

Nature for all Seasons

Celebrating the natural heritage
of the Ontario East region

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East meets North

The rugged eastern reaches of Ontario contain both a wealth of natural history and a legacy of stories about Canada's early settlement. From the great pineries of the Ottawa Valley to the distinct limestone outcrops of the lower Frontenac region, this area has the character, in many ways, of more northern areas. That's because it is here that the billion-year-old bedrock of the Canadian Shield dips south through what is known as the Frontenac Axis and crosses under the St. Lawrence River.

Typical of Shield country, the area is studded with lakes, crisscrossed by rivers and well forested. For nature lovers, this means a chance to explore by canoe or on foot areas that still boast a wild flavour. The north end of the region includes the east side of Algonquin Provincial Park, an area of big lakes, big pines and, often, fewer visitors. Algonquin's system of lakes has made it a world-renowned destination for canoeists in particular. The park is also home to a whole suite of wild species, including moose, black bear and what may be North America's largest red wolf population.

In the Ottawa River Valley, the remains of ancient glacial lakes form the valley's deep sand and clay plains. Great stands of white and red pine once grew on these lands – some said to be many metres in diameter. These trees were used to make masts for the ships of the British Navy or into clear-grained, metre-wide planks for simple pioneer construction. But despite the seemingly endless forests of big trees, it actually took only a few decades for most of the big pines to be cut. However, a few examples of what the forests of this valley looked like when settlers first arrived can still be found in places such as Shaw Woods north of Eganville and Gillies Grove in the town of Arnprior.

For a taste of the big pine forests that once dominated the east side of Algonquin Park and the valley, it's worth the trip into the park's Lake Lavielle wilderness zone. The area can only be reached by canoe, but as the newest wilderness area and the only wilderness zone on the park's unique east side, it is worth the trek.

At the southern edge of the region lies the St. Lawrence River Valley. The park system managed by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission along this aquatic artery is a great place for viewing waterfowl as well as shorebirds and gulls. Bald eagles can also be seen along the river and, of course, there are the views of the mighty St. Lawrence itself to savour.

While this region was one of the earliest areas in central Canada to be settled, the rocky soils and rough topography have ensured that much of the original pattern of woods, wetlands and waters remains. This high degree of natural cover has led to the idea of establishing a natural corridor joining Algonquin Park to the huge Adirondack wilderness in New York State. Planning and community discussions have just begun, but already there is much excitement about the possibilities for linking two of the largest remaining natural areas in the lower Great Lakes region.



Black and white
warbler and birches

There are many exciting and accessible natural places to explore within the Ontario East Region.

① Bon Echo Provincial Park is probably best known for the spectacular cliff that stretches along the east shore of Mazinaw Lake. This monumental piece of upthrust granite has obviously had a powerful effect on visitors for centuries – from the aboriginal peoples who painted pictographs on the lower wall to the carved Walt Whitman quote added by a lodge owner centuries later. But this 6,500-hectare park also offers visitors a chance to explore a rugged landscape of rock outcrops, scenic lookouts, shallow lakes and wetlands.

② The east side of Algonquin Park is the land of pines, thanks to sandy soils and dry conditions. The eastern third of the park is dominated by white, red and jack pine along with aspen and birch. Drive up the Achray Road to the campground on Grand Lake or, more ambitiously, paddle into the Lake Lavielle wilderness zone. A good east-side day trip is to visit the Barron Canyon along the Sand Lake Road (28.9 km.). This deep gorge has rock walls that rise 100 metres.

③ Just north of Kingston is the 400-hectare Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. With ponds, mixed woodlands, including a sugar-maple bush, and plenty of trails, this is a good place to see everything from beavers, ducks and amphibians to songbirds. The site is situated on a series of clay ridges that are thought to mirror the bottom of the ice sheets that lay over the region in the last ice age. Go north from Kingston on Division Street (eventually County Road 10) to 1.5 km. past Hwy. 401; watch for sign on left.

④ One of the best birding areas in the Ottawa region is the Britannia Conservation Area. Situated on Mud Lake, an old embayment of the Ottawa River, it includes shallow ponds and swamps that are home to Midland, painted and snapping turtles. The hardwood forests growing on the area's uplands are home to numerous bird and flower species. The tangled shrubbery of the wetter areas makes good cover for migrating songbirds, while the more open waters attract many waterbirds, including black-crowned night herons, blue and green-winged teal and wood ducks. From Carling Ave. (Hwy. 17B) in west Ottawa, go north on Britannia Road to Cassels Street; turn right and park at the end of the street near the filtration plant.

