700m back to the parking lot.

How to Get There

44.3428° N, 80.2110° W

Take highway 410 north. Eventually it turns into highway 10. Continue north on 10, through Orangeville all the way to Primrose at highway 89. Turn left (west) onto 89 and travel about 4km to County Road 124. Turn right (north) onto 124 and follow all the way to Singhampton, about 30km. When you get to

Singhampton, turn right (east) onto Mill Town Road. Follow Mill Town Rd. through town to where it swings left. Almost immediately after the left, turn right onto Ewing Road. Follow Ewing Rd. to the intersection of Nottawasaga Sideroad 17/18. Turn left and follow 17/18 until it swings right and becomes Sideroad 10. Follow 10 about 1.6km to the conservation area. There is a small pay parking area. Payment via smartphone at site or via computer before leaving home via [MackKay Pay](#).

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

Eigensinn Farm – 12km Distant

Where to start ... It's an organic farm, a restaurant, a hike, a forest tour ... a real experience. I haven't been there for a number of years now, but I'm told that things haven't changed much. Michael Stadlander is a world class chef, turned organic farmer. He grows or raises most of the food you eat at his in-the-forest restaurant. \$\$\$\$ but well worth the effort. Cash only. Strictly by reservation. Don't wear your high heels. Dining is usually al fresco. Literally, the menu varies almost daily, by season. 449357 10th Concession of Grey Highlands, Singhampton, ON. 519.922.3128

Giffen's Market – 13km Distant

See Devil's Glen hike.

YORK REGIONAL FOREST

The history of the York Regional Forest (YRF) is a tale that begins with environmental degradation, deforestation, erosion, extensive land clearing for farming and unsustainable lumbering practices.

By the 1920, farmers and lumber companies had cleared vast areas of land, using the lumber for the expanding domestic and local building industry and exporting, predominantly, softwood to the US and overseas. This clearing activity left behind denuded land, prone to erosion and flooding.

“There was enough concern about the environmental impacts of deforestation by this point that the Province began funding and managing “agreement forests” with counties. The creation of an Agreement Forest in 1924 in what was then York County, as well as reforestation efforts on private lands, were major milestones in reversing deforestation.

The Agreement Forest developed into the York Regional Forest, which today comprises woodlands owned and maintained by the Region – an area of some 23 properties and 2,300 hectares, or about 5,700 acres.

Yet as the century progressed, development and urbanization, especially in the southern reaches of the Region, continued to erode tree cover. What remained was fragmented, younger than the original forests, and often disturbed by intervening usage.

Large, connected woodlands that form complete ecosystems are critical to environmental health and the survival of native trees, other plants and wildlife. Because of this, the approach to forest management in York Region was founded on protection and management of its remaining woodlands. In 1991, the Region established its first tree protection bylaw, which has evolved into the current forest conservation bylaw.”

Today, the protected and overseen land runs to some 2,300ha covering 23 forest tracts with over 100km of hiking and recreation trails. Almost every year the YRF gathers more land under its auspices to coordinate the many competing and complementary activities going on in the YRF, including; sustainable tree harvesting, farming, tourism, urban land use, transportation, industry, manufacturing and many forms of outdoor recreation.

The hiking and recreation trails are administered by the staff of the YRF in consultation with the Regional Forest Advisory Team and the Oak Ridges Trail Association and other user groups. In my experience, the trails are fairly well maintained, usually well marked or mapped and, so far, free to use.

Accessible Trails

There are accessible trails at the;

- *Hollidge Tract - 16389 Highway 48 (N. of Aurora Rd.)*
- *North Tract - 17054 Highway 48 (S. of Davis Dr.)*
- *Hall Tract - 15681 McCowan Road (N. of Aurora Rd.)*

These trails have had obstructions removed, while the surface has been graded and widened. Generally, they seem suitable for wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Accessible parking is available at these sites.

Set out below a few the forest tracts and recreation/hiking trails that can be found among the almost two dozen properties under active management of the YRF. For a full reckoning of the trails you can obtain a copy of *The Everyday Guide to the York Regional Forest*.

As with any hiking or recreation trail, routes change, natural barriers come and go, erosion or flooding can make a path impassable or difficult. Always use your common sense. Check the weather forecast for the area in which you'll be hiking and pay attention to posted notices at the trailheads.

For the most current information on the state and routing of the YRF trails, contact the York Regional Forest Headquarters at forestry@york.ca or 1-877-464-9675 (ext. 7300)

In the York Regional Forest trails, I make no specific recommendations nor offer any specifics on exactly where to hike. The reason is that the trails are rather tightly packed, and there are plenty of them, often interconnecting with each other. The route possibilities are vast. **SOME NAVIGATION WILL BE HIGHLY PROBABLY.**

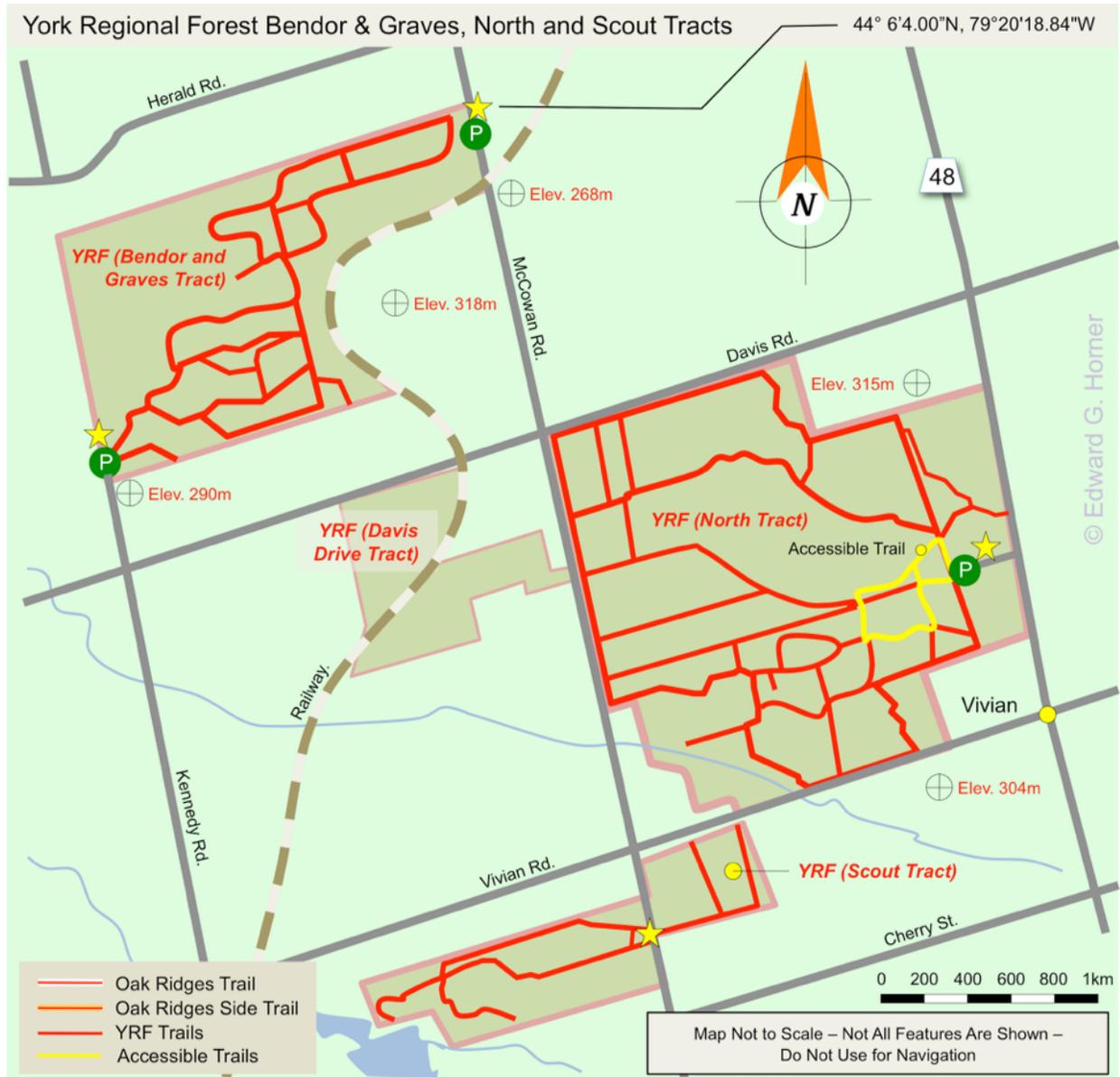
For example, in the *Bendor and Graves Tract*, I parked at the northern end and walked, primarily along the western trails, to the parking area at the SW corner and I returned, primarily along the trails on the eastern side of the tract. There were at least a half dozen other ways of doing this same trip. Keep an eye on your map or GPS on your phone.

When I hiked in the *Eldred King Tract*, I lost my focus. I was originally on the Oak Ridges Trail, but about 30 minutes later, I emerged onto McCowan Road at St. John's Rd. I had to travel back east almost 1km to pick up the Oak Ridge Trail again. By that time, I decided to cut my hike short and just go back to the parking lot and have lunch in the car.

I strongly recommend getting a copy of *The Everyday Guide to the York Regional Forest*. and planning your own hikes.

#5 Bendor/Graves, North and Scout Tracts

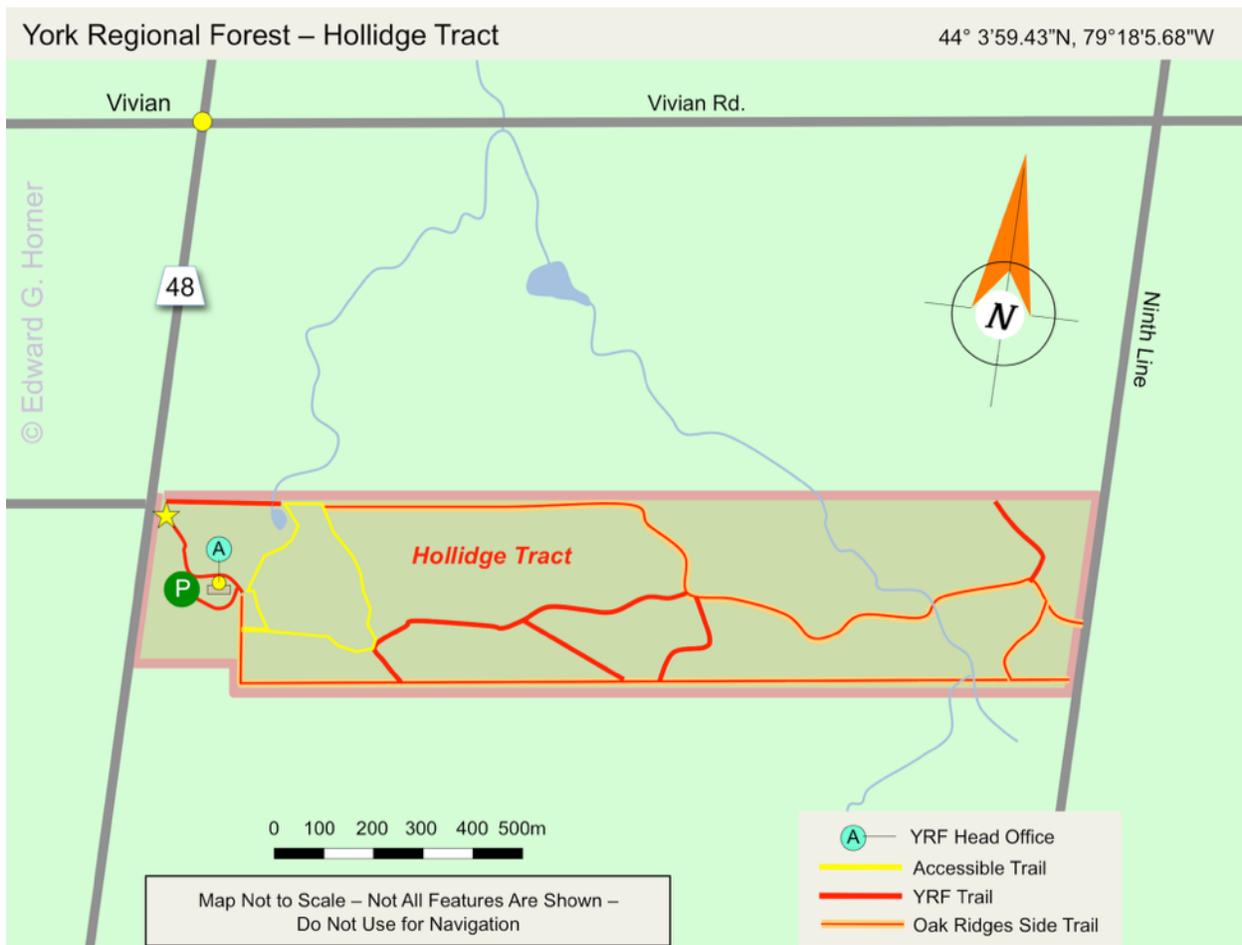
Parking Lot 44° 6'4.00"N, 79°20'18.84"W



#6 Hollidge Tract

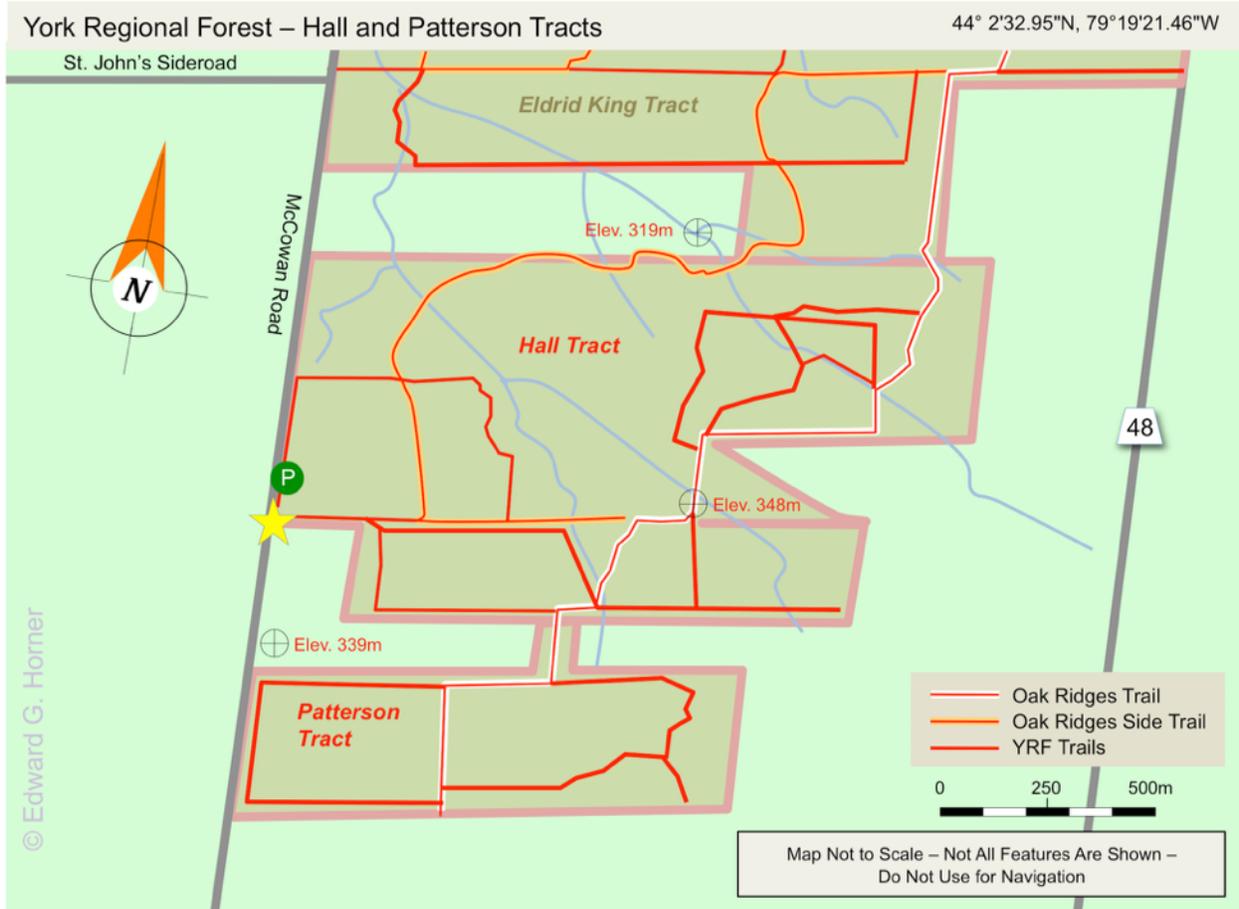
Parking Lot 44° 3'59.43"N, 79°18'5.68"W

Take some time to visit the Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre (A). It's a building that gathers rain and meltwater from the roof and uses it to service the washrooms. It's solar panels provide electricity for the building. Much of the building material was sourced locally to minimize the carbon footprint of the facility.



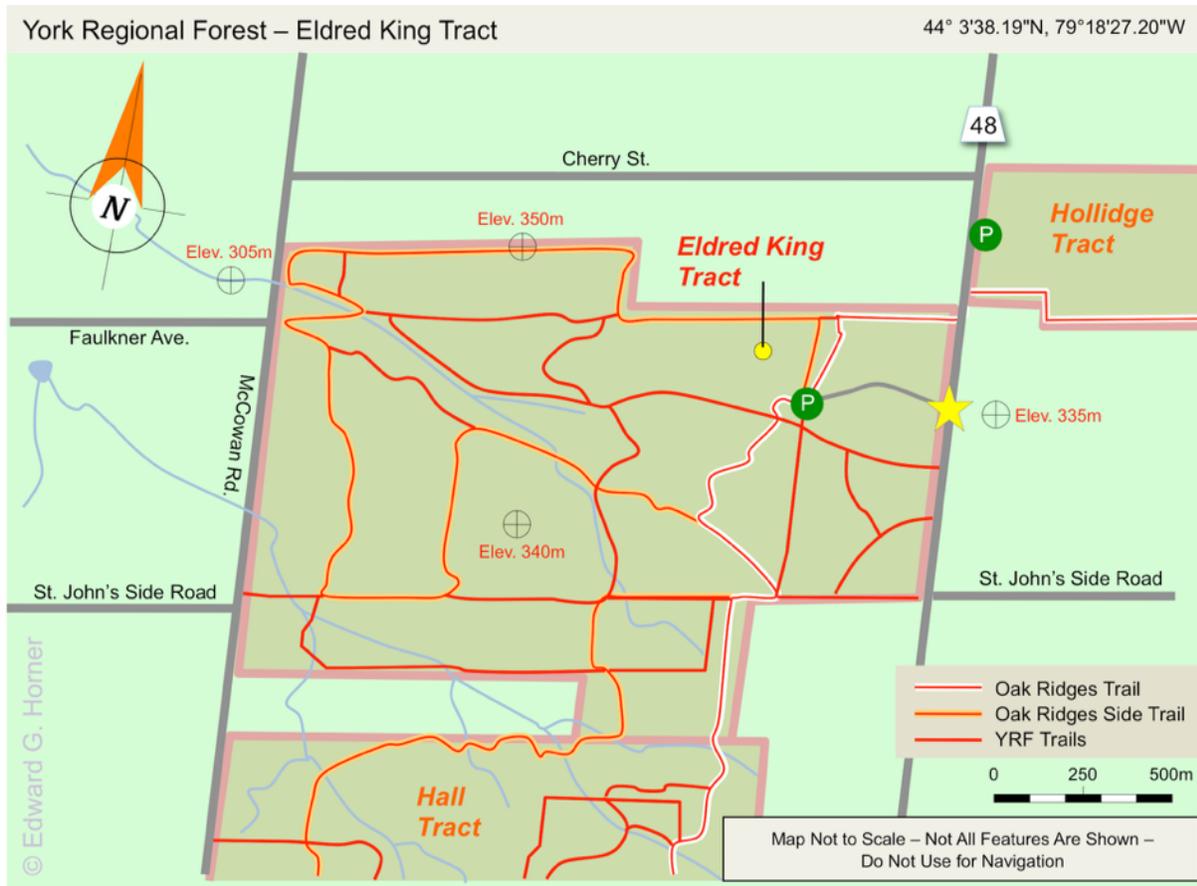
#7 Hall and Patterson Tracts

Parking at 44° 2'32.95"N, 79°19'21.46"W



#8 Eldred King Tract

Parking Lot 44° 3'38.19"N, 79°18'27.20"W



NEWMARKET
#9 Thornton Bales Conservation Area
Newmarket, ON.



Total distance about 5km.

Time; about 2 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions. There are a lot of stairs to climb into and out of the valley.



The Thornton Bales Conservation Area approximately 30ha of natural parkland, sitting astride the Oakridges Moraine, near Newmarket. As it's a natural area, there are few visitor facilities beyond a small parking area and walking trails. There are no washrooms, picnic facilities, swimming areas or similar. When you go, plan to be as self-sufficient as possible.

The conservation area itself is part of a larger green area containing the University of Toronto's Koffler Scientific Reserve at Jokers Hill. You can hike right through Thornton Bales to get to the trails of the U of T reserve and vice-versa. The map immediately below shows the conservation trails in red, while the



dashed blue line is the trail into the UofT reserve.

The trailhead is at the small parking area on the north side of 19th Sideroad. The trail starts with a sharp descent down a set of rustic steps to the valley floor and yes, you do have to climb back up at the end of the hike.

At the first trail intersection (A) bear to the right and continue along for about 300m to (B) then turn left and travel northwest for about 300m to intersection with (C) Bear to the right and carry on to (D) or you can pick up the blue trail into the UofT Coffer Scientific Reserve at (E).

How to Get There

44° 1'37.07"N, 79°31'7.59"W

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances from the parking area on 19th Sideroad

Tom Tailor Trail – 6km Distant (at Ferry Lake Park)

The Tom Taylor Trail, named after a former mayor, is Newmarket's portion of the *Nokiidaa Trail* system that extends through Aurora, Newmarket, and East Gwillimbury. The Trail follows the Holland River and Fairy Lake downstream to link up with the Rogers Reservoir Trail in East Gwillimbury

Newmarket Riverwalk Commons – 7.5km Distant

This is an entertainment facility, featuring an outdoor stage for music and films, winter ice skating, summertime water park and a general public gathering space. Located outside the Newmarket Community Centre & Lions Hall at 200 Doug Duncan Drive.
905. 895.5193

#10 Stouffville Conservation Area Stouffville, On.



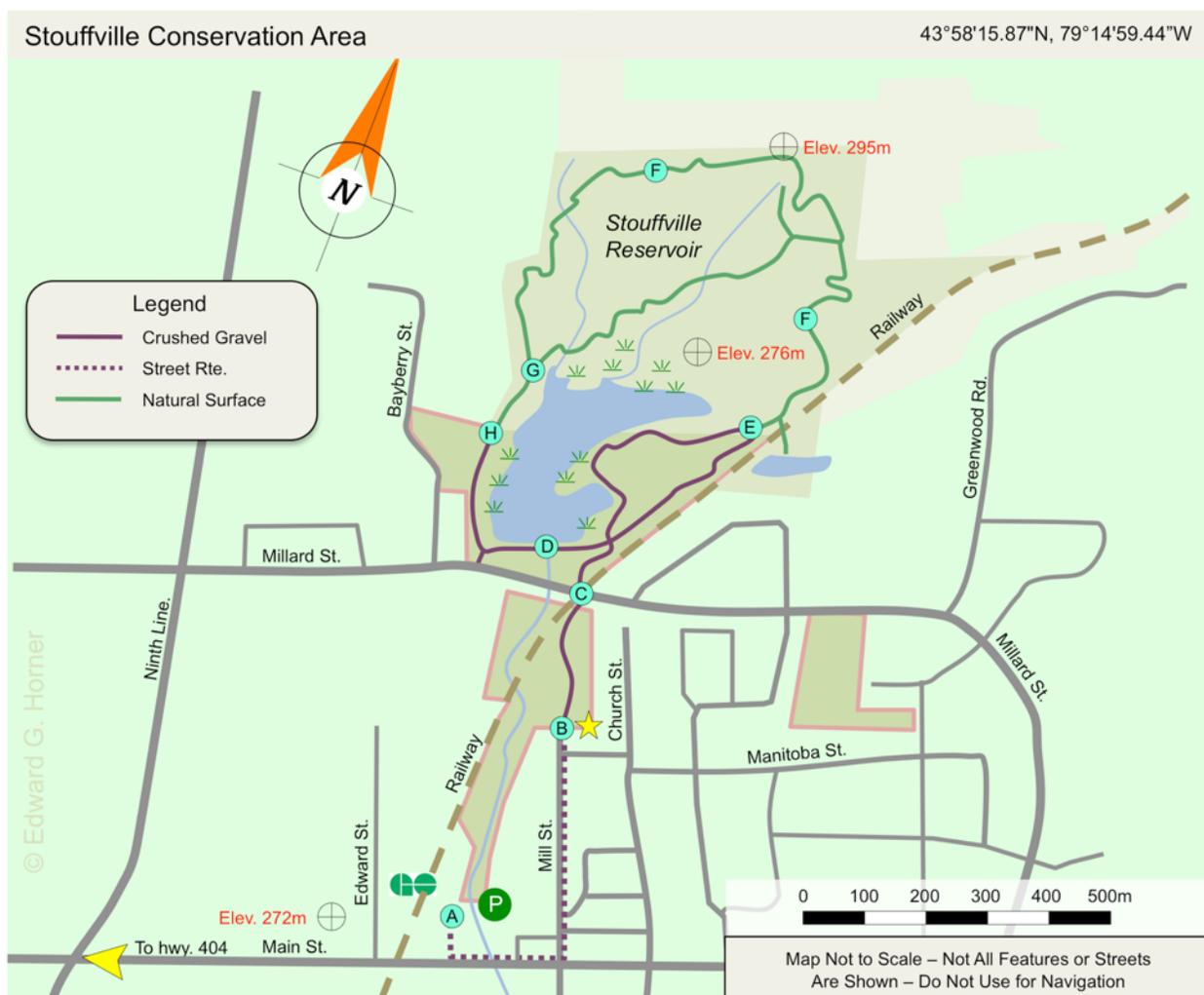
It's funny, but until just recently, Stouffville was a town that I often passed through, but never stopped to enjoy. On this particular weekend, Audrey had a workshop to attend in Stouffville so this seemed like a good opportunity to explore the town a bit.



