

take a HIKE!

A Family Guide to Exploring Nature in Norfolk

by Bernie Solymár, Founder, Nature's Calling Environmental Education



WE LIVE IN A

Very Special Place

The Long Point Watershed, which includes Norfolk County, as well as sections of Elgin, Oxford, Brant and Haldimand Counties, is located in the very heart of the Carolinian Life Zone. The many creeks and streams that make up our watershed flow into Big Creek Marsh, the Inner Bay of Long Point and Lake Erie. The wetlands here are rich in plant life, insects, crustaceans, molluscs, amphibians and reptiles, fish, birds and mammals.

Our forests are home to more than 70 native species of trees and more than half of all species of birds that breed in Canada. Here you can observe wild and wonderful species like Tuliptree, Flowering Dogwood, Giant Swallowtail Butterfly, Blanding's Turtle, Carolina Wren, Louisiana Waterthrush, Wood Duck, and Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Whether taking the kids for an invigorating hike in the woods, enjoying a quiet paddle on one of our creeks, cross country skiing on a crisp winter day or creating a stimulating nature oasis in your backyard, getting outside brings families closer together!



NATURE IS CALLING!

Numerous studies have shown the health benefits to children (and adults) who are exposed to nature and the outdoors:

- being outdoors encourages physical activity, healthy development and overall well-being;
- playing outdoors builds self-confidence and a sense of adventure;
- regular exposure to nature enhances creativity, focus, and problem-solving abilities;
- children that participate in structured outdoor activities (i.e. camps, hikes) are more social, cooperate more and have a higher sense of self-esteem;
- children that spend time outdoors are less prone to being overweight;
- children with ADHD concentrate better after a walk in the woods and regular exposure to nature reduces the severity of the condition

*Quite simply, people that spend more time outdoors
tend to be healthier and happier!!!*



TAKE A HIKE OR PADDLE!

This Family Activity Guide provides you with descriptions of our favourite nature trails and paddles routes. The guide is also chock full of interesting facts and information, and provides you with ideas for activities you can do while on your family outing. We also provide some ideas on fostering nature play right in your back yard!



THE MORE, THE MERRIER!

A forest is like a salad. Just as lettuce is only one ingredient of a salad, trees are only one ingredient of a forest. There are also mushrooms, lichens, grasses, shrubs and ferns, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. This variety of life in a forest is called **biodiversity**.







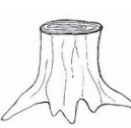
















The more biodiversity there is, the healthier the habitat is.

We live in a very special place – the **Carolinian Life Zone**. This region has more species of animals and plants than pretty much anywhere else in Canada! That's because of the moderating climate of the Great Lakes and the merging of species more commonly found in the southern U.S., and the more familiar species we find here in Canada.

To learn more about the Carolinian Life Zone visit www.carolinian.ca

Here are some plants and animals found only in the Carolinian Life Zone:



				
Big Rock	Chipmunk	Rotten Log	Snake	Green Moss
				
Butterfly	Tree Stump	Woodpecker Drumming	Vine	Tree Cavity
		FREE SQUARE		
Mushroom	Poison Ivy	FREE SQUARE	Feather	Beetle
				
Maple Tree	Squirrel Nest	Oak Leaf	Salamander	Bird Singing
				
Caterpillar	Animal Tracks	Pine Cone	Woodland Flower	Acorn

NATURE BINGO

Photocopy this page for every family member on your hike. See who can get bingo first by completing a full line, either horizontally, vertically or diagonally! Or try your observation skills with the scavenger hunt below.



Nature Scavenger Hunt

- Something Fuzzy
- Two kinds of seeds
- Two pieces of man-made litter
- Something Straight
- Something Round
- Something Smooth
- Something Rough
- Two different types of leaves
- Something that makes noise
- A chewed leaf
- A beautiful rock
- Something you think is beautiful
- A Pinecone
- Something Green
- A stick
- Something you think is a treasure

A SPECIAL ACTIVITY FOR EVERY SEASON!