⑤ An exceptional place to explore for unusual plants or fall mushrooms, Westmeath Provincial Park protects one of the last undeveloped stretches of the Ottawa River. Look for blue beech or silky dogwood among other rare species near the park's beaches and terraces. Pine forests dominate a good portion of the park, while waterfowl use Bellows Bay as a staging area for spring and fall migrations. You'll also probably find shorebirds bobbing along the park's beaches through the summer and early fall. Follow the Ottawa River, first on Hwy. 148 from Pembroke for 16.5 km; then follow County Roads 21 and 12.

See the map inside for locations. For more areas to visit, see A Nature Guide to Ontario, available from the FON.

SPECIAL PLACES AND SPECIES

BRINGING PEOPLE AND NATURE TOGETHER:

ONTARIO EAST NATURE NETWORK

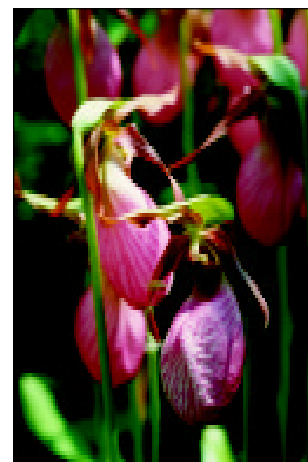


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Be a part of nature! See the back page for information on how you can get involved or get in touch.

Friends of Charleston Lake Park

The Friends strive to further public awareness, education and understanding of the geological, historical, archeological, cultural and biological resources of Charleston Lake Park by undertaking specific projects and initiatives such as: providing educational and interpretive publications, maps and audio-visual materials; encouraging and supporting research of the park's natural, historical and cultural resources and sharing these research findings with the public; supplementing and enhancing existing park educational and recreational programs by offering periodic special activities to the public; and stimulating community interest and understanding of the park to help ensure protection of its natural and cultural resources. To these ends, the Friends have operated services such as the woodlot and a Nature Store to generate funds for everything from laundry facilities to nature guides.



Pink lady's slipper

Kingston Field Naturalists

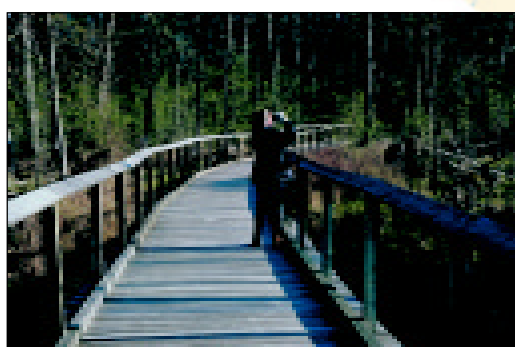
Founded in 1949, the Kingston Field Naturalists club has over 300 members as well as active junior and teens groups. At monthly meetings from September to May, speakers cover a wide range of topics on natural history and habitat conservation. Field trips to local areas are held on many weekends, and Tuesday morning rambles "to notice all aspects of nature" take place twice a month. Many KFN members are involved in projects such as species monitoring and nest box and osprey platform erection. These projects are initiated by the club or undertaken in cooperation with other organizations such as Bird Studies Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The KFN owns two nature reserves covering a total area of approximately 300 hectares. The 200-hectare Helen Quilliam Sanctuary on the Canadian Shield north of Sydenham is the nesting place of several threatened species of birds. Grassland and marsh on Amherst Island with extensive shoreline on Lake Ontario is ideal habitat for breeding waterfowl and Wilson's phalarope and for migrating shorebirds. The club also monitors properties owned privately or by other organizations for which conservation agreements have been drawn up with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. www.psyq.queensu.ca/~davids/KFN.html

Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club

"Enjoying, exploring and preserving nature." These are the interests of the Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club. The club, founded in 1984, was named after early Arnprior naturalist and photographer, Charles Macnamara. Club members share an interest in, and passion for, nature in all its forms in the Ottawa Valley and beyond. The popular club meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month in the Arnprior Public Library and draw people from a broad area. The club produces a newsletter, *The Lady's Slipper*, and bulletins giving updates on speakers and trips. Field trips bring members into close contact with nature. We howl for wolves and thrash for moose in Algonquin Provincial Park. We ski and snowshoe in the Madawaska Highlands and canoe through Conroy's Marsh. We hoot for owls near Pakenham and mingle with orchids in the White Lake Fen.

Club projects have included the release of peregrine falcons, plant and animal surveys, a native plant garden, natural area identification, and conservation efforts for Gillies Grove, a spectacular old-growth woodland in the Town of Arnprior. One of the club's largest projects to date has been the creation of the Macnamara Trail, an interpretive walking trail through Arnprior's Nopiming Game Preserve.