The Stouffville Conservation Area centres around the reservoir and a large forested area. One of the nice things about the park is that it's within the municipal boundaries of Stouffville, so when

you're finished your hike, you walk a couple of blocks down to Main Street and you have your run of coffee shops, bakeries, restaurants, pubs and even art galleries. Another great thing about the area is that the trailhead is only about 500m from the GO Train station. Check the schedule for train and bus service. I last visited the area in July of 2017.

I dropped Audrey off at her workshop on Church Street, then parked the car at the GO train station (A) at Main and Edward. I then walked east along Main St. for about 300m to Mill St. and turned north. At the top of Mill, there is a gate (B) that takes you into the *Stouffville Channel* and north to Millard Street. I considered this gate the trailhead. At Millard, (C) cross the street



near the railway crossing (use extra caution, for oddly, there is no pedestrian crossing here and the traffic can move quickly and you have to keep an eye out for trains.)

I entered the park right across the street and turned left on the gravel path after about 50m and crossed the dam at (D) and then walked all the way west then north to where the crushed gravel path ended at (H). I expected then to get onto the natural trail and continue my walk around the park in a clockwise direction. However, the crushed gravel path ended with a sign informing me that the trail ahead was closed to pedestrian traffic since the area was environmentally sensitive. Fair enough. It would have been nice to know that 10 minutes ago, but fair enough.

I retraced my steps, back across the dam and turned left at the fork and continued northwards on the gravel path, along the edge of the reservoir to (E).

I had intended to enter into the forest on the natural trail at (F), but since there was so much rain in the past week, I was only able to get about 300m north as the trail was so muddy and waterlogged that the slog just didn't seem worth the effort. I had hoped to get up to the cross-park shortcut and make my way west and then circle around north to complete my trek, but it just wasn't going to happen on this trip.

I made my way back down to (E) and carried on southward on the eastern half of the gravel trail. I spend a bit of time birdwatching, (spotted a grey heron in the reeds) got chased by a red-winged blackbird (I suppose there was a nest nearby), watched a garter snake hurry across the trail and just generally enjoyed the day for about 30 minutes before making my way back to town.

Granted it was a short trip on this particular day, but the potential

of the longer trail was worth investigating. Sometimes turning back is the best course of action.

As the day was still young, I dropped my backpack in the car and walked over to the Latcham Art Gallery at 6240 Main. After spending about an hour there, I grabbed my laptop out of the trunk and passed a couple of hours at Main Street Bakehouse just a little further along the street at 6236 Main.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the GO train station in Stouffville.

Main Street Bakehouse – 0.2km Distant

Great local indie space, outstanding espresso and great baked goods. I had a lemon square and was quite impressed - not too sweet and nice and tangy. 6236 Main Street

The Latcham Gallery – 0.3km Distant

Founded in 1979 by a group of local artists who saw the need for an art gallery in Stouffville. The gallery encourages the local community to view their collection of contemporary art and learn what an artist is expressing through their work to help encourage, learning, inspiration and discussion. 6240 Main Street, Stouffville, ON. 905.640.8954

Lionel's Farm – 6.2km Distant

A farm that encourages children of all ages to view, pet and feed the animals. They've got wagon rides, pony rides, school tours, a petting farm, birthday parties and more. Great spot to take the kids. 11714 McCowan Rd. Stouffville, ON. 43°56'42.29"N, 79°18'12.09"W 905.640.7669

Bruce's Mill Cons. Area – 8.2km Distant

Experience nature at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area, as you walk along the forest trails, fly through your way through the tree canopy on a zip line, sharpen your drive at their driving range and taste the sweet maple syrup during the Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival. A compact 115ha of outdoor fun. They even have a BMX park. 3291 Stouffville Rd. Stouffville, ON.

Stouffville Museum and Community Centre – 18km Distant
Featuring the time period from 1850 to 1946, this community museum has a geographical focus specifically on Whitchurch Township and Stouffville, with a broader focus on York Region. Furniture, textiles, maps, photos, textual material, ceramics and more. 14732 Woodbine Avenue, Gormley, ON. 905.727.8954

PETERBOROUGH
#11 Warsaw Caves Conservation Area
Warsaw, ON.



Total distance about 5km.

Time; about 2 hours on the Lookout/Kettle Trail and 2 hours exploring the caves.

Cave Exploration Difficulty ★★☆☆

Lookout/Kettle Trail Difficulty ★★☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions. Exploring

the caves and crevices can be hazardous and physically demanding.

Special Cautions

- 1) There seemed to be quite a bit of poison ivy off the main trails throughout the conservation area. Use caution, wear long pants and learn how to identify poison ivy (see chapter on first aid tips in this book). Stay on the main trails.
- 2) The caves and foot trails can have a lot of broken rock on them. Use care while walking and exploring, to help avoid tripping hazards and sprained ankles.

The Warsaw Caves Conservation Area sits on the bed of an ancient, glacial river. The thick ice sheet that covered much of Ontario began to melt, about 14,000 years ago. This meltwater formed a giant proglacial lake that, while varying in size over time, generally spanned the basins of present day Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Georgian Bay and Simcoe. This giant glacial lake (Algonquin) had a number of drainage outlets, among them the *Kirkfield Spillway*, which took in the present day Indian and Otonabee Rivers and drained into what was to become Lake Ontario as the water ultimately made its way to the Atlantic Ocean, via the St. Lawrence River.

This ancient spillway is nothing like the placid, meandering rivers we see today, but rather it was more akin to a modern day Niagara Falls. It has been estimated that it may have poured 168,000 m³ of meltwater, *per minute*, through the Kirkfield Spillway, over the limestone bedrock of this area of Ontario.

Limestone has a very identifiable, almost unique, crystalline structure and fractures in a very specific way. The meltwater, being slightly acidic, flowed into and around these cracks and fissures, causing a corrosive chemical reaction in the limestone



that actually dissolved the rock, widening and deepening the cracks, creating holes and channels along the surface and deep within the limestone itself. The resulting landscape that we see today, with its potholes, crevices, ledges, and subterranean passages, is known as *karst topography*.

The caves in this area seem to be largely formed by the collapse of an ancient riverbed. The limestone became so porous at some point that the rock on top, seems to have simply collapsed onto it, forming a large area of broken limestone chunks, into which one can climb through.

When exploring the caves you should be prepared with; headlamp (can be purchased at the gatehouse), good hiking shoes, work gloves and clothing you don't mind getting dirty and possibly ripped. There is a lot of hunched over walking, crawling and squeezing as you make your way into and out of the broken landscape. The rock is often wet, so tread carefully. Footing is often uncertain. Don't forget your camera, with flash, as there are some great photo ops. Try to go during the week as weekend can become very busy - especially with kids, who like to hoop and holler as they get excited about their caving experience. Be certain to get a cave map from the gatehouse and remember that there is always risk in this type of activity.



Enter the conservation area off of Cave Road, via County Road 4. Pay the entrance fee, obtain maps, listen carefully to any verbal instructions regarding safety, closures, detours, etc. If you're camping, you can purchase firewood and ice at the gatehouse. You can also purchase headlamps if you're going to explore the caves. Proceed to area (A) on the map and park. From the parking lot you have access to the trails, caves, washrooms, picnic area and beach.

On our most recent trip to The Warsaw Caves, we took about 2 hours and crawled into and out of the various caves and

passages of the Cave Trail (C) before going back to the parking lot, dusting ourselves off and heading out on the Lookout/Kettle trail. As it was early June, one of the caves was closed due to ice blockage. It was a warm day and we could feel the cold air emanating from the cave opening, even though we couldn't get inside.

The Lookout Trail

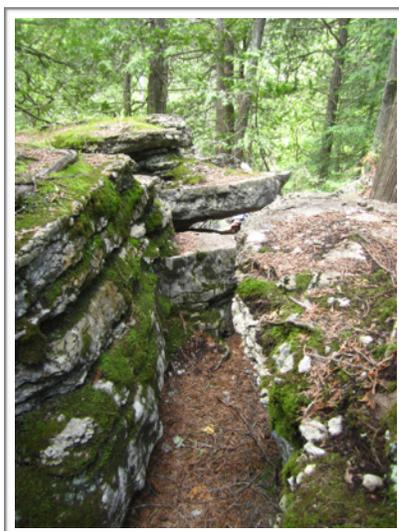
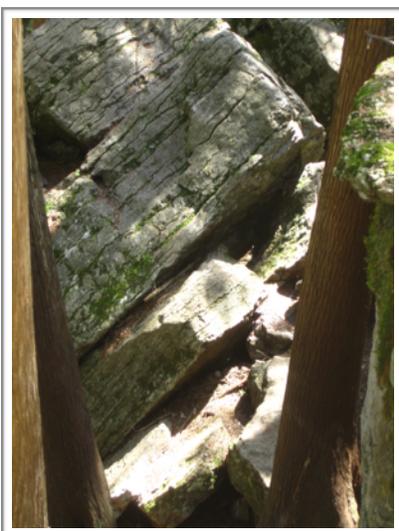
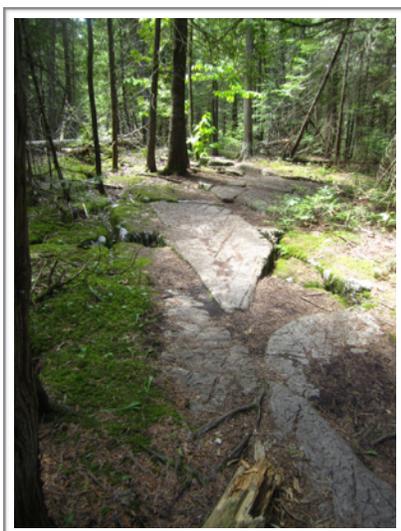
The trailhead is at the eastern end of the parking lot and is well marked (A). (Shown in orange on the accompanying map.) As you traverse the trail over the first 80m or so, you'll see the Indian River on your left. There is a couple of short side trails going down to the water's edge. Take a few moments to walk down and explore the shore.

One thing you'll quickly note is that this section of river flows towards the shore, but then simply disappears under foot! This is a characteristic of this karst topography type - it's very porous and water doesn't necessarily flow on the surface. The underground drainage is noted as a mottled blue on the accompanying map. The river here, disappears into the porous limestone and re-emerges about 100m to the SE.



Continue along the trail and you'll soon come to a little footbridge (D) that crosses over another section of the Indian River. Last time we came through here, there were a couple of picnic tables on the large flat rocks just upstream and we sat and had a bit of a lunch as we soaked in the sunshine. We then spent a few minutes wading around in the shallow, clear water before continuing along the trail.

The trail soon makes a sharp left and heads away from the river and starts an easy climb through the forest to the intersection of the Kettle Trail about km 0.5. The Kettle Trail (K) is only about 250 meters long, so it's only a short side trip to explore the rocky,



broken landscape of the “kettle holes.” The kettle holes that can be seen in this area were created when a hard rock, like granite, got pushed into a limestone crevice or indent then got pummelled by the water current which in turn ground away at the softer limestone, forming holes.

Return to the main trail and turn right to continue along the Lookout Trail. (Turning left takes you back to the parking lot.)

About kilometre 1.1 at (L) the trail comes close to the edge of the cliffside and you can stop to look out over the Indian River.

The Lookout Trail continues SE to the park boundary (you'll see the hydro right of way) and makes a loop to come back to this location at which point you simply retrace your steps back to the parking lot.

Limestone Plains Trails

There are two other trails in the conservation area, the first (shown in B&W on the map) is a 4km loop that takes you through mixed forest and the second is 7km, but uses much of the first trail.

The 4km north loop (B&W) is accessed from the road at (E) on the map. *(Depending on the park occupancy for any given day, you may or may not find a parking spot at (E). You may have to park near the boat launch and walk back.)* After a minute of walking, turn left at (1.) and proceed in a clockwise direction, frequently within sight of the Indian River on your left, to marker (2) on the map. Turn right and make your way back up to (1.) and the trailhead and out to the road.

The 7km white trail accessed at (W) on the map. You may have to park near the comfort station in the Group Campground. Follow the white trail in a looping arc southwards, then north after crossing under the hydro lines to marker (2) on the map. You can either turn right and make your way to (E) on the map and return walking along the park road to (W) or you can make your way in either a clock-wise or counter clock-wise direction around the 4km North Loop (B&W on the map) back to this point, then back to (W) the way you came.

How to Get There

44.4576° N, 78.1283° W

Highway 401 to 115/35 north. Follow 115 for about 57km. As 115 crosses (ends) at highway 7, it becomes becomes Television Road. Follow Television Rd. for about 3.5km to Division Road. Turn right (east) then in about 500m turn left (NE) onto Warsaw Road. Follow Warsaw Road for 17km to the town of Warsaw. When you get to Warsaw, turn left at the stop sign onto CR38 (Water St.) and follow northward for 3.5km to Caves Road. Turn right onto Caves Rd. and the park entrance will be on your right in about 1km.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the park gate

Kawartha Buttertart Factory – 4.5km Distant

- Great selection of butter tarts made on the premisses , not to mention the outstanding apple fritters. 895 Water St. Warsaw, ON. 705.313.4190

Lock 26, Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site

– 12.5km Distant

- One of the hand-operated locks on the Trent-Severn Waterway. A nice spot to sit, relax, eat a packed lunch and watch the boats pass through the lock in a stately procession. Bridge St. Lakefield, ON. 705.652.3056

CALEDON
#12 Rockwood Conservation Area
Rockwood, ON.



Total distance about 5km.

Time; about 2.5 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.



Rockwood Conservation Area is one of eleven parks under the jurisdiction of *The Grand River Conservation Authority*. It includes limestone cliffs, a lake for canoeing, kayaking and swimming, hiking trails, interesting caves to explore, camping and excellent visitor facilities – and only a short drive from several major metropolitan areas in south-central Ontario.

The story of Rockwood Conservation Area is all about limestone and water, erosion and dissolution. For tens of thousands of years, water has flowed over and poured down onto the limestone of the escarpment. Evidence of deep and continued erosion of



the limestone can be seen almost everywhere you turn at Rockwood. The limestone cliffs have been cut through by millenniums of water erosion. Deep potholes have been created by mildly acidic rainwater falling onto the rock and dissolving areas both large and small to create potholes and pockmarks that can be found on almost any rock surface within the park.

Not only has water played a major role in the natural setting of the park, but power, supplied by falling water, has provided the necessary energy for a major mill that was once operated in this park - the Harris/Rockwood Woolen Mill - the ruins of which have been preserved at the northern end of the park and are well worth exploring at (E).

As a side note, many of the workers lived in small houses, huts really, immediately adjacent to the mill. These huts were captured by the Canadian artist A.J. Casson in his painting from 1928, *Mill Houses*.

The Trails

The Cedar Ridge and Pothole trails are all neatly groomed and the surface is mostly crushed limestone, making walking very easy. Strollers and, probably even wheelchairs, would be no problem, although there are a few hills. Always call ahead if you



want the best advice on where a wheelchair can easily navigate.

Our last trip to Rockwood was in late May of 2017. It was a warm sunny day with plenty of sunshine filtered through high, wispy clouds. We spent the first half of the day, exploring the Cedar Ridge and Pothole trails. The lilacs were in full bloom and the scent around the mill dam and along the road to the cliffs was intoxicating. The trilliums were a few days past their peak, but could still be found in abundance. Black capped chickadees could be found almost everywhere in the park, especially near the caves, darting in and out just overhead. We crawled into some of the caves at the north end of the park then walked up the road a few meters and cooled our feet in the quickly flowing Eramosa River. We took our inflatable two person kayak and spent a couple hours after lunch paddling around the lake, under the limestone cliffs, birdwatching and relaxing as the light, warm breeze nudged us along.

Rockwood can be a busy little spot on summer weekends, so if your schedule allows, try getting out in late May or June before the kids are off from school. In July and August the crowds are best avoided during the week. September and October are also quite beautiful and the crowds are far less. Speaking with the attendant on duty at the gatehouse on our last trip, we were told that last year, 75,000 people visited the park.

How to Get There

43.6129° N, 80.1478° W

Highway 401 to Guelph Line. Exit north onto Guelph Line and continue to Rockwood at Highway 7. Turn right onto hwy. 7 (Alma Street) and in about 800m turn right onto Falls Street. The entrance will be on your right. Pay at the gatehouse and carry on to the main parking area near *Maple Lane* camp area, noted on the map, and park there. Down the hill from the parking lot is the

Pavilion with washrooms, snackbar and sheltered picnic area.

What To Do

You might want to walk down towards the beach, make a right at the water and join up with the 1.4km purple Cedar Ridge Trail. (A) About half way along the Cedar Ridge Trail you'll see a well worn trail on your left (west side) that goes a short distance out to the top of a towering limestone cliff with a great view of the Eramosa River at (B)

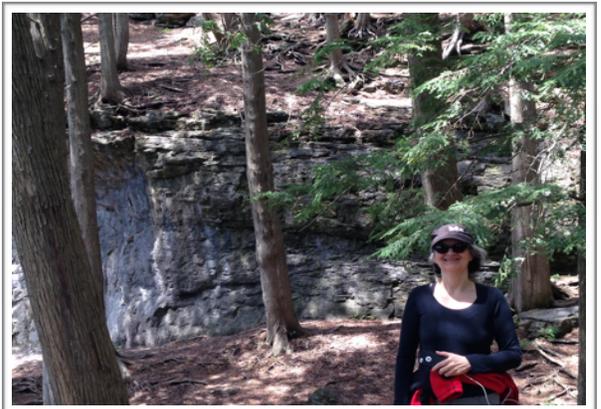
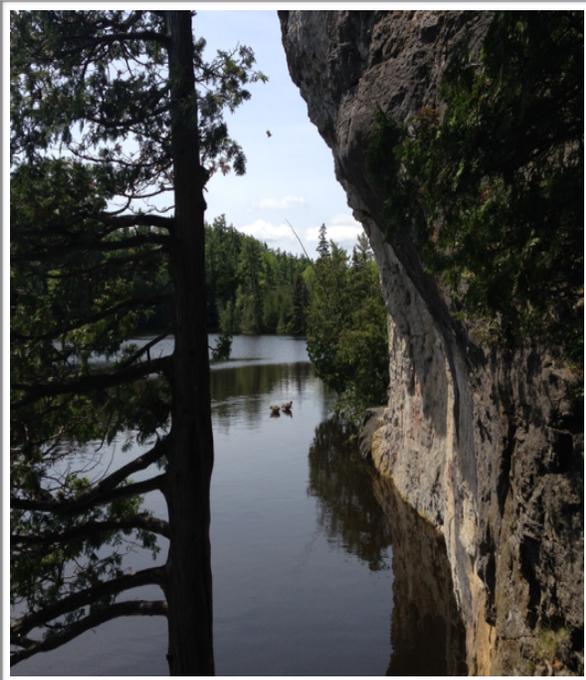
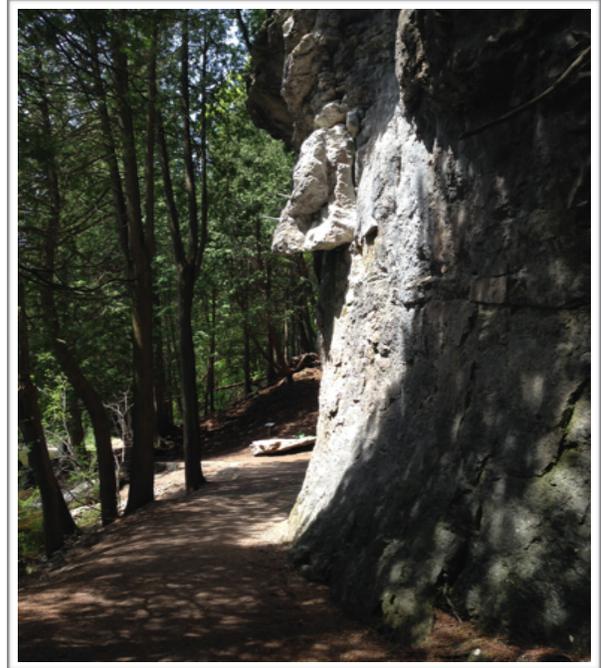


Special Caution; Be careful around the cliff edge, especially with children and pets. While there is a protective barrier, it's pretty easy to slip under, through or around it and the drop is precipitous.

As you approach the northern limits of the park, at (C) you'll walk past some towering, well worn and pock-marked limestone cliffs. These make a dramatic backdrop for photos.

At the north end of the Cedar Ridge Trail, you can visit the caves, and check out the rapids, Retrace your steps back to the dam and bridge. Explore the dam at (D) then cross over the bridge to explore and photograph the old mill at (E)

Return by the yellow Pot Hole Trail along the north side of the Lake. (F) We could have gone back to the pavilion and up to the parking lot, but we opted to turn right at (G) and make our way up the little valley to the car.



With a bit of exploring, meandering and backtracking, the total distance is only about 5km. Don't forget to explore the Harris Woolen Mills, as there are some outstanding photos to be had there.

After your hike, you could rent a canoe and spend a couple hours on the water, or maybe just grab your bathing suit and have a swim. They even have a mini golf course near the entrance. Since you're in the area why not drive over to the village of Rockwood and explore their main street with its antique shops and unique little stores.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the park gate

Rockwood Farmers Market – 1km Distant

- Locally grown and produced foods and products. Live music. Activities for kids. 112 Guelph St., Rockwood, ON. Corner of Main St and Hwy 7. Every Wednesday from 4-7pm. Mid June to Early October. 519.831.3106

•

Jim Farm Market – 4km Distant

- Lots of fresh veggies and fruits grown locally. 8398 Eramosa Milton Townline, Rockwood (Guelph), Ontario Open Fri, Sat, Sun. Seasonally. Find him on Facebook. 416.721.4364

Halton County Radial Railway - 6km Distant

- A first rate attraction. Streetcar and radial railway museum. Ride vintage streetcars, walk around the restoration workshop, learn about the history of streetcars in Ontario. Activities for kids, gift shop, cafeteria. Loads of parking. Admission charge. Located at 13629 Guelph Line, Milton, Ontario. 519.856.9802

Terre Blue Lavender Farm – 8.5km Distant

- Opens the first of June. Closed Wednesdays. Events, shop, photography and the smell of lavender is everywhere. 2501, Sideroad 25, Milton, ON. Call for hours of operation.
905.593.1459

#13 Terra Cotta Conservation Area

Terra Cotta, ON.



Terra Cotta Conservation Area is one of ten parks under the jurisdiction of *Credit Valley Conservation* or CVC. It includes, wetlands, ponds and some 15km of hiking trails within it's nearly 200h.



From about 1947 to 1958, this area was used as a full-blown, privately owned, recreation facility with paved parking lots, swimming ponds, campsites and everything that goes with those high impact activities, including concession buildings and dance halls. Then, about 1958 the CVC began to acquire acreage with the idea of creating conservation land. The concept of gaining land for recreational revenue was, at the time, an enticing idea, for the revenue would help pay for the conservation land being acquired.