Spring - Nest Challenge

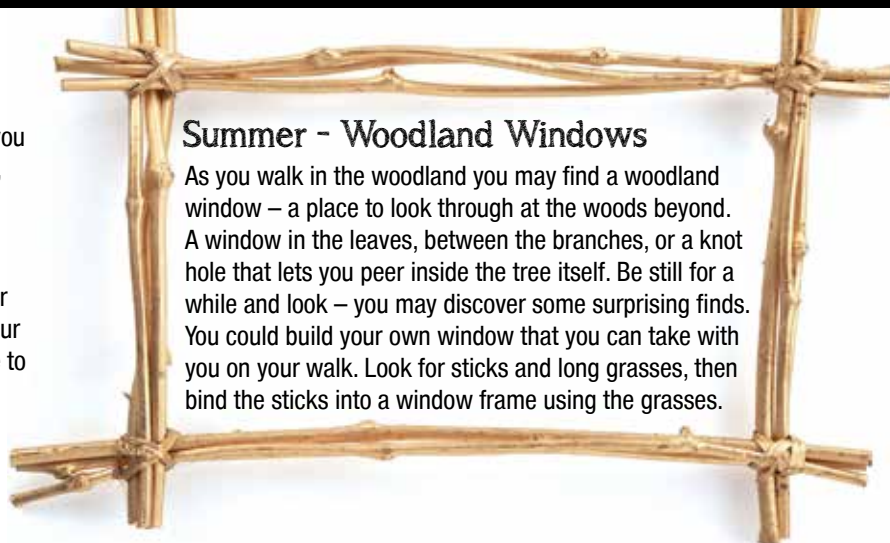
Can you build a nest that could hold a clutch of eggs, and withstand the wind? Look for materials on the woodland floor that you could use – for example dried grasses, twigs, sticks, and lichen. Now find a low fork in a tree and build your nest.

When you have finished, look for several small stones, cones or other objects that could be your eggs and place them in your nest.. Then, with your eggs still in the nest give the branch a little shake to see if your nest would stand up to the wind!



Summer - Woodland Windows

As you walk in the woodland you may find a woodland window – a place to look through at the woods beyond. A window in the leaves, between the branches, or a knot hole that lets you peer inside the tree itself. Be still for a while and look – you may discover some surprising finds. You could build your own window that you can take with you on your walk. Look for sticks and long grasses, then bind the sticks into a window frame using the grasses.



Fall - Hide and Seek

Squirrels and Blue jays are just two of the woodland animals that store food ready for the winter. They need to have a good memory to find them again! Could you survive as a squirrel?

Collect 5-10 acorns from the woodland floor, from beneath an oak tree. Find a good place to store or bury them. Go off for a walk, then come back and see if you can find them!

Why not really test yourself and store the acorns on one visit to the woodland, then look for them the next time you come!



Winter - Tree Faces

Now that the leaves have fallen off our deciduous trees, their once hidden faces are easier to spot. As you walk look for some faces in the trees.

A tree may have only one eye showing as it mischievously winks at you, it may have both eyes open wide, or you may only spot the nose and mouth of a sleeping tree.

You may be able to tell how the tree is feeling – the signs are there!



Checklist of Some Plants and Animals

Use this handy checklist to record all the different plants and animals you see or hear on your next nature hike or paddle.

Trees:

- ☐ Tuliptree
- ☐ Black Walnut
- ☐ American Beech
- ☐ Red Oak
- ☐ White Oak
- ☐ Sassafras
- ☐ White Pine
- ☐ Flowering Dogwood
- ☐ Yellow Birch
- ☐ Sugar Maple

Spring Wildflowers:

- ☐ Spring Beauty
- ☐ Round-lobed Hepatica
- ☐ Skunk Cabbage
- ☐ Jack-in-the-pulpit
- ☐ White Trillium
- ☐ Red Trillium
- ☐ Trout Lily
- ☐ Mayapple
- ☐ Marsh Marigold

Amphibians (Spring):

- ☐ Red-backed Salamander
- ☐ Spotted Salamander

- ☐ Blue-spotted Salamander

- ☐ Spring Peeper
- ☐ Chorus Frog
- ☐ American Toad
- ☐ Wood Frog
- ☐ Leopard Frog

Birds:

- ☐ Northern Cardinal
- ☐ American Robin
- ☐ Eastern Bluebird
- ☐ Wood Thrush
- ☐ Black-capped Chickadee
- ☐ Downy Woodpecker
- ☐ White-breasted Nuthatch
- ☐ Blue Jay
- ☐ Eastern Towhee
- ☐ Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- ☐ Red-tailed Hawk