Charleston Lake

Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists

Founded in 1988, MVFN endeavours to increase public interest in, knowledge and understanding of, and appreciation and respect for, the natural world within the Mississippi River watershed. MVFN conducts field trips and indoor sessions for its members and the general public and plays an active role in addressing environmental concerns. *The Whip-poor-will* and an Environmental Fact Sheet are published periodically and circulated to members, libraries and other public places. We are sole distributors of Dr. Paul Keddy's recent book *Earth, Water, and Fire, an Ecological Profile of Lanark County*.

An environmental issues subcommittee focuses on environmental matters. Recently MVFN successfully petitioned the Mississippi Mills municipal council to form an Environmental Advisory Committee. MVFN has put forth one candidate to serve on this committee. MVFN also sponsors and facilitates public forums in conjunction with other organizations as a way of discussing broader issues. Sessions were held recently with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest on the topic of certified-forest products and with the University of Waterloo Wolf Ecosystem Research Project.

Pembroke Area Field Naturalists

The Pembroke area is located midway between Ottawa and North Bay along the Ottawa River, a natural corridor for wildlife. The club was founded in 1983 as the Pembroke and Area Bird Club, but changed its name in 1996 to better reflect the diverse interests of our members. The objectives of the club remain to protect the region's natural attributes and encourage further enjoyment of its flora and fauna through field trips and talks. Currently, the club sponsors Christmas Bird Counts in Pembroke, Eganville and Killaloe, two butterfly counts in July and a dragonfly count in August.

Our members are interested in all aspects of natural history, including astronomy, forest ecology, and moth, butterfly, dragonfly and orchid identification. In 1999, the PAFN co-sponsored a Star Night with Terrence Dickinson as the guest speaker, attracting 600 people. Good natural areas in the region are Lake Dore, Westmeath Provincial Park, Mud Lake/Snake River wetland, the Petawawa National Forest, Petawawa Fish Hatchery and the Shaw Woods, an old-growth forest. www.renc.igs.net/~cmichener/pafn.index.html

Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club

The club, incorporated in 1879, is the oldest natural history club in Canada. Our more than 1,000 members enjoy walks, articles and lectures on all aspects of the natural world, from birding to botanizing, field studies to publication, conservation to co-operation. Our objectives are to promote the appreciation, preservation, and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and to publish the results of research in all fields of natural history as well as distributing information on these fields as widely as possible; and to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring high-quality environments for living things.

The Canadian Field-Naturalist, also established in 1879, is an award-winning journal with an international reputation which publishes the results of original research on Canadian natural history. The journal and *Trail & Landscape*, the club's newsletter, are published four times a year. The club also oversees the Macoun Field Club, a club for juniors jointly sponsored by the Canadian Museum of Nature since 1948. www.achilles.net/ofnc

A Place for Nature



ONTARIO EAST

MAP KEY

- 1 Bon Echo Provincial Park
- 2 Algonquin Provincial Park
- 3 Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area
- 4 Britannia Conservation Area
- 5 Westmeath Provincial Park
- 6 Shaw Woods
- 7 Gillies Grove
- 8 Stewartville Swamp - FON Nature Reserve
- 9 Hungry Lake Conservation Reserve (designated)
- 10 Puzzle Lake Provincial Park / Mellon Lake Conservation Reserve (designated)
- 11 Frontenac Provincial Park
- 12 Charleston Lake Provincial Park

Prince Edward County Field Naturalists

The club was formed four years ago in response to interest in the local environment and because of the abundance of natural sights and sounds in "The County" (as we are fondly known locally). As well as the traditional monthly meetings, nature walks, and explorations of environmental interest, the P.E.C. Field Naturalists play the lead role in mounting the week-long Prince Edward County Birding Festival each May. In addition, we spearheaded the successful campaign to stop the use of Dombind for dust suppression in the county, and we will continue to work for the protection and preservation of our local wildlands.

With the popular Sandbanks Provincial Park, dozens of Conservation Areas as well as the spectacular Prince Edward Point Natural Wildlife Area, Prince Edward County is a productive, exciting and largely undiscovered hot spot for birders and other naturalists.

Quinte Field Naturalists

In 1949, a small group of birdwatchers decided that the Belleville area needed a naturalist club. Unlike today, there were very few nature clubs in Ontario and those that did exist were all located in major cities. The newly formed "Brown Thrasher Club" made it through its formative years and eventually became the Quinte Field Naturalists.

