

Step Into Nature: A Visitor's Guide to Trent's Wildlife Sanctuary Trail (blue trail)

Includes:

Final Report

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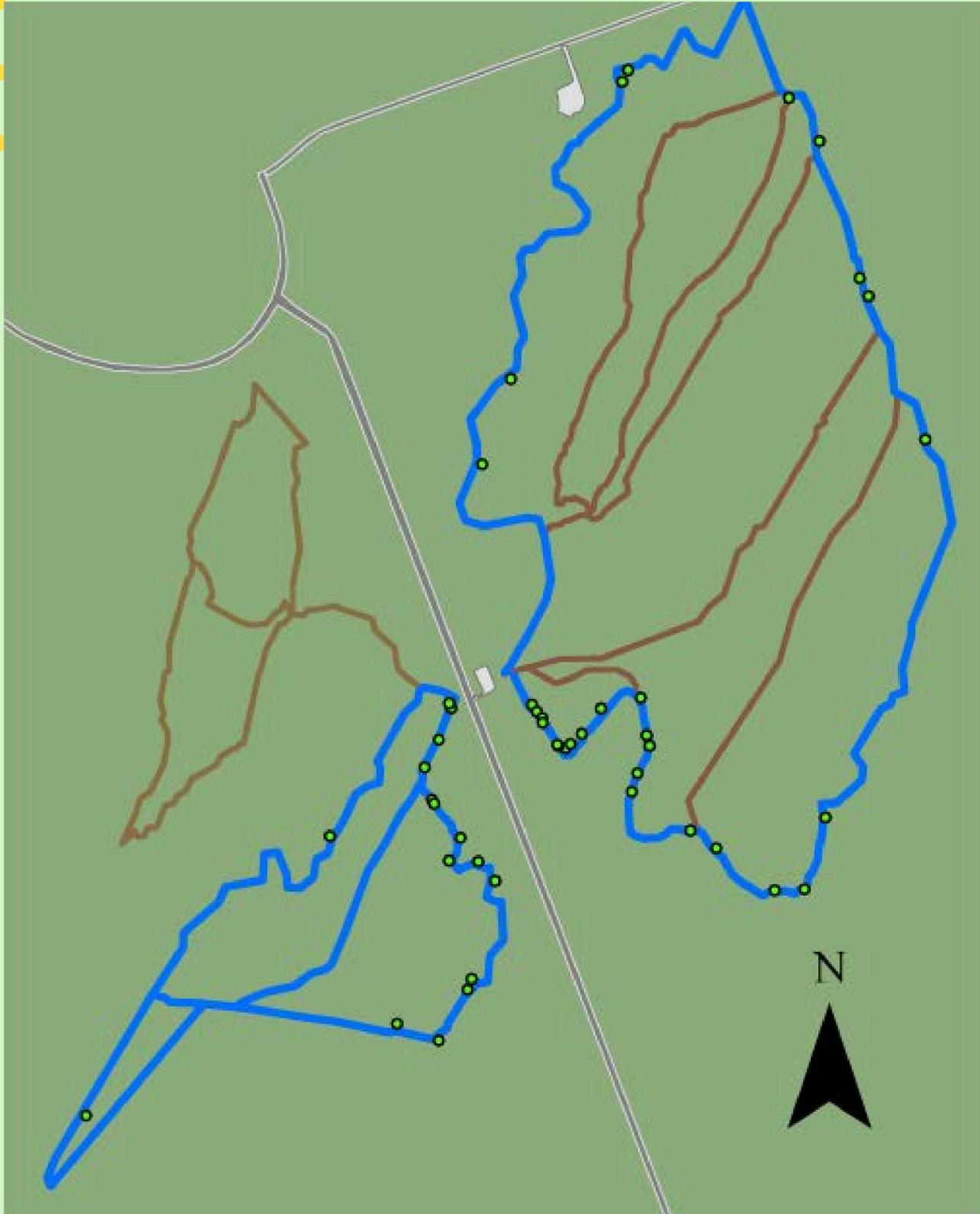
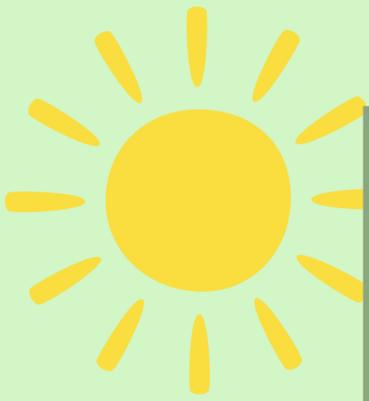
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Indigenous Awareness: Being Respectful of the Lands You are On



We respectfully acknowledge that Trent University is located on the Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations. We respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come



We understand that some users of this guide may begin their hike from Gzowski College. If this is your starting point, we ask that you be especially mindful when using the trail. The path leaving from the back entrance of Gzowski College takes you directly past Trent's Traditional Space.

This space is sacred and holds deep significance for both the university and the broader Indigenous community. It is used to host ceremonies and gatherings for Indigenous students and community members. Before starting your hike, please check if any events are taking place in the Traditional Space. If there are, we respectfully ask that you take an alternative route to access the trail to avoid disrupting these important activities.

Out of respect for the space, please refrain from taking photos of the Tipi or other cultural structures. We also ask that you do not leave any garbage or debris in this area.

Before passing through, we invite you to pause and reflect on the traditional territory on which Trent University is located, and to consider your own role and responsibility as we move together on the path toward reconciliation.

It is important for all visitors to the trail to know whose land they are on and to take a moment to reflect on the history, presence, and ongoing contributions of the First Peoples of this territory while enjoying their time in nature. Our ability to experience the lands and waters of the Trent University Nature Areas is made possible through the deep and lasting relationship the Mississauga Anishinaabeg have with these lands.

Step Gently: Respect, Safety, and Sustainability on the Trails



We are committed to protecting and preserving our nature trails while minimizing disturbance to local wildlife. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone, we encourage you to review these trail etiquette guidelines before setting out. Please be mindful and respectful of these rules throughout your journey, helping us keep the trails beautiful and thriving for all to enjoy!

Dog Waste

Dog waste is more than just an inconvenience on trails, it poses serious environmental and ecological risks. When left behind, decomposing waste releases harmful bacteria and nutrients into the soil and nearby water sources, leading to decreased oxygen levels that can harm aquatic life. uncollected waste can disrupt local ecosystems. Proper disposal of pet waste helps protect wildlife, water quality, and the overall health of natural environments (Taylor & Harding, 2021).

Cycling on Trails

Cycling on nature trails offers a thrilling way to connect with the outdoors, but it's essential to be mindful of environmental impacts. Research shows that while mountain biking provides recreational and health benefits, it can contribute to trail degradation through soil erosion, vegetation damage, and wildlife disturbance if not managed properly (Marion & Wimpey, 2017). To minimize impact, cyclists should stay on designated trails, avoid riding in wet conditions, and follow local guidelines for sustainable trail use.

Leave Nature as You Found It

Nature trails provide a home for diverse plant species, many of which play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem balance. Removing or picking vegetation can lead to habitat degradation, soil erosion, and a decline in biodiversity. Please also refrain from scarring trees. Research shows that trail use already causes shifts in plant species composition and increases bare soil patches, making it even more important to minimize additional human impact (Pickering & Norman, 2017).

Trail Safety

- 1. Stay on Marked Trails** – Avoid creating new paths to protect vegetation and minimize erosion.
- 2. Yield to Others** – Hikers, cyclists, horseback riders, and skiers should follow proper right-of-way rules (e.g., cyclists yield to pedestrians).
- 3. Keep Pets Leashed** – If pets are allowed, keep them on a leash and clean up after them to protect wildlife and other trail users.
- 4. Pack Out What You Pack In** – Carry out all trash, including food scraps and biodegradable waste, to maintain a clean environment.
- 5. Be Aware of Wildlife** – Do not feed or approach wild animals, and stay alert to avoid disturbing their habitat.
- 6. Carry Essentials** – Bring water, a first-aid kit, a map, and a flashlight or headlamp in case of emergencies.
- 7. Know the Weather Conditions** – Check forecasts before heading out and be prepared for sudden changes in weather.
- 8. Use Proper Gear** – Wear appropriate footwear and protective equipment for the activity you're engaging in.
- 9. Leave No Trace** – Follow the principles of Leave No Trace by minimizing your impact on the environment.

Every step you take on the trail leaves an impact, let's make it a positive one. By following these guidelines, you help protect the beauty, safety, and sustainability of our natural spaces. Respect wildlife, stay on designated paths, and leave no trace behind. Together, we can ensure these trails remain a place of wonder and discovery for generations to come.

Thank you for stepping gently and respecting nature!



Explore and Identify: Tree and Plant ID Guides



Citizen Science Identification Apps!



iNaturalist ([inaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org))

Allows users to understand biodiversity and create research quality scientific data by sharing wildlife photos. Users can assist in identifying each other's observations at any level wildlife identification. Users can join groups while being connected to a social network of naturalists.



Seek (https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app)

Created by iNaturalist, Seek uses image recognition to assist in wildlife identification. Users can aim their camera at a target to reveal what species they are observing, and can be automatically uploaded to iNaturalist. Users can earn badges and participate in challenges to improve their identification skills.



eBird (ebird.org/home)

Created by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, bird watchers can log their sightings in 'checklists.' This data is used by researchers and educators that study bird conservation and migration

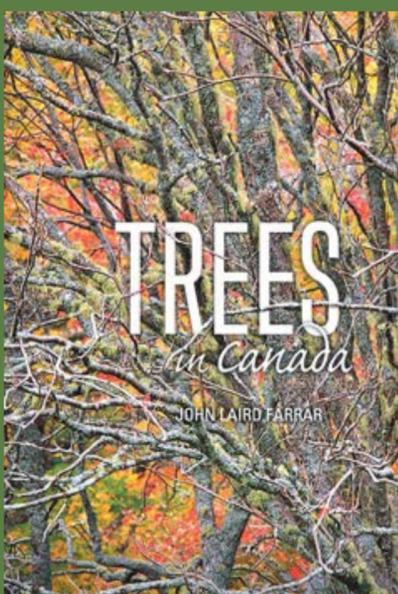


Merlin (merlin.allaboutbirds.org)

Created by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Merlin allows users to identify birds by uploading photos, describing the bird's appearance, and recording their song/call. A database of bird photos and songs/calls can also be used as an identification aid, and observations can be automatically uploaded to eBird.



Other Tree and Plant Identification Tools



Trees In Canada by John Laird Farrar

Trees in Canada is a guide to the many tree species, both native and introduced, that are found throughout Canada and the northern United States.



Minnesota Wildflowers Plant and Tree Website
(<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/>)

How to Use this Guide



IMPORTANT NOTICE: All trails are use at your own risk please use caution and prioritize safety while hiking in the wildlife sanctuary. Trails are not maintained during the winter.

1 Stop at the trees you see tagged on the trail and go to the corresponding checkpoint, the first tree you see on the trail head would be tree 1 therefore you are at checkpoint one!



You should be able to see trees flagged with this tape on or just off the trails

Tree ID Key: White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (5-9) arranged oppositely on a long stalk, skinny oval-shaped leaflets taper at the tip. Twig: stout, shiny, dark grey and purplish, hairless.

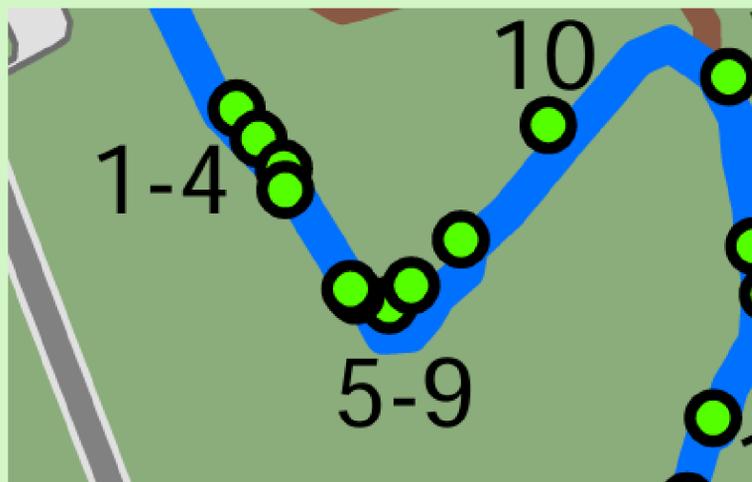
Buds: opposite arrangement, terminal bud wider than long, lateral buds sit within notched leaf scar, lateral buds tight against terminal bud.

Mature Bark: grey, intersecting ridges form diamond pattern.



Each flagged tree will have a corresponding ID Key for you to learn about tree identification

2 Using the Tree ID Key, learn to identify the tree species, the map located at the top right hand corner is where you are located in the trail.



These maps will serve as a way for you to track your progress on the trail as well as highlighting the checkpoints on the trail

3 Read the information on the checkpoint page to learn about the vegetation community and species biodiversity and take a second to observe the environment around you!

Acknowledgements

This guide was created for credit in ERSC 3160 – Community-Based Resource Management by Kallista Laite and Daniel Run. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Professor Thomas Whillans for his guidance and to our host, Rob Loney from the Trent School of the Environment, for his ongoing support and encouragement throughout the development of this project. We also extend our gratitude to the Trent Community Research Centre and Matthew Walmsley for providing the opportunity to undertake this project and for their coordination efforts. Daniel Run led the mapping, tagging, and identification of trees and trails, and contributed key information on species diversity. Kallista Laite was responsible for graphic design, Indigenous awareness, environmental communications, and accessibility considerations.

Trail Safety: Poisonous Plants and Berries



Identifying Poison Ivy:

Poison Ivy adaptability allows it to grow in open areas, wooded areas, swamps and even roadsides. It is most often found as a low growing plant in dense colonies. However, it can become a vine and spread up tree trunks.

The compound leaf is made up 3 leaflets. "Leaflets of 3, let it be." In the summer they grow small white berries.



Trail Safety:

While enjoying the trails, it's important to be aware of Poison Ivy, a native plant that can cause an itchy, blistering skin rash when touched. Poison Ivy is commonly found along trail edges, in open fields, and at the borders of wooded areas.

How to Identify Poison Ivy:

- Leaves: "Leaves of three, let it be!" Poison Ivy typically grows with three pointed leaflets. The leaves can be shiny and may have smooth or slightly toothed edges.
- Growth: It can appear as a low-growing plant, a climbing vine on trees, or a spreading ground cover.
- Color Changes: Leaves are green in summer but may turn red, orange, or yellow in fall.

Safety Tips:

- Stay on marked trails to avoid brushing against vegetation at trail edges.
- Wear long pants and closed-toe shoes to help protect your skin.
- If you think you've touched Poison Ivy, wash the area with soap and cool water as soon as possible to reduce the risk of a rash.
- Do not touch your face, especially your eyes and mouth, if you suspect contact with Poison Ivy.

Other Trail Safety Tips: Unknown Plants

While exploring the trails, you may come across many different types of plants—some beautiful, some unusual, and some that could cause skin irritation or allergic reactions if touched.

Safety Tips Around Unknown Plants:

- Look, but don't touch. If you see a plant you don't recognize, it's safest to admire it from a distance.
- Avoid picking flowers, leaves, or berries. Some plants may have oils or toxins that can cause rashes or be harmful if accidentally ingested.
- Stick to the trails. Staying on marked paths reduces the chance of accidentally brushing against unknown or hazardous plants.
- Teach children to be cautious. Encourage young explorers to ask an adult before touching plants they find along the trail.
- Wash up after your hike. Even if you don't think you touched anything harmful, washing your hands and clothes after a hike helps remove any plant oils or irritants you may have picked up.