Wetlands and Creeks:

- ☐ Cattail
- ☐ Swamp Milkweed
- ☐ Water Lily
- ☐ Crayfish
- ☐ Damselflies (many species)

- ☐ Dragonflies (many species)

- ☐ Green Frog
- ☐ Bullfrog
- ☐ Painted Turtle
- ☐ Snapping Turtle
- ☐ Garter Snake
- ☐ Wood Duck
- ☐ Belted Kingfisher
- ☐ Red-winged Blackbird
- ☐ Great Blue Heron
- ☐ Muskrat

Woods:

- ☐ Mourning Cloak
- ☐ Red Admiral
- ☐ Walking Stick
- ☐ Garter Snake
- ☐ Wild Turkey
- ☐ Wood Duck
- ☐ Downy Woodpecker
- ☐ Pileated Woodpecker
- ☐ Ruffed Grouse
- ☐ Red Squirrel
- ☐ Grey Squirrel
- ☐ Eastern Chipmunk
- ☐ White-tailed Deer

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE...

Everywhere animals go, they leave behind signs and clues of their presence. It is not always possible to see the wildlife that lives around us but it is possible to get to know these often secretive animals by the clues they leave behind. Whether it be tracks, scat (poop), or holes underground or in trees, using keen observation skills will help you become more aware of the animals we share this world with.

To help sharpen your observation skills, try this activity while out on a family hike:

While hiking along the trail, pick out something you see. Tell the others whether it's an animal or plant. The others must try to figure out what it is by asking yes or no questions. The one to guess it correctly is the next one to spy.



Coyote



Rabbit



Wild Turkey



Squirrel



MY LOG

Date: _____

Trail: _____

Minutes spent silent: _____

Things I Saw: _____

Things I Heard: _____



Deer



Raccoon

DARE TO BE SILENT

Take a rest break, find a bench or comfortable log, and sit quietly for as long as you can.

Note how many things you can see/hear in nature. Look at the ground around you, in the forest cover, up in the trees, and then close your eyes and listen.

When you're done, talk about how long you sat, how many things you observed and what you noticed that you'd missed when talking and moving.

Keep a log, and on future hikes compare the things you heard and saw on various trails or in different seasons.

For a really cool experience try doing this activity at dusk or at night. It's a whole new world!

(Photocopy the next page and use the form every time you go for a hike).

INSECTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN NATURE!

They decompose plant matter, they pollinate flowers, and they provide food for birds, salamanders and other animals.

Activity

Pick a spot on the trail and spend the next 5 minutes examining leaves, branches, and bark of trees, flowering plants, and under logs and leaves.

How many different kinds of insects can you find?

What are they doing?

How many blend in with their surroundings and how many are brightly coloured?

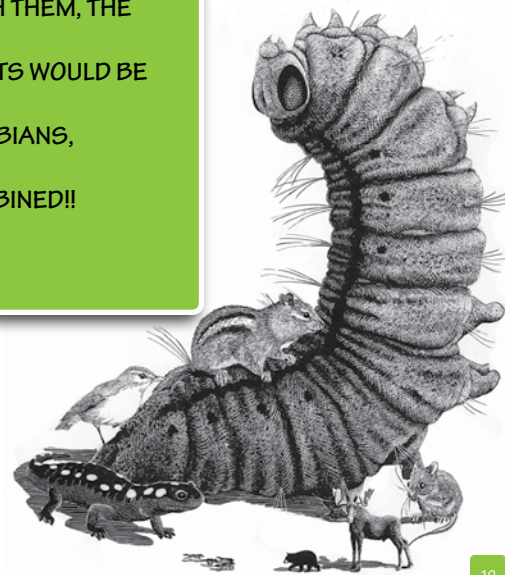
How many were feeding on leaves?

Were there any predatory insects (i.e. eating other insects)?

INSECTS RULE!

DID YOU KNOW?

- ALL INSECTS HAVE 3 BODY PARTS (HEAD, THORAX AND ABDOMEN), SIX LEGS AND AN EXOSKELETON (EXTERNAL SKELETON).
- MOST INSECTS HAVE WINGS.
- IF YOU WERE TO TAKE ALL THE ANIMALS IN A FOREST AND WEIGH THEM, THE TOTAL "BIOMASS" OF INSECTS WOULD BE GREATER THAN ALL THE AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES, BIRDS AND MAMMALS COMBINED!!