Some of the projects we have undertaken include regular maintenance of a nature trail at Vanderwater Conservation Area, maintaining nesting boxes, and presenting a regular slide show at a local elementary school in support of Earth Day. The group also participates in several provincial programs such as the Forest Bird Monitoring and Marsh Monitoring programs and the Ontario Nocturnal Owl Survey. Our newsletter, *The Quinte Naturalist* is published eight times a year. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of every month from September through April at the Bridge Street United Church in Belleville. For more information see our web page at: www.pec.on.ca/naturestuff.

Rideau Environmental Action League

Based in Smiths Falls, the League has gained a reputation for doing a lot with a little. The group was formed in 1989 to focus on public education and actions to improve the natural environment. We have taken significant leadership and action on composting, waste reduction and recycling and on improving biodiversity in the Rideau River watershed by participating in the Rideau River Biodiversity Study, RiverCare 2000 and the Tay River Watershed Study.

We launched the Lanark & Leeds Green Community to deliver Green Home and Green Cottage Visits focusing on energy and water conservation and now the EnerGuide for Houses program, which is specifically geared to reducing household energy use and greenhouse gases. This year, REAL developed the Evergreen Avenue tree planting and education project in Smiths Falls, studied the feasibility of an ecotourism project on the Rideau, and launched an Ecological Land Care project to help public and private landowners create beautiful gardens with no pesticides and less water. LL Green has also developed a rural and a small-town Ecological Footprint, combined with a carbon-dioxide calculator, to educate homeowners about their full environmental impact and how to reduce their footprints. REAL publishes a newsletter and invites individual, family and corporate memberships.

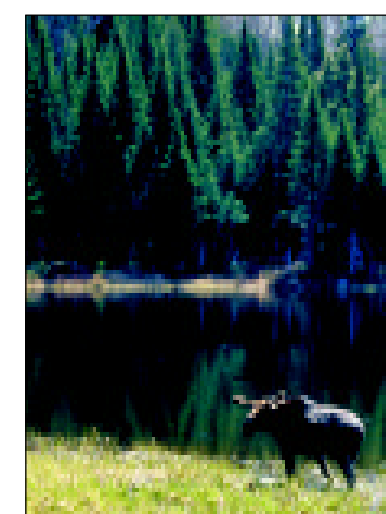
Rideau Valley Field Naturalists

Since 1984, club members have been developing their knowledge of local natural history and working to stimulate interest in protecting the region's natural environment. Our members - who are drawn from the central area of Eastern Ontario - including Perth, Maberly, McDonalds Corners, Lanark, Carleton Place, Smiths Falls and Westport - have interests ranging from flora, fauna, ecology and geology to astronomy, photography and hiking. The club is also active in bird counts and our sightings are used to study the range and population of local and migratory birds.

Regular meetings with invited speakers are held on the first Sunday of each month from September to May at the Perth Public Library. Field trips are arranged throughout the year, usually on weekends, and are led by individuals with expertise in their field. The membership is kept informed on club and nature news by *The Wannigan*, a comprehensive quarterly publication, and *Wannigan Update* sheets which are published between issues of the quarterly.

Upper Ottawa Valley Nature Club

The club is centred around the communities of Deep River and Chalk River, where agricultural land ends and Shield country begins. We lie between the Ottawa River and Algonquin Provincial Park, in a fringe zone that suffers from intensive logging and hunting, but which features large federal preserves to the east (Atomic Energy, Base Petawawa and the Research Forest). Being a transition zone, with many different habitats, the area is rich in varieties of life. Migratory birds follow the Ottawa River and warblers are especially numerous. Members spearheaded the purchase of the 400-hectare Four Seasons preserve on the edge of Deep River, thereby maintaining a system of trails, wetlands, high-quality forest, and two kilometres of undeveloped Ottawa River shoreline. The structure of the club is informal - activities are organized on an ad-hoc basis.



Moose in Algonquin Park

The Vankleek Hill Nature Society

The Society takes a keen interest in all things natural in our region. Our motto is "Conservation Through Education," and we put it into practice through trips to natural areas and learning from others at our quarterly meetings. The Society takes a special interest in the conservation of the Alfred Bog. We also venture out to Voyageur Provincial Park for bird counts and nature observation as well as to other interesting nearby natural areas, such as the Garry Fen (near Alexandria). Club members participate in a number of bird counts, including the Bill Pilon Spring Count (named in memory of an early member and avid birder).

Our meetings take place in February, March, September and October on the third Monday of the month - all are welcome. We also have a quarterly newsletter called *Nature News*. Join us in discovering what's happening in this region!