By respecting all plant life and exercising caution, you help protect yourself and help preserve the natural beauty of the trail for everyone!

Check Point 1: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

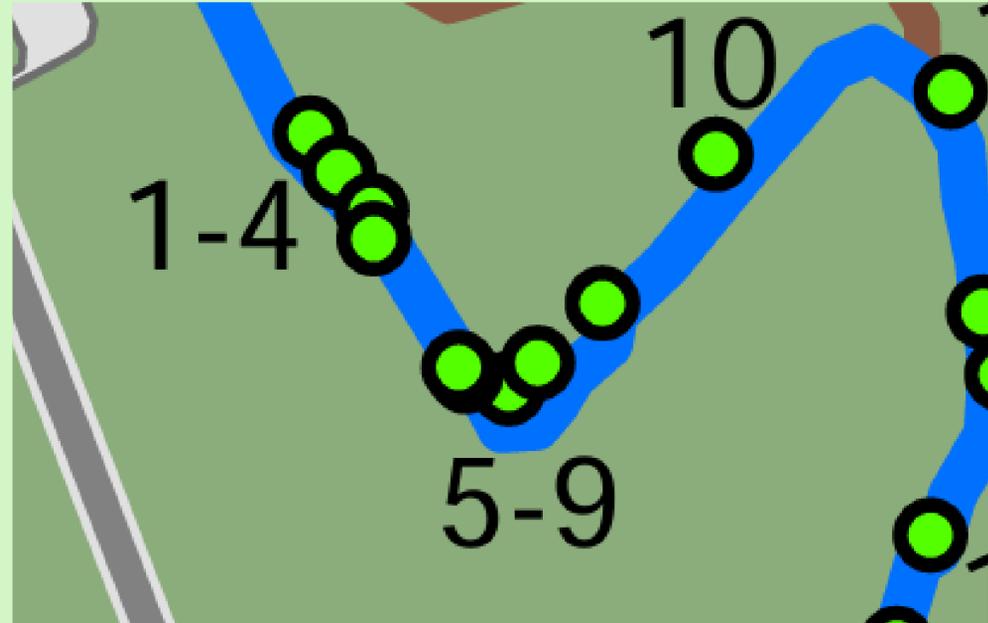
Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



Eastern Gray Squirrel

A tree squirrel native to eastern North America. It has predominantly gray fur with a white underside and a large bushy tail. These squirrels inhabit large areas of mature, dense woodland ecosystems, generally covering about 100 acres, which contain large mast-producing trees such as oaks and hickories. The eastern gray squirrel plays a vital role in seed dispersal. As winter approaches these furry friends bury nuts and seeds in various locations to eat later, however sometimes they forget where they hid them! These forgotten seeds can sprout and grow into new trees which aids in forest regeneration.



Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee is a small songbird native to North America's mixed and deciduous forests. Recognizable by its black cap and bib, white cheeks, and soft gray back, this bird also has a pale, fluffy belly and a short, thin bill perfect for picking at seeds and insects. Chickadees are social and curious birds, often seen flitting through the branches in small flocks, especially in the colder months. They are well-known for their namesake "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call, which varies in intensity depending on the level of threat nearby. These clever little birds also cache food in hidden spots to retrieve later, showing impressive memory skills that help them survive harsh winters.

Tree ID Key:

White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (5-9) arranged oppositely on a long stalk, skinny oval-shaped leaflets taper at the tip. Twig: stout, shiny, dark grey and purplish, hairless.

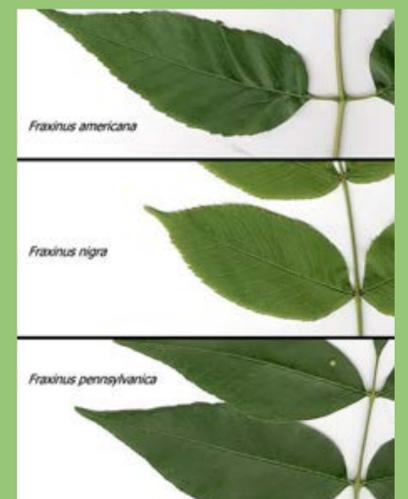
Buds: opposite arrangement, terminal bud wider than long, lateral buds sit within notched leaf scar, lateral buds tight against terminal bud.

Mature Bark: grey, intersecting ridges form diamond pattern.



Emerald Ash Borer

The Emerald Ash Borer is a striking, metallic green beetle native to parts of Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, and Russia. Though small, less than half an inch in length this invasive insect has had a massive impact on North American forests. Accidentally introduced to North America in the early 2000s, the Emerald Ash Borer targets ash trees by laying its eggs in the bark. When the larvae hatch, they burrow into the tree and feed on the inner bark, disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. This often leads to the tree's death within a few years. Since its arrival, the beetle has killed millions of ash trees across Canada and the U.S., drastically altering forest ecosystems.



Kids Corner

Did you know trees in a forest **can communicate with each other!** Using their roots and a special underground network of fungi, trees are able to **share nutrients and even warn each other about dangers** like bugs or disease.



Check Point 2: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

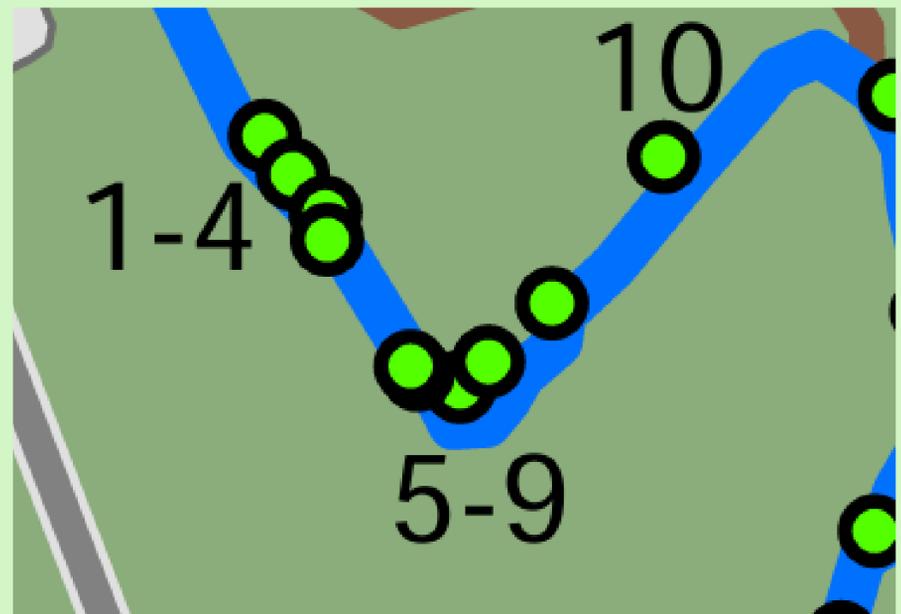
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North American Porcupine

The North American Porcupine is the second-largest rodent on the continent, right after the beaver. Covered in thousands of sharp quills used for defense, this slow-moving mammal is surprisingly shy and prefers a peaceful life in forests, rocky outcrops, and wooded areas. Porcupines are excellent climbers and spend much of their time in trees, nibbling on bark, buds, and leaves. Their quills are not thrown, as some myths suggest, but detach easily if a predator gets too close. These quirky, solitary creatures play an important role in shaping forest vegetation through their foraging habits.



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Tree ID Key:

Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Leaves: flat, scaly, branched.

Cone: tiny and round, dark brown when mature

Mature Bark: grayish brown, peels in strips.



Barred Owl

The Barred Owl is a large, mysterious-looking bird known for its soulful dark eyes and distinct hooting call that sounds like "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" It has a rounded head, a yellow beak, and a beautifully streaked chest, with brown and white mottling along its back and wings that help it blend seamlessly into the forest. Native to North America's mature woodlands and swamps, Barred Owls are primarily nocturnal but may also be active during the day. These skilled hunters perch silently before swooping down to catch prey like small mammals, amphibians, and even fish. Their presence is a sign of a healthy, well-established forest ecosystem.

Indigenous Knowledge

Eastern White Cedar, often called the "Tree of Life," holds deep cultural significance for many Indigenous communities. Its lightweight, rot-resistant wood has been traditionally used to build canoes, while its leaves and bark are used in smudging and purification ceremonies for their healing and spiritual properties.



Check Point 3: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

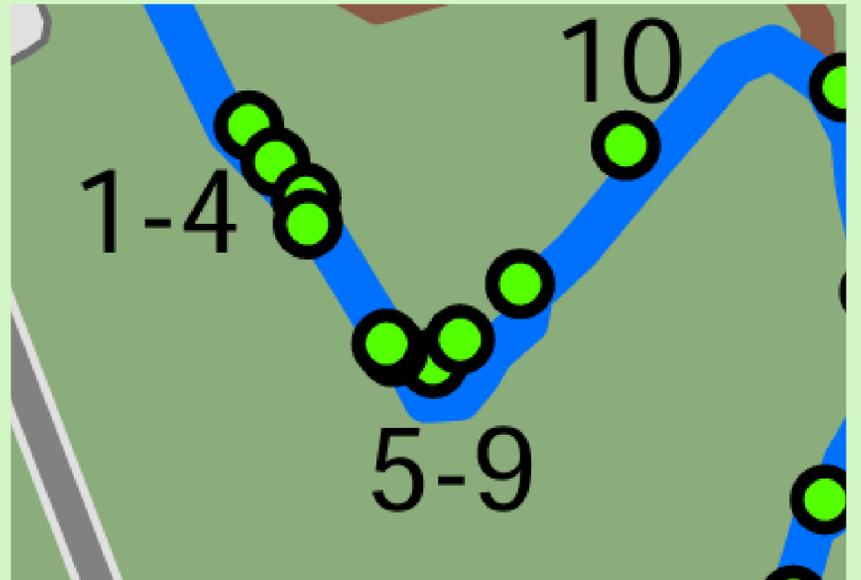
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Eastern Garter Snake

The Eastern Garter Snake is one of the most commonly spotted snakes in eastern North America. Typically greenish in color, they can also appear brown or black, with a pale yellow stripe running down their back and a light-colored belly. These snakes are non-venomous and harmless to humans, often found basking in the sun on rocks or slithering through grassy areas. Garter snakes play an important role in local ecosystems by helping control insect and amphibian populations. When threatened, they may release a harmless but smelly musk to ward off predators, so be respectful and give them space if you encounter one on the trail!



White-throated Sparrow

The White-throated Sparrow is a charming songbird easily recognized by its crisp black and white head stripes, a bright yellow patch near the eyes, and its namesake white throat. It has a small, sturdy bill and a long tail, perfect for flitting through shrubs and forest understories. These sparrows are known for their sweet, whistled song that sounds like "Oh sweet Canada, Canada, Canada." Commonly found in woodlands and along forest edges, they scratch at the ground in search of seeds and insects. Their striking markings and cheerful call make them a favorite among birdwatchers!

Tree ID Key:

American (White) Elm (*Ulmus americana*)

Leaves: variable in shape but usually elliptical, sharp serrated teeth on margin, tapers to a sharp point, asymmetrical leaf base.

Twig: greyish-brown, slight zigzag appearance, hairy when found in open canopy.

Buds: alternate arrangement, terminal bud slanted, brown, bud scales have pale leading edges.

Mature bark: layered appearance, dark greyish brown with light brown to orangish outer layers, ridges interlaced, deep furrows.



Red Tailed Hawk

The Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most widespread and easily recognized birds of prey in North America. It has a broad, reddish tail that fans out in flight, pale underparts with a band of dark streaks across the belly, and a rich brown head with a white throat. Often seen soaring in wide circles high above open fields or perched along roadsides, this hawk uses its sharp eyesight to spot small mammals, like mice and rabbits, from far away. Its signature raspy scream is often used in movies to represent any bird of prey, even when it's not a hawk on screen! A powerful hunter and symbol of wild open spaces, the Red-tailed Hawk plays a key role in keeping rodent populations in check.



Kids Corner

Red-tailed Hawks are amazing hunters! They soar high above open fields and thickets, using their super-sharp eyesight to spot rabbits, squirrels, and other small animals to catch for lunch.



Check Point 4: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

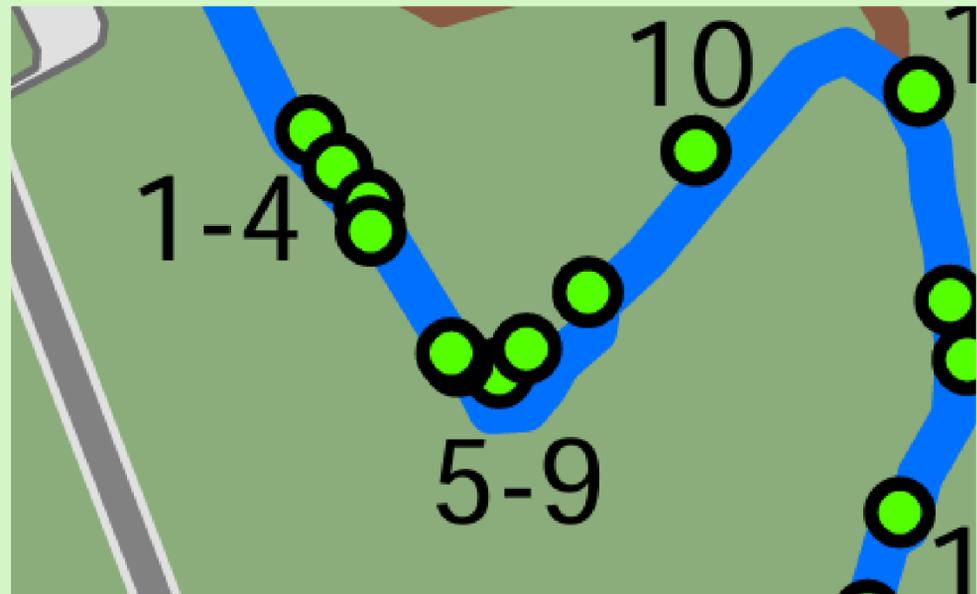
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White-breasted Nuthatch

The White-breasted Nuthatch is a small, compact songbird with a sharp, pointed beak and barely any neck giving it a unique, hunched look. It has a short tail, a bluish-gray back, and bright white cheeks and belly. These agile little birds are often seen creeping headfirst down tree trunks as they search for insects and seeds hidden in the bark. Their name comes from their habit of wedging nuts into tree bark and "hatching" them open with their beak! With their quick movements and nasal "yank-yank" call, nuthatches are fun to watch and a favorite among winter bird feeders.

Tree ID Key:

Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

Needles: long and thin, bundles of 5.

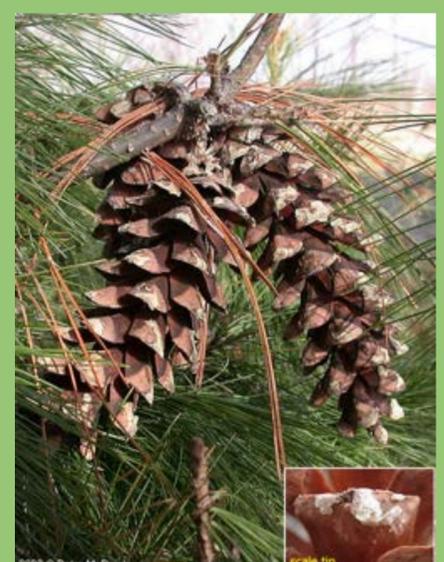
Cone: Longest of pine species in eastern Canada

Mature bark: broad scaly ridges.