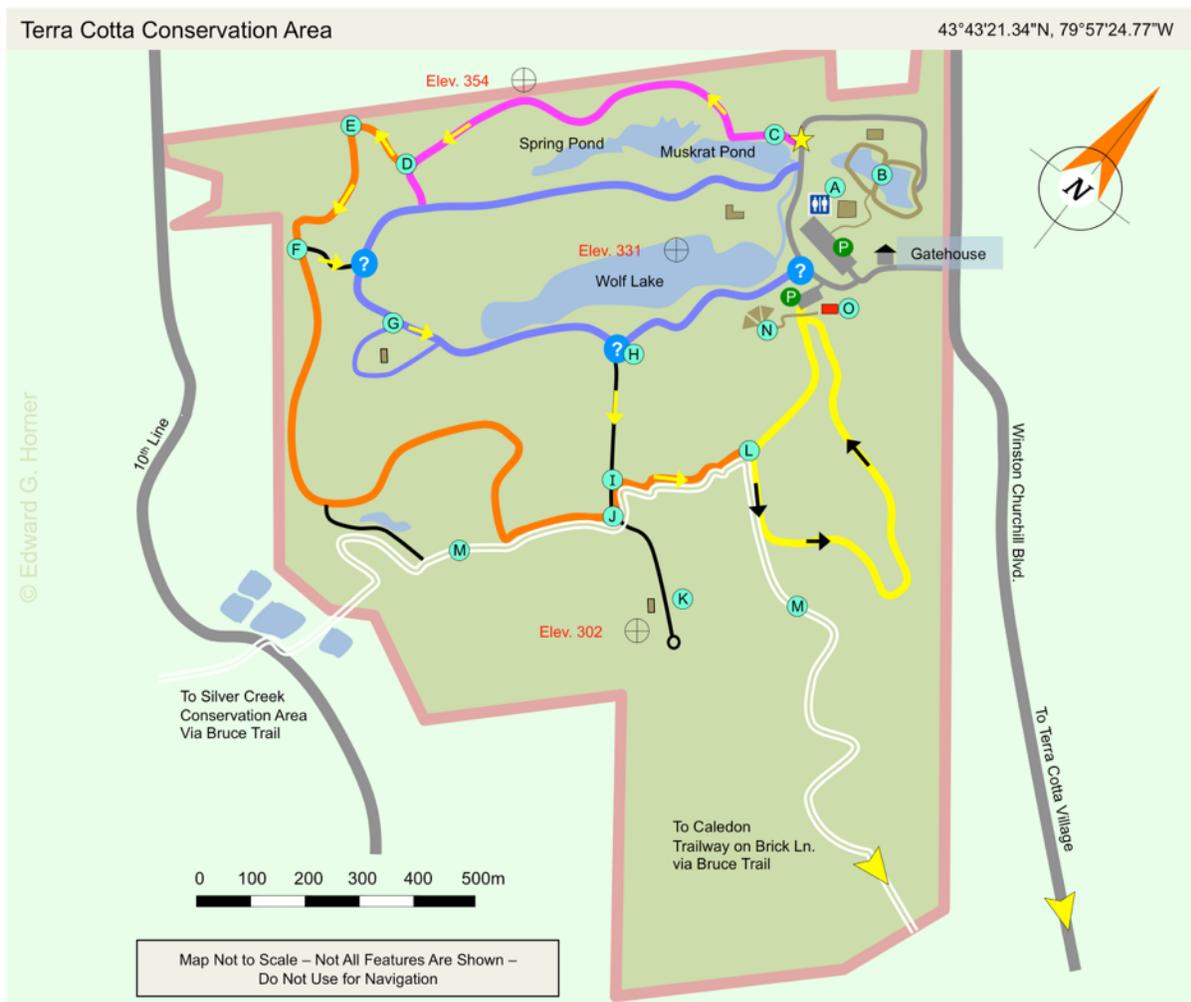
By 1979, there was a shift in thinking about the CVC priorities. It went from recreation, followed by conservation, to conservation before recreation. About 1990 a new master plan (*Hough, Stansbury, Woodland Limited, et al.*) placed an “*emphasis on the protection of the environmentally significant portions of the parkland and provision of passive recreational uses.*” While recreational facilities were still being considered, there was a shift. Since about 1990, the land has been slowly and carefully managed back to its original state. The paved parking lots have been revegetated, the pools removed and replaced with award winning wetlands and the campgrounds have been re-planted with native vegetation. Now, visitors can enjoy the conservation area in a more natural state, closer to what it was like prior to European settlement, an outstanding example of the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO designated World Biosphere Reserve.

Begin your visit at the Visitors Welcome Centre (A). Refreshment, maps and washrooms. In the winter you can rent XC skis and snowshoes. Call ahead for hours of operation 905-877-1120.

Terra Cotta Lane 3.2km loop

Difficulty ★☆☆☆☆

This is a good place to start, if you haven't explored the area before. The loop takes you throughout the park, and touches on some of the highlights of the history and topography of the park. Starting and ending in the parking lot, there are other, one-way trails that will connect you to the Vaughan and McGregor Springs walks. It's an easy trail, along an old access road. Most, if not of it, is wheelchair accessible, but as always, call ahead to confirm condition of trail. The trail circumnavigates Wolf Lake, named after original land owner, Leo Wolf. In the winter, Wolf Lake is a great spot for ice skating or hockey on its frozen surface.



McGregor Spring Pond Trail 1.2km loop

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

This trail leads north and west from the parking lot, along the northern edge of Spring Pond and up into the rolling hills above the water's edge. It makes its way through mixed forest in a westerly direction to eventually connect with Terra Cotta Lane trail. When you get to Terra Cotta Lane, turn left and head back eastward to the parking lot and welcome centre. Of course, you can extend the walk by turning right onto Terra Cotta Lane and following it in a loop back to the parking lot.

Vaughan Trail 2.2km

Difficulty ★★★☆☆

The Vaughan Trail skirts the western edge of the park from its intersection with Spring Pond Trail in the north and then turns eastward to meet up with the western leg of the AF Coventry trail in the SE. This is a little more advanced trail with lots of ups and downs, not to mention that the footing is a little sketchy due to tree roots and rocks. Hiking boots are recommended.

AF Coventry Trail 1.2km

Difficulty ★★★☆☆

Like the Vaughan Trail, this trail is not groomed in any way. It's a much rougher trail, than, say the Terra Cotta Lane route and hiking boots are recommended. The trail takes the hiker across and through at least three river ravines with quite a bit of climbing and ridge walking.

Wetlands Trail – 0.6km

Difficulty ★☆☆☆☆

This trail seems accessible for wheelchairs and other mobility devices, although after a rain things may be a little dicey. The trail takes you through the man-made wetlands that have replaced a large, concrete swimming pool of the 80s.

On My Last Trip – 8.3km. Aug. 18, 2017

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

I rated this hike “moderate” mainly due to the difficult footing on the AF Coventry section and the numerous ravines that one climbs into and out of along the way.

I pulled into the main parking lot and began my visit at the *Visitors Welcome Centre* (A) purchased a bottle of water (I forgot mine) and spent about 30 minutes exploring in and around the Wetlands Trail at (B). I took a figure-eight route through the Wetlands trail and discovered, ducks, frogs and a small turtle.

One of the invasive wetland plant species that has been causing trouble in Ontario’s waterways is Purple-Loosestrife. It was introduced by early European settlers, primarily as a decorative plant, but it “got out,” and by the early 80s was making a major nuisance of itself; choking out native species, clogging marginal waterways, depleting nutrients in the soil and generally reducing local biodiversity.



Controls, mainly physical removal, have proven ineffective on a large scale, but may work locally, say in a local park or garden. The difficulty is that it has a substantial and widespread root system, which, if not completely removed, will

garner a new purple-loosestrife plant next spring. Simply spraying with a herbicide would certainly kill the plant, but the overspray would also affect birds, bees, insects of all sorts and of course other plants, not to mention the poison getting into the very waterways that were targeted for protection in the first place.

About thirty years ago, a major search for a biological control was underway and resulted in finding three European beetles that feed almost exclusively on purple-loosestrife. One beetle eats leaves (*Galerucella*), another eats the flower itself and the third attacks



the root. The leaf-eating beetle was finally introduced in Ontario about 1992 and the results have been a major depletion of the plant and a general conclusion that the native species are no longer under threat in Ontario's wetlands.

In the spirit of transparency, I have no idea whether or not the beetle pictured earlier is actually the *Galerucella* beetle. *I just saw it munching away on a purple-loosestrife flower and got it on camera.*

Below, I make note of the open-air picnic shelters at (G) and (K), for along this hike they are the only two spots where one can seek shelter in the event of a heavy rain. There is also an open-air picnic shelter on the north side of the Wetlands Trail.

After exploring the Wetland Trail, I made my way out to the McGregor Spring Pond trailhead at (C) and proceeded westward through the second growth, mixed forest on a wide, wood chip and compacted soil path. The trail runs through a gently rolling landscape that rises to the right of the path and slopes away to a river valley and pond system on the left.

Eventually the McGregor Spring Pond trail intersects with the Vaughan trail at (D). I turned right (northward) and made my way to the stile that takes one over a fence and out of the conservation area (E) into the Jack Smyth Field Centre.²⁵ Do not climb the stile or go over or around the fence. The Vaughan trail continues to the left and southward, along the edge of a river valley.

At (F) you'll come to a connector trail that takes you to the Terra

²⁵ The Jack Smyth Field Centre is owned by the Peel Board of Education and is used as an educational centre for Peel students.

Cotta Lane Trail. (Of course you can continue along the Vaughan trail and meet up at (J), although the going is not as easy as the Terra Cotta Lane.) Follow the connector trail to the Terra Cotta Lane, then make a right. Follow the Terra Cotta Lane past the Picnic Shelter at (G) to the access road at (H). Turn right (southward) at (H) and carry on to (I). You can, as I did, follow the road down to the picnic area beyond (J) at (K) or you can just make a left turn onto the Vaughan trail at (I).

Either way, you'll want to come back the Vaughan trail at (I) and continue eastward over to the AF Coventry Trail at (L). The Vaughan trail at this point is rather rough, and as noted earlier, hiking boots would be most beneficial. This is definitely one of those occasions where walking and texting is going to be problematic.

At (L) you can cut the trip short and turn left and make your way up to the parking lot just beyond the Watershed Learning Centre at (O), or, for a longer trip, turn right and follow the AF Coventry, southward, then northward all the way back up to the Watershed Learning Centre. Either way this hike ends at the Watershed Centre.

Located near the Watershed Learning Centre is the amphitheatre at (N). Throughout the summer, talks, demonstrations and evening movies take place here.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the park gate

Caledon Trailway – 1.2km Distant

This rail-to-rail pathway takes one from Terra Cotta to just beyond Palgrave ON. The best way to explore this trail is on your bike although short sections, say, Cheltenham to Inglewood, can be

easily explored by foot. Trail length, 36km one way. Trail head at the end of Brick Lane in Terra Cotta. 43°42'54.99"N, 79°56'35.36"W

Terra Cotta Inn – 1.7km Distant

A beautiful, if rather pricey, eatery in the heart of the village of Terra Cotta. Food was very good and the well manicured grounds run down to the river, making for some nice photo opportunities. I especially enjoyed wandering through their gardens.

Reservations recommended, but not always necessary, according to our server. 175 King Street, Terra Cotta, ON. 905.873.2223

Terra Cotta Country Store - 1.7km Distant

This is a great little store that has outstanding coffee and baked goods. They sell jewelry, clothing, arts and crafts. They also host the Buzzfest Outdoor Art and Gourmet Food Festival in September. 119 King St. Terra Cotta, ON. 905.877.2210

Silver Creek Conservation Area - 3.5km Distant

Silver Creek sits on the southern boundary of Terra Cotta Conservation area. It's roughly 430ha stretches southward about 4.5km to the outskirts of the village of Silver Creek on highway 7 and contains the large river valley of Silver Creek itself, rock outcroppings, forests and various trails. Trailhead 43°41'33.25"N, 79°58'2.59"W at 13500 Fallbrook Trail, Halton Hills, ON.

Glen Williams Art Centre and Gallery – 8.3km Distant

Art gallery, studio, art classes meeting space, all in the picturesque village of Glen Williams. 515 Main St, Georgetown, ON. right next to Glen Williams Park. 905.873.8203

HAMILTON
#14 Christie Lake Conservation Area
Dundas, ON.



Christie Lake Conservation Area is primarily an event and large group picnic area, although the trails (mostly south of the lake) are quite pleasant and relatively remote. One can rent canoes, rowboats and kayaks at the marina pavilion or you can bring your own. No motorized vessels are allowed on the lake.

When you arrive at Christie Like Conservation Area, you pay your

fee and they hand you a map. The map, contrary to convention, has south located at the top and north at the bottom. I suppose, in a crazy way, it makes sense, as you enter the park from the “bottom” of the map and proceed in a southward fashion to the “top” of the map, but it’s a little confusing at first to people who actually read maps. Fortunately, there’s a compass rose right on the map that indicates “north” in a fairly obvious manner. The map in this book is oriented in the traditional way, with north at the top of the page.

Both on the map they hand you at the gate and the map included in this book, not all the trails are included. The reason for this is that there are a lot of “proposed” trails and “bikes only” trails, such as Lowlands, Wedeln Run, Punchbowl, Trillium and others. Walking on these trails is not recommended and may prove dangerous to hikers and cyclists alike. Better that hikers stick to the “multi-use” trails on the map. It’s good to remember that cyclists yield to pedestrians and everyone yields to equestrians.



In 1971 the Spencer Creek was dammed to help prevent the frequent and dangerous flooding that was occurring downstream through Greenville and even down into Dundas Ontario, at the bottom of the Niagara Escarpment. One of the benefits of the dam was the creation of Christie Lake or Christie Reservoir and its

subsequent development as a conservation area.

Hill and Dale and 'Round the Lake Trail

Total distance about 6.5km.

Time; about 3 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.

On my most recent trip in early July of 2017, I parked at the westernmost lot, the “mountain bike” lot (A) and proceeded to the SW, across the short causeway and immediately right onto the Hill and Dale Trail at (B). Right at the trailhead is a special note that the bridge, further along this trail, is not safe for horses, yet despite that, I noted horse tracks in the dirt and mud along the way - so go figure.

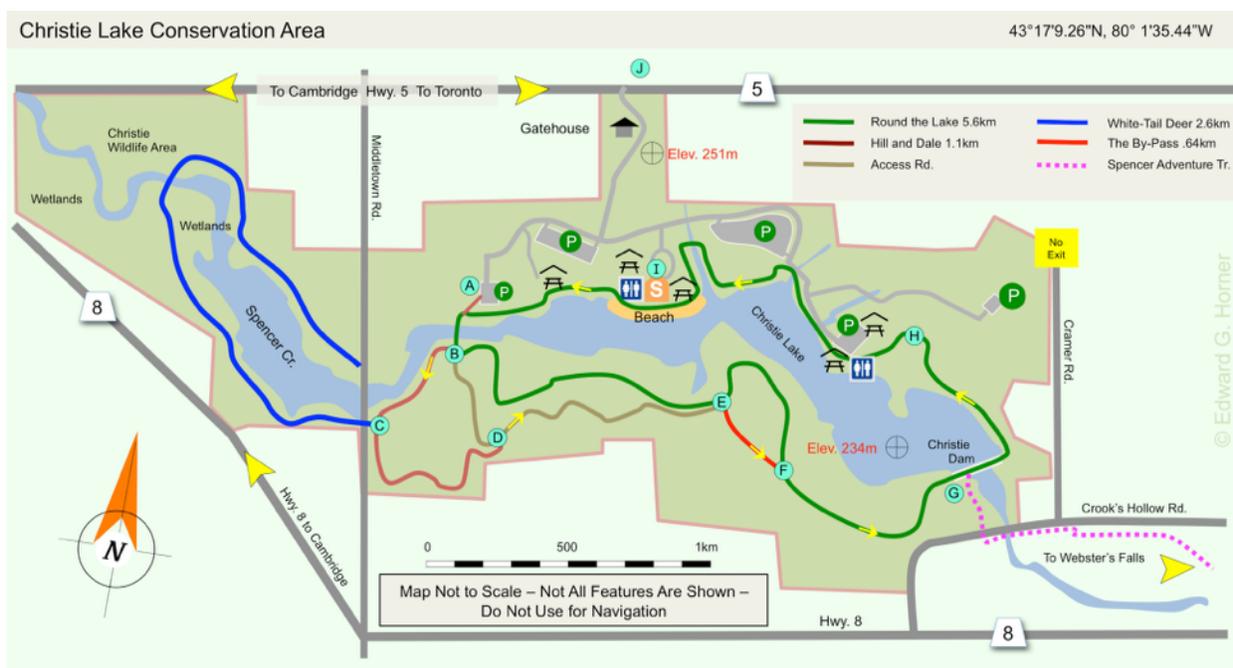


Shortly, you'll come to a point where the trail is very near the road at (C). You'll see a well worn path off to your right, leading to the road. Directly across the street, is the beginning (or end) of the Deer Tail trail that leads the walker/cyclists through the Christie Wetlands. I opted not to add this to my walk on this day, but carried on along the Hill and Dale Trail to eventually emerge at the Access Road at (D).

Once on the access road, I turned right (now heading eastward) and carried on to the intersection of the 'Round the Lake Trail and The By-Pass at (E). I opted to bear right and take The By-Pass trail a short 600m SE to the 'Round The Lake trail intersection at (F). Again, I bore right and followed the trail mostly SE to make a wide left turn to the Christie Lake Dam at (G).

At this point you can hook up to the Spencer Adventure Trail that runs over to Webster's Falls, noted elsewhere in this book) or continue across the dam and carry on along the 'Round The Lake trail and to the Disc Golf course at (H). As an interesting side note, I was introduced to the fact that the course was in this area with a distant, "Look out! Incoming!!" and then hit in the back with a Frisbee. The course is actually played along and across the trail, so keep an eye out.

Once you get to the end of the Disc Golf course, the trail itself, sort of peters out. I walked down towards the lake and picked up the trail near the picnic pavilion and carried on westward. It loses itself from time to time, but just carry on along the lake shore in a



westerly direction as best you can and you'll eventually end up back at the parking area at (A).

You can buy a few snacks at the beach concession (I), on weekends, IF they're open. They seem pretty lax about their operating hours. Theoretically you can also rent a canoe or kayak here, but, like the store, it wasn't open either. Better call for details.

Finally, after you finish up your hike or bike ride and pile back into the car, you can treat yourself to some great scones, butter tarts, cinnamon rolls, and lots of other baked goods at the Tiny Shop Bakery right across the highway from the park gates at (J). They also have ice cream. Just watch the traffic getting across the road, it can be quite busy at times.

How to Get There

43.2859° N, 80.0265° W

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

Spencer Adventure Trail – Beginning at Christie Dam

- The Spencer Adventure Trail winds along the Spencer Creek all the way to Webster Falls. There are numerous interpretive signs and images along the trail that points out the industrial and cultural history in this area. It terminates about 5km east at Webster's Falls. Also see *Webster's Falls* near the end of this book.

Weir's Lane Lavender & Apiary - 2.6km Distant

- This is a working farm specializing in lavender and bee products. There is a store on the site. Gift baskets, honey, essential oil lip balm, pillow spray and dozens of other products available. Also online. 223 Weirs Lane, Dundas, ON.
905.627.9208

Dundas Valley Conservation Area – 4.6km Distant

- Over 40km of well marked and nicely maintained hiking, walking, riding and equestrian trails, nestled in the Dundas Valley. Trail Centre, store, washrooms, etc. 650 Governors Rd, Hamilton, ON. 905.627.1233. See *Dundas Valley Conservation Area* elsewhere in this book.

Webster's Falls – 5.5km Distant

- Discussed elsewhere in this book, Webster's and Tew Falls are two excellent examples of the "ribbon" waterfalls that can be found all along the Niagara Escarpment.

Griffin House – 6km Distant

- This structure is recognized as an important Canadian Black History site. Built in 1827, this wood frame house was purchased (along with the 50 acre lot) in 1834 by Eneals Griffin. He and his wife Priscilla arrived in Canada about 1829, fleeing slavery in the US. For the next 150 years their descendants lived here and farmed the land in the immediate area. 733 Mineral Springs Rd, Hamilton ON. Operated by the City of Hamilton and the Fieldcote Memorial Park and Museum. 905.648.8144.

Dundurn Castle – 12km Distant

This 40 room, 1,700m² home was completed in 1835 by Sir Allan McNab - once premier of the United Canadas. The castle was the basis for wide ranging entertainment and included guests such as Sir John A MacDonald and King Edward VII. Purchased by the City of Hamilton in 1990, renovated to an era about 1855 and opened to the public. Guided tours. 60 York Blvd. Hamilton, ON. 905.546.2872

#15 Webster's Falls

Dundas, ON.



Total distance about 10km.

Time; about 4 hours

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.



Special Cautions

Some portions of the trail are very close to the edge of the gorge and are very near the Spencer Creek. Protective barriers are not always present. Use caution, especially with children and pets.

The Webster's and Tew Falls hiking trails and historical area is a fascinating walk for anyone interested in the industrial history of Upper Canada and the natural history of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve of the Niagara Escarpment.



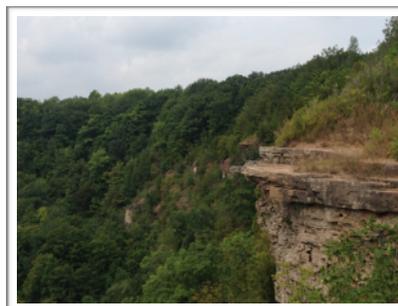
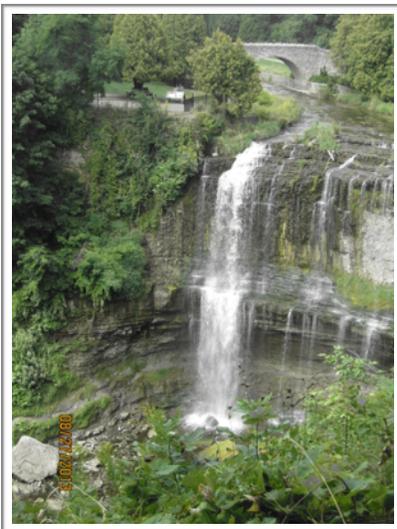
In 1990 the Niagara Escarpment became one of eighteen recognized biosphere reserves in Canada. This nationally and internationally, significant landform encompasses scientifically valuable examples of sustainable relationships between human activities and ecosystems and is part of a 120 country network of over 650 significant biospheres. The escarpment stretches for over 725km through the province of Ontario, from Niagara Falls in the south to Tobermory in the north and covers some 194,555 ha. To quote from the UNESCO website;

“The Niagara Escarpment represents the largest contiguous stretch of primarily forested land in south-central Ontario. The biosphere reserve includes the greatest topographic variability in southern Ontario, with habitats ranging over more than 430 m in elevations and including Great Lakes coastlines, cliff edges, talus slopes, wetlands, woodlands, limestone alvar pavements, oak savannahs, conifer swamps and many others. These habitats collectively boast the highest level of species diversity among Canadian biosphere reserves, including more than 300 bird species, 55 mammals, 36 reptiles and amphibians, 90 fish and 100 varieties of special interest flora.”

Where to Park

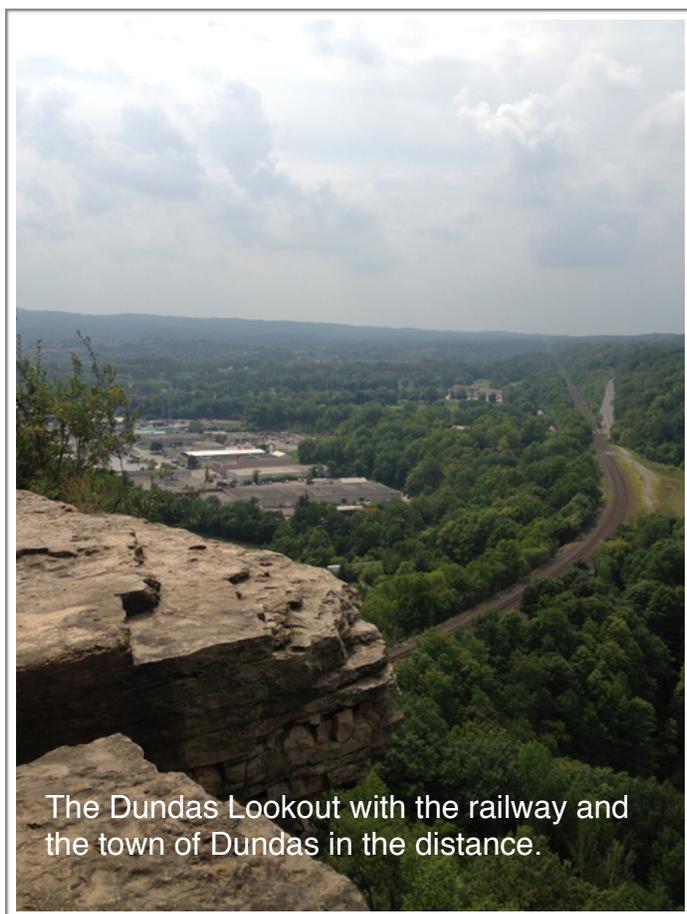
Important Parking Note; this area can get *very busy* during summer weekends and holiday Mondays. For this reason, the parking lots may be closed but a shuttle bus will run from Mizener’s Antique and Flea Market at 367 Hwy 5 West. There is a small fee.