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WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE!

The Long Point Watershed has lots of water – cold water streams, ponds, marshes, swamps and, of course, Lake Erie.

Wetlands, like marshes and swamps, are important to the health of a watershed. They:

- ✓ Provide habitat for many species of plants and animals;
- ✓ Store and hold large amounts of water by acting like giant sponges;
- ✓ Help reduce flooding;
- ✓ Act like giant filters, trapping sediment and pollutants;
- ✓ Help improve water quality.

Did you know that only about 20% of Southern Ontario's original wetlands still remain?

PADDLE IT BIG!

Sometimes referred to our very own "Amazon", **Big Creek**, and **Big Otter Creek** to the west, make for memorable paddling experiences. Whether paddling by canoe or by kayak, these winding creeks, with their overhanging willows and majestic sycamores, and abundant flitting dragonflies and butterflies, this experience will make you feel like you are passing through a different world!



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LIFE IN THE WETLANDS

Next time visiting a wetland see how many of these plants and animals you observe.



Red-winged
Blackbird



Duckweed



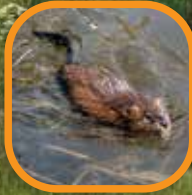
Water Lily



Canada Goose



Dragonfly



Muskrat



Largemouth Bass



Great Blue Heron



Cattails



Bullfrog



Painted Turtle



Mallard

This activity can be conducted at the Port Rowan Wetlands Trail,
Big Creek NWA or at the Bird Studies Canada HQ Trail.

BEACH DAY!

What better place to spend a Saturday with the family? Blue sky, lots of warm sand and big water! So much to discover and do!

We are so lucky to have so many great Lake Erie beaches associated with our 4 provincial parks and as well as in Port Dover and Normandale.

Some fun things to do while exploring the shoreline include:

- Collect different coloured pebbles, shells and beach glass. Sort them, decorate your sand castle with them, or create art pieces on the sand with them...like a beach mandala;
- Make a sundial. It's easy – place a stick upright in the sand and place 12 pebbles around it to form your sundial. When's lunch?
- Take a walk along the beach and conduct a lakeside hunt for interesting objects. Then arrange them on the sand and take a picture.
- Look for tracks in the sand. Can you tell which are from a bird? A snake? A dog? A human?
- Use your senses and make a listwhat do you hear? The waves lapping the shore, the wind, other people, birds. What else? What do you smell? The wet sand, sunscreen, a wet dog, what else?



Beach Mandala



Beach Sundial



NATURE TRAILS AND PADDLES IN THE LONG POINT WATERSHED: - A FAMILY GUIDE -

NATURE TRAILS

Ravine Creek Trail and Beach Trail, Pt. Burwell Provincial Park

Ownership: Ontario Parks (www.ontarioparks.com)

Location: 9 Wilson Line, Port Burwell.

Length of Trails: Ravine Creek Trail is a 1 km loop, Beach Trail is 2 km return.

Features: The hike has several sets of stairs to help explore ravines and small cold-water streams. Steep bluffs shelter stands of oak and maple. Between bluffs and warm water's edge are ribbons of dunes, beach savanna and meadow. Great for viewing spring migrations of songbirds and fall migrations of raptors, monarch butterflies, blue jays and dragonflies.

Note: Day use/camping fees apply from Victoria Day weekend through Thanksgiving weekend.

Long Point Birding Trail - Big Creek National Wildlife Area

Ownership: Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada (www.ec.gc.ca)

Location: 96 Wolven St. (Hwy #59), Pt. Rowan.

Parking lot is on the west side, about 2.5 km past the intersection of Lakehore Road and Hwy #59 along The

Causeway heading to Long Point.

Length of Trail: 2 km loop

Features: The extensive wetlands of this National Wildlife Area provides essential habitat for dragonflies, frogs, turtles, marsh birds (like the American Bittern and Sedge Wren), ducks, geese, muskrats and many other species. During Spring and Fall migration, more than 300 different bird species rest and feed in the area, including stately Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes. Two viewing platforms provide panoramic vistas of the 613 hectare marsh.

Note: The NWA is open to the public from mid-May to mid-September.