Red-breasted Nuthatch

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a tiny, energetic bird with a sharp beak, barely any neck, and a bold personality! It has a rusty red belly, a white face, and a black cap and eyestripes that make it look like it's wearing a tiny mask. Like its white-breasted cousin, this nuthatch is often seen climbing down tree trunks headfirst in search of insects and seeds. You can spot them in coniferous forests, where their nasal "yank-yank" call rings through the trees. Despite their small size, these birds are fearless and will even chase off larger birds from feeders!



Kids Corner

Nuthatches love living in pine trees! They hide snacks like seeds and bugs in the bark to save for later it's like having their own secret forest pantry!



Check Point 5: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

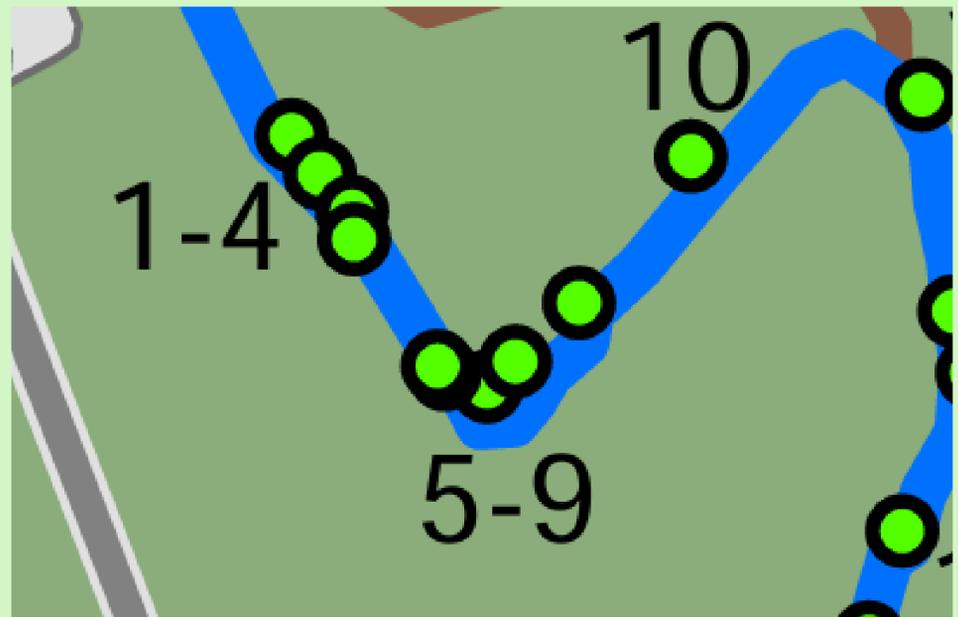
Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Eastern Cottontail

The Eastern Cottontail is a familiar sight in grassy fields, forest edges, and even backyards! Named for its fluffy white tail that looks like a cotton ball, this rabbit is usually brown or gray with large ears and big dark eyes. While they do dig shallow nests called "forms" to hide their babies, cottontails are often seen out in the open, especially at dawn and dusk when they're most active. They feed on grasses, clover, and leafy plants, and rely on their speed and quick reflexes to dash away from predators. Keep your eyes peeled as they often freeze in place to blend into their surroundings!



Yellow Warbler

The Yellow Warbler is a small, bright burst of sunshine flitting through shrubs and treetops! With its round head, short beak, and vibrant yellow feathers, this little songbird is easy to spot, especially thanks to the reddish-brown streaks on its chest. Found in wetlands, thickets, and forest edges, Yellow Warblers are often heard before they're seen, singing their cheerful "sweet-sweet-sweet, I'm so sweet!" tune. These insect-loving birds are busy during spring and summer, nesting and raising young before migrating all the way to Central and South America for the winter. Keep an eye out, they're fast, but their golden glow stands out!

Tree ID Key:

Round-leaved (Mottled) Dogwood (*Cornus rugosa*)

Leaves: broadly round, abruptly tapers to sharp tip.

Twig: greenish red with dark purple/black blotches. Fruit: white/bluish white berries on dull red stalk.

Buds: Opposite arrangement, somewhat candle flame-shaped, bud scales slightly separate vertically.



White-tailed Deer

The White-tailed Deer is one of the most recognizable mammals in North America, known for the white underside of its tail, which it flashes as a warning when startled. These graceful animals are commonly found in forests, meadows, and along the edges of trails. Their coat changes with the seasons—reddish-brown in summer and grayish in winter, to help them blend into their surroundings. A deer's snout length and coat color can offer clues about its age, with younger deer having shorter snouts and lighter coats. White-tailed deer are most active at dawn and dusk, browsing on leaves, twigs, fruits, and grasses. If you're quiet and patient, you just might spot one stepping softly through the woods!



Kids Corner

Did you know dogwood twigs are a tasty treat for forest animals? Rabbits and deer munch on them, especially in the winter when other food is hard to find!



Check Point: 6 Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

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Red Fox

The Red Fox is a clever and adaptable mammal known for its bright reddish-orange fur, bushy tail, and sharp black legs and ears. These foxes are expert survivors and can thrive in a wide range of environments, from deep forests and open fields to busy city neighborhoods. Unlike many other wild animals, Red Foxes have learned how to live alongside humans, and urban development has had little effect on their overall population. They hunt mainly at night, feeding on small mammals, birds, insects, and even fruit. With their keen senses and curious nature, Red Foxes are one of nature's most resourceful creatures!



Cedar Waxwing

The Cedar Waxwing is a sleek, elegant songbird with smooth, silky feathers that give it a polished appearance. It's easily recognized by its black "mask" across the eyes, soft brown body, and bright yellow-tipped tail. Look closely and you'll see red, waxy-looking tips on the wings, where the bird gets its name! These social birds often travel in flocks and are known for their love of fruit, especially berries. You might spot them passing berries to one another or performing graceful, swooping flights through forest edges and open woodlands. Their high-pitched, whispery calls and stylish looks make them a favorite for birdwatchers!

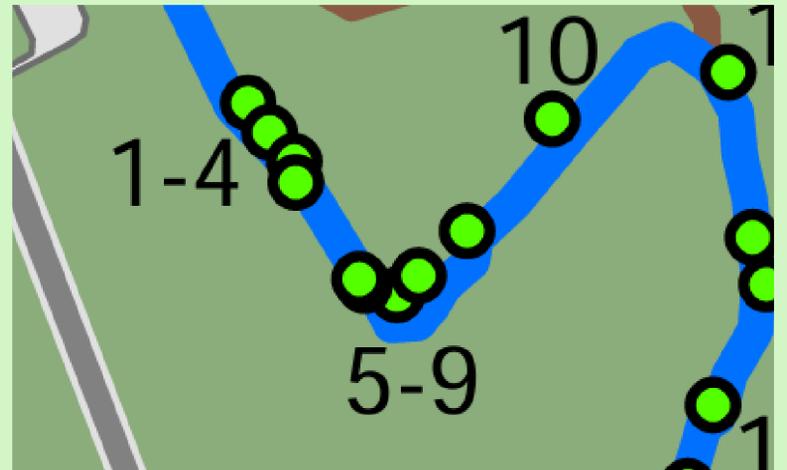


Gray Catbird

The Gray Catbird is a sleek, slate-gray songbird about the size of a robin, with a long tail, a dark cap on its head, and a hidden splash of rusty red under its tail feathers. These birds are named for their cat-like "mew" call, which is often heard coming from dense shrubs and thickets. Catbirds are talented mimics and can copy the songs of other birds, insects, and even mechanical sounds! They love to stay tucked in low branches, where they forage for insects and berries. Though they're quiet in appearance, their bold songs and curious personalities make them stand out once you know where to look.

Kids Corner

Cedar Waxwings and Gray Catbirds love snacking on berries from shrubs like hawthorn! The Gray Catbird's call sounds just like a cat meowing, and it can copy the songs of other birds too!



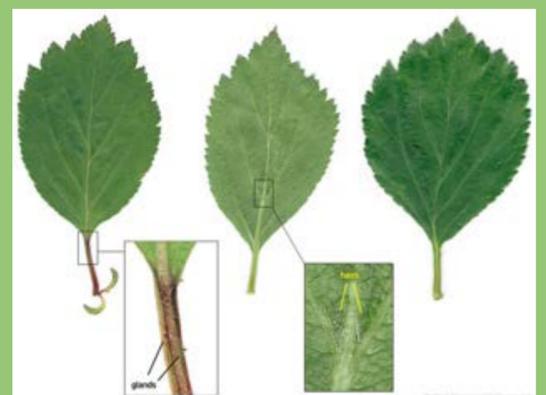
Tree ID Key: Hawthorn spp. (*Crataegus* spp.)

Leaves: small, wedge-shaped base, sharply serrated margin.

Twig: smooth, slight zigzag appearance, sharp thorns.

Buds: broad and round, reddish brown and shiny.

Mature bark: separates into firm shreds.



Check Point 7: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Red Fox

The Red Fox is a clever and adaptable mammal known for its bright reddish-orange fur, bushy tail, and sharp black legs and ears. These foxes are expert survivors and can thrive in a wide range of environments, from deep forests and open fields to busy city neighborhoods. Unlike many other wild animals, Red Foxes have learned how to live alongside humans, and urban development has had little effect on their overall population. They hunt mainly at night, feeding on small mammals, birds, insects, and even fruit. With their keen senses and curious nature, Red Foxes are one of nature's most resourceful creatures!



American Robin

The American Robin is a familiar and beloved bird often seen hopping across lawns and fields in search of worms. It has a gray back, a bright orange belly, and a black head with a distinctive white ring around each eye. Robins are early signs of spring, often heard singing cheerful, whistling tunes at dawn. They forage mostly on the ground, pulling up worms and insects, but also enjoy berries and fruit when available. Their bold colors and friendly presence make them one of the most recognized backyard birds in North America!

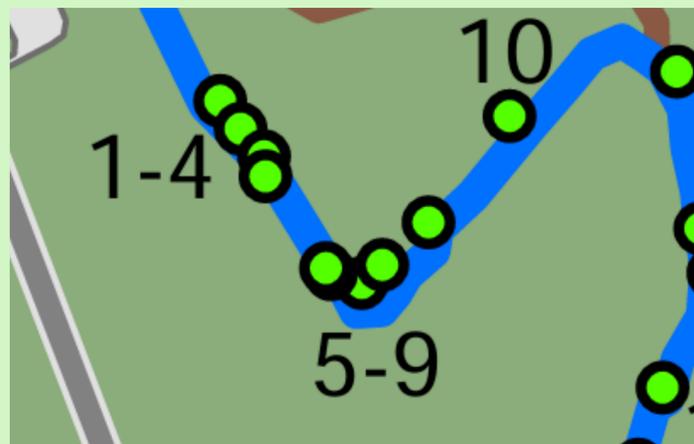


Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don't drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!

Kids Corner

In winter, birds like to snack on Buckthorn berries, but when they fly away and drop the seeds, they accidentally help this invasive plant spread!



Tree Key ID: European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

Leaves: round to egg-shaped, can taper to a short sharp point at the tip.

Twig: brownish gray, tips have a sharp point when terminal bud is not present, deer-hoof like appearance.

Buds: opposite or sub-opposite, lateral buds appressed and curve towards the twig.

Mature bark: Dark gray and scaly.



Check Point 8: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Emerald Ash Borer

The Emerald Ash Borer is a small, shiny green beetle that might look harmless or even beautiful, but it's actually a serious invasive pest. Often mistaken for other beetles, this insect is native to Asia and was accidentally introduced to North America. Its larvae burrow into the bark of ash trees, feeding on the inner layers and cutting off the tree's ability to move water and nutrients. Over time, this damage causes the tree to weaken and die. Since its arrival, the Emerald Ash Borer has killed millions of ash trees across Canada and the U.S., making it one of the most destructive forest pests in recent history.



Southern Flying Squirrel

The Southern Flying Squirrel is one of three flying squirrel species found in North America and the smallest of the bunch! Despite their name, these tiny nocturnal mammals don't actually fly, they glide. Using a special flap of skin between their legs called a patagium, they can soar from tree to tree in graceful, floating leaps. With big dark eyes for night vision and a soft gray-brown coat, they're perfectly adapted for life in the treetops. These squirrels are rarely seen because they're most active at night, but if you're lucky, you might spot one gliding through the forest under the moonlight!

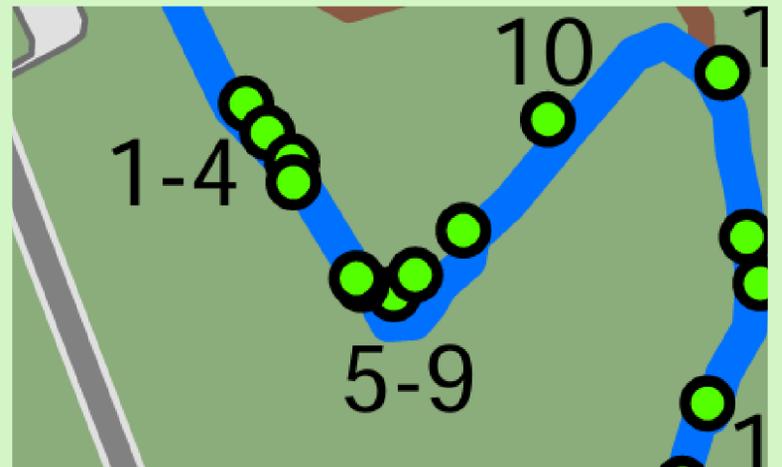


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Kids Corner

Ash trees are dying because of a tiny insect called the Emerald Ash Borer. Its larvae tunnel through the inner bark and disrupt the tree's phloem and xylem, the parts that move water and nutrients, causing the tree to slowly die.



Tree ID Key: Green Ash

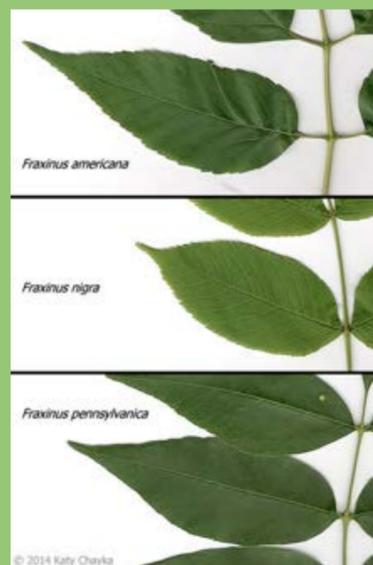
(*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (5-9) arranged oppositely, oval-shaped leaflets taper at the tip.

Twig: moderately stout, greyish brown, can be hairy.

Buds: opposite arrangement, reddish-brown, hairy, bud on top of leaf scar, space between lateral buds and terminal bud varies.

Mature bark: greyish-brown, ridges form messy diamond-shaped pattern but not as conspicuous as White Ash.