Tews Falls and
Stone Bridge



Dundas Lookout

Parking is largely dependent upon what you want to see, how far you want to walk and how much time you have. On my last outing to Webster Falls, I used the *Crook's Hollow Conservation Area* parking lot on the south side of Crook's Hollow Road, about 1km west of Bullocks Corners. If you only want to see Webster's and/or Tews Falls, you might want to park at the Websters Falls parking lot (at the bottom of Shorts Road), take in Webster's Falls there, then walk north up to Tew Falls along the Webster Falls Side Trail. On a previous occasion, I parked in the eastern most lot of the Christie Lake Conservation Area (see hike #14 elsewhere in this book) and took in the entire length of the Spencer and Webster Falls trails, connecting by the Round the Lake trail, all the way to the Dundas Lookout. It was about 14km return hike, and took much of the day, but I was in no hurry.



The Dundas Lookout with the railway and the town of Dundas in the distance.

As we put this hiking guide to bed in late Sept. 2017, it should be noted that land ownership agreements are under renegotiation. This means that as of this writing, there may or may not be a land access agreement for trail users between Webster's Falls and Tew Falls. That means you may have to park at one spot enjoy the falls, then drive to the other.

How to Get There

43.2763° N, 79.9809° W for Webster's Falls Parking Lot

Follow Queen Elizabeth Way west from Toronto. The QEW merges with the 403 at Oakville, but continues on as the QEW/403 combination towards Hamilton. As you approach Burlington, the QEW peels off the 403 to go over the Skyway Bridge towards Niagara Falls. *Do not go over the bridge.* Stay with the 403 and it eventually merges with the Hamilton Chedoke Expressway. Continue on the Chedoke to Exit 69A to Main Street/Hwy 8 West. Turn left on Main Street (8 West. You'll see the signs for McMaster University) and in 1.2km turn right onto Cootes Dr. (Hamilton Rd 8) just after you pass McMaster University. Cootes Dr. becomes King Street in about 3km. Continue on King St. (Still Hamilton Rd. 8), up the escarpment to Bullocks Corners. Park as above or as per accompanying map. Distance from QEW and 427 about 67km.

Points of Interest

(A) Village of Crook's Hollow. Between 1820 and 1850 a series of industrial facilities were built by James Crooks, including, in no particular order; a scythe factory, a linseed oil factory, a brewery, a distillery, a blacksmith shop, a general store, a saw mill, a tannery and a cooperage.

(D) In 1971 the *Christie dam* was constructed to help regulate the flood prone Spencer Creek. Not only did the creek wreak havoc in towns like Crook's Hollow, Greenville and Bullocks Corner, but further downstream towns like Dundas were susceptible to flooding as the water washed over Webster's Falls and flowed through town. As recently as April 20th, 2017 a major rainfall hit the Dundas area, dumping a months worth of rain in a single day, and water poured down from the escarpment, overflowing Spencer Creek through town and flooded roads, business, houses and parks. As the earth's atmosphere heats up, due to anthropogenic activity (global warming) the air is able to hold

more moisture, so rainfall events of this sort are going to become more likely and not less.

A side benefit from the building of the dam was the creation of Christie Lake, with its large wetlands west of Middletown Rd. in the Christie Lake Conservation Area.

(C) The *Darnley Cascade* is a waterfall that flows from Spencer Creek into Crook's Hollow. Since it's now controlled by the Christie Lake dam, it's not always flowing, but when it is, it's quite lovely.

(B) *Darnley Grist Mill*. Construction on this mill began in 1811 by James Crooks.. Over the years it had various additions, configurations.. When James passed away in 1860, the mill was purchased by James Stutt and Robert Sanderson who, by 1880, added a steam boiler to augment the waterpower and heat water for the purpose of paper making. In 1885 the boiler exploded, killing two workers and causing considerable damage to the mill. It was quickly re-built and and continued to operate until 1934 when it was finally consumed in a conflagration that damaged it beyond recovery. The Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) purchased the mill site in 1969 and stabilized the ruins.

(E) In 1797 George Morden arrived from Pennsylvania and was granted land in the Greenville area. His son, Jonathan, purchased 200 acres along the Spencer Creek and, by 1801, built the first saw mill in the area, powered of course, by the water flowing in Spencer Creek. Jonathan's son, James, added a grist mill on the site in the late 1850s. Both mills burned beyond recovery in 1905. Some of the original stone and wooden planks used to contain the water as it rushed through the mill race, can still be seen on site.

(F) Up until a couple of years ago, there was a dam located here. It was built about 1825 - the fifth to be built on the Spencer Creek. It was used to provide water for various saw, planing and cider mills that operated over the years. The dam, having long out-lived it's purpose, was finally removed a few years ago and the area naturalized.

(G) Back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Spencer Creek was not as tame as it would seem today. While it was an invaluable source of power (largely waterwheels for mills) it was prone to flash flooding. Rain storms a score of kilometres away, in a far distant corner of the Spencer Creek basin, could send water rushing down the gullies and vales, washing out homes, businesses, eroding farmland and endangering human life. In 1938, the Clark Blanket Factory stood on both sides of the Spencer Creek, but a flood took out the mill on the west side of the creek, completely destroying the business. All that remained was the dyeing house, which was built a few feet higher than the mill. Today, it's occupied by the Old Stone Gallery.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the Greenville Optimist Park at (G)

Dundas Museum and Archives – 3.2km Distant

A local museum with regional reach. The Dundas Museum showcases and interprets the Canadian History as it unfolded in and around Dundas, Ontario. 139 Park St. W, Dundas, ON. 905.627.7412

Carnegie Gallery – 3.3km Distant

Housed in the 1910 Andrew Carnegie Library building, this not-for-profit, artist run gallery hosts a wide variety of it's regional artist's members. 10 King Street W. Dundas, ON. 905-627-4265

Royal Botanical Gardens – 13.5km Distant

This world class horticultural centre, located in Burlington, is an absolute must see, if you have any interest in gardening at all. People from all across North America come to see and learn about horticulture, conservation, science and education. Their unique gardens, facilities and natural lands inspire and nurture society's commitment to the environment. 680 Plains Road West, Burlington, ON. 905.527.1158

#16 Dundas Valley Conservation Area Dundas, ON.



The Dundas Valley Conservation is a hiker's paradise with 40km of hiking trails spreading out over 1,200ha of forested land in the heart of the Dundas Valley. The trails were developed and are maintained by the Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) and the Bruce Trail Conservancy. The trails reach out into almost every corner of the park and take the walker/cyclist/equestrian through a



rich variety of forest, meadow and varied geological formations.

The whole Dundas Valley was gouged out by the Laurentide Ice Sheet and then when the ice melted, it was further contoured by the rush of millions cubic miles of meltwater as it cascaded eastwards into Lake Ontario.²⁶ Much of the area is part of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and as such is recognized for its biodiversity and unique or rare geological formations. For more info on the UNESCO designation, read the Webster's Falls section in this book.

While I have been to the area on at least four separate occasions - all during the summer months, I learned quickly that the trails change almost seasonally, due to re-routings, erosion, land owner agreements, etc. Always check at the gatehouse or Trail Centre for closures, detours, updates and special notices. If you have children, you might want to walk them through the outdoor learning centre, just west of the Trail Centre, south of the train tracks, where they can learn about the wildlife and geography of the area.

Where to Start

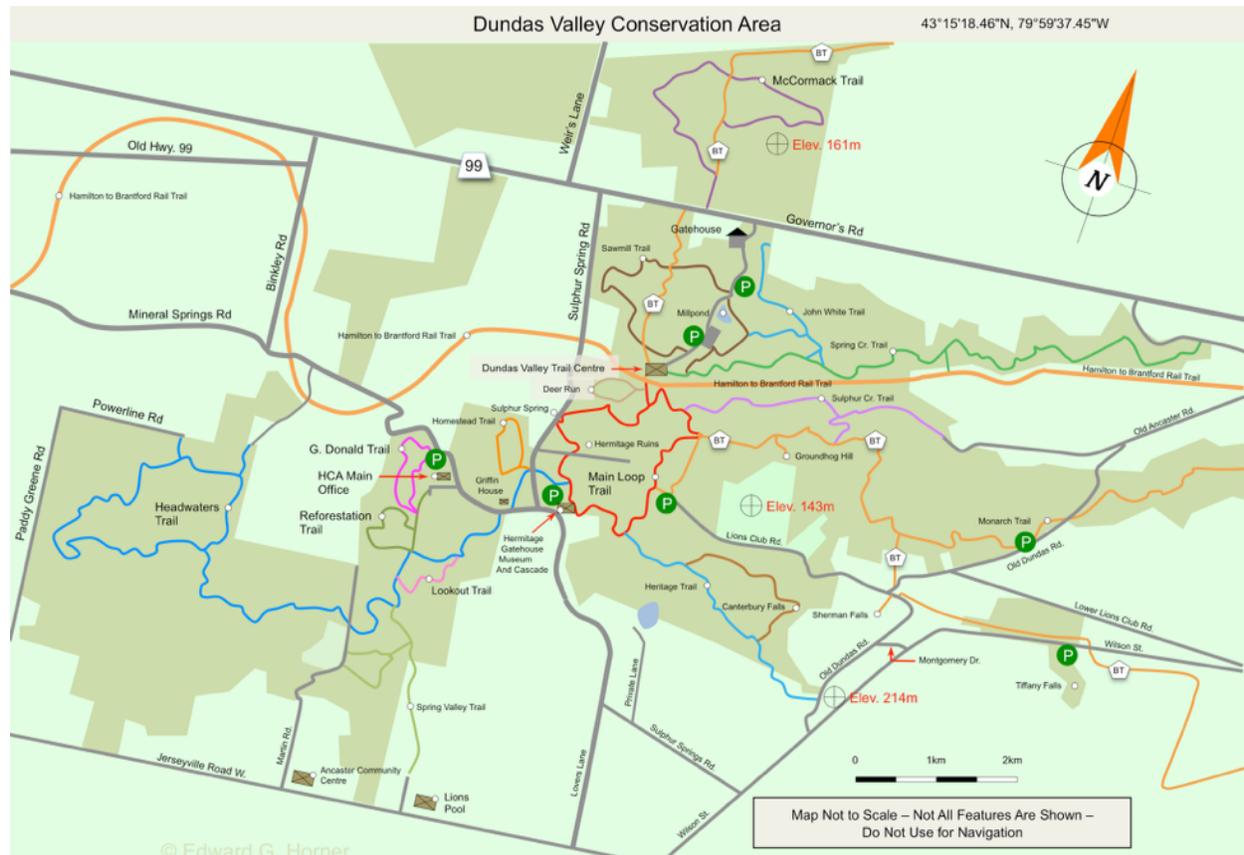
From the gatehouse, you'll find a large parking area about 800m



²⁶ For more detailed information see the Laurentide Ice Sheet elsewhere in this book.

south. Park here. The *Dundas Valley Trail Centre* is located south of the parking lot. Follow the signed road/trail to the centre and pick up a current map, note trail closures, updates, re-routes, etc. Inside the centre is a food concession, washrooms, interpretive displays, learning centre, covered and open picnic facilities, maps, brochures and more.

One of the interesting things about the Trail Centre is that it's a replica of a Victorian era train station that would have stood in this area at that time. Right next to the centre is a short remnant of the Toronto-Hamilton-Buffalo railway line upon which sits a 1929 executive coach car and a 1931 baggage car that were donated to the centre by the CPR. The railway line was abandoned in 1988 and eventually converted into an inter-urban, multi-use rail trail.



Main Loop Trail. 3.5km approx. Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

This is a good trail to help get your bearings in this vast network of trails. As you'll quickly realize, there are numerous other footpaths radiating out from the Main Loop and extend to all corners of the park. On the Main Loop you'll walk on a well groomed crushed gravel trail, through a mature deciduous forest, open meadows, stream valleys and an overgrown apple orchard. Points of interest include the sulphur spring,²⁷ Hermitage Ruins (about km 1.1), the Hermitage Gatehouse Museum and cascade (about km 1.5), the Merrick Orchard (about km 2.5) and the Trail Centre itself at the trailhead. The trail seems suitable for strollers, although there were a few short sections of loose gravel. Allow about 90 to 120 minutes.

McCormack Trail. 6.3km approx. Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

On my most recent trip I parked in the main lot, noted above, took the Sawmill Trail around the east end of the millpond, and followed it NW, across the park road and westward to the intersection with the Bruce Trail. I turned north and continued up to the McCormack Trail on the north side of Governor's Road. By



²⁷ About 880m into the hike (counter clockwise) the trail comes close to the road. At this point, you can make your way out to the road, and look over the little sulphur spring/fountain on the far side of the bridge. Watch for cars and, judging from the smell, I don't think you'd want to drink the water.

the time I got to western most point on the trail, I turned around and took in the tremendous view down into the Dundas Valley and Hamilton beyond. Well worth the easy climb. Allow yourself about 3 hours.

Headwater Trail. 10.5km approx. ★★☆☆☆

Park the Hermitage Gatehouse Museum lot (intersection of Mineral Springs Rd and Sulphur Spring Rd. You can pick up the trail directly south of Griffin House Museum. Follow the trail in a wide loop through the southwestern reaches of the park. The trail takes you through a pine plantation, across deeply cut ravines, over sparkling streams and rolling hills. The trail goes over about as far as Paddy Green Rd. then loops back north then west to retrace an earlier part of the trail. Allow yourself about 4.5 hours.

How to Get There

43°15'17.77"N, 79°59'36.42"W

Follow Queen Elizabeth Way west from Toronto. The QEW merges with the 403 at Oakville and continues on as the QEW/403 combination towards Hamilton. As you approach Burlington, the QEW peels off the 403 to go over the Skyway Bridge towards Niagara Falls. *Do not go over the bridge.* Stay with the 403 and it eventually merges with the Hamilton Chedoke Expressway. Continue on the Chedoke to Exit 69A to Main Street/Hwy 8 West. Turn left on Main Street (8 West. You'll see the signs for McMaser University). Continue on Main Street, which in about 2.3km turns into Osler Drive. Continue along Osler Drive to Governor's Rd. Turn left on Governor's Rd. Continue for about 3.5km to the park entrance on your left. Total distance from Hwy. 427 and QEW about 60km.

#17 Dofasco 2000 Trail
Stoney Creek, ON.



Trail Length One Way 11.5km.

Time; about 4 hours (one way)

Difficulty ★★☆☆☆

Walking time varies with weather and trail conditions.

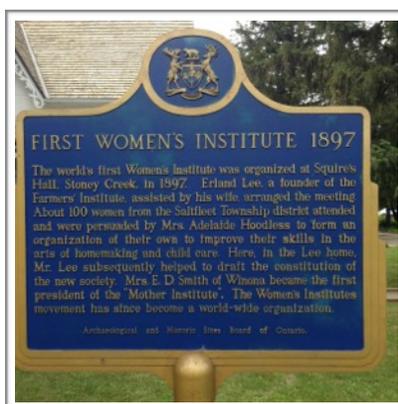
The 11.5km and then return is a bit much for most people to

chunk off in one hiking trip. I suggest either breaking it into two days (as I note below) or a day ride with your bike. It's very flat and well maintained - at least it was well maintained in 2017 when I last hiked there. Pay parking at the Devil's Glen Conservation Area.

Special Cautions

While there are protective barriers along the edges of the gorge, you should still keep a close eye on children. The barriers are not failsafe. While driving through this area, slow down and be aware that pedestrians may be on the road.

The Dofasco 2000²⁸ multi-use trail can be accessed from a number of points. From end to end it's 11.5km or a total of 23km return. On my 2015 trip out to the trail, I parked near the intersection of Power Line Road and Tapleystown Road. I then hiked the 3.5km westward along the trail to the Devils Punchbowl Conservation Area, stopped into the Punchbowl Market for lunch and returned to the car. Total distance about 7km, taking just over 3 hours to complete.



²⁸ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Dofasco is a steel company based in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Dofasco is currently a standalone subsidiary of ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel producer.

On a subsequent trip out, (about a week later) I parked at the eastern end of Power Line Road and headed eastward, through the Vinemount South Swamp and turned around at the railway crossing about kilometre 4.2 later. Total walking distance about 8.5km and total time out about 5 hours, with lots of time for resting, taking photos and lunching.

There are few, if any, facilities along the trail, so whatever you think you'll need you have to take with you. You will cross a few streams that look cool and refreshing, but avoid drinking from them, unless you properly treat the water. (See the section on Treating Water in this book).

The trail was developed in partnership with Dofasco Inc., the former City of Stoney Creek, the Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) and the Canada Millennium Partnership Program.

A

Devil's Punchbowl Conservation Area centres on the Stoney Creek as it plunges over the edge of the Niagara Escarpment. While the creek is not usually more than a trickle these days, the evidence of erosion (likely from the melting of the Laurentide ice Sheet, that covered this area and much of the Northern US, about 20,000 years ago) shows that it once was a much greater flow and was able to cut through the limestone layers of the



escarpment to form the rounded canyon head that is so evident today. Still, if you come during the spring thaw or just after a rain storm, the flow can be quite dramatic.

Pay parking, walking paths, lookout points. Curiously, when I arrived in July 2017, during my most recent trip, the pay parking meter device was locked up behind a chain link enclosure. I couldn't pay. Don't know what that's all about.

Punchbowl Market and Bakery. (B) A good spot to pick up some things for lunch.

Whether you walk, cycle or drive over, the lookout point here (C) offers a great view out over the city of Stoney Creek and beyond to Lake Ontario and, if the weather is clear, you can see Toronto near the horizon.

While not, strictly, part of this hike/ride, you might want to take a detour (especially if you're biking) to check out the The Erland Lee Museum. (D)

Power Line Road. (E) Just a note of caution that the trail uses this section of the road. It doesn't appear to be too busy, at least during the week, but still use caution along this section. Walk where traffic can see you and you can see traffic - usually on the shoulder, facing oncoming traffic. One two different trips, I parked at the east end and then the west end of the road, just off on the shoulder, as noted above.

The South Vineland Swamp/Wetland (F) is an environmentally significant aquatic feature of this area. It offers a habitat for numerous important and/or endangered species, including; the Sedge Wren, the Northern Harrier and Edward's Hairstreak



Butterfly. The board walk offers a great way to experience the inner workings of the wetlands. Don't forget your camera.

87 Acres Park. (G) I don't mean to be too dismissive, but this "Park" is basically just a closed landfill site. Not much here, except for a quarry pond that seems to offer a bit of a habitat for some aquatic birds. I've read that the park is a popular spot for viewing Red-Tailed hawks. The warning sign and locked gate down at Green Mountain Rd and 10th Rd. E makes it fairly clear that the City of Hamilton, Waste Management Division doesn't want you wandering around in there, although, curiously, about 200m east of that sign they've posted a notice that motorized vehicles are not allowed and the fence has been pulled back to allow walk-in access. A quick internet search tells us that Hamilton is monitoring the area for surface water contamination (little to none reported), has plans to clay cap the landfill area (about .80ha) and redevelop as a park.

The Dofasco 2000 Trail crosses the RR tracks and continues about another 800m to the east to finally end at Fifty Road. I was told by a fellow hiker that the trail will eventually turn northward on Fifty Road and connect up with the Waterfront Trail and Fifty Point Conservation Area on Lake Ontario.

Once again, not a part of this hike/ride, but the Starlite Drive-In (H) is one of the few remaining facilities of it's type that I know of in the area. See below.



HOW TO GET THERE

43.2111° N, 79.7567° W

From Toronto, QEW westbound through Burlington, over the Skyway Bridge and exit onto Centennial Parkway (exit 88). Turn right (south) onto Centennial Parkway at the end of the off ramp. Follow Centennial through town and up the escarpment. Just after you gain the top of the hill, turn left onto Ridge Road. Follow Ridge Road for about 1.5km to the parking area of The Devil's Punchbowl Conservation Area. Distance from QEW and 427 to Devil's Punchbowl Conservation Area about 56km.

Alternatively, go past Devil's Punchbowl and follow Ridge Road to Tapleystown Road. Turn right (south) onto Tapleystown Rd. and park about 1km south where the Dofasco 2000 Trail, crosses

Tapleytown Rd. at Power Line Road. Park at the side of the road and hike eastwards as described in, “my second trip out,” above.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the Devil’s Punchbowl parking area

Starlite Drive-In – 2.6km Distant

- Drive-Ins are still fun. Three screens, the largest being 47’X90’ The two smaller screens are each larger than your average IMAX screen. 59 Green Mountain Rd E. Stoney Creek, ON. 905.662.4800

Dofasco Park – 2.3km distance

- A recreational and learning facility for employees of Arcelormittal/Dofasco. Sitting on 20 acres of leased land, Dofasco began providing sports and recreational facilities and training for it’s employees back in the 1920s. You can [view their website](#) to see what programs are available to the public.

The Erland Lee Museum – 2.75km distance

- One of Canada’s National Historic Sites, located on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment. This Carpenter Gothic farmhouse is recognized as the location where the constitution of the first [Women’s Institute](#) was drafted. After touring the museum and visiting the gift shop, there are picnic facilities out back. 552 Ridge Road, Stoney Creek, ON. 905.662.2691.

Battlefield House, Museum and Park – 3.5km Distant

- This is a top rated attraction. Professional, informative and entertaining. A museum dedicated to preserving the memories, stories and artifacts of the Battle of 1812 between the Americans and the British. You won’t want to miss the battle re-enactment in June. 77 King St. W. Stoney Creek, ON. 905.662.8458

Canadian Heritage Warplane Museum – 23km Distant

- Home of one of only two Lancaster bombers that are airworthy. there are a total of 36 vintage military aircraft on display (in whole or in part, airworthy and not airworthy) at the museum. Located at the John C. Munro International Airport, Hamilton, ON. YHM. 9300 Airport Road, #2206, Mount Hope, ON. 905.679.4183

TORONTO HIKES

#18 Rouge National Urban Park Scarborough, Toronto's East End

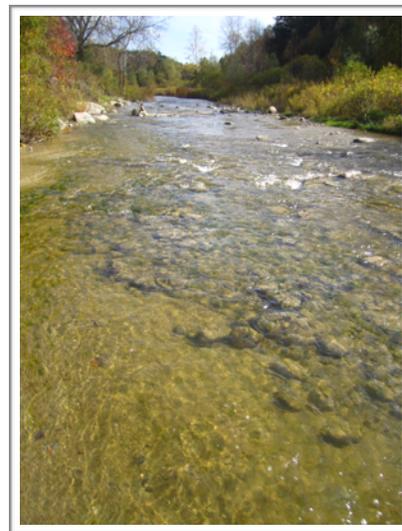


This 7,900ha, near-wilderness tract of land is Canada's only national park that is completely surrounded by an urban landscape. It contains a rich mixture of cultural, agricultural, natural, geographical and heritage features that is unique in this area of Ontario. It stretches from the Oak Ridges Moraine in the

north to the shores of Lake Ontario in the south. Within its boundaries are the last remaining working farms in Toronto and some of Canada's oldest indigenous sites, dating back 10,000 years.

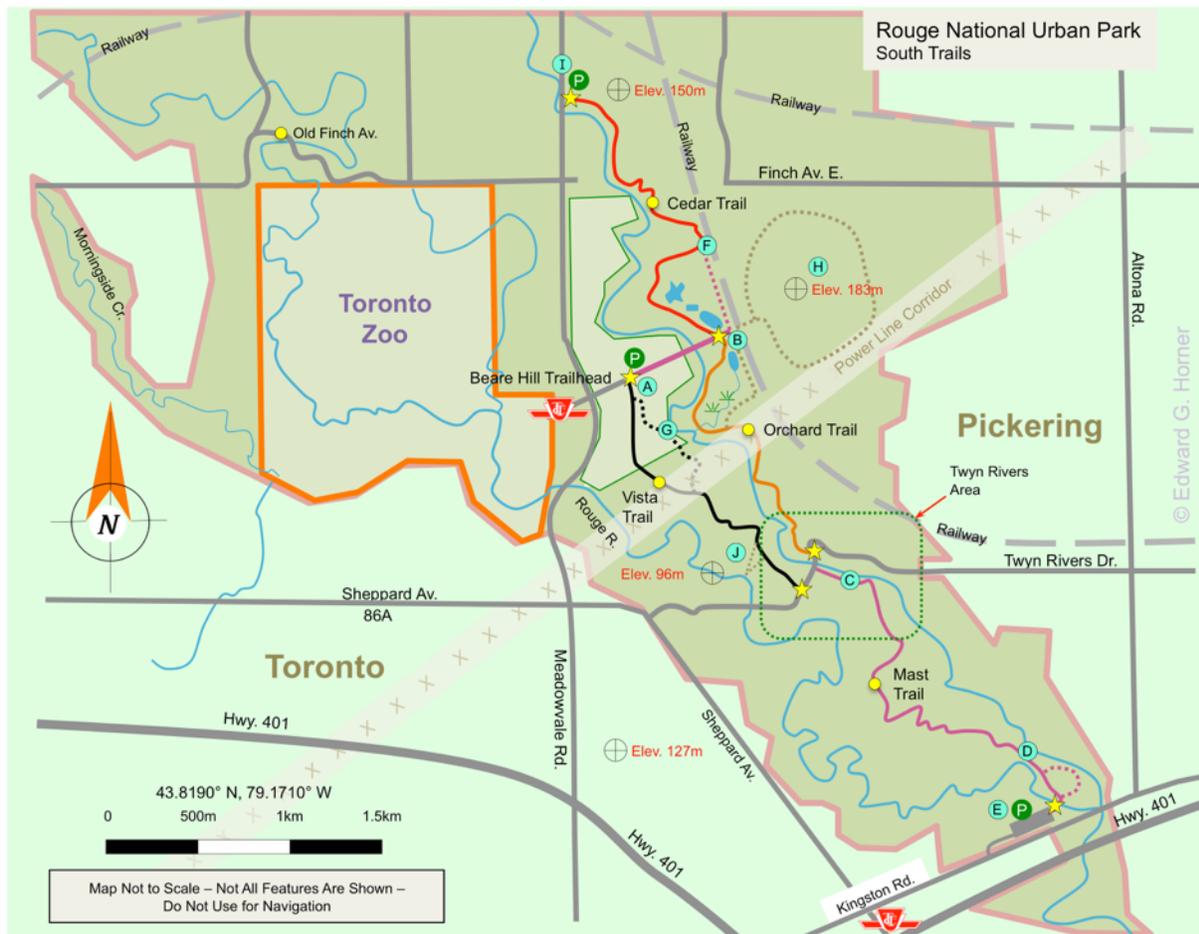
I've been to The Rouge on numerous occasions over the years in summer, fall and winter. Each season has its own special attraction, but for me, the autumn and early winter has the greatest draw. The leaves turning orange, gold and red as a chill begins to fill the air is a special treat that's hard to match. The early winter, as the snow begins to fall and the valley settles down to a long winter's rest also has its charms as the trail traffic falls to almost zero and you have long sections of trail on which you may not pass a soul and might see coyotes, foxes and white tailed deer.