Bird Studies Canada Headquarters

Ownership: Bird Studies Canada (www.bsc-eoc.org)

Location: 115 Front Rd., P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan.

Length of Trail: 1.2 km

Features: The 13 hectare property is interlaced with trails and several ponds providing excellent viewing opportunities for shore birds, including sandpipers and herons, as well as frogs, turtles, and numerous dragonfly and damselfly species. A wooden platform at the southeast corner of the property provides a great view of the Inner Bay of Long Point. In Spring and Fall thousands of ducks, geese and Tundra Swans can be observed on calm, shallow waters of the Inner Bay.

Port Rowan Wetlands

Ownership: Norfolk County

Location: This trail is located off of Hunter Drive North in Port Rowan. From Highway 59, head northeast on Front/Lakeshore Road. Turn left onto Hunter Drive and

ows of the Dedrick Creek floodplain. A great place to look for salamanders under logs, identify spring wild flowers and fall mushrooms, look for birds, or take in a night hike and owl prow! A Backus Woods is also popular for snow shoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter. Interpretive signs are found along the extensive trail network.

Forest Capital Trail, St. Williams Conservation Reserve

Ownership: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (www.mnr.gov.on.ca). Also www.swcr.ca

Location: 885 Norfolk County Hwy 24, St Williams.

The trail entrance is beside the former St. Williams Forestry Interpretive Centre on Highway #24 just west of Forestry Farm Road.

Length of Trail: 2.5 km loop

Features: This trail passes some tree nursery plots owned by St. Williams Nursery and Ecology Centre, through mature mixed forest dominated by oak and maple, old pine plantations, open sand ridges and pit, a marsh, and a short bridge that crosses Dedrick creek. Listen for the chattering of Red Squirrels, drumming from Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and look for Brown Trout in the creek. Interpretive signs are found along the trail.

Lookout Bluff Trail, Turkey Point Provincial Park

Ownership: Ontario Parks (www.ontarioparks.com)

Location: 194 Turkey Point Rd, Turkey Point. On passing the park office look for trail entrance to your right.

Length of Trail: 2 km loop

Features: The trail brochure and interpretive signs focus on how early settlers, loggers and, later, tree

continue to the trailhead

Length of Trail: 1.2 km

Features: This short loop circles the old sewage lagoon and features restored native tallgrass prairie, tree plantings, and small wetlands/vernal pools, which provide habitat for reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals and pollinating insects. The trail is mainly crushed stone and features a lookout platform and a number of interpretive signs and benches. A great place to observe waterfowl, turtles, snakes, and insects. Numerous nest boxes are home to Tree Swallows, which are fascinating to observe.

Lake Erie Farms/Andy and Helen Spriet Trail

Ownership: Nature Conservancy of Canada (www.natureconservancy.ca)

Location: 453 Norfolk County Rd. #60, Walsingham.

Length of Trail: 1.5 km loop, which attaches to a 2 km return portion.

Features: Interpretive signs along the trail describe restoration of agricultural land back to natural habitat on the property. The trail travels through Carolinian forest and former farmland that has been planted with seed of 100 native plants including grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees. The fields are covered in wildflowers throughout the summer and fall.

Note: Seasonal hunting is allowed on this property, which is closed from 1 November to 20 December, and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from late April to the end of May.

nursery production, impacted the extensive forests and oak savanna that once existed here. Learn about how the land has gradually returned to its natural state and how that has allowed the diversity of plants and animals to return. The trail brings hikers to the Bluff and a great lookout over the village of Turkey Point and Lake Erie.

Note: Day use/camping fees apply from Victoria Day weekend through Thanksgiving weekend.

Caution! Poison ivy is predominant along this trail!

Marion Shivas Trail and Hemlock Loop Trail, Spooky Hollow Nature Sanctuary

Ownership: Hamilton Naturalists Club (www.hamilton-nature.org)

Location: Entrance is at the bottom of the hill on Spooky Hollow Road.

Length of Trail: Marion Shivas Trail is a 1.7 km loop and Hemlock Loop Trail is 0.5 km.

Features: The property, owned by the Hamilton Naturalists Club, consists of forested hills and valleys with some unusual species like American Chestnut. In the Spring the trails are a great place to look for wildflowers and late Fall brings a cornucopia of mushroom species. Look for Brown Trout in Fisher's Creek, a clear, sand bottomed, cold water stream that runs through the property.