Check Point 9: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



Pileated Woodpecker

The Pileated Woodpecker is a striking, crow-sized bird and the largest woodpecker in most of North America. Mostly black with bold white stripes along its face and neck, it's easily recognized by its bright red crest that stands tall on its head. These powerful birds use their strong beaks to chisel large, rectangular holes into dead trees in search of carpenter ants and other insects. Their loud, echoing calls and drumming sounds can often be heard long before they're seen. Pileated Woodpeckers play an important role in forest ecosystems, many other birds and animals use their abandoned nesting cavities for shelter.



Spotted Salamander

The Spotted Salamander is a secretive amphibian with a smooth black body covered in bright yellow spots that run from head to tail. Its underside is gray, and its coloring helps it blend into the forest floor. These salamanders live in moist woodlands and spend most of their time hidden under logs or in burrows, only emerging at night or during spring rains to breed in vernal pools. Despite their shy nature, they play an important role in forest ecosystems by helping control insect populations. Their spotted pattern is not only eye-catching but also helps warn predators that they produce a mild toxin for protection.

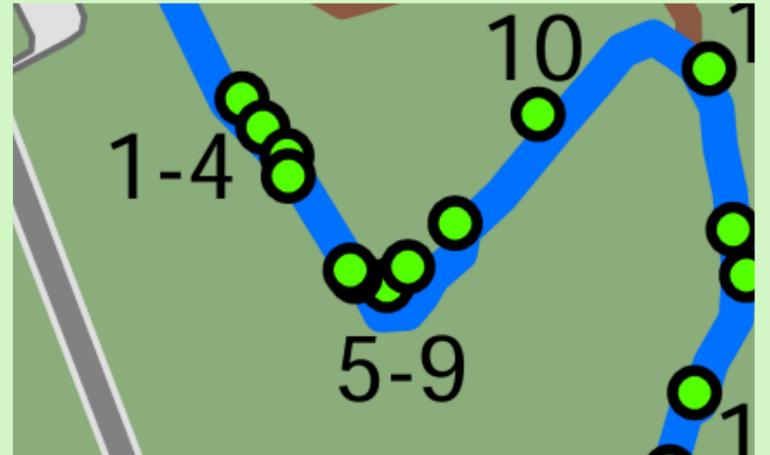


Red-winged Blackbird

The Red-winged Blackbird is a familiar and flashy songbird often seen in marshes, meadows, and along the edges of ponds. The males are jet black with a bright red shoulder patch bordered in yellow, like nature's built-in shoulder badges! About the size of a robin, they perch on cattails and fences, loudly calling out their distinctive "konk-la-ree!" song to defend their territory. Females look quite different, with streaky brown feathers that help them blend into the grass while nesting. Red-winged Blackbirds are bold, vocal, and one of the first birds to return in early spring, often seen gathering in noisy flocks.

Kids Corner

Red-winged Blackbirds are small but super brave. They'll team up or even go solo to chase away much bigger birds like hawks from their nests. Talk about tiny but tough!



Tree ID Key:

Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Leaves: Skinny oval, tapers to a sharp point, thick and leathery, fine brown hairs along midvein.

Twig: reddish-brown to grey, shiny and smooth with flaky waxy appearance.

Buds: Alternate arrangement, blunt or round points, reddish-brown, bud scales have dark leading edges.

Mature bark: grey, large scales curve outwards at vertical edges, looks like burnt corn flakes.



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Check Point 10: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



North American Porcupine

The North American Porcupine is the second-largest rodent on the continent, right after the beaver. Covered in thousands of sharp quills used for defense, this slow-moving mammal is surprisingly shy and prefers a peaceful life in forests, rocky outcrops, and wooded areas. Porcupines are excellent climbers and spend much of their time in trees, nibbling on bark, buds, and leaves. Their quills are not thrown, as some myths suggest, but detach easily if a predator gets too close. These quirky, solitary creatures play an important role in shaping forest vegetation through their foraging habits.



Yellow Warbler

The Yellow Warbler is a small, bright burst of sunshine flitting through shrubs and treetops! With its round head, short beak, and vibrant yellow feathers, this little songbird is easy to spot, especially thanks to the reddish-brown streaks on its chest. Found in wetlands, thickets, and forest edges, Yellow Warblers are often heard before they're seen, singing their cheerful "sweet-sweet-sweet, I'm so sweet!" tune. These insect-loving birds are busy during spring and summer, nesting and raising young before migrating all the way to Central and South America for the winter. Keep an eye out, they're fast, but their golden glow stands out!

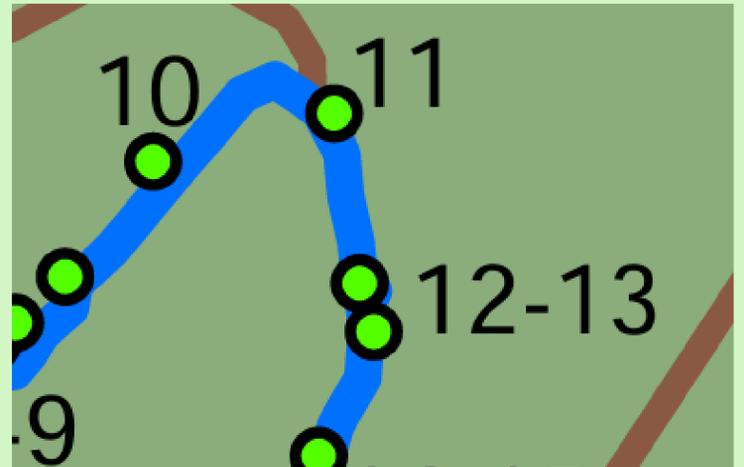


Northern Redbelly Snake

The Northern Redbelly Snake is a small, secretive reptile found across parts of North America and even in some areas of the Caribbean. It has a smooth, gray or brown back and a bright red or orange belly that gives it its name. These snakes are harmless to humans and prefer cool, damp habitats like forests, meadows, and the edges of wetlands. They often hide under logs, rocks, or leaf litter, where they hunt for small prey like slugs and worms. Though they're rarely seen, Northern Redbelly Snakes play an important role in keeping soil-dwelling insect populations in balance.

Kids Corner

Porcupines love to snack on pine trees! They peel off the bark in strips to munch on the tasty layer underneath.



Tree ID Key:

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Mature leaves: scaly, cylindrical and branched.

Immature leaves: short spikes, in whorls of 3, similar to Common Juniper.

Mature bark: grayish brown, long ridges peel in vertical flat strips.



Check Point 11: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

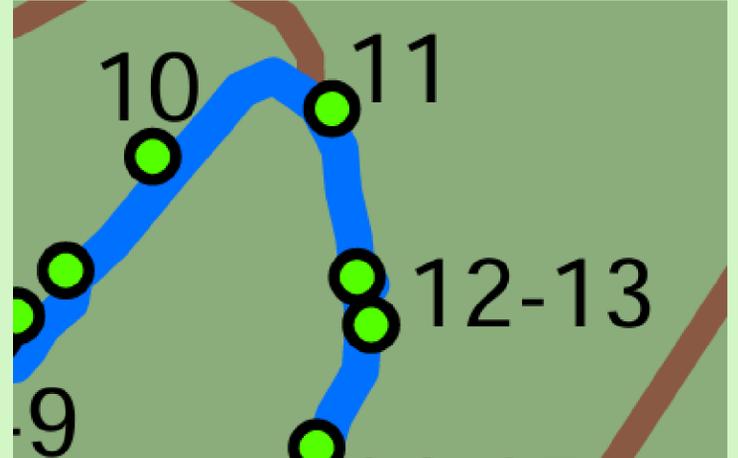
Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

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White-tailed Deer

The White-tailed Deer is one of the most recognizable mammals in North America, known for the white underside of its tail, which it flashes as a warning when startled. These graceful animals are commonly found in forests, meadows, and along the edges of trails. Their coat changes with the seasons—reddish-brown in summer and grayish in winter, to help them blend into their surroundings. A deer's snout length and coat color can offer clues about its age, with younger deer having shorter snouts and lighter coats. White-tailed deer are most active at dawn and dusk, browsing on leaves, twigs, fruits, and grasses. If you're quiet and patient, you just might spot one stepping softly through the woods!



Tree ID Key:

Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Leaves: lance egg shape-shaped, tapers to a point.

Twig: commonly bright red, smooth and shiny, raised whitish lenticels.

Buds: opposite arrangement, candle flame-shaped terminal bud, bud scales separated.

Fruit: white berries on green to purplish-red stalks.



Eastern Cottontail

The Eastern Cottontail is a familiar sight in grassy fields, forest edges, and even backyards! Named for its fluffy white tail that looks like a cotton ball, this rabbit is usually brown or gray with large ears and big dark eyes. While they do dig shallow nests called "forms" to hide their babies, cottontails are often seen out in the open, especially at dawn and dusk when they're most active. They feed on grasses, clover, and leafy plants, and rely on their speed and quick reflexes to dash away from predators. Keep your eyes peeled as they often freeze in place to blend into their surroundings!



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The Yellow Warbler is a small, bright burst of sunshine flitting through shrubs and treetops! With its round head, short beak, and vibrant yellow feathers, this little songbird is easy to spot, especially thanks to the reddish-brown streaks on its chest. Found in wetlands, thickets, and forest edges, Yellow Warblers are often heard before they're seen, singing their cheerful "sweet-sweet-sweet, I'm so sweet!" tune. These insect-loving birds are busy during spring and summer, nesting and raising young before migrating all the way to Central and South America for the winter. Keep an eye out, they're fast, but their golden glow stands out!



Kids Corner

Swamps aren't always soggy on the surface! Some have water all year, while others only get wet in certain seasons, so even if it looks dry, you might still be standing in a swamp!



Check Point 12: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee is a small songbird native to North America's mixed and deciduous forests. Recognizable by its black cap and bib, white cheeks, and soft gray back, this bird also has a pale, fluffy belly and a short, thin bill perfect for picking at seeds and insects. Chickadees are social and curious birds, often seen flitting through the branches in small flocks, especially in the colder months. They are well-known for their namesake "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call, which varies in intensity depending on the level of threat nearby. These clever little birds also cache food in hidden spots to retrieve later, showing impressive memory skills that help them survive harsh winters.



Northern Redbelly Snake

The Northern Redbelly Snake is a small and secretive reptile with a brown or grayish back and a bright red or orange belly, making it easy to identify if you're lucky enough to spot one! Just behind its head, it has three small yellow spots, like a tiny necklace. These snakes are harmless to humans and prefer cool, damp habitats like woodlands, meadows, and wetland edges. Often hiding under rocks, logs, or leaf litter, they feed mostly on slugs, worms, and soft-bodied insects. Though they're rarely seen, these shy snakes play an important role in maintaining healthy soil ecosystems.

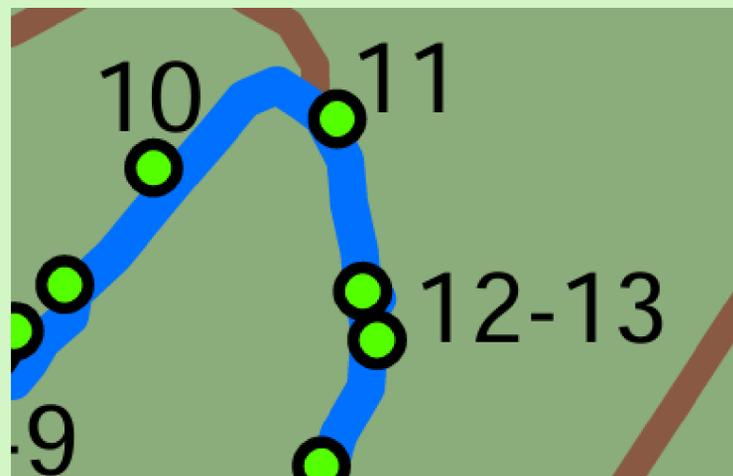


American Toad

The American Toad is the most common toad species found across Canada and the eastern United States. It has dry, bumpy skin that can range from brown to gray or reddish, often with darker spots and warts. These toads thrive in forests, gardens, and wetlands, where they feed on insects, worms, and other small invertebrates. They're most active at night and can often be heard singing a long, trilling call during spring breeding season. American Toads play an important role in controlling insect populations and are a welcome sight in any healthy ecosystem.

Kids Corner

Conifer trees grow seeds in cones and have skinny, needle-like leaves that stay green all year, even in the snow!



Tree ID Key Staghorn Sumac (Rhus typhina)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (11-31) arranged oppositely almost stalkless and lance-shaped.

Twig: very stout, covered in soft velvety hairs.

Buds: alternate arrangement, no terminal bud, small rounded lateral buds.

Mature bark: scaly and thin. **Fruit:** clustered red and velvety seeds, cone-shaped at the top of twigs.



Check Point 13: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



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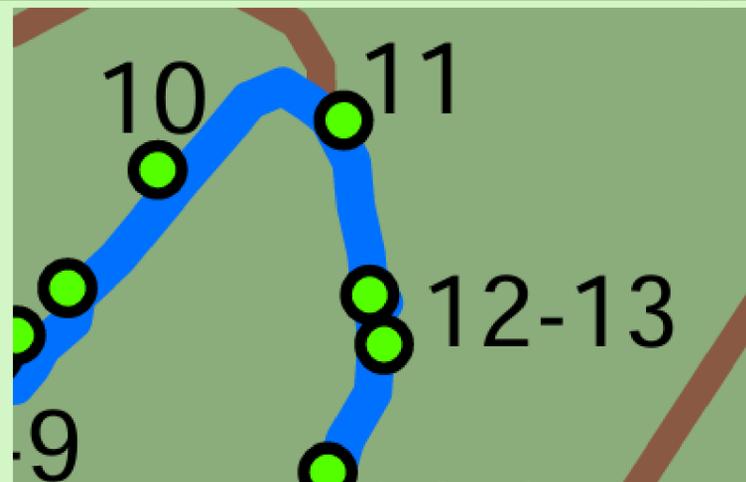


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Kids Corner

The curved branches of Alternate-leaved Dogwood create strong, sheltered spots that are perfect for birds to build their nests and keep their eggs safe.



Tree ID Key Alternate-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)

Leaves: oval, widest near middle, long tapered tip, slight wedge-shaped base.

Twig: waxy/glossy smooth, zigzag pattern, each node contains 1 dwarf shoot and 1 longer twig, yellow dead twigs.

Buds: Alternate arrangement, dark, bud scales diverge toward tip.

Fruit: dark blue berries on red stalks.



Check Point 14: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

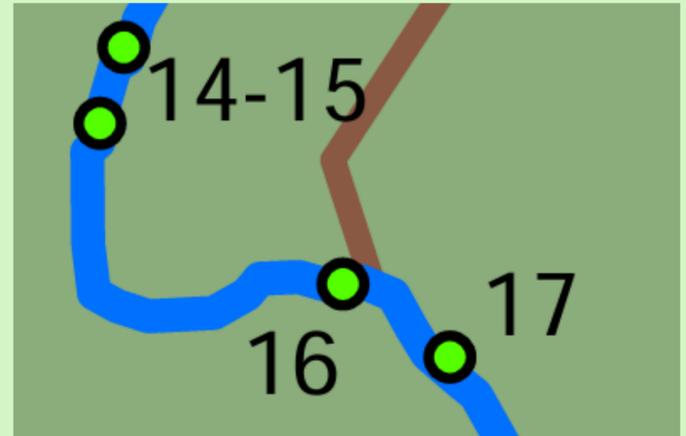
Vegetation Community: Coniferous Forest

A Conifer Forest is dominated by evergreen trees such as white pine, eastern hemlock, and balsam fir, which keep their needle-like leaves year-round. These forests are often found in cooler climates and grow well in sandy, rocky, or acidic soils. The dense canopy provides shade, creating a cool and moist environment that supports mosses, ferns, and shade-loving shrubs on the forest floor. Conifer forests offer important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including deer, owls, woodpeckers, and squirrels. These ecosystems play a key role in carbon storage, water regulation, and maintaining biodiversity in northern forest landscapes.