The park was turned over to Parks Canada back in 2011 and since then the park has doubled in size from its original 47km². Previous to this it was administered cooperatively by the cities of Toronto and Pickering, as it was the boundary between the two municipalities. To say the park is "in development" is an understatement. The process is ongoing, ever-changing and has been receiving input from 20,000 Canadians and 200 stakeholder groups including farmers, hikers, indigenous peoples,



urbanists, naturalists, conservationists, animal experts, scientists, climatologists, urban planners, etc. The list is rather exhaustive, but amazingly, work is getting done.

Trails have been added, expanded, improved and properly marked. Interpretive signage and navigation maps have been added. Facilities have been improved and the park is now easier to get to than ever before. Outdoor education initiatives have been implemented and a mobile app is under development in coordination with the University of Toronto. The park even has a photographer in residence program and as I write this in Early August of 2017 that artist is Heike Reuse. I also just received an email notification that the “Welcome Centre” on Zoo Road has re-opened with expanded facilities.



Coyote Warning

Yes. There are coyotes in the park. No, they are not usually a threat to humans. Do not approach them, feed them or trouble them in any way.

For more on coyotes and how to handle encounters, see the section on Coyotes near the back of this book.

TTC Access

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) operates the 86A bus from the Kennedy subway station right to the main entrance of the Toronto Zoo. From the zoo entrance, walk east to the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre at (A) on the map.

The Toronto Transit Commission also operates the 85 bus from Sheppard-Yonge subway station to Kingston Road and Sheppard Ave E. Exit at that intersection (stop #7199) and walk east along Kingston Road to the entrance to Rouge Park - about 1km.

Call the TTC for route and schedule details 416-393-4636

----- THE TRAILS -----

Mast Trail - 6km Return



For me, this is the “Classic” Rouge Park hike. The trail traverses a 200 year old logging road through a largely Carolinian ecosystem. The timber taken out of this valley was used for masts on the sailing vessels that plied the waters of the Great Lakes at the time. Much of this timber was also shipped back to England where it was used to construct military and merchant vessels.

The trail starts at the parking lot just off Sheppard, (E) near the Glenrouge Campground,²⁹ crosses a footbridge and immediately heads north. As an alternative, there is a short loop (dashed line), just after you cross the bridge, that takes you nearer the river and connects back to the main trail after about a ten minute walk.

When you get to (D) there's a short path down to the river on your right and once there, you may find some nice photo opportunities. Also at (D) is the beginning of the climb up to a ridge, from the valley floor. The trail heads up a bit of a steep hill, then flattens and then up again, using the wooden stairs. There are a couple benches along the way so you can sit for a rest, if needed.

The trail passes through a Carolinian forest, over the "hogs back" ridge and down to the *Twyn Rivers* section. After you cross the open area and get to the river, (C) the trail makes a left at some bridge ruins and goes out to the road. At one time, a hotel stood near this site and there was a small dam that backed up the river to form a swimming hole. That open area you just crossed, used to be a small ski hill.

Once at the road, turn right and cross the bridge. **Take care due to active traffic.** Make your way eastward to the Twyn Rivers parking lot. At this point, the Orchard and Vista trails more or less meet up and you have the option, if you wish, to continue northwards or you can just turn around and retrace your steps back to the parking lot on Sheppard Ave.

As an aside, I have been in this area when the river is barely a trickle and one can cross the river at the bridge ruins (directly to the parking lot) on a few stepping stones, but don't take the risk if the water is any more than ankle deep.

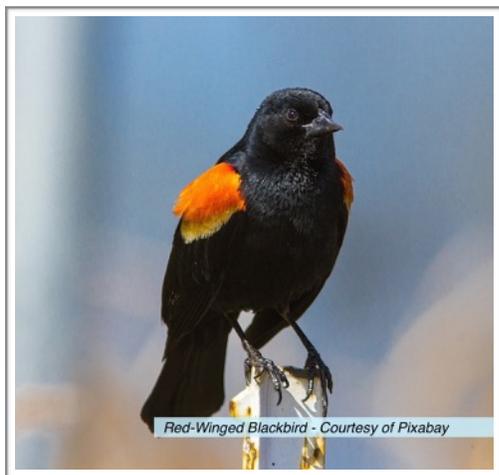
²⁹ The only remaining campgrounds within the city of Toronto. Mostly RVs, but a few tent and o'TENTik sites - must be booked well in advance. o'TENTik sites are basically canvas covered cabins with sleeping facilities.

Orchard Trail – 4km Return



Another classic Rouge hike, in my mind. This trail can be accessed from the south at the Twyn Rivers area parking lot or the north end, via the trailhead for the Beare Trail (park at (A) and walk to at (B), then turn right (south).

The Orchard trail takes one through a young, mixed forest and wetland. You'll pass through remnant orchards, past some early european settlement ruins, a mill and some foundations of early residences. You'll also traverse a boardwalk over a marshy area and when you do, listen for the shrill sounds of the Red-winged Blackbirds that are so common in this area. At one point the trail comes close to the eastern bank of the river, across which you can see towering bluffs that are constantly being eroded by the water action as the river alters it's course over time.



A couple of times, I've combined the Mast Trail with the Orchard Trail for a full 10km hike. I usually parked at the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre at (A) and walked to (B) then south down the Orchard, across Twyn Rivers Dr. to the Mast trail, south again to the parking area at (E) and then return.

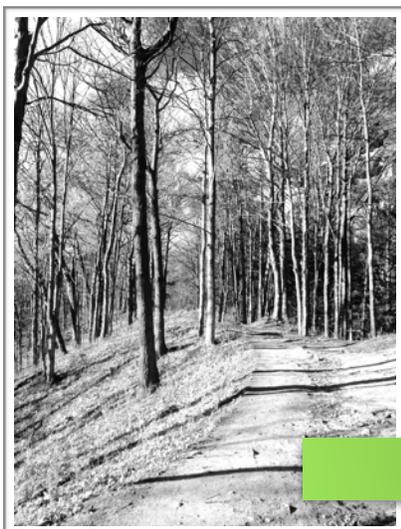
Vista Trail – 3.6km Return



The Vista Trail starts just south of the Welcome Centre at (A). While the trail has been re-routed, from time to time, it generally heads south, through open fields, under the powerlines and along a ridge down to Twyn rivers Drive. An alternative you won't want to miss is the short trail to the viewing platform (G) on the edge of the bluff that looks eastward over the park. You can see east and north, out over the Rouge River valley for quite some distance. This side trail reconnects with the Vista a little further south.

As you near the southern end of the Vista trail, near (J) there is an unofficial trail that takes you out to the edge of the cliff that looks over Twyn Rivers Drive and the Rouge River. If you decided to take this path, do be **extra careful** near the edge of the cliff, for it's an almost sheer drop for about 30m down to the river.

When you ultimately reach Twyn Rivers Drive, it's the end of the Vista Trail, but you can walk down the hill along the edge of the road (being extra aware of traffic), over the bridge to the south end of the Orchard trail (on your left after the bridge) and return via that route, or you can just retrace your steps back up to the Welcome Centre. Taking the Orchard trail as the return route will add about 1km to total trip making it a 4.6km loop.

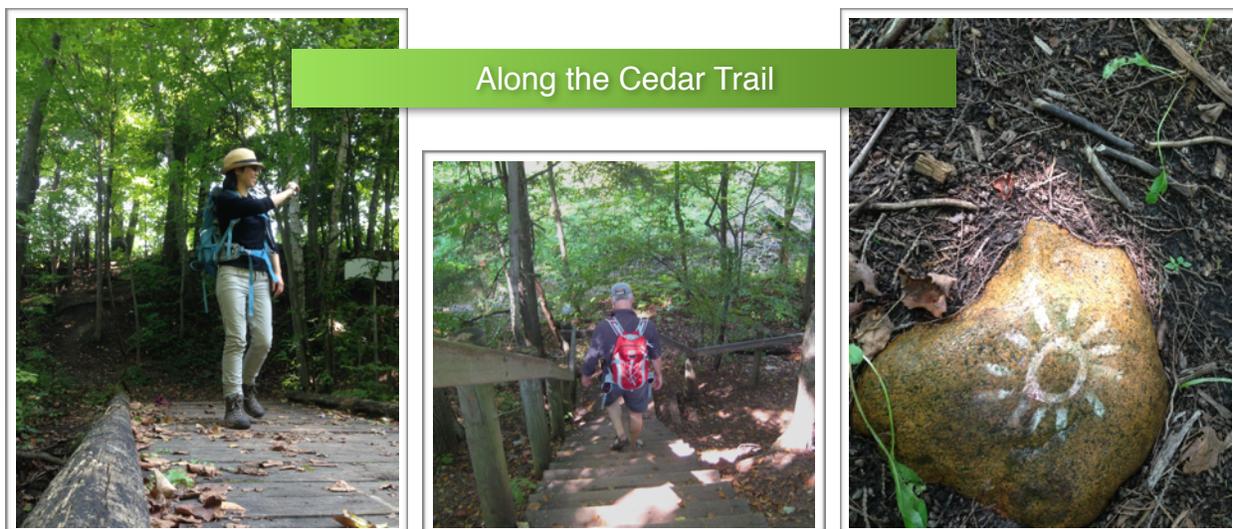


Views from along the Vista Trail

Cedar Trail – 4.2km Return

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ³⁰

Your best way to access the Cedar trail is to park at the Welcome Centre (A), walk along the Zoo Rd. to (B). It's possible to access the trail from (I) but, technically, there is "NO PARKING" on Meadowvale Road. Mind you, I have parked there a couple of and not gotten a ticket. Dozens of vehicles can be seen parked here on a nice weekend, but are all subject to tickets and towing. The road is certainly wide enough for parking, but it's not really allowed. Consider yourself forewarned.



Departing from the trailhead at (B) the route shares the way with the Beare Wetlands Loop but departs northward at (F) to continue it's winding way across a couple of streams, through and open meadow, into and out of lush forests and along the banks of the Little Rouge River. At one point, just a few minutes from (F) the trail drops into a vale and goes across a stream, very near the

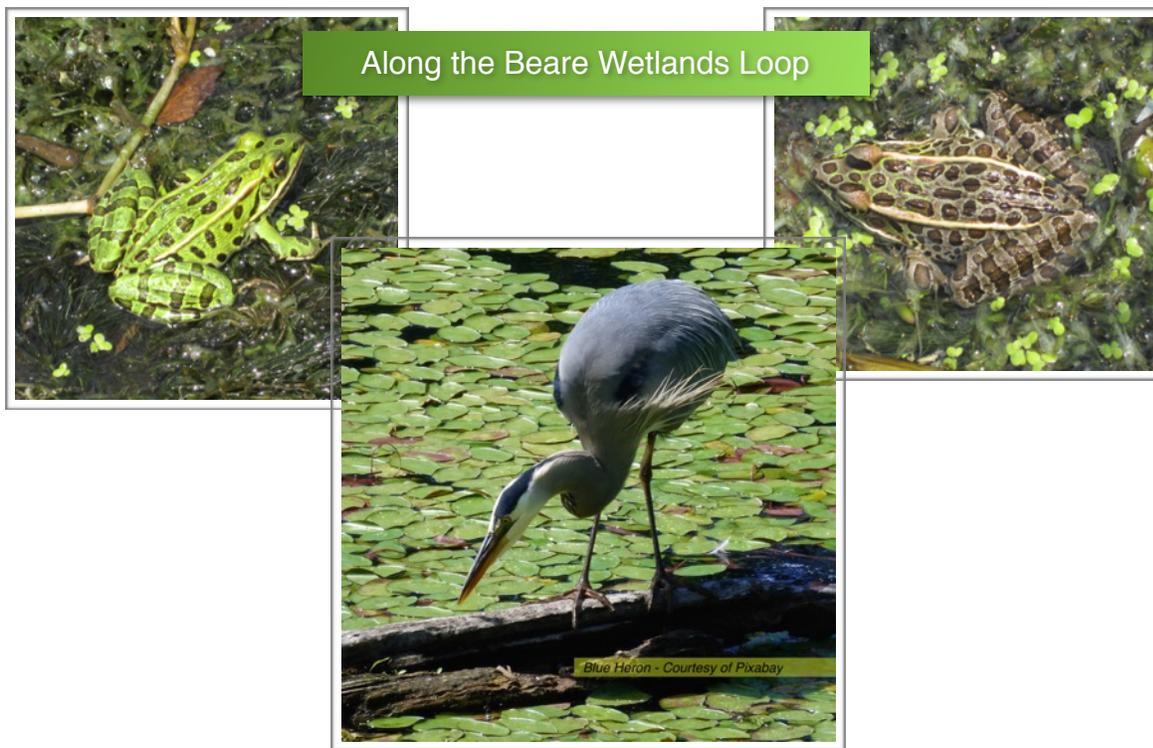
³⁰ While this trail is rated "easy," there are a couple of short steep sections that will give your heart a workout. If the trail is wet, the footing can be a bit sketchy.

train tracks above. You can't see the tracks, but should a train come along it can be quite startling, just so you know.

Beare Wetlands Loop 1.75km



This trail explores the manmade or remade wetlands near the bottom of Zoo Road (B). I'm not certain, but the wetlands seems to have been a gravel pit in the not too distant past. If so, it's been beautifully transformed. There are numerous unofficial pathways into and through the wetlands, but my advice is to just enjoy the views from the well-marked, outer perimeter trail.



Near the beginning of the trail, just off Zoo Road, (B) you may see painted turtles and numerous varieties of frogs in the pond. On my last trip, I unknowingly walked up on a great heron, who promptly took to wing, giving me a good shock and shot of adrenaline.

Proceed to the left of the pond onto the Cedar/Beare trail. The trail makes a long arc around the wetlands. When you get to (F), bear to the right and follow the path back down to (B).

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from the Visitor Welcome Centre at (A)

Toronto Zoo – 0.5km Distant

- This 287ha zoo is home to some 5,000 animals and is divided into 7 geographically distinct areas - each housing animals appropriate for the zone. Opened in 1974 this world class zoo that has become a must-see for Toronto residents and tourists alike. Widely accessible for people with mobility issues. Located at 2000 Meadowvale Rd. 416.392.5929

Whittamore's Farm – 6km Distant

- This 89ha pick-your-own vegetable and fruit farm located on the edge of the Rouge River Valle, in Markham, has been a family attraction for years. Not only can you pick fresh fruits and veggies, but there's lots of things sights and activities for the kids. Located at 8100 Steeles Ave. East. 905.294.3275

Herongate Barn Theatre – 6km Distant

- This 100 year old dairy farm has been reinvented as a nice little dinner theatre venue. Located at 2885 Altona Rd. 905.472.3085.

Highland Creek Trail – 4.5km Distant

- See Hike #20 in this book.

#19 High Park

Bloor St. W at Keele St./Parkside Dr.



Goodness, there are so many ways to enjoy High Park that I really don't know where to begin. There's swimming in the large pool near the centre of the park. There's the soccer and baseball facilities nearby. There's picnic shelters, scores of picnic tables, BBQ pits and the Grenadier Restaurant. If you enjoy wandering curved paths through lush gardens and beautifully kept lawns, you'd do well at Hillside Gardens. There's a trackless train that takes you on a tour around the park. You can visit or take part in

the allotment gardens, enjoy a Shakespeare play at the outdoor amphitheatre or visit the duck ponds. Then there's the zoo, or as the parks people have taken to calling it, the "Animal Display Area." You can take your dog to the largest off leash dog park I've ever seen or grab your tennis racquet and take advantage of the public courts near the pool, but there's also a public club on the eastern side of the park, that you can join. You can visit Sculpture Hill and see some of the art installations that were constructed for Canada's 100th anniversary back in 1967 or just sit under a large chestnut tree or shady elm and take in your surroundings while you read a book or listen to your iPod. Finally, and for me, the most important, there are (depending upon what exactly you're measuring) about 16km of hiking/strolling/cycling trails.



There are a lot of trails; some are dirt, some are chipped wood, others crushed gravel and still others are paved, so there's sure to be something for everyone. For the most part they appear to be mixed use with some exceptions which are plainly posted. Some of them are on closed roads, like Spring Road or Cherry Hill (while they're closed, the trackless train does use them).

Another thing you need to know is that not all the trails are particularly well-marked, so you should grab a map near where you first enter the park, or down by the food concession at (B) (or print out this one as a rough guide) and make plans. And still a

third thing you need to know, is that while the Parks department looks after the marked trails, at least to some degree, they are not very well marked and new trails seem to get formed all the time by regular users. One year a trail might cross over between two established routes, but the next year it may be completely overgrown and forgotten. The park is in a constant state of flux.

So, while I'll outline my last walk in the park, there's lots more to see and do. But first a piece of advice, and I quote directly from a couple of signs at various trailheads within the park,

“There is no provision for lighting on the nature trails. These trails are intended for daytime use only. We recommend that you enjoy secluded areas in the company of friends.”

Good advice for any hike, really, but all the more so as one wanders around one of Toronto's largest natural areas. As with any hike, be sure to let friends know where you're going and when you'll be back.

My July 2017 Hike – 5.2km

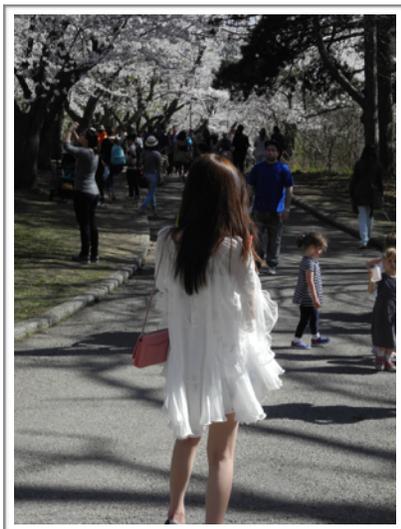
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆³¹

I got off the subway at the High Park station and exited out onto High Park Avenue. I turned right and walked south, across Bloor Street, into the park (A). I veered towards the right and followed West Rd. south past the food concession, kids playground and washrooms at (B). If you brought along a water bottle, this might be a good spot to fill up, for oddly, water fountains seem few and far between. There is also a stop for the High Park Trackless Train along this section. This train runs around the park and

³¹ There is a steep descent, in a remote area near the Children's Garden, that may give you some difficulty. Read the Alternate Route suggestion below.

stops at various locations where you can board or disembark. Adult fare is \$4.50 as of this writing and I believe you have one stopover privilege.

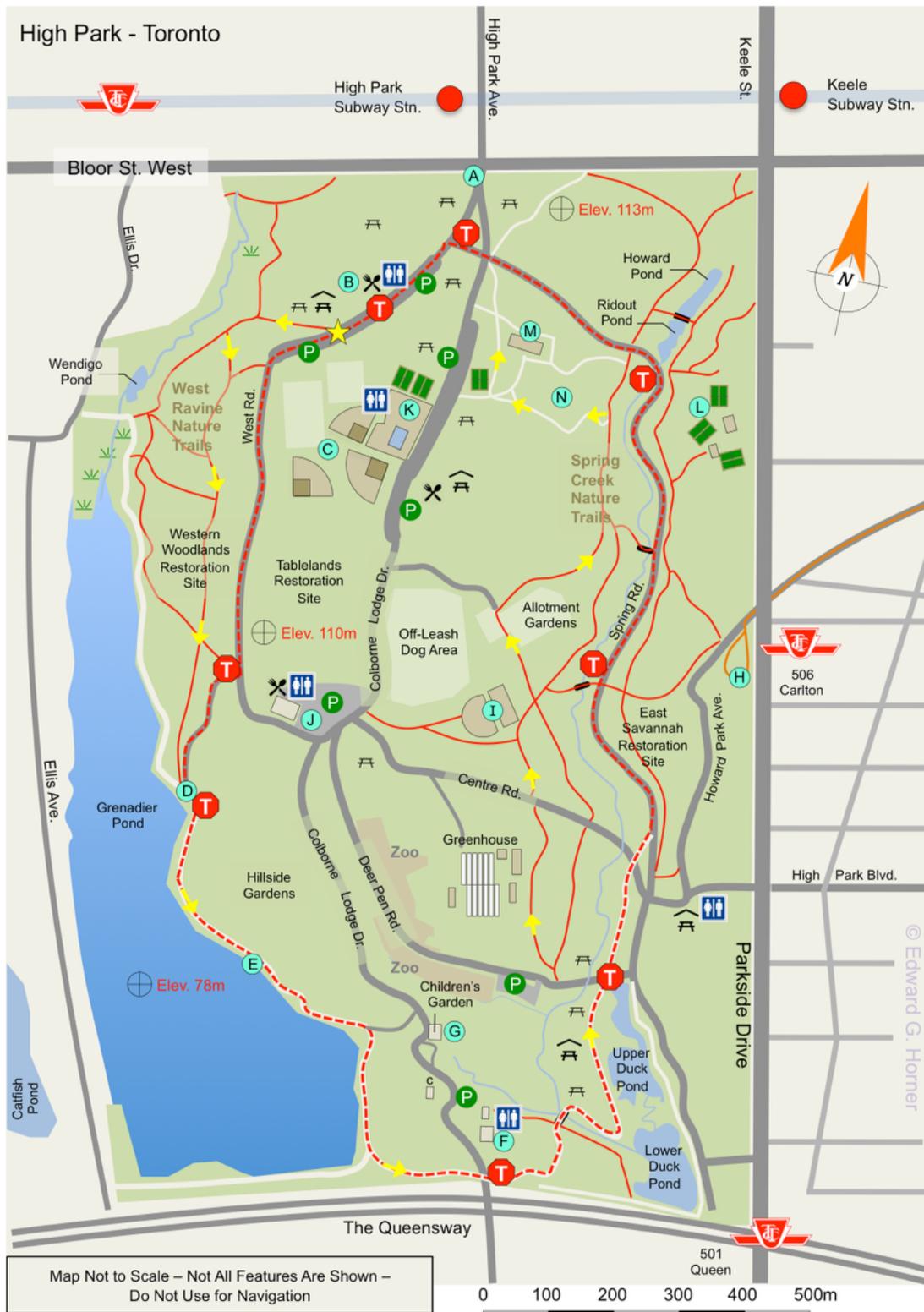
I walked along the west side of West Rd, past all this hubbub to a point where a nature trail emerges onto the sidewalk from the right (★). I took this trail down the hill to the west. I turned left at the first intersection, then left again in a few metres at the next intersection. At this point I was heading mostly south, traversing the hill, about half way between the top and bottom. While there are a few intersections, just keep going mostly south and follow the trail all the way to (D) where it emerges onto the banks of Grenadier Pond. The road leading up the hill on your left, is Cherry Road.



Cherry Blossom Festival

In the spring, there is an explosion of cherry blossoms in this area, both going up the hill and going southward along the shore of the pond. It's a well attended event and the High Park website even has a page devoted exclusively to this phenomenon. Unless things have changed recently, there is also another trackless train stop right at the bottom of the hill.

Day Hikes of Ontario Vol. II



- T Trackless Train Stop
- TTC Subway Stop
- ⛶ Picnic Shelter
- - - Trackless Train Route

Carry on along the shore of the pond. The well tended lawns and pathways to your left is *Hillside Gardens*. You'll often see wedding parties, photographers and special events taking place in this area. At about 1.2km you'll come to a pier out into the pond (E). This is a great spot for photos and observing the geese and ducks that come around almost constantly looking for a hand out. The signs caution us not to feed the birds as it is often unhealthy for them. Right behind the pier, a little up the hill, is a large Maple Leaf, about 20m in width, planted entirely from green and purple plants.

As an aside, if you want to read a funny story about Hillside Gardens and the trouble my friends and I got into as kids, read [Freewheeling](#).