Note: Permission to hike the trail is required – contact land@hamiltonnature.org or 905-381-0329.

Spring Arbour Farm Nature Reserve

Ownership: Long Point Basin Land Trust (<https://long-pointlandtrust.ca>)

Location: 305 Concession Road 7, Langton, ON

Length of Trail: 2.3 km

Features: The former owners of this 49 acre property operated an organic fruit and vegetable farm. They planted windbreaks, removed decades of garbage, created buffer zones with native plants around the Venison Creek valley, and remediated the soil. Today, restoration efforts continue via the Long Point Basin Land Trust.

An easy loop trail meanders along the open fields and forest edge making for a pleasant outing with family. The fields are being restored as oak savannah. Because the property is part of a larger network of conservation lands that extend along Venison Creek it's very diverse area for wildlife including insects, birds, wild turkey and deer. Bring your binoculars!

Note: Trails maintained May 1st to October 31st

Backus Woods Trails [Easy] [Interpretive signs]

Ownership: Nature Conservancy of Canada (www.natureconservancy.ca)

Location: 2 main trail heads – 1329 Concession Rd. 3, Port Rowan and 218 Highway # 24, Walsingham.

Length of Trails: Over 15 km of trails ranging from 1 km to 4 km loops. Maps are posted at each trail head entrance and.

Features: A nature family's dream come true! This 300+ hectare mature Carolinian forest, features an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Hike through rich upland and bottomland forests, wooded swamps, and the wet mead-

Hay Creek Conservation Area

Ownership: Long Point Region Conservation Authority (www.lprca.on.ca)

Location: 241 Port Ryerse Rd, Simcoe. From Simcoe, head south on #24, left on Radical Road. At Ryerse Road turn right, parking on right.

Length of Trail: 2 km

Features: The trail loops through an old Red Pine plantation and Carolinian forest featuring some beautiful tree species such as Flowering Dogwood, Pignut Hickory, Kentucky Coffee Tree and, in the spring, a good diversity of spring flowers on the forest floor. Along the reservoir and on the footbridge Belted Kingfishers and Blue Herons can often be seen. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are popular winter activities in this conservation area.

Notes: The foot bridge across the reservoir is permanently closed. This is a popular dog walking trail. Dogs are frequently off-leash.

Wheeler Trail, Selkirk Provincial Park

Ownership: Ontario Parks (www.ontarioparks.com)

Location: 151 Wheeler's Sideroad, Selkirk. Length of Trail: 2 km loop

Features: This trail, inside the provincial park, winds through the woods and meadows of the park. A short boardwalk spans the marsh providing a close up look at a wetland environment. The woods are dominated by red and white oaks, with maple, cherry, ash, and beech trees mixed in. You'll also see hardy Shagbark Hickory trees with their distinctive peeling bark. These trees thrive in the clay soils and flat landscape because of their preference for moist areas and their ability to

PADDLES

Big Creek

Start: Rowan Mills C.A. Access Point

Finish: On Big Creek Marsh along the Long Point Causeway

Directions: From Highway #59 turn west on Norfolk County Road #60. A small driveway on the left leads you to a MNR-owned parking lot with canoe access to Big Creek.

Length of Paddle: Approximately 4 hours. Be prepared for an occasional short portage or lifting your water vessel over fallen trees.

Features: This river valley corridor has an excellent variety of typical valley rim, slope, and bottomland habitats. You'll pass through upland woodlands containing oak, hickory, tulip, and sassafras, as well as floodplain depressions comprised of cedar swamps. Deer, Wood Ducks, Spotted Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron and other wildlife are commonly seen.

Caution! In Spring Big Otter Creek may be swollen and fast-moving, and should be avoided by all but the most experienced paddlers.

Caution! This paddle winds through hunt club properties at Port Royal. Avoid paddling in this section of Big Creek and the Marsh during waterfowl hunting season.

Big Creek Marsh

Ownership: Canadian Wildlife Service (www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change)

Directions: Heading south on Highway #59 onto the Causeway, your canoe or kayak can be launched beside the bridge where Big Creek flows into the Inner

resist the often high winds off Lake Erie.

Note: Day use/camping fees apply from Victoria Day weekend through Labour Day weekend.