White-tailed Deer

The White-tailed Deer is one of the most recognizable mammals in North America, known for the white underside of its tail, which it flashes as a warning when startled. These graceful animals are commonly found in forests, meadows, and along the edges of trails. Their coat changes with the seasons—reddish-brown in summer and grayish in winter, to help them blend into their surroundings. A deer's snout length and coat color can offer clues about its age, with younger deer having shorter snouts and lighter coats. White-tailed deer are most active at dawn and dusk, browsing on leaves, twigs, fruits, and grasses. If you're quiet and patient, you just might spot one stepping softly through the woods!



Eastern Cottontail

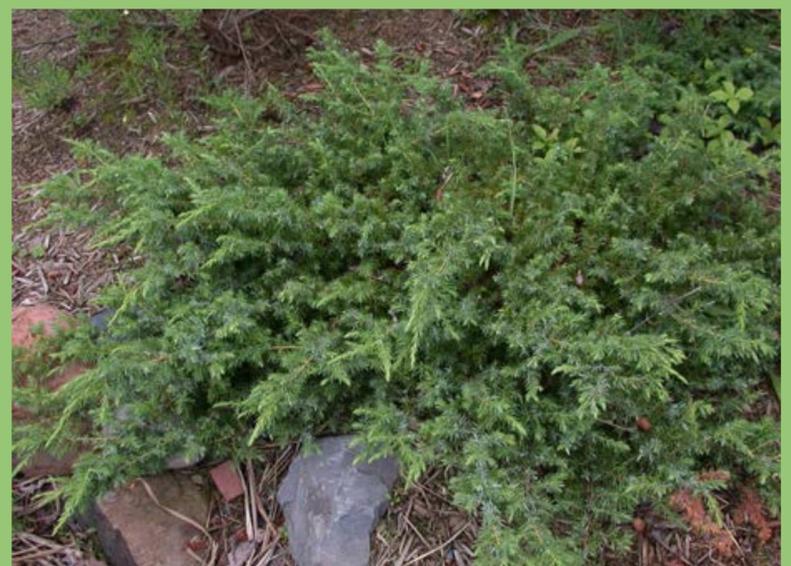
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Tree ID Key: Common Juniper (Juniperus communis)

Leaves: short flat spikes, in whorls of 3 around twig, similar to young Eastern Red Cedar.

Appearance: no central trunk, multiple ascending branches instead, bush like, wider than tall.

Fruit: round berries, dark blue-black when mature.



Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don't drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!



Kids Corner

Deer and rabbits often forage on the young twigs and needle-like leaves of Common Juniper, especially in winter when other food is harder to find.



Check Point 15: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Mixed Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



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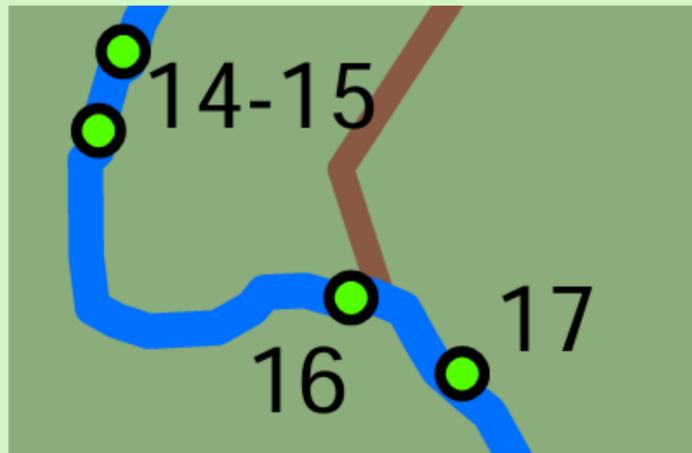


Barred Owl

The Barred Owl is a large, mysterious-looking bird known for its soulful dark eyes and distinct hooting call that sounds like "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" It has a rounded head, a yellow beak, and a beautifully streaked chest, with brown and white mottling along its back and wings that help it blend seamlessly into the forest. Native to North America's mature woodlands and swamps, Barred Owls are primarily nocturnal but may also be active during the day. These skilled hunters perch silently before swooping down to catch prey like small mammals, amphibians, and even fish. Their presence is a sign of a healthy, well-established forest ecosystem.

Kids Corner

A woodpecker's tongue can be up to three times the length of its beak and wraps around the back of its skull when not in use. This special adaptation helps it reach deep into holes in tree bark to catch insects and larvae with its sticky, barbed tip.



Tree ID Key: Wild Apple (Pyrus spp.)

Leaves: triangular, base can be round or heart-shaped, serrated leaf margin.

Twig: rough flaky appearance, copper/purplish brown, thorn-like projections.

Buds: alternate arrangement, reddish brown and hairy.



Check Point 16: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



Eastern Coyote

The Eastern Coyote is a highly adaptable wild canid that looks like a smaller, leaner version of a wolf. It has a long, narrow snout, pointed ears, and a bushy tail, with fur that ranges from gray to tan with reddish tones. Eastern Coyotes are larger than their western cousins due to historical interbreeding with wolves, which also gives them a more robust build. They thrive in a variety of habitats including forests, fields, and even urban areas and are most active at dawn and dusk. As omnivores, they eat a wide range of foods, from small mammals and birds to fruit and carrion. Their adaptability and intelligence make them successful survivors across much of eastern North America.



Northern Flicker

The Northern Flicker is a unique and colorful member of the woodpecker family. It has a grayish-brown body with a black bib across its chest and a belly covered in bold black spots. When it flies, you can see a flash of bright yellow underneath its wings and tail, giving this eastern variety the name "yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker. Unlike many woodpeckers, flickers often forage on the ground, using their long, sticky tongues to catch ants and beetles. Their loud, ringing calls and rhythmic drumming make them a lively presence in forests, open woodlands, and even suburban parks.



Eastern Garter Snake

The Eastern Garter Snake is a common, harmless snake found in many habitats, from forests and meadows to wetlands and backyards. Its slender body is marked with yellow, green, or bluish stripes that help it blend into grassy areas. Females are larger than males, often growing longer to carry more offspring. Active during the day, they feed on small prey like worms, amphibians, and insects. When threatened, they release a harmless but smelly musk to deter predators. Their adaptability and gentle nature make them one of the most frequently spotted snakes in eastern North America.

Kids Corner

Unlike most woodpeckers that search for insects in trees, the Northern Flicker mainly forages on the ground, using its long, sticky tongue to eat ants, its favorite food!



Tree ID Key: Choke Cherry (Prunus virginiana)

Leaves: Broadly oval, widest above the middle, tapers to sharp point.

Twig: brown to grey, smooth.

Buds: Alternate arrangement, pointed, brown, bud scales have pale leading edges.

Mature bark: Dark, smooth with fine scales.



Check Point 17: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Kids Corner

Also known as Box Elder, Manitoba Maples are very resilient and can grow in disturbed areas like roadsides and vacant lots. Because they spread easily and grow quickly, some people consider them a nuisance tree.



Tree ID Key: Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*)

Leaves: compound and opposite, 3-5 leaflets (sometimes 7), taper to a sharp point.

Twig: purplish to green, smooth, powdery appearance.

Buds: opposite arrangement, brownish gray to green, terminal bud long and blunt, first set of lateral buds pressed against the terminal bud.

Mature bark: brown – greyish brown, messy vertical ridges and furrows.



Check Point 18: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



North American Porcupine

The North American Porcupine is the second-largest rodent on the continent, right after the beaver. Covered in thousands of sharp quills used for defense, this slow-moving mammal is surprisingly shy and prefers a peaceful life in forests, rocky outcrops, and wooded areas. Porcupines are excellent climbers and spend much of their time in trees, nibbling on bark, buds, and leaves. Their quills are not thrown, as some myths suggest, but detach easily if a predator gets too close. These quirky, solitary creatures play an important role in shaping forest vegetation through their foraging habits.



Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel is a small, energetic tree squirrel with a reddish-brown coat, a white belly, and a distinct white ring around each eye. Slightly larger than a chipmunk, this squirrel is known for its feisty personality and rapid chatter. Red Squirrels are most often found in coniferous and mixed forests, where they build nests high in the trees and store cones and seeds for winter. They are highly territorial and will loudly defend their food caches from other animals. Quick and agile, these squirrels are a lively presence in the forest canopy.

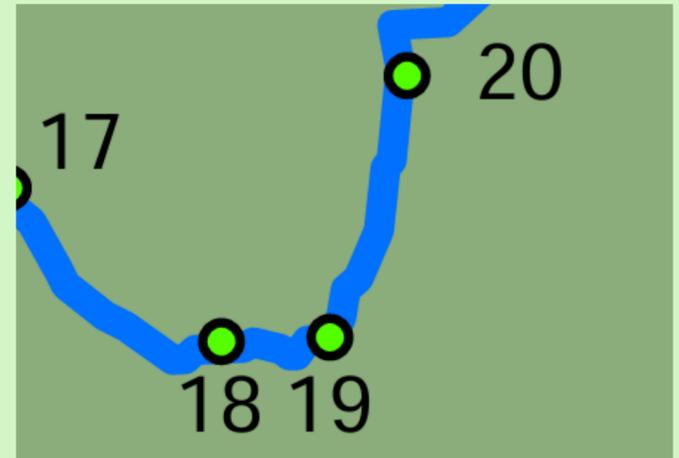


White-breasted Nuthatch

The White-breasted Nuthatch is a small, compact songbird with a sharp, pointed beak and barely any neck giving it a unique, hunched look. It has a short tail, a bluish-gray back, and bright white cheeks and belly. These agile little birds are often seen creeping headfirst down tree trunks as they search for insects and seeds hidden in the bark. Their name comes from their habit of wedging nuts into tree bark and "hatching" them open with their beak! With their quick movements and nasal "yank-yank" call, nuthatches are fun to watch and a favorite among winter bird feeders.

Kids Corner

Scots Pine trees aren't native to Canada, but they aren't invasive either! They were brought here from Europe and have adapted so well that they now grow naturally in forests and fields.



Tree ID Key: Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)

Needles: medium length, bundles of 2, twisted.

Cone: Small and round

Mature bark: fissured with scaly plates.



Check Point 19: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

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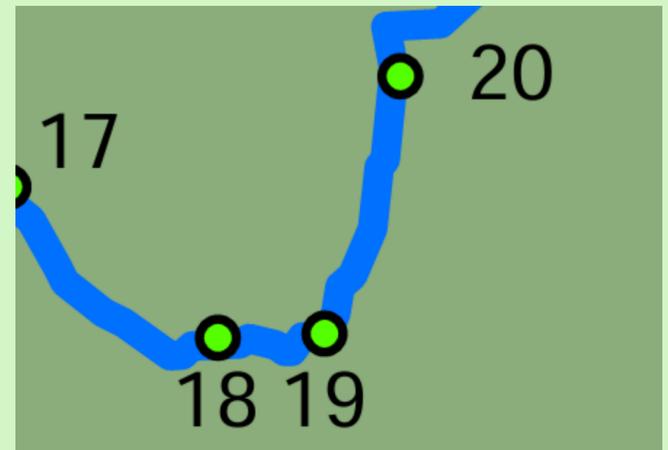


Eastern Garter Snake

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Kids Corner

Want to tell a Red Maple from a Sugar Maple? Check the bark! On old trees, Sugar Maple bark peels from the sides, while Red Maple bark peels from the top and bottom like it's lifting its hat and shoes!



Tree ID Key: Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)

Leaves: typical maple appearance, 5 pointy lobes, base of central lobe has U-shaped notches.

Twig: shiny, reddish-brown.

Buds: opposite arrangement, sharp terminal bud sits between 2 lateral buds to form a trident shape.

Mature bark: vertical ridges curve outwards at sides.



Check Point 20: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

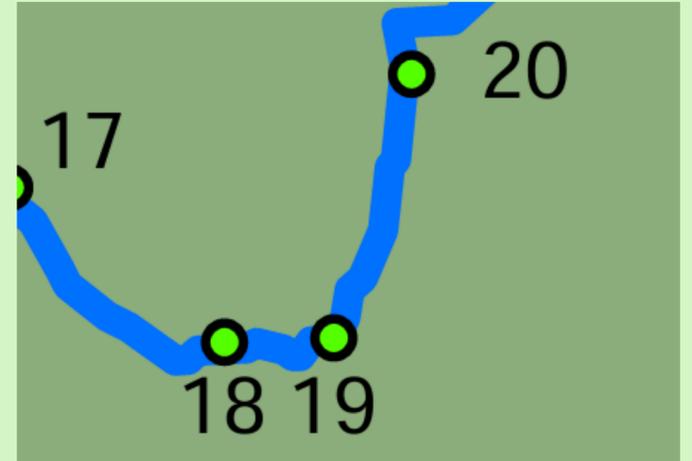
Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

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Ruffed Grouse

The Ruffed Grouse is a medium-sized game bird, about the size of a crow, with a plump body and short crest. Its brown and gray plumage is beautifully patterned with bars and spots, helping it blend into the forest floor. These birds are found in mixed and deciduous woodlands, where they forage for buds, berries, and insects. Ruffed Grouse are best known for the males' drumming display in spring, when they beat their wings in the air to create a deep, echoing sound to attract mates. Their powerful burst of flight can be startling, as they often remain hidden until the last second.

Tree ID Key: Trembling Aspen (Populus tremuloides)

Leaves: small and broadly oval-shaped, tapers abruptly at tip, round base, contrasting pale underside flickers in the wind.

Twig: brown to greenish, slender, waxy appearance.

Buds: alternate arrangement, pointy, glossy, dark brown, lateral buds appressed against twig.

Mature bark: white, grayish brown and furrowed at base then quickly smooths out.



Red Tailed Hawk

The Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most widespread and easily recognized birds of prey in North America. It has a broad, reddish tail that fans out in flight, pale underparts with a band of dark streaks across the belly, and a rich brown head with a white throat. Often seen soaring in wide circles high above open fields or perched along roadsides, this hawk uses its sharp eyesight to spot small mammals, like mice and rabbits, from far away. Its signature raspy scream is often used in movies to represent any bird of prey, even when it's not a hawk on screen! A powerful hunter and symbol of wild open spaces, the Red-tailed Hawk plays a key role in keeping rodent populations in check.



Lower bark on mature tree



2004 © Peter M. Dziuk

Kids Corner

Biodiversity means having lots of different plants, animals, and other living things in one place. The more variety there is, the healthier and stronger an ecosystem becomes, kind of like how a team works better with different skills!



Check Point 21: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Agricultural Field

An Agricultural Field Vegetation Community is a human-modified landscape dominated by cultivated crops like corn, soybeans, or hay, as well as pasture grasses for livestock. These open areas are regularly disturbed by plowing, planting, and harvesting, which limits the presence of native plants. However, some weedy or hardy species like goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace, and milkweed, can be found growing along the field edges or in fallow patches. While not naturally biodiverse, agricultural fields can still provide important habitat for pollinators, birds, and small mammals, especially when bordered by hedgerows, wetlands, or forest edges.