As you near the southern end of Hillside Gardens, the road starts back up the hill on your left, but you're not going up there, follow the right fork, back down towards the pond. The path takes you almost down to The Queensway, where you turn left at the fork and make your way over to Colborne Lodge Road. If you'd like to take in a bit of history, stop into the Colborne Lodge (F) and learn how High Park was once a farm, owned by architect John Howard. Just across the road from the lodge is the burial site of the Howard's.

Alternate Point of Interest

Further north, up the hill (G), is the Children's Garden and Kitchen. Created in order to educate children, youth and the community about sustainable eco practices in the city. Located in the school is a kitchen where kids learn how easy it is to prepare food.

Retrace your steps back down to the bottom of the hill at

Colborne Lodge Road and The Queensway, then turn left and follow the paved, trackless train route back into the park. The path eventually leads out to Deer Pen Road, after crossing a sports field. Turn left and cross over the creek bridge and then into a clearing on the north side, immediately west of the creek. There is a trail at the north end of the clearing, leading up the hill, past the greenhouses towards the amphitheatre at (I).

The amphitheatre venue is used for *Shakespeare-in-the-Park* type of events that are put on in the evenings, during the summer. Celebrating 35 years as Canada's longest running outdoor venue. See *Canadian Stage* for information and tickets. I've been to numerous plays here over the years and they are always enchanting, especially under the stars. Bring snacks, a comfortable blanket/seat and some bug spray.

I took a bit of a detour from the amphitheatre over to the Grenadier Restaurant (J) to use the washroom, grab a coffee and sit on the patio, overlooking Hillside Gardens for about 15 minutes. I retraced my steps back to the amphitheatre and continued northwards, beyond the allotment gardens, all the way up to (N) and *Sculpture Hill*.

There are some sculptures in this area, that were, as I recall, mostly installed back in 1967 (to help celebrate Canada's Centennial) as part of an international competition that had 12 artists from around the world build/sculpt/create installations on and around *Sculpture Hill*. Sadly, many of these art pieces are gone or fallen into terrible disrepair, but you can still see a few of them ... such as they are. I remember, as a youth, returning almost daily to observe the progress of the granite carving of *The Hippie*, by Canadian artist William Koochin, located at the NW end of the Forest School (M).



At the SE corner of Colborne Lodge Rd. and Spring Rd. is the “*Unfinished Sculpture.*” As part of the competition noted above, Toronto sculptor, Irving Burman, had two blocks of stone delivered, but he suffered a major health event and was never able to get the sculpture completed. To this day, no one knows what he had in mind. The Parks Department built a plinth, moved the stones there and arranged them as you see today.

From the Forest School, I continued north along

Colborne Lodge Road and back to Bloor Street and the High Park subway station.

Loose Ends

(C) Sports fields. Organized teams can book these fields for their games

(H) Howard Park Streetcar Loop. Another way to get to High Park is to take the *Carlton 506* streetcar to its terminus in High Park. You can also get to the park via the *Queen 501* streetcar which stops at Parkside Drive at the southern end of the park. Both streetcars are fairly frequent. See TTC website for details

(J) *Grenadier Restaurant*. With a large patio, plus indoor dining, this can be a very busy spot on weekends.

(K) Pool and tennis facilities

(L) Howard Park Tennis Club.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

There are scores of things to do around the High Park neighbourhood, so I'll only list a few.

Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion – 0.6km SE of Colborne Lodge Drive at south end of park, situated right on the shore of Lake Ontario.

- One of the largest and most scenic swimming pools in Toronto.

Waterfront Trail 0.3km South of Colborne Lodge Drive at south end of park, right on the shore of Lake Ontario.

- The Waterfront Trail stretches from the St. Lawrence River in the east to the Detroit River and Lake Huron in the west some 2100km. www.waterfronttrail.org

Bloor West Village (west from High Park Av, along Bloor).

- Great shopping, dining and entertainment area. It runs roughly from Ellis Avenue, just west of High Park, eastward to Jane Street, and includes my favorite library, the Runnymede Branch, designed by John M. Lyle. Lyle also designed Toronto's Union Station.

West Beaches – 0.4km south of the Colborne Lodge entrance of High Park.

- Also known as Sunnyside Beach, it stretches from the Palise Royale dinner club, in the east, to the Humber River in the west, about 2km.

Martin Goodman Trail – 0.4km south of the Colborne Lodge entrance of High Park.

- Named for the President and Editor-In-Chief of the Toronto Star newspaper who died three years previously, the multi-use trail

stretches across the front door of Toronto, along the lakeshore from Rouge River in the east to the Humber in the west - some 56km.

Roncesvalles Village or “Roncy,” a few blocks west of Parkside Drive off Howard Park Avenue.

- Roncy is jam-packed with places to eat, view art, be entertained and just enjoy. It’s a great neighbourhood that has worked hard at rebuilding itself after a multi-year TTC project that saw Roncesvalles Ave. ripped up from sidewalk to sidewalk. If you like Polish and Ukrainian food this neighbourhood is the place to get it.

Humber River Recreation Trail - 2.5km west of the Bloor Street entrance to the park.

- The trail follows the river valley and stretches from just north of Lake Ontario, all the way to Steeles Avenue in the north, some 22km.

#20 Highland Creek Trail

Old Kingston Road and Military Trail, Toronto, ON.



☆☆☆☆☆

6.5km Return

9.0km With Extension to Port Union Waterfront Park

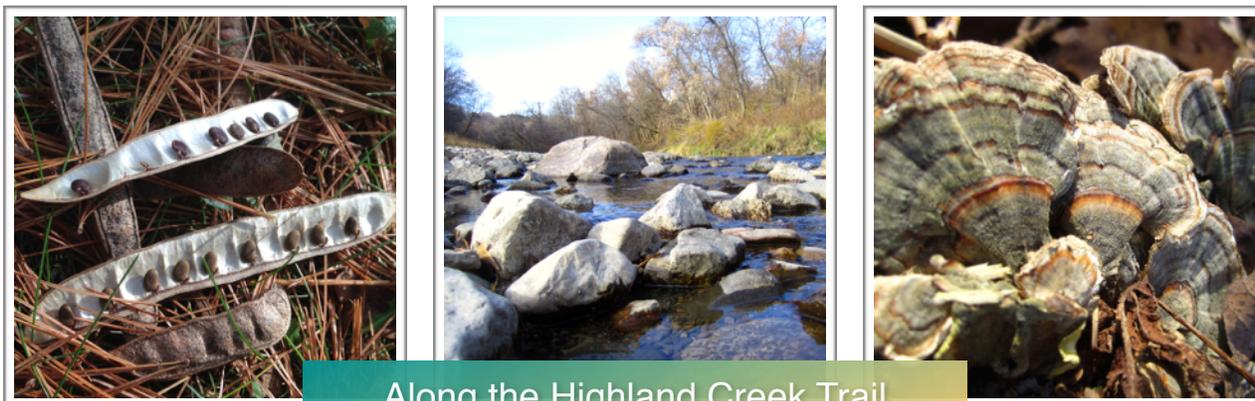


The South Highland Creek trail is an outstanding trail for cyclists,

inline skaters and fitness walkers. This paved pathway takes the user into the valley of the Highland Creek, all the way from Old Kingston Road in the north to the Lake Ontario waterfront in the south.

My last trip on the Highlands Trail was November, 2016, so most of the foliage had fallen from the trees, and the grasses and water plants were past their prime, but there was enough colour in the valley to make for a very pleasant walk, as you can see from the photos – mind you, it was a cold day with temperatures hovering about -3C most of the trip and ice was beginning to form along the still, backwaters of the Highland Creek.

Park at the parking area on Old Kingston Road, about midway between Military Trail to the east and Kingston Road to the west at (A). You'll find a couple of parking areas so try to get one furthest east. Walk east along the south side of Old Kingston Road, over the bridge then make a right, at the trailhead onto the



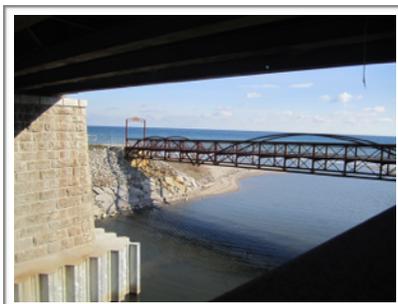
Along the Highland Creek Trail

paved path. After your hike, you may want to stop into the village of Highland Creek at (G) at the intersection of Military Trail and Old Kingston Road. There are a few coffee shops, restaurants and stores that are quite nice and well worth a visit.

The trail winds it's way southeast to first go under some power

lines, then the Kingston Road bridge in about 400m. Continue along the trail for another couple hundred meters and it soon pops out onto Highland Creek Dr. (B) that takes vehicles into the Colonel Danforth Park (C). Turn right onto the road and follow it over the bridge and generally southeast. You can either walk along the road or ramble along the lawns down by the river, either way, keep going downstream and you'll eventually come to a couple of paved parking areas. The trail continues southwards, beyond the parking lots.

You leave the traffic behind and follow the trail southwards with the river on your left with the ravine rising steeply on your right. Eventually you'll go under the Lawrence East bridge at (D). Immediately after passing under the bridge there is a smaller trail on your right that leads up the valley side onto Lawrence Ave. At the top of that path (at Beech Grove) is a 24hr. TTC bus stop. A little further beyond the Lawrence bridge is a large overhead pipe that crosses the valley on elevated pylons. Water maybe, or sewage? Tough to say.



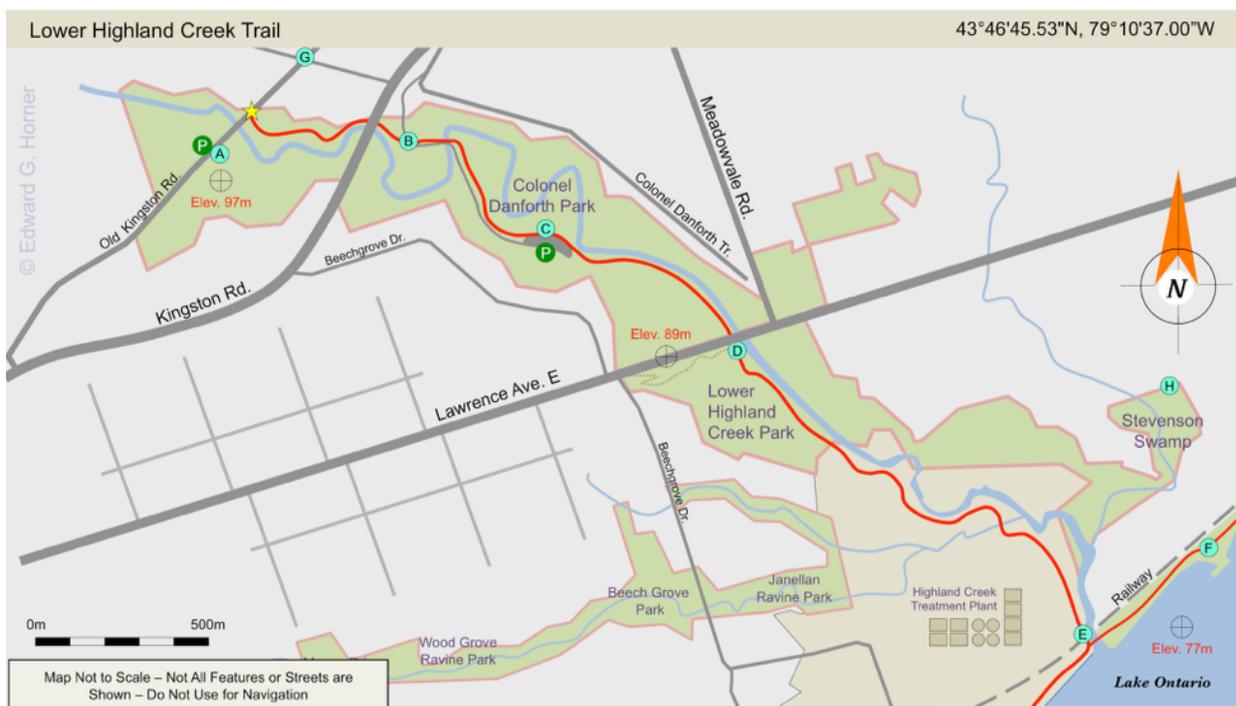
South End of the Highland Creek Trail



At this point you're in the Lower Highlands Creek Park. Continue along the trail and you'll eventually come to the railway bridge at (E) under which you'll pass on a dedicated pedestrian bridge. If you're on inline skates this section might be a little difficult with the smooth plastic boards they use on the bridge deck, so be careful.

When you finally navigate your way down to the southern end of the trail, under the network of railway and pedestrian bridges, you will be rewarded with some spectacular views of Lake Ontario, on of the provinces Great Lakes. Way off to the NE, about 8km is the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, which, on a clear day, you can just make out on the horizon to your left, as you face the lake.

On my last trip on this trail, when I got down to the river mouth, I turned left (eastward) and walked another 1.5km along the



waterfront pathway to the Port Union Waterfront Park at (F).

At the Port Union Waterfront Park, I took in the view from the stone lookout over the lake. I also followed the pathway under the train tracks and explored the Port Union Village Common. While I was too late in the year to enjoy the fountains, artificial water course and water pad, the park would make a great spot to cool off in the summer months. It's also well planted with many young trees and flowering plants that make a good showing in the summer.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

All distances are from Old Kingston Rd. at trailhead

Rouge National Urban Park – 4.5km Distant

- See hike #18 in this book.

Rosetta McLain Park and Gardens – 4.7km Distant

- Located at the top of the Scarborough Bluffs, this park not only offers a great view of the lake, but is a must-see for flower lovers and butterfly enthusiasts. One of my favorite features of the park (aside from the view) is the central fountain that gushes over a large granite rock, and seems to invite you to run your hand through the cascade.

The Guild Park – 5km Distant

- The Guild is now a public park, but was once an artists colony. It overlooks Lake Ontario, from high atop the Scarborough Bluffs. Within it's boundaries you can find many sculptural and architectural relics from Toronto's demolished buildings. For a more complete story visit the [wikipedia](#) page. Facilities can be rented for events. 201 Guildwood Pkwy, Scarborough, ON. 416.392.2489

Toronto Zoo – 5.3km Distant

- This 287ha zoo is home to some 5,000 animals and is divided into 7 geographically distinct areas - each housing animals appropriate for the zone. Opened in 1974 this world class zoo that has become a must-see for Toronto residents and tourists alike. Widely accessible for people with mobility issues. Located at 2000 Meadowvale Road. 416.392.5929

Chesterton Beach – 6.5km Distant

- Another great place to cool off on a hot summer's day. This sandy beach stretches from Port Union Waterfront Park in the west all the way over to Rouge River in the east, along the shore of Lake Ontario. Hop off the GO Train at Rouge Hill Station. Bottom of East Avenue, Scarborough. 169 Chesterton Shores.

Scarborough Historical Society – 1.5km Distant

- Housed in the old 1890 Victorian style, the W.J. Morrish General Store at Kingston Rd and Meadowvale was restored by the City of Scarborough and handed over to the Scarborough Historical Society for internal restoration and occupation. A unique hand operated lift can be found in the building. Explore the history of the village of Highland Creek and the area of Scarborough. 6282 Kingston Rd. 416.995.6930

Stephenson's Swamp – 4.5km Distant

- This 7.2ha forested swampland is a small remnant of what used to be the most common type of wetland along the shores of Lake Ontario. It's one of four Environmentally Sensitive Areas (EAS) and is the breeding ground for red-backed and yellow-spotted salamanders, as well as bird species such as blue-gray gnatcatcher. Limited access through a right-of-way between 42 and 44 Bridgewater Rd.

The Highland Creek Salmon Festival – 2.5km Distant

- Chinook salmon travel upstream from the cold waters of Lake Ontario every fall to spawn. Join naturalists and learn more about this incredible migration, the first Sunday of October every year. Morningside Park at 390 Morningside Avenue. For more information and to register for the event, www.thesalmonfestival.ca

OUTDOOR KNOWLEDGE

Treating Water

The good news is that most of the popular provincial campgrounds and conservation areas that I have visited and listed in this book, provide frequently tested drinking water for their guests. However, I have been to a couple of provincial parks where the water has been “posted,” which is to say that there was a “Boil Water” warning posted at the faucets and at the gate house and washrooms. Pay attention to the signs. If not posted, it’s reasonable to assume the water provided is safe for drinking and cooking. Other provincial parks are listed as “non-operating” and do not provide drinking water at all, so you will need to treat any ground water before drinking. If you ever have any doubt, ask the Park Warden or attendants at the gatehouse.

When you are beyond the group campgrounds, out hiking on the trails, within provincial parks, you **MUST** assume any and all water you come across is not suitable for drinking. This includes, creeks, rivers, ponds, lakes and any other water you find – no matter how inviting it seems.

Making Surface Water Drinkable

The thought of taking a long cool drink from an ice-cold creek, falling over smooth rocks, surrounded by nature, is, like cooking over an open fire, primal. What could be more pure or refreshing? It’s how we humans have gotten our water for at least three million years. It’s how millions of people around the world get their water today. But how safe is it?

Despite the beer commercials touting the purity of their glacier fed springs or the bottled water companies telling us about the clarity of their Kentucky sourced mineral waters, we know that surface water throughout the vast majority of the world is contaminated

with everything from *Giardia* to cancer causing PCBs. If you're thinking about taking a drink from the Nottawasaga River as it flows peacefully and invitingly through the Hockley Valley, I urge you to think again. Without proper treatment, drinking Ontario surface water can cause very serious problems for campers and hikers.

For the purpose of this section, "surface water" (water found on the surface of the earth in the form of streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, etc) and "ground water" (water which is below the surface of the earth – mostly in aquifers and generally not accessible to hikers, except maybe through wells, but can seep to the surface to become surface water) should both be treated with suspicion.

Backcountry water treatment is a very complex topic and what is written here is only an overview. For more information, go to the Katadyn website and download their booklet "Water Guide for Safe Drinking Water."

So, what's in the water that makes it so risky for us modern men and women? In Ontario, and the vast majority of North America, there are two major concerns; *Giardia lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium* protozoan parasites. These are microscopic parasites that infect and colonize the small intestine. They are about one micron in diameter (1μ) or one millionth of a meter. An average human hair is 80μ in diameter.

Giardia and *Cryptosporidium* exist in two forms, the active or trophozoite and the inactive cyst. The trophozoite attaches itself to the walls of the small intestine and is responsible for the symptoms of *giardiasis* and *cryptosporidiosis*. In general, the trophozoite cannot live outside the body and is unlikely to infect others. The cyst on the other hand (which is produced by the trophozoite) is activated by the digestive liquids of the stomach

and can be passed onto others through fecal/food contamination or into ground water through human excrement.

Symptoms of giardia and cryptosporidiosis infection are similar to each other and may include; diarrhea and abdominal pain, bloating, nausea (with or without vomiting), malaise, and fatigue. Low grade fever is not unusual. Other symptoms may include foul smelling, greasy stool (owing to the fact that giardia and cryptosporidiosis inhibits fat absorption in the small intestine), foul gas and belching, again, due to giardia and cryptosporidiosis interfering with digestion. This “malabsorption” may lead to weight loss. Symptoms typically manifest themselves in 7-10 days.

I won't burden you with treatment options, but drugs typically used for giardiasis include; metronidazole, furazolidone, Quinacrine and a few others. Not all are available or approved in Canada. Cryptosporidiosis has no effective treatment, other than supportive. Drink plenty of electrolytes, rest and follow doctor's recommendations for diarrhea. Symptoms generally ease after two weeks.

Another major concern in backcountry drinking water is viral contamination. Viruses are present just about everywhere humans come in contact with ground water and include polio and hepatitis. The norovirus or Norwalk virus accounts for about 90% of all non-bacterial gastroenteritis outbreaks around the world and is transmitted by the fecal-oral route or person to person.

Brief Recap

- Surface water is *always* suspect and contains potentially dangerous contaminants
- Giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis and viral infections are a major concern to backcountry travelers

- Do not ingest surface water which has not been properly treated.

Water Treatment

There are four major ways to treat suspect water for drinking purposes;

- Filtering
- Chemical treatment
- Ultra Violet light
- Boiling

And of course to kill any suspected viruses, filtering combined with chemical treatment, UV treatment or boiling.

Filtering

Hand operated filters are readily available in a wide variety of models and price ranges. Typically, these filters fall into two types; ceramic filters or glass fibre filters (commonly called “paper” filters). Both can be quite effective when used properly. Ceramics have the advantage of greater longevity while glass fibre filters have the advantage of reduced cost. Most of these filters will remove contaminants which are 1μ or larger. This generally takes care of the *Giardia lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium* protozoan parasites and other micro-organisms which are anywhere from 1μ - 20μ in diameter. These filters will *not* remove viruses (which are $.03\mu$ or smaller). We’ll address that below.

Ceramic and paper filters will need to be maintained for maximum efficiency. The ceramic will need scrubbing and rinsing, while the paper will need back flushing and replacement. Be sure to read the instructions.

Filter/purifiers are also available. As noted above, viruses are not generally removed by filtering and need additional treatment. This is where the filter/purifier comes in. These devices will filter the water and then send it through (usually) an iodine resin matrix to expose the filtered water to virus killing iodine (or chlorine) before expelling it for drinking purposes.



Some filtering units have an “activated charcoal” filter to help remove bad taste or odours. These may be “built in” or replaceable in the form of charcoal powder or cartridge. These charcoal filters help remove some chemical contaminants – but not all.

Most filters will have a “pre filter” screen which will remove the “big chunks” of nastiness, such as; insects, pond scum, sand and similar contaminants. These need replacement or cleaning on a regular basis, depending on the quality of the water being filtered.

I personally used the Katadyn Hiker for individual day, or weekend, hikes. Under ideal conditions the glass fibre filter is claimed to deliver up to 750 litres of water. In my experience, it only seems to get about 2/3 that before the pumping becomes difficult. Still, the replacement cartridges are quite inexpensive (by most standards) and it’s proven reliable and effective. It has an optional activated charcoal filter (presses into the top of a standard sized Nalgene water bottle) to help remove odours and poor taste. It may seem like overkill, but I then treat the water with *Aquatab™* tablets to effectively kill any remaining viruses.

For the larger family or group (6 or more) you might want to look at the Katadyn Expedition filter (pictured above). It can deliver up to 4 litres of filtered, drinkable water per minute. It uses a silver impregnated ceramic filter that is very long lasting and easily maintained. This is a larger, heavier unit, but it holds up very well under heavy, expedition conditions.

In the past few years we've seen the introduction of "gravity" filters that can supply water for groups of up to six to eight people. The one I've tried and liked a lot was the Katadyn Basecamp Pro 10L. Letting gravity do the work it was able to filter about 2 litres per minute. Letting gravity do the work saves a lot of pumping time around the water filter.

Regardless of what filter type or brand you settle on, be sure to follow the instructions and maintenance schedule.

Chemical Treatment

This type of treatment uses chemicals to destroy the micro-organisms which may be present in the water. These treatments are best performed on clear, filtered water for greatest effectiveness. If the water is murky (turbid) then the effectiveness of the chemicals will be greatly reduced – and the dwell time (amount of time the chemicals are allowed to work in the water) will need to be increased. This is a science in itself, so, whenever possible, use only clear water.

Another factor that will affect the chemicals is water temperature. The colder the water the longer the dwell time. It's important to follow the directions from the manufacturer of the chemicals, as you don't want to overdose or under dose.

If you need to rely solely on chemical treatments, remember that the chemicals only kill the micro-organisms and does not remove them. This may result in unpleasant tasting or smelling water.

Some micro-organisms are quite resistant to iodine and chlorine. Although I have not personally used it, Micropur™ tables (Chlorine Dioxide) claim effectiveness against; viruses, bacteria, cryptosporidium, and Giardia.

Ultra Violet Light

UV light has been used to treat municipal and institutional water for almost 100 years. UV light has a few advantages going for it; low cost per litre sanitized, easy, safe, effective and fast.

SteriPEN™ claims that its pocket-sized UV purifying lamp kills 99.9999% of bacteria, 99.99% of viruses and 99.9% of protozoa (i.e. Giardia and Cryptosporidium) when used as directed with clear water. The UV lamp can sterilize 1 litre of water in about 48-60 seconds. UV light will kill, but not remove the micro-organisms. The UV lamp has sensors which will determine water temperature and the computer chip in the unit will automatically dose the water appropriately. One other, not insignificant advantage, is that the SteriPEN can be used discretely in places where pumps and chemicals may be inappropriate, such as restaurants and cruise ships.



As with all other methods of water treatment, you need to read and follow the instructions carefully.

Boiling

This form of water treatment is one of the oldest and most effective methods for treating water. It does have its disadvantages; it requires time to get the water boiling, it uses fuel, it cannot be done “on the fly,” it kills micro-organisms but does not clarify the water and it does not remove chemical contaminants.

At sea level (0m) water boils at 100C and boiling suspect water should be done for 5 minutes. At 4000m (Everest Base Camp is 5400m) water boils at 86C and would require 20 minutes to kill the most heat resistant micro-organisms.