Grey Squirrel

The Eastern Gray Squirrel is a familiar and adaptable tree squirrel often seen in forests, parks, and neighborhoods. Despite their name, these squirrels aren't always gray—some have brown coats, and in many areas, black-coated squirrels are common. This black coloration is called melanism, a genetic variation that gives them extra dark fur. Eastern Gray Squirrels are excellent climbers and spend much of their time gathering nuts, seeds, and berries to store for winter. Their quick movements and chattering calls make them a lively part of many outdoor spaces.



Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel is a small, energetic tree squirrel with a reddish-brown coat, a white belly, and a distinct white ring around each eye. Slightly larger than a chipmunk, this squirrel is known for its feisty personality and rapid chatter. Red Squirrels are most often found in coniferous and mixed forests, where they build nests high in the trees and store cones and seeds for winter. They are highly territorial and will loudly defend their food caches from other animals. Quick and agile, these squirrels are a lively presence in the forest canopy.



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Kids Corner

Hawks and other birds of prey are called "raptors" because they use sharp talons to catch and carry their prey. They, like all modern birds, evolved from ancient theropod dinosaurs millions of years ago!



Tree ID Key: American Basswood (Tilia americana)

Leaves: large, round and heart-shaped, abruptly tapers to a pointed tip. Asymmetrical base.

Twig: smooth, moderately stout.

Buds: alternate arrangement, shiny reddish brown, round terminal bud with blunt tip.

Mature bark: greyish brown, long narrow ridges with flat surface may have blocky appearance.



Check Point 22: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

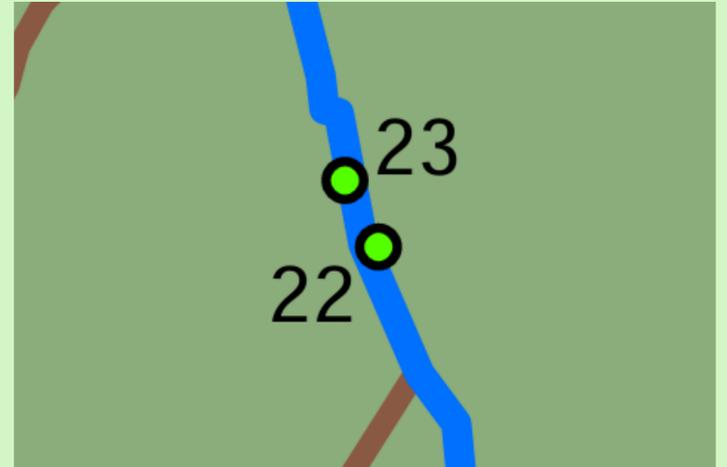
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Eastern Coyote

The Eastern Coyote is a highly adaptable wild canid that looks like a smaller, leaner version of a wolf. It has a long, narrow snout, pointed ears, and a bushy tail, with fur that ranges from gray to tan with reddish tones. Eastern Coyotes are larger than their western cousins due to historical interbreeding with wolves, which also gives them a more robust build. They thrive in a variety of habitats including forests, fields, and even urban areas and are most active at dawn and dusk. As omnivores, they eat a wide range of foods, from small mammals and birds to fruit and carrion. Their adaptability and intelligence make them successful survivors across much of eastern North America.



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Kids Corner

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Tree ID Key: Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (7-11) arranged oppositely, oval-shaped leaflets taper to a longer tip than White and Green Ash, reddish-brown hairs where leaflet meets stalk.

Twig: very stout, greyish beige.

Buds: opposite arrangement, dark and contrast with twig, terminal bud has chocolate chip appearance, lateral buds spaced from terminal bud, lateral bud sits on top of round leaf scar.

Mature bark: light grey, scaly corky ridges.



Check Point 23: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Agricultural Field

An Agricultural Field Vegetation Community is a human-modified landscape dominated by cultivated crops like corn, soybeans, or hay, as well as pasture grasses for livestock. These open areas are regularly disturbed by plowing, planting, and harvesting, which limits the presence of native plants. However, some weedy or hardy species like goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace, and milkweed, can be found growing along the field edges or in fallow patches. While not naturally biodiverse, agricultural fields can still provide important habitat for pollinators, birds, and small mammals, especially when bordered by hedgerows, wetlands, or forest edges.



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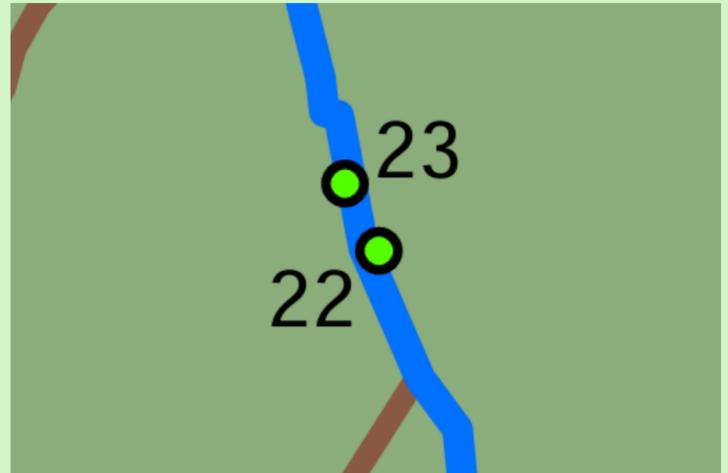


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Kids Corner

Plants are the base of almost every food chain! They use sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to make their own food through a process called photosynthesis and they help produce the oxygen we breathe!



Tree ID Key: White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)

Leaves: broadly egg-shaped, tapers to sharp point at tip, sharp serrated margin, round as base.

Twig: slender, brown, raised lenticels gives pretzel-like appearance and texture, can be hairy when found in open canopy.

Buds: alternate arrangement, brown, bluntly pointed, lateral buds diverge from twig.

Mature bark: White, peels in large horizontal strips, multiple trunks are not uncommon.



Check Point 24: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Song Sparrow

The Song Sparrow is a small, brown songbird with a short, thick bill and bold streaks on its chest and head. These streaks often gather into a central dark spot on the chest, making them easy to recognize. Found in a variety of habitats like wetlands, fields, and forest edges, Song Sparrows are known for their cheerful and complex songs, which vary slightly from bird to bird. They forage on the ground for seeds and insects and often perch in shrubs or low trees to sing. Their adaptability and musical calls make them one of the most widespread and familiar sparrows in North America.



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Kids Corner

Lilacs aren't just wild plants, you might see them in gardens too! People love them for their pretty purple flowers and sweet smell that fills the air in spring.



Tree ID Key: Common Lilac (Syringa vulgaris)

Leaves: egg-shaped, tapers to a blunt tip.

Twig: greyish brown and hard.

Buds: opposite arrangement, large, reddish brown, paired terminal buds, slightly square-shaped when viewed from the top.

Flowers: small and clustered with 4 lobes, can be pink, purple or white.



Check Point 25: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Thicket Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



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Northern Redbelly Snake

The Northern Redbelly Snake is a small and secretive reptile with a brown or grayish back and a bright red or orange belly, making it easy to identify if you're lucky enough to spot one! Just behind its head, it has three small yellow spots, like a tiny necklace. These snakes are harmless to humans and prefer cool, damp habitats like woodlands, meadows, and wetland edges. Often hiding under rocks, logs, or leaf litter, they feed mostly on slugs, worms, and soft-bodied insects. Though they're rarely seen, these shy snakes play an important role in maintaining healthy soil ecosystems.



American Toad

The American Toad is the most common toad species found across Canada and the eastern United States. It has dry, bumpy skin that can range from brown to gray or reddish, often with darker spots and warts. These toads thrive in forests, gardens, and wetlands, where they feed on insects, worms, and other small invertebrates. They're most active at night and can often be heard singing a long, trilling call during spring breeding season. American Toads play an important role in controlling insect populations and are a welcome sight in any healthy ecosystem.

Kids Corner

This vegetation community is part of a provincially significant swamp. It was once farmland, but was converted to a wetland in the 1960s



Tree ID Key: Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (7-23) arranged oppositely and egg-shaped.

Twig: reddish brown, ridged slender and smooth, young twigs have 2 thorns beside each bud.

Buds: alternate arrangement, no terminal bud, tiny lateral buds.

Mature bark: greyish brown, deeply furrowed with forking ridges. Fruit: thin and flat seed pods, reddish brown.



Check Point 26: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Thicket Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



Ruffed Grouse

The Ruffed Grouse is a medium-sized game bird, about the size of a crow, with a plump body and short crest. Its brown and gray plumage is beautifully patterned with bars and spots, helping it blend into the forest floor. These birds are found in mixed and deciduous woodlands, where they forage for buds, berries, and insects. Ruffed Grouse are best known for the males' drumming display in spring, when they beat their wings in the air to create a deep, echoing sound to attract mates. Their powerful burst of flight can be startling, as they often remain hidden until the last second.



Northern Redbelly Snake

The Northern Redbelly Snake is a small and secretive reptile with a brown or grayish back and a bright red or orange belly, making it easy to identify if you're lucky enough to spot one! Just behind its head, it has three small yellow spots, like a tiny necklace. These snakes are harmless to humans and prefer cool, damp habitats like woodlands, meadows, and wetland edges. Often hiding under rocks, logs, or leaf litter, they feed mostly on slugs, worms, and soft-bodied insects. Though they're rarely seen, these shy snakes play an important role in maintaining healthy soil ecosystems.



Southern Flying Squirrel

The Southern Flying Squirrel is a small, nocturnal mammal known for its amazing gliding abilities. Instead of flying like a bird, it stretches out its legs and uses a flap of skin called a patagium to glide from tree to tree. With big dark eyes for night vision and a soft gray-brown coat, it's perfectly adapted for life high in the forest canopy. These squirrels feed on nuts, seeds, fruits, and insects, and are rarely seen during the day. Their ability to glide helps them escape predators and travel easily through their woodland homes.

Kids Corner

Balsam Poplar trees are some of the first to grow back after a disturbance like a fire or flood! Their sticky buds smell sweet in the spring and help protect the tree from insects and disease.



Tree OD Key: Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*)

Leaves: lance-elliptical shape, round base, rusty blotches on underside, long stalks.

Twig: reddish-brown, smooth.

Buds: alternate arrangement, large and sharp, talon-shaped, coated with sticky aromatic resin.

Mature bark: grey, vertical scaly ridges reach branches then smooths out.



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Check Point 27: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Thicket Swamp

A Coniferous Mixed Swamp is a forested wetland found in low-lying, poorly drained areas. It features a mix of water-tolerant conifers like eastern white cedar and black spruce, along with some hardwoods such as red maple. The soggy soils support mosses, ferns, sedges, and shrubs like alder and winterberry. These swamps provide cool, sheltered habitats for wildlife like amphibians, birds, and small mammals, and play a key role in filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity. While often overlooked, these ecosystems are important for flood control and maintaining healthy watersheds.



Tree Swallow

The Tree Swallow is a small, sleek songbird with a streamlined body, tiny bill, and long, pointed wings built for agile flight. Its shimmering bluish-green back contrasts with its bright white underside, making it easy to spot in the sunlight. Tree Swallows are often seen swooping and gliding over open fields, wetlands, and ponds as they catch flying insects mid-air. They nest in tree cavities or nest boxes and are one of the earliest swallows to return in spring. Their graceful flight and iridescent feathers make them a favorite sight in open natural spaces.



Yellow Warbler

The Yellow Warbler is a small, bright burst of sunshine flitting through shrubs and treetops! With its round head, short beak, and vibrant yellow feathers, this little songbird is easy to spot, especially thanks to the reddish-brown streaks on its chest. Found in wetlands, thickets, and forest edges, Yellow Warblers are often heard before they're seen, singing their cheerful "sweet-sweet-sweet, I'm so sweet!" tune. These insect-loving birds are busy during spring and summer, nesting and raising young before migrating all the way to Central and South America for the winter. Keep an eye out, they're fast, but their golden glow stands out!

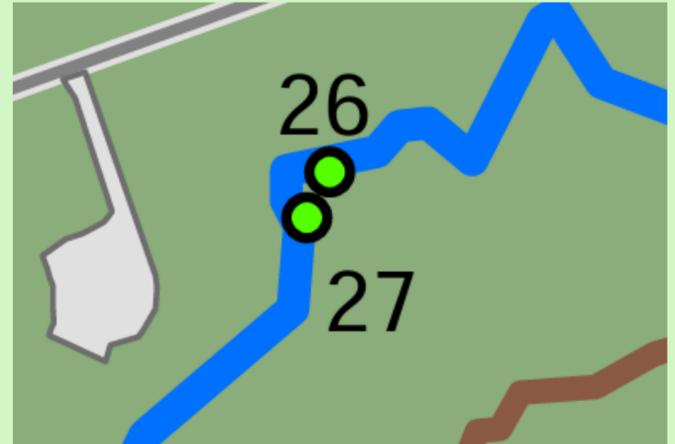


Northern Redbelly Snake

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Kids Corner

Earthworms play an important role in soil health. As they burrow, they improve soil structure and allow air and water to reach plant roots. Their castings (waste) are rich in nutrients, making the soil more fertile for plant growth.



Tree ID Key: Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)

Leaves: elliptic-shaped, tapers to a long point at tip.

Twig: current years growth is orangish brown with warty texture, turns brownish grey as it ages.

Buds: opposite arrangement, candle-shaped bud is darker than the twig.

Fruit: white berries on red stalks.



Check Point 28: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Sparse Coniferous Woodland

A Sparse Coniferous Woodland is a forest community characterized by widely spaced conifer trees such as jack pine, white pine, or black spruce. These areas typically have thin, rocky, or sandy soils with low moisture and nutrient levels, which limits dense vegetation growth. The open canopy allows plenty of sunlight to reach the ground, supporting a patchy understory of grasses, lichens, mosses, and hardy shrubs like blueberry or sweet fern. These woodlands are often found on dry ridges, rock outcrops, or areas recovering from fire. Despite their sparse appearance, they provide important habitat for specialized wildlife adapted to open, dry forest conditions.



Grey Squirrel

The Eastern Gray Squirrel is a familiar and adaptable tree squirrel often seen in forests, parks, and neighborhoods. Despite their name, these squirrels aren't always gray—some have brown coats, and in many areas, black-coated squirrels are common. This black coloration is called melanism, a genetic variation that gives them extra dark fur. Eastern Gray Squirrels are excellent climbers and spend much of their time gathering nuts, seeds, and berries to store for winter. Their quick movements and chattering calls make them a lively part of many outdoor spaces.



Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel is a small, energetic tree squirrel with a reddish-brown coat, a white belly, and a distinct white ring around each eye. Slightly larger than a chipmunk, this squirrel is known for its feisty personality and rapid chatter. Red Squirrels are most often found in coniferous and mixed forests, where they build nests high in the trees and store cones and seeds for winter. They are highly territorial and will loudly defend their food caches from other animals. Quick and agile, these squirrels are a lively presence in the forest canopy.



Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don't drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!

Kids Corner

Frogs can breathe through their skin as well as their lungs! Their skin must stay moist to absorb oxygen from the air and water, which is why you often find frogs living near ponds and wetlands.



Tree ID Key: Black Walnut (Juglans nigra)

Leaves: large and compound, leaflets (12-19) arranged oppositely.

Twig: green to olive-brown, hairy and becoming smooth in second year, heart-shaped leaf scar with a smiley face.

Buds: alternate arrangement, light brown with fuzzy hairs, terminal bud round to oval shaped and slightly flattened.

Mature bark: grayish brown with narrow rough ridges and deep furrows.



Check Point 29: Trent Wildlife Sanctuary

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Southern Flying Squirrel

The Southern Flying Squirrel is a small, nocturnal mammal known for its amazing gliding abilities. Instead of flying like a bird, it stretches out its legs and uses a flap of skin called a patagium to glide from tree to tree. With big dark eyes for night vision and a soft gray-brown coat, it's perfectly adapted for life high in the forest canopy. These squirrels feed on nuts, seeds, fruits, and insects, and are rarely seen during the day. Their ability to glide helps them escape predators and travel easily through their woodland homes.



Tree ID Key: Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)

Leaves: long with broadly wedged base, 7-9 bristle-tipped lobes.

Twig: reddish brown and moderately stout.

Buds: alternate arrangement, reddish brown, clustered terminal buds.

Mature bark: greyish brown, continuous vertical ridges, reddish furrows.



Kids Corner

Forests are sometimes called the "lungs of the Earth" because trees take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen during photosynthesis, helping to keep the air clean and healthy for all living things!



Check Point 30: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Red Fox

The Red Fox is a clever and adaptable mammal known for its bright reddish-orange fur, bushy tail, and sharp black legs and ears. These foxes are expert survivors and can thrive in a wide range of environments, from deep forests and open fields to busy city neighborhoods. Unlike many other wild animals, Red Foxes have learned how to live alongside humans, and urban development has had little effect on their overall population. They hunt mainly at night, feeding on small mammals, birds, insects, and even fruit. With their keen senses and curious nature, Red Foxes are one of nature's most resourceful creatures!



Emerald Ash Borer

The Emerald Ash Borer is a small, shiny green beetle that might look harmless or even beautiful, but it's actually a serious invasive pest. Often mistaken for other beetles, this insect is native to Asia and was accidentally introduced to North America. Its larvae burrow into the bark of ash trees, feeding on the inner layers and cutting off the tree's ability to move water and nutrients. Over time, this damage causes the tree to weaken and die. Since its arrival, the Emerald Ash Borer has killed millions of ash trees across Canada and the U.S., making it one of the most destructive forest pests in recent history.



Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don't drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!

Kids Corner

Old forests, called old-growth forests, are home to some of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth. They provide shelter for rare plants, animals, fungi, and insects that can't survive anywhere else!



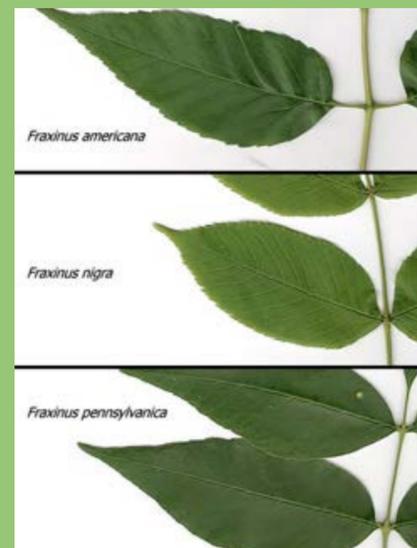
Tree ID Key: White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (5-9) arranged oppositely, oval-shaped leaflets taper at the tip.

Twig: stout, shiny, dark grey and purplish, hairless.

Buds: opposite arrangement, terminal bud wider than long, lateral buds sit within notched leaf scar, lateral buds tight against terminal bud.

Mature Bark: grey, intersecting ridges form diamond pattern.



Check Point 31: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



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Pileated Woodpecker

The Pileated Woodpecker is a striking, crow-sized bird and the largest woodpecker in most of North America. Mostly black with bold white stripes along its face and neck, it's easily recognized by its bright red crest that stands tall on its head. These powerful birds use their strong beaks to chisel large, rectangular holes into dead trees in search of carpenter ants and other insects. Their loud, echoing calls and drumming sounds can often be heard long before they're seen. Pileated Woodpeckers play an important role in forest ecosystems, many other birds and animals use their abandoned nesting cavities for shelter.

Kids Corner

In a healthy forest, fallen logs and dead trees are just as important as living ones! They provide food, shelter, and nutrients for insects, fungi, birds, and small mammals, helping the forest recycle life back into the soil.



Tree ID Key: Balsam Poplar (Populus balsamifera)

Leaves: lance-elliptical shape, round base, rusty blotches on underside, long stalks.

Twig: reddish-brown, smooth.

Buds: alternate arrangement, large and sharp, talon-shaped, coated with sticky aromatic resin.

Mature bark: grey, vertical scaly ridges reach branches then smooths out.



Check Point 32: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

The Yellow-rumped Warbler is a small, lively songbird easily recognized by its black mask, white throat, and the bright yellow patches on its sides and rump. These flashes of yellow have earned it the playful nickname "butter butt." Found in forests, thickets, and open woodlands, Yellow-rumped Warblers are highly adaptable and one of the few warblers able to digest waxy berries, allowing them to stay farther north in winter than most other warblers. Their cheerful songs and quick movements make them a favorite among birdwatchers, especially during spring and fall migrations.



Red-eyed Vireo

The Red-eyed Vireo is a small, active songbird with olive-green upperparts and a pale, whitish belly. It has a gray crown, a dark eye stripe, and, as its name suggests, a striking red eye that stands out when seen up close. These birds are often heard more than seen, singing persistently from high in the tree canopy throughout the summer. Red-eyed Vireos forage by hopping from branch to branch, searching for insects among the leaves. Their constant singing and subtle colors make them a hidden but important part of many North American forests.



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Kids Corner

Some forest trees, like oaks and maples, drop their leaves in the fall to save water and energy during the winter. This process is called deciduousness and helps trees survive cold, snowy seasons!



Tree ID Key: White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)

Leaves: broadly egg-shaped, tapers to sharp point at tip, sharp serrated margin, round as base.

Twig: slender, brown, raised lenticels gives pretzel-like appearance and texture, can be hairy when found in open canopy.

Buds: alternate arrangement, brown, bluntly pointed, lateral buds diverge from twig.

Mature bark: White, peels in large horizontal strips, multiple trunks are not uncommon.



Check Point 33: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Red Fox

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Tree ID Key: Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Leaves: flat, scaly, branched.

Cone: tiny and round, dark brown when mature

Bark: grayish brown, peels in strips.



Red-backed Salamander

The Red-backed Salamander is a small, active amphibian with a dark back and a lighter belly. It has a striking red stripe along its back, which gives it its name. These salamanders are often found in moist, shaded areas like under logs and rocks. They are important for the health of the ecosystem as they help control insect populations and serve as a food source for other animals.



Kids Corner

The Red-backed Salamander is the most common Salamander in the Trent nature areas. While other salamanders require water to lay eggs, the Red-backed lays eggs under wet logs and rocks.



Check Point 34: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Barred Owl

The Barred Owl is a large, mysterious-looking bird known for its soulful dark eyes and distinct hooting call that sounds like “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” It has a rounded head, a yellow beak, and a beautifully streaked chest, with brown and white mottling along its back and wings that help it blend seamlessly into the forest. Native to North America’s mature woodlands and swamps, Barred Owls are primarily nocturnal but may also be active during the day. These skilled hunters perch silently before swooping down to catch prey like small mammals, amphibians, and even fish. Their presence is a sign of a healthy, well-established forest ecosystem.



Southern Flying Squirrel

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Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don’t drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!

Tree ID Key: European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

Leaves: round to egg-shaped, can taper to a short sharp point at the tip.

Twig: brownish gray, tips have a sharp point when terminal bud is not present, deer-hoof like appearance.

Buds: opposite or sub-opposite, lateral buds appressed and curve towards the twig.

Mature bark: Dark gray and scaly.



Kids Corner

Buckthorn roots rapidly spread horizontally and vertically to connect a dense network of fibrous roots and tap roots between trees.



Check Point 35: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Mixed Woodland

A mixed woodland vegetation community is a diverse forest habitat where both deciduous and coniferous trees grow together, creating a layered and dynamic ecosystem. These woodlands often include species like sugar maple, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock, alongside shrubs such as serviceberry and hazel. The mix of tree types creates a rich canopy that changes with the seasons, while the understory is filled with ferns, mosses, wildflowers, and young saplings. This blend of plant life supports a wide variety of wildlife from woodpeckers and warblers to deer, foxes, and amphibians. Mixed woodlands offer year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites, making them essential for biodiversity and ecosystem health.



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Emerald Ash Borer

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Tree ID Key: Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (5-9) arranged oppositely, oval-shaped leaflets taper at the tip.

Twig: moderately stout, greyish brown, can be hairy.

Buds: opposite arrangement, reddish-brown, hairy, bud on top of leaf scar, space between lateral buds and terminal bud varies.

Mature bark: greyish-brown, ridges form messy diamond-shaped pattern but not as conspicuous as White Ash.



Eastern Milk Snake

The Eastern Milk Snake is a non-venomous, slender snake that can grow up to 3 feet long, and sometimes even longer, reaching 4 feet! It has a light gray or tan body with reddish-brown blotches bordered in black, helping it blend into forest floors, fields, and rocky areas. Despite old myths, milk snakes don't drink milk from cows, they actually get their name from being found in barns where they hunt mice! These shy snakes are great at controlling rodent populations and are completely harmless to humans. If you spot one on a trail, give it some space and consider yourself lucky to see this secretive woodland resident!



Kids Corner

Forests help keep rivers and streams clean! Tree roots hold the soil in place, preventing erosion, and forest plants filter rainwater before it reaches waterways, keeping habitats healthy for fish and other animals.



Check Point 36: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



Eastern Coyote

The Eastern Coyote is a highly adaptable wild canid that looks like a smaller, leaner version of a wolf. It has a long, narrow snout, pointed ears, and a bushy tail, with fur that ranges from gray to tan with reddish tones. Eastern Coyotes are larger than their western cousins due to historical interbreeding with wolves, which also gives them a more robust build. They thrive in a variety of habitats including forests, fields, and even urban areas and are most active at dawn and dusk. As omnivores, they eat a wide range of foods, from small mammals and birds to fruit and carrion. Their adaptability and intelligence make them successful survivors across much of eastern North America.



Song Sparrow

The Song Sparrow is a small, brown songbird with a short, thick bill and bold streaks on its chest and head. These streaks often gather into a central dark spot on the chest, making them easy to recognize. Found in a variety of habitats like wetlands, fields, and forest edges, Song Sparrows are known for their cheerful and complex songs, which vary slightly from bird to bird. They forage on the ground for seeds and insects and often perch in shrubs or low trees to sing. Their adaptability and musical calls make them one of the most widespread and familiar sparrows in North America.

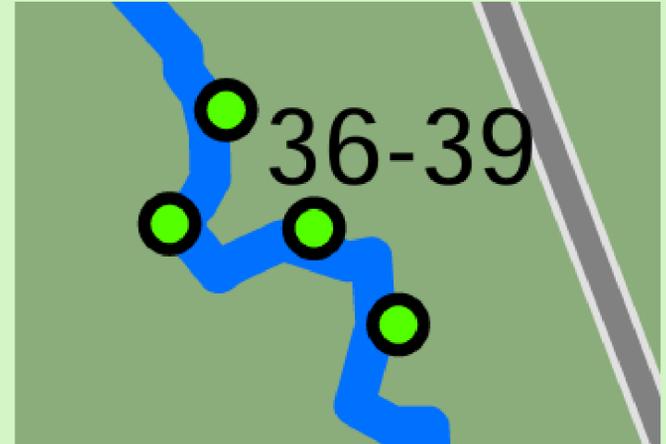


Eastern Garter Snake

The Eastern Garter Snake is a common, harmless snake found in many habitats, from forests and meadows to wetlands and backyards. Its slender body is marked with yellow, green, or bluish stripes that help it blend into grassy areas. Females are larger than males, often growing longer to carry more offspring. Active during the day, they feed on small prey like worms, amphibians, and insects. When threatened, they release a harmless but smelly musk to deter predators. Their adaptability and gentle nature make them one of the most frequently spotted snakes in eastern North America.

Kids Corner

Mosses and lichens in the forest are important pioneers, they can grow on rocks, tree bark, and soil, helping to create new habitats by slowly breaking down surfaces and adding nutrients to the ground!



Tree ID Key: Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

Leaves: compound, leaflets (7-23) arranged oppositely and egg-shaped.

Twig: reddish brown, ridged slender and smooth, young twigs have 2 thorns beside each bud.

Buds: alternate arrangement, no terminal bud, tiny lateral buds.

Mature bark: greyish brown, deeply furrowed with forking ridges. Fruit: thin and flat seed pods, reddish brown.



Check Point 37: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Successional

An Old Field Successional Vegetation Community forms when farmland or disturbed open areas are left to regrow naturally. In the early stages, hardy grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants dominate, providing important food and shelter for pollinators and small mammals. Over time, shrubs like dogwood and sumac move in, followed by fast-growing pioneer trees such as poplar, birch, and white pine. This natural process, called succession, gradually transforms open fields into young forests. Old field habitats are rich in biodiversity and provide critical stopover points for migratory birds and homes for a wide range of wildlife.



Eastern Coyote

The Eastern Coyote is a highly adaptable wild canid that looks like a smaller, leaner version of a wolf. It has a long, narrow snout, pointed ears, and a bushy tail, with fur that ranges from gray to tan with reddish tones. Eastern Coyotes are larger than their western cousins due to historical interbreeding with wolves, which also gives them a more robust build. They thrive in a variety of habitats including forests, fields, and even urban areas and are most active at dawn and dusk. As omnivores, they eat a wide range of foods, from small mammals and birds to fruit and carrion. Their adaptability and intelligence make them successful survivors across much of eastern North America.



Eastern Garter Snake

The Eastern Garter Snake is a common, harmless snake found in many habitats, from forests and meadows to wetlands and backyards. Its slender body is marked with yellow, green, or bluish stripes that help it blend into grassy areas. Females are larger than males, often growing longer to carry more offspring. Active during the day, they feed on small prey like worms, amphibians, and insects. When threatened, they release a harmless but smelly musk to deter predators. Their adaptability and gentle nature make them one of the most frequently spotted snakes in eastern North America.

Tree ID Key: American (White) Elm (*Ulmus americana*)

Leaves: variable in shape but usually elliptical, sharp serrated teeth on margin, tapers to a sharp point, asymmetrical leaf base.

Twig: greyish-brown, slight zigzag appearance, hairy when found in open canopy.

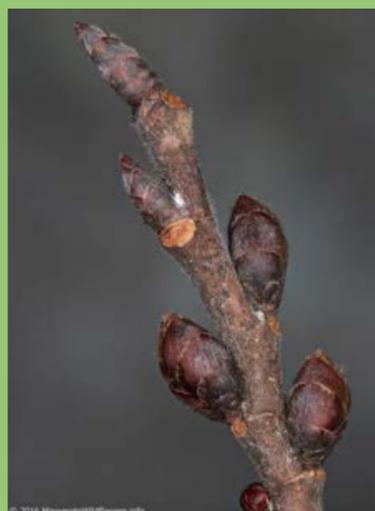
Buds: alternate arrangement, terminal bud slanted, brown, bud scales have pale leading edges.

Mature bark: layered appearance, dark greyish brown with light brown to orangish outer layers, ridges interlaced, deep furrows.