Incidentals

Water filters usually have a couple of plastic tubes through which the water passes into and out of the filtering unit. Do not confuse these tubes. One is the intake hose which carries untreated water into the filter and the other is the exhaust tube, which expels treated water for drinking. Keep them separate to avoid cross-contamination. Be sure to sanitize any containers that you use to store drinking water. Even water can “go bad” if left for long periods of time. Bacteria can form in the water.

While there has been a lot of discussion around the use of silver in various forms, to kill bacteria or viruses, there seems to be no strong conclusions on its efficacy, largely due to the studies being wide ranging, differing methodologies, different target pathogens, etc. It's well known that silver is a toxin for mammals, but it varies widely by cell type, body organ, etc. As of this writing, I don't

recommend silver products for purification, when so many other options are available.

Conclusion

Do not drink, brush your teeth or treat open wounds or rashes with untreated surface water as it almost certainly contains harmful micro-organisms. Treat water by boiling, filtering, UV light or chemically.

Learn more by downloading the Katadyn “Water Guide” pamphlet at the Katadyn website. Also check out the SteriPEN™ website.

COMMON FIRST AID CONCERNS

It must be clearly understood that Ed Horner is not medically trained in any way and any advice offered is strictly anecdotal and based on his personal experience in the field. Should real emergencies arise you must seek out professionally trained medical practitioners. Always carry and know how to use a first aid kit.

Poison Ivy

Don't let the fact that poison ivy exists, keep you and your family from enjoying the outdoors. Yes, it's a nuisance if you come in contact with it, but the symptoms are usually easily treated and usually not long lasting.

Poison Ivy rash is typically caused by contact with poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac plants. About 50% of the people who come in contact with these plants will develop a rash, caused by the oily resin called urushiol (u-ROO-she-ol), which is found in the leaves, stems and roots.

There is a wide variety of "poison ivy" but for the purposes of identification the most common things to look for are three leaves growing from a single stem, the centre leaf is usually larger. The leaf edge is jagged. In the summer the plants produce yellow flowers, followed by white berries. The leaves turn red in the fall. The plant generally grows as a low lying ground cover, low shrub or climbing ivy (although not a true ivy).



Symptoms include, but are not limited to; redness, itchiness, swelling and blisters on the skin. Some milder forms may only exhibit redness and itchy skin. Symptoms typically appear 12-48 hours after exposure. If the above-mentioned plants are burned and the smoke accidentally inhaled, it can cause serious lung problems for those who are sensitive.

The severity of the rash is mostly dependent upon an individual's sensitivity and how much oil gets onto the skin. Areas with less exposure may take longer to develop symptoms than those with greater exposure. The oil can also be spread from one area of skin to another. Scratching one area, then touching the face is quite common. The oil can also be transferred from contaminated clothing and other objects. Contrary to popular belief, the rash is not spread by fluid from blisters. It's only spread by contact with the oil.

Interestingly, some people who have had sensitivities to the oil as a youngster, may have become less sensitive to it as an adult or vice-versa. Some people who have been sensitive, then become less so, have even returned to greater sensitivity again in their lives. It seems sensitivities vary over time. I know I used to have terrible allergies to cats, as a teen, but have become far less so as an adult.

Treatment

If the rash is not severe, treatment by a doctor is usually not required and the rash will typically disappear in a couple of weeks.

Easing the Symptoms

- If exposure to the oil is suspected, then washing with any soap within 5-10 minutes will usually reduce or stop the irritation. After an hour, the oil will have penetrated the skin and washing typically doesn't help.



- Apply a cool compress to the rash with a clean cloth soaked in cool, potable water several times a day
- Immerse affected area in cold water with an oatmeal based skin care product (Aveeno, for example)
- Apply over-the-counter corticosteroid cream for the first few days. If that's not available try calamine lotion
- Oral antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl and others), may help with inflammation and may also help you sleep. Ask a pharmacist for details.

When to Seek Medical Help

- If the rash is widespread or severe
- If the rash is on the face or genitals
- If the blisters ooze pus
- If the rash hasn't disappeared by week four
- If you develop a fever

Prevention

- Needless to say, but avoid contact with plants containing urushiol
- Heed any warning signs along trails, in campground areas, trailheads or parking lots
- Stay on marked, well traveled trails - do not wander in the brush along side the trails
- Wear long pants, socks, long sleeved shirts and gloves in areas known to be infested with poison ivy
- Wash clothing in warm soapy water to remove urushiol if contamination is suspected – handle clothing carefully to avoid spreading to hands or other objects
- Apply a barrier cream such as IvyBlock that absorbs the urushiol and prevents the skin from absorbing the oil.

Giant Hogweed

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One of the newer invasive species that has made it's way into the province. In a way, Giant Hogweed is a lot like poison ivy, in that it can cause rashes, blister skin and general discomfort, but it's a lot more potent. It's like poison ivy on steroids. The sap is photo-reactive, which means it reacts with sunlight. If you get it on your

Giant hogweed is commonly mistaken for Queen Anne's lace or wild carrot, but the invasive weed is far larger, growing to 3 to 4 metres in height. (Wikimedia Commons)



skin you might not even realize it until you get into the sun, then wow! Look out. The active chemicals become more potent in the sunlight. If it gets into the eyes, it can cause blindness, temporary or permanent. It's for this reason, that Giant Hogweed should be avoided at all costs.

Giant Hogweed arrived in Canada from Asia as a decorative plant. Indeed, it's most decorative, looking similar to Queen Ann's Lace, Cow Parsnip or Wild Carrot, but it's much larger and its multiple blooming heads tend to form an umbrella shape, 3-4 meters in height. The seeds are unusually buoyant and water resistant so the plant spreads widely through Ontario's numerous waterways. It tends to grow along the edge of forests in undisturbed areas, and along river banks, but I have seen it just a

few meters off a well-worn trail in Bronte Creek Provincial Park, down by the river. Unlike Queen Ann's Lace, Giant Hogweed has a purplish, hollow stalk with tiny spines

If you come in contact with Giant Hogweed, wash the skin with soap and water, avoid putting hands near the face. Keep children and pets away from the plant.



Giant hogweed can be identified by its purplish, hollow stalk, with small spines sticking out of it. The plant carries a sap that can blister the skin and irritate the eyes when it reacts with light. (Wikimedia Commons)

When it comes to removal of the plant from your property, The city of Toronto advises the following;

- *Wear protective clothing, including gloves, long sleeves, pants, and eye protection, rain coat and boots*
- *Avoid getting sap on your skin*
- *Immediately remove any flower heads to prevent seed growth and dispersal*
- *Sever the plant roots 8 - 12 cm below the soil surface*
- *Dispose of all plant parts in double-bagged garbage bag, seal the bag and DO NOT COMPOST or put it in your yard waste*
- *Return to plant site periodically to remove any new plant growth*

- *After completing the plant removal, wash the clothes that were worn when removing the plant to prevent possible transfer of toxins*
- *Speak with a retailer about products permitted for control of giant hogweed*

Friction Blisters

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Another common affliction for the hikers is blistering of the foot or “friction blisters.” These injuries, while not trifling, are rarely a major source of concern, if treated properly. They are quite different from the blistering that occurs from poison ivy, noted above.

Friction blisters are (usually small) pockets of skin that fill with a clear liquid caused by frequent and prolonged rubbing. If small blood vessels are broken, then the fluid may also fill with blood and the result is often referred to as a “blood” blister, but the causes are usually the same – prolonged, irritable rubbing, esp. on damp skin, under warm conditions.

Typically the friction blister will drain in a few days and a new layer of skin will form under the old one. Eventually the old layer will fall off. If the source of rubbing isn’t addressed, the blister will continue to get worse, break the skin, cause seepage and may become infected, creating a deeper, more serious wound.

Because these friction blisters tend only to last a few days, simply keeping the area clean and dry is usually all that’s necessary for treatment. Don’t try to drain the blister or pick off the overlaying skin. If the blister breaks on it’s own, it’s general practice to wash

the area with warm, soapy water, apply an anti-bacterial ointment and cover with a clean, sterile dressing – changing as required.

Now, recognizing that I'm no expert in this field, I do understand that people who suffer from diabetes may have greater difficulty treating friction blisters, as there may be underlying circulation problems and nerve damage. A greater level of preventative maintenance will be required and, should a blister develop which is not healing, professional help may be required.

Blistering that does not seem to be due to friction – such as blisters above the ankles and sock area, may be due to chemical irritations such as poison ivy or poison oak that may have brushed the skin while walking through brush. This is a different type of blister and is addressed in the section on Poison Ivy.

When it's all said and done, the main (but not exclusive) cause of foot blistering is ill-fitting boots or shoes.

Break In Your New Boots

The good news is that the current generation of hiking boots generally require far less “breaking in” than the boots from the 80s and 90s. New light weight material, major advances in construction techniques and revised “fit” metrics all combine to make “breaking in” almost a thing of the past. “Almost” is key here. You still need to get into your new boots and do a bit of walking before you set out on any hike, just to be sure there are no “hot spots,” bad seams, or pinch points.

“Hot spots” usually develop into blisters if left unaddressed.

“Pinch points” might present itself by squeezing the toes together, causing the toes to rub against each other, causing blisters.

Finally “bad seams” may place unnecessary stress on any specific point of the foot, causing pressure points and, again, possible blistering.

Socks

OMG stop using those crappy white cotton “athletic” tube socks that you buy from Walmart, six pair for \$10! Just stop! Cotton socks are fine when sitting on the patio swilling Margaritas, but for a hiking or walking sock they’re terrible. They absorb water from the foot, but don’t have the ability to move the perspiration away from the skin. This leaves a sloppy wet mass of cotton clinging to your foot, keeping your foot damp and more blister-prone than ever!

Move to Merino Wool. Wool is able to absorb 20% it’s weight in perspiration before the material even feels damp! They have the almost unique ability to pull moisture off the foot and actually transport it away from the skin, leaving the skin dry – and keeping feet dry is key to blister prevention. Look for a sock where the inside is a “loop” construction. This loop configuration of the threads provides much more surface area upon which the wool fibres can suck moisture off the foot. Wool also has the added benefit of being naturally anti-microbial, which really helps to minimize odours. Typical wool socks are a blend of about 70% merino wool, along with various percentages of nylon and spandex. The nylon tends to be in areas of high wear and the spandex helps the sock hold it’s shape.

Look for a “fitted” sock. This means there is an obvious heel, arch and toe area built into the sock that will perfectly conform to the foot. Be sure the seams in and around the toe are “flat-stitched” for a smooth fit around the toes. Where possible, look for the toe seam to be on top of the toe box so that your toes don’t have to feel the seam under them all day long.



Look for a bit of padding on the bottom of the foot (esp. in the ball of the foot and heel area) and partly up the back of the foot to help protect and cushion the Achilles tendon. Mind you, be careful not to buy a sock “too” padded as it may not fit in your existing boots – making the boot too tight. Most hiking sock manufacturers such as Point 6, Smartwool, Bridgedale, Ice Breaker and Lorpen, produce socks in “light,” “medium,” “heavy” and sometimes “extra heavy/

trekking,” versions. Prices will start about \$20 and range up to \$40+.

For longer hikes, or if your feet are prone to friction blisters, try sock liners. These are very thin socks, usually wool and synthetic blend, that are worn next to the skin (under a standard hiking sock) and will wick moisture off the foot and onto the outer sock, leaving your foot dry and, again, less prone to blisters. Any movement between the foot and boot will then be experienced as movement between the two socks, minimizing any rubbing experienced - and that too means fewer blisters.

Pay attention to your feet. Stop often and ensure your hiking partners are not experiencing any blistering. You may even want to have a seat, pull your shoes or boots and look for signs of rubbing or irritation to get an early jump on blister prevention.

If you're walking along and you feel “hot spots” on, say, the ball of your foot, stop and attend to it. Hot spots are almost always precursors to blisters. If the spot is “hot” or “tingly” then stop,



apply a bit of moleskin, some talc (Gold Bond foot powder is really nice) and put on a clean pair of dry socks.

Let the inside of your boots dry fully between hikes. Not always possible, but highly recommended. Most boots have a liner inside that will help pull moisture off the socks, further enhancing the wicking power of the wool socks.

Before any hike, I wash my feet (or dip them into a cool stream, ahhhhh), dry them well, and apply a little sprinkling of talcum powder (often Gold Bond as noted earlier). I then pull on the appropriate sock (sometimes a sock liner first) and lace on the boots.

Still, despite all my own advice and precautions I've had blisters form while on the trail and even break before I knew what was happening. I couldn't just end the trip and go home, It was a matter of health and safety that we get off the (mountain) trail ASAP as threatening weather was closing in. Thankfully, Spenco had just developed a product called "Second Skin" for use on burn victims.

This product is some sort of plasticky matrix in which water is encapsulated. It has two sides that you peel off to reveal a gel-like membrane. The membrane is then applied directly over the blister. It's anti-septic and sterile so it also helps reduce the chances of infection. The whole area is then covered with an adhesive, flexible bandage to hold it all in place. A clean pair of dry socks then went back on, followed by the boots. I was back on the trail in about 10 minutes and the pain had been reduced to

almost nothing! Of course I had to stop a couple of times to inspect the arrangement and replace as necessary, but really, we made great time without any further damage to my foot.

Product similar to the above include “Glacier Gel” from Adventure Medical Kits

Minor Cuts and Lacerations

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Call 911 if;

- The cut is bleeding severely
- Blood is spurting
- Bleeding won't stop after 10 minute of firm pressure

According to WebMD, you should take the following **4 STEPS** if the cut is minor;

1. Stop the Bleeding

- Apply firm pressure with a clean cloth

2. Clean and Protect

- Wash the wound with gentle soap and warm, clean, drinking water
- Apply an antiseptic ointment to protect against infection³²
- Apply a sterile bandage to protect the wound

3. Call a Health Care Professional if;

- The cut is deep or over a joint
- You cannot get the cut or laceration clean

³² In some people an antiseptic ointment may cause a rash. If so, discontinue use of the ointment.

- The injury is a deep puncture wound or the person has not had a recent (within the last 5 to 10 years) *tetanus*³³ shot or booster
- The cut is from a human or animal bite

4. Follow Up

- For a minor cut or laceration, remove bandage after a couple of days to promote healing.
- See a health care provider if the cut doesn't heal or shows signs of infection, including redness, swelling, pus, or excessive pain.

³³ Often called *lockjaw*, tetanus is a bacterial infection that causes painful muscle spasms and can lead to death. The tetanus vaccine has made tetanus a preventable disease. Thanks to its widespread use, lockjaw has become very rare. Even so, adults in need to be vaccinated against tetanus because there is no cure and 10% to 20% of victims will die.

You cannot get tetanus from another person. You can get it through a cut or other wound. Tetanus bacteria are commonly present in soil, dust, and manure. The tetanus bacteria can infect a person even through a tiny scratch. But you are more likely to get tetanus through deep punctures from wounds created by nails or knives. The bacteria travel via blood or nerves to the central nervous system. (WebMD.)

Sprained Ankle

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Planting a foot awkwardly and then applying weight can cause the ligaments around the ankle joint of the foot to tear or sprain. In my experience, a minor ankle sprain is among the more common injuries that hikers experience. The sprain, if bad enough, can put a real crimp in your daily activities, let alone your hiking schedule.

Determining An Ankle Sprain.

Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference from a severe ankle sprain and a more serious injury, such as a fracture. Usually a simple sprain doesn't require a trip to the doctor, but if the following symptoms present themselves, professional medical treatment should be sought.

- Foot or ankle is misshapen or severely swollen
- Severe or uncontrolled pain, even after taking over-the-counter pain medication, elevating the foot and icing
- You cannot walk without severe pain
- The ankle isn't getting any better after 5-7 days

Self-Treatment for Sprained Ankles

According to WebMD, the following **3 STEPS** are indicated for self-care of sprained ankles;

1. **Ice** is probably the best treatment.
 - Ice will counteract the increased blood flow to the injured area.
 - It will reduce the swelling, redness, and warmth.
 - Applied soon after the injury, ice will prevent much of the inflammation from happening.

- Do not apply ice directly to the skin. Use a thin towel between the ice and the injury, or use an ice bag. Apply ice for 20 minutes at a time, with at least 20 minutes between applications. This is to help prevent frostbite, which can occur if you use ice too much or use it directly on your skin.

2. **Rest** prevents further injury and avoids stress on already inflamed tissue.

- Put the ankle joint at rest by wearing a brace or splint³⁴
- Compression wraps, such as Ace bandages, do not provide much support to prevent movement of the ankle, and you should not apply them tightly.

3. **Elevation** (keeping the injured area up as high as possible) will help the body absorb fluid that has leaked into the tissue.

- Ideally, prop the ankle up so that it is above the level of your heart.
- You can do this in a reclining chair.
- Anti-inflammatory pain medications will reduce the pain and combat the swelling. Several are available over-the-counter, such as ibuprofen (*Motrin, Advil*) and naproxen (*Aleve*). But check with your doctor first if you have any medical problems or take any other medicines.

Follow Up

Most ankle sprains heal quite nicely on their own, but if pain or swelling continue or increase after two weeks, medical attention should be sought.

³⁴ On longer day trips, multi day trips or trips with a group of people for whom I have responsibility, I carry a 36" flexible, trim-able, lightweight foam splints from SAM. It rolls up into a cylinder about 3" in diameter and 4" wide, yet weighs in at less than 100g. This splint can be moulded to almost any shape and used for wrists, ankles, knees, etc. Trimmed, it can be used for fingers or thumbs.

Prevention

Ankle sprains can be dramatically reduced in both frequency and severity by selecting the right shoes for the intended activity. Light hiking boots for trail walking, trail running shoes for trail running and heavy trekking boots for difficult terrain or prolonged travel. Around the house, be sure to pick up any errant toys or other obstacles that might cause an ankle to turn. In the yard, be sure to fill any holes or smooth out any sharp bumps in the lawn. If you have previously sprained an ankle, you might consider wearing an ankle support when doing sports to help prevent a recurrence of the injury. Consider strength and flexibility training for feet and lower legs (your Dr. or physical trainer can help with these exercises.)

Sunburn

Another reminder that Ed Horner is not a medical professional. Any advice offered herein is anecdotal and should be used only as a reference for further investigation by the individual. Always seek professional medical attention when it comes to your health and safety.

Ok, despite all the warnings and all the precautions, you've managed to get a little sunburn. It's not the end of the world, but depending on how severe the symptoms, it may feel like it!

The sun emits a wide range of radiation, most of which of little concern to us here on Earth. However, there is one band of radiation that is of considerable concern, the Ultra Violet range. Make no mistake, the sunburn you receive from over exposure to the sun is, indeed a radiation burn.

As noted, for the sake of this discussion, the main concern is ultra violet light or UV. The UV radiation is further categorized as UVA and UVB. UVA is the "long" rays and are responsible for sunburn and do not penetrate through glass windows – like those in your car or home. Then there are UVB rays or "short" rays, which are responsible for "tanning" the skin, but are capable of penetrating glass. Both types of rays cause premature ageing in the skin. UVB levels tend to vary widely throughout the year, peaking in the summer, while UVA rays tend to be a little more consistent with only minor variations, seasonally.

In any case, the hours from 11-4 are when both rays are at their most intense. It's at these times that you should wear protective clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen, hats, etc. Also, listen to the UV reports on the radio or check the morning paper to determine the level of UV risk that day. You can also get UV index info online for many cities and towns across Canada at the Canadian UV Forecast website.

UV INDEX	Risk	Estimated Time for a Fair-Skinned Person to Burn
0-2	Minimal	1 Hour
3-4	Low	Less than 20 min.
5-6	Moderate	Less than 15 min.
7-9	HIGH	Less than 10 min.
10+	EXTREME	Less than 5 min.

Five Steps to Help Prevent Sunburn

1. While your hair helps prevent your scalp from burning, don't forget your forehead, back of neck and ears – these areas can burn quickly. BTW guys, most of us don't have as much hair up there as we think we do, so be sure to wear a hat with a brim
2. Don't forget the back of the hands, knees and tops of the feet (when wearing sandals)
3. For women, even if your makeup contains SPF, wear separate sunscreen. Sound a bit much? It isn't. SPF products tend to breakdown after a few hours and most women don't reapply their makeup that often
4. Apply more sunscreen than you think you need. Apply it once, then take a short break and apply it a second time – all at least 20 minutes before exposure to the sun (for best protection)
5. If you're out all day, use a minimum of SPF30, but if you burn easily or have a sun-sensitive condition such as rosacea or you're on medication that makes your skin photosensitive (tetracycline and ciprofloxacin to name only two common antibiotics – for a more complete list try medicine.net) then

you may need a higher level or even move to high UPF clothing.

Dealing with Sunburn

- Rehydrate. Getting a sunburn can be very dehydrating, so be sure to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.
- Cool. Apply a cool compress to the affected area several times per day, but be careful not to “scrub” the area with a cloth – it can cause skin damage and, frankly, just plain hurts like the dickens. Use only potable water
- Soothe. Applying soothing lotions that contain aloe may help Pramoxine lotion, calamine and colloidal oatmeal may also help soothe
- Ease the pain. In the simplest terms, sunburn hurts, so taking a pain killer such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (as directed on the package) will help. For my money, I’d buy a can of Solarcaine™ spray. It contains Lidocaine (a topical analgesic) and Aloe to help sooth the skin and draw away heat
- Cover up. After a good sunburn, the skin will be very sensitive to any more sunlight, so wear light, high UPF clothing³⁵ and avoid exposing the burned skin to the sun for a least a week.

³⁵ UPF stands for Ultraviolet Protection Factor and is a specific measure for fabric. The higher the number the better the protection. Not to be confused with SPF or Sun Protection Factor which is a measurement for sunscreen applied to the skin.

Dehydration

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In simple terms, one becomes dehydrated if the body uses or loses more fluid than it takes in. Fluid loss can arise through perspiration, urination, vomiting or diarrhea.

Without enough fluids, the body cannot carry out its normal functions. Anyone can become dehydrated, especially if the weather is hot and humid, causing significant perspiration. Dehydration is complicated by loss of associated electrolytes.³⁶ Older individuals are more susceptible to dehydration than younger adults.

Minor to moderate dehydration can usually be reversed by drinking fluids, however severe dehydration should be treated immediately by medical professionals.

Symptoms of dehydration typically include, but are not limited to;

- Extreme thirst
- Less frequent and voluminous urination
- Dark-colored urine
- Fatigue, listlessness
- Dizziness, nausea
- Confusion and disorientation.

Dehydration, if left untreated can result in serious, long term health conditions - even death. Treatment of dehydration, at least

³⁶ Electrolytes help the body balance electrical current in muscles, heart and nerve cells. They are necessary for proper bodily functions and they include; sodium, potassium calcium, bicarbonate magnesium, chloride and hydrogen phosphate.

for adults, usually involves drinking more water. Liquids containing small amounts of electrolyte may also be helpful. Drinking full strength fruit juices usually isn't a good idea, as it may cause an upset stomach and/or cramps. Same thing with full strength electrolyte replacement drinks like Gatorade. Better to dilute them 1:1 with water.

Drink plenty of water while out hiking, especially in the heat and/or if you are exercising heavily. If symptoms persist, seek professional medical attention.

Heatstroke

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Heatstroke, if left untreated or undiagnosed, can be a very serious condition that may result in loss of consciousness, coma and even death.

Let's start with the concept of "thermal neutrality." This is an environment in which the air temperature, wind speed and humidity is such that it allows a working/active body to dissipate as much heat as it creates - thus allowing the body to maintain its normal temperature of 37C. The body may be heated or cooled a degree or so above or below this, due to environmental factors, but much beyond this range and the body begins to suffer from thermal stress.

In the case of heatstroke, the human body rises in temperature beyond that which is normal and is unable to cool itself through the usual method of perspiring (sweating). In Ontario, during a hot, humid day with little air movement, *heat stroke is a real possibility for even the most physically fit individuals.*

Symptoms of heatstroke include, but are not limited to;

- Rise in body temperature to 40C or higher
- Altered mental state - unclear or confused thinking, agitation, slurred speech. Even seizures or coma.
- Altered sweating patterns. If body temperature rises due to hot weather, skin may feel hot and dry. If heatstroke is brought about through extensive exercise, the skin may feel dry or slightly moist

- Nausea and/or vomiting. You may feel sick to your stomach
- Dizziness
- Headache. Your head may throb
- Increased heart rate (racing)

HUMIDEX INDEX OF APPARENT TEMPERATURE (DEGREES C)

	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
42°	48	50	52	55	57	59	62	64	66	68	71	73	75	77	80	82
41°	46	48	51	53	55	57	59	61	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	79
40°	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75
39°	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	66	68	70	72
38°	42	44	45	47	49	51	53	55	56	58	60	62	64	66	67	69
37°	40	42	44	45	47	49	51	52	54	56	58	59	61	63	65	66
36°	39	40	42	44	45	47	49	50	52	54	55	57	59	60	62	63
35°	37	39	40	42	44	45	47	48	50	51	53	54	56	58	59	61
34°	36	37	39	40	42	43	45	46	48	49	51	52	54	55	57	58
33°	34	36	37	39	40	41	43	44	46	47	48	50	51	53	54	55
32°	33	34	36	37	38	40	41	42	44	45	46	48	49	50	52	53
31°	32	33	34	35	37	38	39	40	42	43	44	45	47	48	49	50
30°	30	32	33	34	35	36	37	39	40	41	42	43	45	46	47	48
29°	29	30	31	32	33	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	45	46
28°	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43
27°	27	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
26°	26	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	34	35	36	37	38	39
25°	25	25	26	27	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	34	35	36	37
24°	24	24	24	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	32	33	33	34	35
23°	23	23	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31	32	32	33
22°	22	22	22	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	27	28	29	30	30	31

Up to 29 C°	No Discomcomfort
30 to 34 C°	Minimal Discomcomfort
35 to 39 C°	Strong discomfort - Limit heavy physical exertion
40 to 45 C°	Strong indisposition sensation - Danger; avoid effort
46 to 53 C°	Serious Danger - Stop all physical activity
Over 54 C°	Danger of Death - Imminent heatstroke

How to use this Chart

Start by finding the air temperature down the first column in degrees celcius

Then find the relative humidity in percentage along the top row

Example; 34 C° in the first column and 85% humidity in the top row results in an apparent temperature of 54 C° - STOP WORK IMMEDIATELY AND SEEK AN AIR CONDITIONED ENVIRONMENT

- Fast breathing. Breathing may become rapid and shallow.