Tree Swallow

The Tree Swallow is a small, sleek songbird with a streamlined body, tiny bill, and long, pointed wings built for agile flight. Its shimmering bluish-green back contrasts with its bright white underside, making it easy to spot in the sunlight. Tree Swallows are often seen swooping and gliding over open fields, wetlands, and ponds as they catch flying insects mid-air. They nest in tree cavities or nest boxes and are one of the earliest swallows to return in spring. Their graceful flight and iridescent feathers make them a favorite sight in open natural spaces.



Kids Corner

Mosses and lichens in the forest are important pioneers, they can grow on rocks, tree bark, and soil, helping to create new habitats by slowly breaking down surfaces and adding nutrients to the ground!



Check Point 38: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field

An Old Field Vegetation Community is made up of open, grassy areas that were once used for farming or other human activities but have been left to grow back naturally. These fields are typically dominated by hardy grasses, wildflowers, and scattered shrubs like goldenrod, milkweed, and dogwood. Over time, if left undisturbed, small trees such as poplar and white pine begin to take root, slowly changing the field into young forest. Old fields provide important habitat for pollinators, songbirds, small mammals, and other wildlife that rely on open, sunny spaces.



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Tree ID Key: Common Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)

Leaves: egg-shaped, tapers to a blunt tip.

Twig: greyish brown and hard.

Buds: opposite arrangement, large, reddish brown, paired terminal buds, slightly square-shaped when viewed from the top.

Flowers: small and clustered with 4 lobes, can be pink, purple or white.



Kids Corner

In forests, fallen leaves form a layer called leaf litter. As the leaves decompose, they release important nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus back into the soil, helping support new plant growth and maintaining a healthy ecosystem.



Check Point 39: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field

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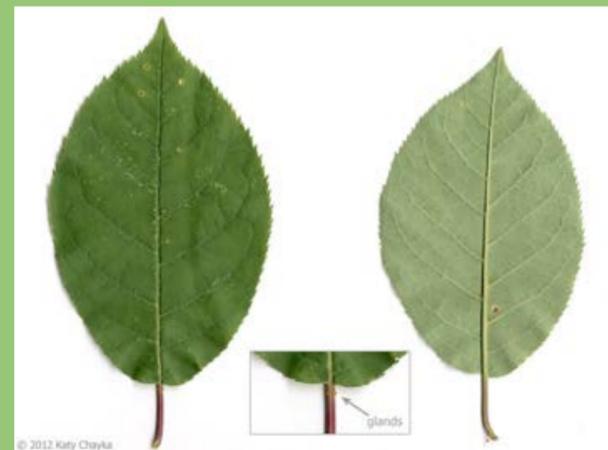
Tree ID Key: Choke Cherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

Leaves: Broadly oval, widest above the middle, tapers to sharp point.

Twig: brown to grey, smooth.

Buds: Alternate arrangement, pointed, brown, bud scales have pale leading edges.

Mature bark: Dark, smooth with fine scales.



Tree Swallow

The Tree Swallow is a small, sleek songbird with a streamlined body, tiny bill, and long, pointed wings built for agile flight. Its shimmering bluish-green back contrasts with its bright white underside, making it easy to spot in the sunlight. Tree Swallows are often seen swooping and gliding over open fields, wetlands, and ponds as they catch flying insects mid-air. They nest in tree cavities or nest boxes and are one of the earliest swallows to return in spring. Their graceful flight and iridescent feathers make them a favorite sight in open natural spaces.



Kids Corner

Forests create their own microclimates! The dense canopy of trees helps keep the air cooler, traps moisture, and protects the plants and animals living underneath from extreme temperatures.



Check Point 40: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Blue Jay

The Blue Jay is a large, vibrant songbird easily recognized by its bright blue feathers, crested head, and pale underside. It also sports a bold black "necklace" across its chest and striking black and white markings on its wings and tail. Blue Jays are intelligent and noisy birds often found in forests, parks, and backyards. They are known for their loud calls and their ability to mimic the sounds of other birds. Curious and resourceful, Blue Jays play an important role in forests by spreading seeds, especially acorns, which can grow into new trees.



Eastern Garter Snake

The Eastern Garter Snake is a common, harmless snake found in many habitats, from forests and meadows to wetlands and backyards. Its slender body is marked with yellow, green, or bluish stripes that help it blend into grassy areas. Females are larger than males, often growing longer to carry more offspring. Active during the day, they feed on small prey like worms, amphibians, and insects. When threatened, they release a harmless but smelly musk to deter predators. Their adaptability and gentle nature make them one of the most frequently spotted snakes in eastern North America.

Kids Corner

Some trees, like maple and birch, produce sugary sap in the spring. This sap helps fuel the tree's growth after winter and it's what people collect to make delicious maple syrup!



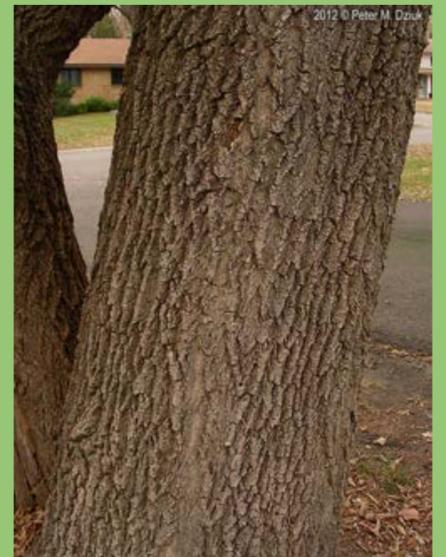
Tree ID Key: Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*)

Leaves: compound and opposite, 3-5 leaflets (sometimes 7), taper to a sharp point.

Twig: purplish to green, smooth, powdery appearance.

Buds: opposite arrangement, brownish to green, terminal bud long and blunt, first set of lateral buds pressed against the terminal bud.

Mature bark: brown – greyish brown, messy vertical ridges and furrows.



Check Point 41: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Kids Corner

Some trees, like maple and birch, produce sugary sap in the spring. This sap helps fuel the tree's growth after winter and it's what people collect to make delicious maple syrup!



Tree ID Key: Alternate-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)

Leaves: oval, widest near middle, long tapered tip, slight wedge-shaped base.

Twig: waxy/glossy smooth, zigzag pattern, each node contains 1 dwarf shoot and 1 longer twig, yellow dead twigs.

Buds: Alternate arrangement, dark, bud scales diverge toward tip.

Fruit: dark blue berries on red stalks.



Check Point 42: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



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Song Sparrow

The Song Sparrow is a small, brown songbird with a short, thick bill and bold streaks on its chest and head. These streaks often gather into a central dark spot on the chest, making them easy to recognize. Found in a variety of habitats like wetlands, fields, and forest edges, Song Sparrows are known for their cheerful and complex songs, which vary slightly from bird to bird. They forage on the ground for seeds and insects and often perch in shrubs or low trees to sing. Their adaptability and musical calls make them one of the most widespread and familiar sparrows in North America.

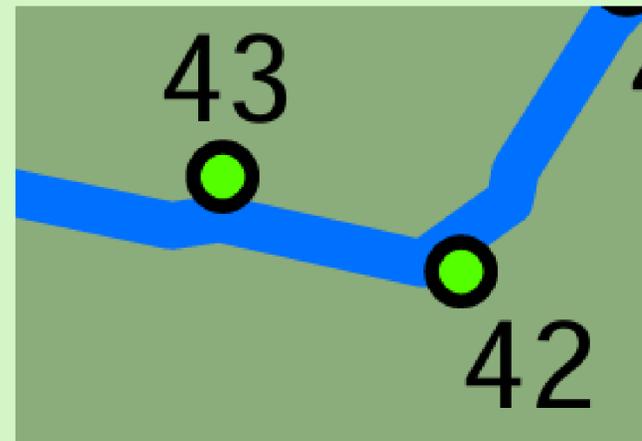


Eastern Garter Snake

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Kids Corner

In some forests, tree roots from different trees can actually grow together and share water and nutrients, helping each other survive tough conditions like droughts!



Tree ID Key: American Basswood (*Tilia americana*)

Leaves: large, round and heart-shaped, abruptly tapers to a pointed tip. Asymmetrical base.

Twig: smooth, moderately stout.

Buds: shiny reddish brown, round terminal bud with blunt tip.

Mature bark: greyish brown, long narrow ridges with flat surface may have blocky appearance.



Check Point 43: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Old Field Thicket

A **transitional habitat** that forms when an abandoned agricultural field or disturbed open land begins to regenerate with shrubs and young trees. These areas are characterized by a mix of **woody shrubs**, such as hawthorn, dogwood, and sumac, along with young pioneer trees like poplar and white pine. Ground cover includes **grasses, wildflowers, and herbaceous plants** that provide food and shelter for various wildlife species. Over time, old field thickets can develop into young forests as tree cover increases. These habitats support diverse wildlife, including songbirds, small mammals, and pollinators, and serve as important stopover sites for migratory species



Blue Jay

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Red-breasted Nuthatch

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a tiny, energetic bird with a sharp beak, barely any neck, and a bold personality! It has a rusty red belly, a white face, and a black cap and eyestripes that make it look like it's wearing a tiny mask. Like its white-breasted cousin, this nuthatch is often seen climbing down tree trunks headfirst in search of insects and seeds. You can spot them in coniferous forests, where their nasal "yank-yank" call rings through the trees. Despite their small size, these birds are fearless and will even chase off larger birds from feeders!

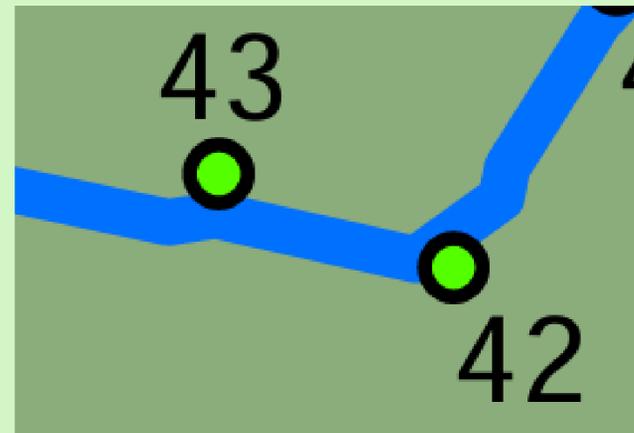


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Kids Corner

Forest floors are like giant recycling centers! Decomposers like fungi, bacteria, and insects break down dead plants and animals, returning important nutrients to the soil so new life can grow.



Tree ID Key: Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris)

Needles: medium length, bundles of 2, twisted.

Cone: Small and round.

Mature bark: fissured with scaly plates.



Check Point 44: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Coniferous Forest

A Conifer Forest is dominated by evergreen trees such as white pine, eastern hemlock, and balsam fir, which keep their needle-like leaves year-round. These forests are often found in cooler climates and grow well in sandy, rocky, or acidic soils. The dense canopy provides shade, creating a cool and moist environment that supports mosses, ferns, and shade-loving shrubs on the forest floor. Conifer forests offer important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including deer, owls, woodpeckers, and squirrels. These ecosystems play a key role in carbon storage, water regulation, and maintaining biodiversity in northern forest landscapes.



Barred Owl

The Barred Owl is a large, mysterious-looking bird known for its soulful dark eyes and distinct hooting call that sounds like “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” It has a rounded head, a yellow beak, and a beautifully streaked chest, with brown and white mottling along its back and wings that help it blend seamlessly into the forest. Native to North America’s mature woodlands and swamps, Barred Owls are primarily nocturnal but may also be active during the day. These skilled hunters perch silently before swooping down to catch prey like small mammals, amphibians, and even fish. Their presence is a sign of a healthy, well-established forest ecosystem.



Snapping Turtle

The Snapping Turtle is one of the largest freshwater turtles in North America, known for its rugged appearance and powerful bite. It has a large, rough shell with a notched rear edge and a long tail lined with spike-like projections. Snapping Turtles are usually found in ponds, lakes, and slow-moving rivers, where they spend most of their time buried in the mud or resting underwater with just their nostrils exposed. Although they are shy in the water, on land they can be defensive if approached. Snapping Turtles play an important role in aquatic ecosystems by helping keep fish and plant populations in balance.

Tree ID Key: Eastern White Pine (Pinus strobus)

Needles: long, bundles of 5.

Cone: longest cone of pines in eastern Canada.

Mature bark: broad scaly ridges.



Midland Painted Turtle

The Midland Painted Turtle is a small, colorful freshwater turtle easily recognized by its smooth, dark shell edged with red barring and blotches. Its skin is decorated with bright red and yellow stripes along the neck, legs, and tail. These turtles are often seen basking on logs or rocks near ponds, lakes, and slow-moving rivers, soaking up the sun. They feed on a variety of aquatic plants, insects, and small fish. Midland Painted Turtles are an important part of wetland ecosystems and are one of the most common and widespread turtle species in eastern North America.



Kids Corner

Some forest trees, like firs and spruces, have cones that only open to release their seeds after a fire. This helps new forests grow after old ones are cleared by natural wildfires!



Check Point 45: Canal Nature Area

Vegetation Community: Deciduous Swamp

A Deciduous Swamp Vegetation Community is a forested wetland dominated by broad-leaved trees that lose their leaves in the fall. Common species include red maple, silver maple, black ash, and green ash, which are adapted to the wet, seasonally flooded soils. The swamp floor is often covered with water-tolerant shrubs, ferns, sedges, and mosses. These swamps provide rich habitat for amphibians, birds, and mammals, offering food, shelter, and breeding grounds. Deciduous swamps also play an important role in filtering water, controlling floods, and supporting biodiversity in the landscape.



Ruffed Grouse

The Ruffed Grouse is a medium-sized game bird, about the size of a crow, with a plump body and short crest. Its brown and gray plumage is beautifully patterned with bars and spots, helping it blend into the forest floor. These birds are found in mixed and deciduous woodlands, where they forage for buds, berries, and insects. Ruffed Grouse are best known for the males' drumming display in spring, when they beat their wings in the air to create a deep, echoing sound to attract mates. Their powerful burst of flight can be startling, as they often remain hidden until the last second.



Northern Redbelly Snake

The Northern Redbelly Snake is a small and secretive reptile with a brown or grayish back and a bright red or orange belly, making it easy to identify if you're lucky enough to spot one! Just behind its head, it has three small yellow spots, like a tiny necklace. These snakes are harmless to humans and prefer cool, damp habitats like woodlands, meadows, and wetland edges. Often hiding under rocks, logs, or leaf litter, they feed mostly on slugs, worms, and soft-bodied insects. Though they're rarely seen, these shy snakes play an important role in maintaining healthy soil ecosystems.



American Toad

The American Toad is the most common toad species found across Canada and the eastern United States. It has dry, bumpy skin that can range from brown to gray or reddish, often with darker spots and warts. These toads thrive in forests, gardens, and wetlands, where they feed on insects, worms, and other small invertebrates. They're most active at night and can often be heard singing a long, trilling call during spring breeding season. American Toads play an important role in controlling insect populations and are a welcome sight in any healthy ecosystem.



Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*)

Leaves: lance-elliptical shape, round base, rusty blotches on underside, long stalks.

Twig: reddish-brown, smooth.

Buds: alternate arrangement, large and sharp, talon-shaped, coated with sticky aromatic resin.

Mature bark: grey, vertical scaly ridges reach branches then smooths out.

Kids Corner

Many trees in the forest, like oaks and hickories, produce nuts called "mast." These nuts are an important food source for animals like deer, squirrels, and birds, especially in the fall and winter!



Photo Credits

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