HOW TO TREAT HEATSTROKE

The overall goal is to reduce body temperature to normal. If body temperature can't be controlled you should call 911 immediately.

- Move individual to a cool, shady area
- Cool compresses on the body. “Cold Packs” can be useful
- Evacuate individual to an air conditioned space
- Mist the individual with cool water and apply moving air from a fan
- Take a cool shower or bath. If outdoors, then cooling in a stream or pond may be useful
- If the victim is taken to a doctor, then other methods may be employed including wrapping the individual in a special cooling blanket, application of ice packs to groin, neck and under the arms. If shivering occurs, the medical professional may administer special muscle relaxants to calm the tremors.

When out hiking, using the chart above, be sure to monitor yourself and others for symptoms of heatstroke and take preventative action to get the body temperature back to normal.

BUGS, BEARS AND COYOTES

Mosquitos, Black Flies, Deer Flies and Deer Ticks

I recall one weekend camping near MacTier, not far from the Legion at – of all places – Mosquito Lake. At least that's what we knew it as locally. It was accessed just off of Joseph Street and was a curious body of water only because it's surrounded by a thick layer of floating vegetation.

Anyway, a friend and I took our motorcycles up, rode in as far as we could on the road then hiked the remaining distance around to the far side of the lake. We selected a rocky outcropping as a campsite and settled in to watch the sun set. About 7pm, the mosquitoes became so thick that if we inhaled too deeply we'd actually suck in bugs!

We reasonably assumed that once the sun set the bugs would ease off as is typical. It didn't happen. The bugs got so thick that we had to drown the fire and retreat into the tent. We could actually hear them buzzing by the thousands - tens of thousands - outside the tent. By morning we each had dozens of little, scratchy red bumps all over our bodies and the sunrise brought little in the way of relief. It was heavily overcast and humid. The mosquitoes just kept coming.

If we wanted to eat we had to start a fire. The smoke helped to drive off many of the critters, but it just about choked us. After breakfast I rode back into town and bought a big bottle of bug repellent and that seemed to help considerably – at least with bites. The mosquitoes would still buzz around and go into our ears or eyes. It was just awful and we finally broke camp and went for swim over in Stewart Lake – it was a tremendous relief.

The reason this story stands out for me is that its level of bug severity is rare. It's the only time I ever let bugs get in the way of doing what I had originally planned. The vast majority of the days I've spent hiking or camping are nothing like this particular and singular experience.

So, let's start off by recognizing that you can't make bugs go away and if you decide can't live with that then you need to alter

your plans and location to avoid high bug season. Typically, this is May and early June in areas of Ontario north of, about, Gravenhurst. Southern areas tend to be less buggy during this time, but that's only my observations and experience talking.



- Set up camp in a breezier area and avoid marshes, wetlands and stagnant bodies of water
- Camping near the shore of a lake isn't too bad, as the breezes tend to blow the bugs around too much and they seek shelter in the grass and vegetation
- A sunny site, tends to keep the mosquitoes at bay more than shady areas
- A smokey campfire absolutely helps – if you and your camp neighbours can stand it
- Be sure the bug screen panels on your tent are intact and that zippers close properly. Mosquitoes find their way through any little crack in your tent defences.

According to the *Smithsonian Magazine* (October, 2013) mosquitos remains have been found in solidified amber that are estimated to be at least 46 million years old. These flies have been around a long time and don't seem to be going extinct any time soon.

Adult mosquitoes are the problem of course, particularly the females, as they are the ones that bite humans and drawn our blood. Apparently without blood from a mammal, the mosquito can't reproduce. The male of the species feeds on flower nectar. Surprised? Me too, but it's true.

Many years ago most of the private and publicly owned campgrounds used to get the “mosquito guy” to come around with the propane powered fog machine and chemically fog the property to help kill mosquitoes. It definitely helped, the chemicals also harmed or killed birds, “good” insects and contaminated any edible berries in the area.

As far as I know, provincial authorities no longer fog their campgrounds, nor does it recommend fogging your campsite on your own. If you decide, against all reason, to fog your campsite, check with the park manager before doing so, as there may be a specific bylaw which prohibits it. Also be sure to check with your campground neighbours, because the fog drifts around and they might not like it.

When it comes to personal bug repellent on your body, you still can't beat DEET (N-Diethyl-meta-toluamid). In 2002 Health Canada banned DEET solutions greater than 30%, citing health reasons. If used on children a DEET concentration of 10% or less is recommended. In any case, do not use DEET on infants.

DEET is very effective against many biting insects, when used properly. It was found in US studies that concentrations of 100% would protect the wearer for up to 12 hours. Lesser concentrations protected for lesser amounts of time. Rashes and skin irritation are the most commonly reported affects of using DEET – especially at higher concentrations. Keep it out of your mouth, nose and eyes. Avoid its use on broken skin – including badly sunburned skin, pimples, existing rashes and cuts.

Most of the previous advice seems to work with Black flies – those meat-munching early spring time pests that put a dent in a

perfectly good camping trip by inflicting great welts on unsuspecting skin.

The Deer Fly

Then there's the deer fly. It turns out there are precious few per hectare, but how many aggressive, persistent, razor sharp-fanged flying nuisances does one need before staying indoors?

I've been walking along a trail without any indication of mosquitoes or black flies all day, then all of a sudden I'll get a tremendously painful sting on the back of my head or neck. Swatting at it, my hand comes away with nothing but a smudge of my own blood.



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Deer flies are very persistent. They follow you and wait for an opportunity to land on your head or neck. They have very sharp mandibles which they use to slice into your skin to get the blood flowing then they drink deeply. They are the vampires in the bug kingdom.

They act like they're immune to DEET, (they aren't) citronella or any other repellent. Movement, such as swatting at them, only allows them to zero in on you quicker.

I have, quite literally, been chased down the trail by a couple of these things. I threw down my pack, kicked off my shoes and waded into the water to avoid them. I wasn't panicking, but I wasn't waiting around for the bites to come either. The ruddy things didn't go away! They flew around me and were present

when I came up for air. By sheer happenstance, I managed to splash them out of the air so they fell to the surface, where I drowned them by forcing them under water. I'm not making any of this up!

So, how can you reduce their influence around the campsite? Well, it turns out they are attracted to the colour blue, like a royal blue. I've tried a few things, but oddly, *Tree Tanglefoot* insect barrier (a very sticky product that you put around the base of a tree to prevent insects from climbing up) attracts deer flies. I've smeared a thin coating of this brownish goo onto a royal blue plastic bucket I found at a dollar store and set the contraption on a stick driven into the ground outside the dining shelter. It worked! It attracted and killed dozens of deer flies over the course of a week.

Use a disposable piece of wood as a spatula and use disposable rubber gloves, because I promise you, this stuff will stick to everything and it's difficult to wash off. If you do get it on your hands, use a citrus based cleaner then wash your hands with soap and water.

Deer Ticks

These are a special outdoor pest and no matter how I spin this, it's going to sound like the apocalypse is upon us. A few precautions can relieve a lot of stress.

The deer tick has been around a long time and it has always been an unusual threat to humans because it can carry a bacteria known as *Borrelia burgdorferi* (*B burgdorferi*). This bacteria can cause Lyme Disease in humans and is a serious health threat if left untreated or undiagnosed, as you'll read below.

Not all ticks carry the disease. The Blacklegged or Deer Tick (and other species) can, if it bites a mouse or deer that carries *Burgdorferi*, transfer that bacteria to a human through biting.

According to the Canadian government website on this topic, ticks “live in woodlands, tall grasses and bushes – and thrive in wet environments. They are most commonly found in areas along the north shores of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.” Still, ticks can be found just about everywhere in Ontario and, while remote, there is still a possibility that you can come in contact with a Lyme carrying tick almost anywhere.



Deer Tick
Photo courtesy of
pixabay.com

- Wear light coloured, long pants and long sleeve shirts. This makes it easier to spot ticks if they get onto your clothing. Then you can just flick them off
- In heavily infested areas, you may want to put tape around pant leg openings or use elastics to close them. I've taken to carrying and using Velcro bands that are intended for wrapping around the pants near the ankles to keep the material out of bicycle chains. We used to call these “pant clips”
- Use insect repellent containing DEET (discussed above). Re-apply as necessary. DEET is a very effective deterrent
- After a hike or walk, check yourself thoroughly for ticks. Pay close attention to areas such as your scalp, ankles, armpits, groin, naval and behind your ears and knees. Use a mirror to check the back of your body or have someone else check for you
- Wash and dry thoroughly. After a hike you may want to undress, shower or wash thoroughly to dislodge any ticks not attached to your skin.

If Bitten by a Tick

If you find a tick attached to your skin, do not just brush it off. According to the Canadian government website

1. If the tick is attached to you, use fine-tipped tweezers or tick removal tool to grasp the tick as close to your skin as possible. Do not use your fingers
2. Pull the tick straight out, gently but firmly making sure to remove the entire tick (including the head). **Don't squeeze it** – avoid crushing the tick's body
3. After removing the tick, place it in a secure container, such as a screw-top bottle used for medication
4. Give the tick to your health care professional or Local Health Unit. They like to test ticks to see if they contain the troublesome bacteria
5. Thoroughly clean the bite site with rubbing alcohol and/or soap and water.

Symptoms of Lyme Disease

Common symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- fever
- headache
- muscle and joint pain
- spasms, numbness or tingling
- facial paralysis
- fatigue
- swollen glands
- expanding skin rash

Symptoms usually show up within 1-2 weeks, but symptoms can appear anywhere from 3 to 30 days after a bite from an infected tick.

If you've been bitten by a tick and/or you're just feeling unwell after a trip go see your doctor and be sure to explain you've been bitten and suggest a test for Lyme disease might be in order. With early detection, most Lyme disease cases can be treated with antibiotics.

Lyme disease, left untreated, can cause some serious health issues, including; recurring arthritis and neurological problems, numbness, paralysis and, in very rare cases, death.

Bug Wrap Up

You can help protect yourself from deer flies, mosquitoes and black flies by following a few simple guidelines;

- Dress in lighter colours (tans, whites, but avoid pastels)
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants, use a hat
- Some hiking shirts have a double-high collar to help with sun, but they also help against bugs
- Use an approved insect repellent on exposed skin
- Dusk and dawn are times of greatest activity for mosquitoes and black flies. Deer flies don't seem as bothersome after dark
- Chemically fog only where permitted by law and only when absolutely necessary.

Use special care in areas infested with Deer Ticks. See precautions in the Deer Tick section above.

Despite making it all sound so horrible, it's not. I've enjoyed hundreds of days in the outdoors – essentially bug free and only on the rarest of occasions have I ever truly been annoyed by them or altered my plans.

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Bears

Really, bears aren't generally a concern to most hikers or campers. I don't want to demonize them here. They don't like human company, they tend to be skittish and aren't usually aggressive. The number of people hurt by bears in Ontario (mostly Black Bears) is so small as to be insignificant. Still, bears are attracted by the scent of food and if they're hungry enough (or lazy enough) will wander into your campsite - usually at night - to see what they can snack on. Usually they're only just a nuisance if handled properly.

How to Avoid Bears While Camping or Hiking

While there is little reason to irrationally fear black bears, one should remember that there is never any advantage to messing around with them. With an average weight of some 110kg and the ability to swim, climb trees and run at some 50kph they are a formidable force in nature. You will not out-run or out-swim them. Your best course of action is to avoid them. Give them plenty of "getting away" room. Don't get near their young. If you come across a freshly killed animal carcass, assume it's been killed by a bear and leave the area immediately. Bears will aggressively defend their young and the source of their next meal. When hiking, especially on winding trails, make enough noise so bears can hear you and leave the area. You don't want to sneak up on a bear!

If you're planning to go camping in Alberta or British Columbia, you should read up on the habits of Grizzly bears. Grizzly bears are larger, somewhat more aggressive cousins of the common Black bear we often find in Ontario. If you're going up north, say, to Churchill, Manitoba, you might want to read up on the special cautions around Polar bears.



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Hiking and Camping Tips When in Black Bear Country

- When in the outdoors, in south central Ontario, it's wise to remember that you're in the natural habitat of black bears.
- Whenever possible, hike in a group of two or more people.
- Make noise while on the trail, talking, whistling or singing for example - anything that a bear can hear and avoid. This is especially important in area of high background noise such as a loud stream or waterfall
- NEVER wear music headphones or earbuds while hiking. You need to be aware of your surroundings and that includes active listening
- When hiking, it is wise to keep children between adults, only a few steps apart
- Teach children simple things like making sure they can always see an adult; to never approach a bear or other animals; to never run from a bear and if they see a bear to stay calm and call for help
- If you plan on bringing a dog, you should verify whether there are any rules that prohibit dogs or require them to be on a leash. Point in fact, every trail I have ever been on that is under the jurisdiction of the Bruce Trail Association, Muskoka Trails, or any provincial park or conservation area has strict and

frequently enforced leash rules for dogs. This is as much for the dogs safety as it is for the safety of the local animals

- All food odours can attract bears. Pack all food, including dog food, with special care. Double or triple bag food to reduce smells
- Think about how you will handle your garbage, and how you will keep your campsite clean and odour free. Your safety and that of other campers or hikers is dependent upon how you hand food and food doors
- Pack a good length of cord for hanging your food pack. Practice hanging a pack before you go. Hang the bag at least 12 feet up and tie off the rope to another tree
- Bring a whistle or air horn. Bears are usually scared off by loud noises.
- Pepper spray. If you bring pepper spray, be sure you know how to use it. It can be very effective, but you need to be calm and stand your ground.³⁷ One urban myth has a couple of tourists spraying themselves with the product,



³⁷ I'm not going to try to explain how to use bear spray here, as there are plenty of YouTube videos you can watch, but I will say it is very effective. When the bear approaches to about 3 meters, you spray a short blast directly into it's face. Rest assured, it will not injure the bear, but will certainly give it a good reason to run away. When the bear leaves, replace the safety clip, put the canister away and leave the area quickly. You may want to report the incident to the park warden, when you get the first opportunity, as they might want to post a bear warning. Don't get the pepper into your eyes. Wash hands as soon as possible. ALWAYS READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE CANISTER BEFORE YOUR HIKE.

Pepper spray is illegal to sell, use or manufacture in Canada. The only exception seems to be for the purposes of animal repelling - usually bears or dogs. If you're caught carrying around a can of pepper spray on the subway or on the city streets, you're going to get charged with possession of a dangerous weapon. You cannot take a canister aboard a commercial airliner. I'm no expert on the subject, so speak with your local police or law enforcement officers before obtaining any pepper spray.

thinking, incorrectly, that it was to be used like mosquito repellent. Just to be clear, you DO NOT spray it on yourself!

- The Ministry of Natural Resources or an Ontario Parks Office can provide general information about recent campsite or route closures due to bear problems. Keep in mind, however, that bear activity can not be predicted
- Once in a while people will encounter black bears. Have a plan in mind if a bear enters your campsite
- People are rarely attacked and/or killed by black bears. Nonetheless, it is important that you be prepared to handle an encounter or an attack.

Coyotes

Yes. There are coyotes wandering about Ontario. No, they are not usually a threat to humans. Do not approach them, feed them or trouble them in any way.



They are often mistaken for feral dogs or scruffy foxes. An adult can weigh in at about 25kg, which is about the same size and weight as a medium sized dog. While they tend to be lone hunters, they do have a pack/communal background when pups. There is the occasional report that they have been seen hunting in small packs. They like to eat mice, rabbits and other small mammals, but they will also eat fallen fruit or even human garbage. This makes them omnivores, which means they'll eat just about anything. This adaptability means that they will come into contact with humans as their habitat becomes urbanized.

“In the unlikely event of an encounter, the best course of action is to make yourself appear large and aggressive by shouting and waving your arms,” says David Sugarman, animal expert from the Ontario Science Centre. “Usually what they'll do is just go away from you ... since they're a members of the dog family, you want to do what another dominant dog would do: stare it down, show it that you're the boss. You don't want to turn your back and run away from it.”

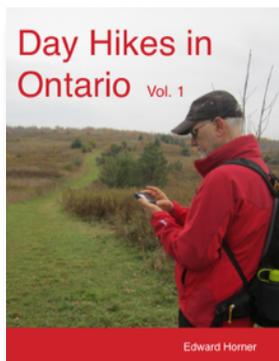
Sharp whistles seem to scare them away as does hand clapping and yelling. Keep pets on a leash and do not allow small children to wander on their own.

BACK MATTER



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Other Outdoor Titles by Edward Horner



Day Hikes of Ontario, Vol. I

Written to help anyone interested in getting outdoors and enjoying the wonderful hiking trails that Ontario has to offer. The author focuses on day hikes, typically 2 - 4 hours in length, within a two hour drive of Toronto. It offers suggestions of not only where to go, what to take with you and what other attractions you might find as part of an outing. Getting outside need not be simply a hike, but the hike might be part of a longer day spent in the outdoors at fairs, on farms, picking your own vegetables or just sitting by a well-stocked trout pond, dang-ling a line in the water.

The author includes tips on outdoor photography, trail etiquette, trail ratings, how to get to the hikes, site facilities, first aid concerns, how to avoid and treat insect bites and avoiding and managing bears. This is a perfect companion to The Family Camping Guide and Day Hikes of Ontario, Vol. II.

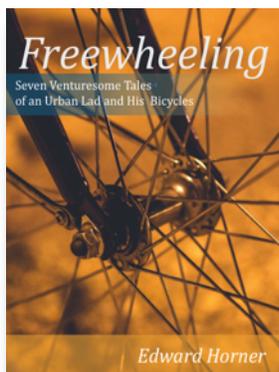
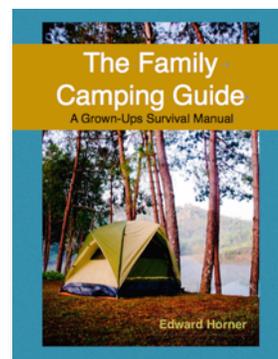
126 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-8-2

The Family Camping Guide

For every adult who has ever faced the family camping challenge.

This book shows you how to prepare yourself and your family for a great outdoor getaway. Included are tips for selecting tents, cooking, getting the kids to bed, treating common camp injuries, entertaining the gang, building a fire, securing drinkable water, camp lighting, checklists and much, much more.

175 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-9-9



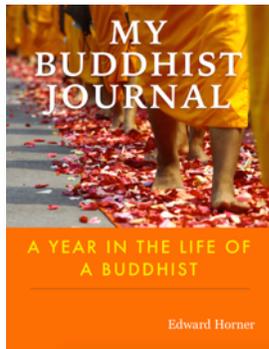
Freewheeling

Seven short stories of boys and the adventures they get up to on their bikes. Causing a bit of trouble in High Park, Misadventures in the Black Creek, Nose Dive into Catfish Pond, The Bike to End all Bikes, The Giro d'Italia AND MORE.

82 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9953161-3-3

Buddhist Titles from Off The Dock Books

- An imprint of Canadian Outdoor Press

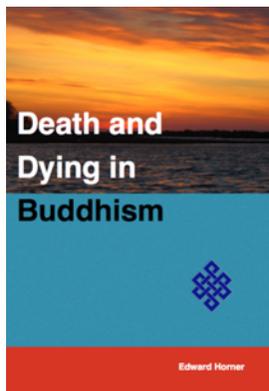


[My Buddhist Journal; One Year in the Life of a Buddhist](#)

My Buddhist Journal is journey of self-discovery. Along the way, we see ourselves through new and kinder eyes that befriend the world and ourselves. It helps cultivate compassion and awareness as we work through the challenges of every day living. 306 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-1-3

[Consequences in Buddhism; Why Things Happen](#)

A chapbook that discusses the consequences of our thoughts, words and actions, from the perspective of a practicing buddhist 32 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-4-4

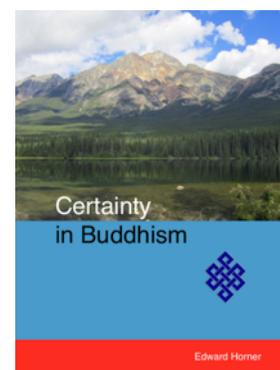


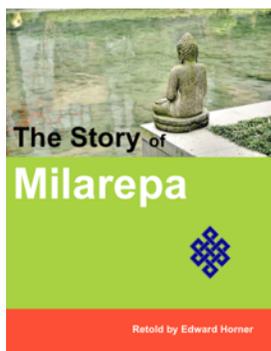
[Death and Dying in Buddhism](#)

No human being, nor animal nor plant nor smallest microbe manages to escape death. It's the ultimate end of everyone now living or that ever will live. There is no "cure" and no avoiding it, but from a Buddhist perspective, suffering over this inevitability is something we can reduce and maybe even sidestep. Death and Dying in Buddhism gives us hope that we can shake off the fear of death and bring a clear mind to the process. 100 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-3-7

[Certainty in Buddhism; When Knowing Becomes our Undoing](#)

Certainty is a bubble we travel around in all day long, every day, day in and day out. We generate our own reality distortion field and it reaches out to include everything we see, feel, smell, taste, hear or think. It's insidious, creeping into every corner of our lives, affecting not only ourselves, but those around us. 25 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-2-0





The Story of Ujtsun Milarepa

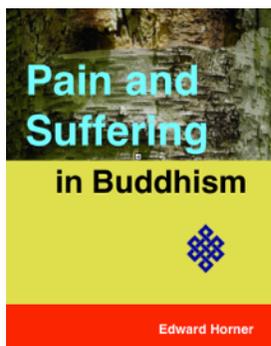
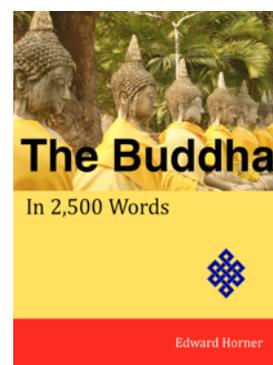
A **FREE** Publication. A brief re-telling of one of Tibet's most beloved stories. Altered and amended over the centuries, we cannot truly know how much of the story is historically accurate or even if the man, Milarepa, actually existed. None-the-less, Milarepa's story is as relevant today as it was a thousand years ago.

ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9698297-7-5

The Life of Buddha In 2,500 Words

A **FREE** Publication. A riches to rags story. He marries his cousin at the age of sixteen. Abandons her and his son so he can wander the countryside of India and Nepal searching for an end to human suffering. He irritates his brother-in-law who then tries to assassinate him, not just once, but three times! He calms an intoxicated, rampaging elephant, ordains his aunt as the first Buddhist nun, and, despite his best efforts, is hated by a good many people through his lifetime. This is the Life of The Buddha, told in 2,500 words.

ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9953161-1-9



Pain and Suffering in Buddhism;

Each and every one of us share the combined experiences of pain and suffering. It is unavoidable. The pain comes from the simple fact that we are human and that our physiology and psychic makeup allow it to arise. While suffering is often associated with pain, it is a different matter.

In Pain and Suffering, the author explores the relationship between these two afflictions as we look deeply into how our ego relentlessly drives us towards disappointment and regret.

However, we are not left with just an understanding of how we suffer and why we have pain. We take a serious look at how, with diligence and patience, we can apply a specific program to escape or at the very least, lessen our suffering.

100 pages. ISBN E-Book: 978-0-9953161-0-2

About the Author

Ed has been hiking, skiing and paddling throughout Ontario and Alberta for nearly 45 years. He's an avid photographer, cyclist and outdoor enthusiast.

He's the founder of *Friends of Dieppe Park* and past member of the *Harbourfront Parks and Open Space Project*, in Toronto.

Ed has been a practicing Buddhist, in the Theravada tradition, since 2003 and enjoys talking and writing about his experiences and ideas.

Ed is also the founder of [Canadian Outdoor Press](#) - a digital first publishing company specializing in books about Buddhism and the natural world.