RAIL TRAILS

The rail trails in Norfolk County radiate out from Simcoe to Delhi, Waterford and Pt. Dover, and are all family-friendly. Most of the trails are crushed gravel with some paved sections near the towns. All trails are multi-use for hiking, biking, dog walking and cross-country skiing in the winter. No motorized vehicles are allowed. There are benches along the trails and at many trail access points. Keep in mind these are all one-way trails so you'll need to turn around at some point to return to your vehicle.

The Norfolk Sunrise Trail is just 3.8km long but is the connector to the 3 longer rail trails. The main access point for this trail is off of Davis Street East behind Rona. There is a parking lot at the Lions Ball Park, directly adjacent to the trail.

The Delhi Rail Trail, part of the Trans-Canada Trail, is a 13.8km trail that takes you from the outskirts of Delhi into the heart of Simcoe, where it connects with the Norfolk Sunrise Trail. It passes through old fields and farmland, through woodlands, and by a solar farm. There are several sections of tallgrass prairie that host native flower species like Butterflyweed and Milkweed.

Bay of Long Point.

Length of Paddle: 1 to 4 hours

Features: The wetlands of the Big Creek National Wildlife Area (NWA) provides essential habitat for an astounding assortment of plants, insects, fish, reptiles and amphibians, birds and mammals. The area is a major staging ground for migratory shore birds and ducks. A paddle through the Marsh allows good opportunities to see Muskrats, Great Blue Herons, several species of turtles and frogs and various marsh bird species.

Note: The NWA is open to the public from mid-May to mid-September.

Deer Creek Conservation Area

Ownership: Long Point Region Conservation Area (www.lprca.on.ca)

Directions: The entrance to the conservation area is on Norfolk County Road #45 about 1 km west of Highway #59.

Length of Paddle: Varies.

Features: The 80-acre reservoir is a great place for beginner canoeists and kayakers. Enjoy a day paddling and exploring the reservoir and its many inlets, and viewing the plentiful wildlife. Deer Creek C.A. is one of the premier fishing spots in the Long Point Region watershed. Drop a line and enjoy fishing for rainbow and brown trout, largemouth bass, yellow perch and panfish. In mid-October the maples along the reservoir and Deer Creek provide breathtaking colours and fantastic photo opportunities.

Note: Day use/camping fees apply from Victoria Day weekend through Labour Day weekend. Canoe rentals

The Waterford Heritage Trail, part of the Trans-Canada Trail, is a 19km decommissioned rail line that connects to the Brantford Rail Trail to the north, and the Sunrise Trail to the south. Woodlands, fields, wetlands and grasslands line this rail trail, giving you a diverse landscape to view as you make your way into the town of Waterford. As you head out of Waterford you'll pass through farmers' fields, forests and wetlands. The trail supports a variety of activities including hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing.

The Lynn Valley Trail is 10km long and runs between Simcoe and Port Dover. It follows the Lynn River, crosses four trestle bridges, passes through wooded habitat and farm fields, and follows historic and early pioneer travel routes. Marshes and ponds along the route resound with frog song in the spring and are lined with wild flowers. The trail is a natural wildlife corridor and a great spot to practice "birding by ear" skills.



are available during the conservation area's operating season.

Waterford Ponds (Waterford North Conservation Area)

Ownership: Long Point Region Conservation Area (<https://lprca.on.ca>)

Location: 226 Concession 8 Townsend, Waterford, ON NOE 1Y0

Features: Whether you want to take the family camping, enjoy a quiet picnic, paddle a canoe or kayak, or catch "the big one", Waterford North Conservation Area is a great choice for outdoor fun. This popular conservation area is also known as Waterford Ponds. A favourite with anglers, the three ponds at Waterford North Conservation Area are home to an array of fish species including largemouth bass, northern pike and a variety of panfish. Pickerel Lake, Willow Pond and Bass Lake, the three ponds located in the conservation area, are excellent examples of gravel pit rehabilitation, with deep rocky bottoms and pronounced shorelines. Launch points outside of the C.A. include off Alice St. and Thompson Rd.

Note: Day use/camping fees apply from Victoria Day weekend through Labour Day weekend.



SLIMY, SCALY AND SLITHERY

In our Long Point Watershed we have 7 species of salamanders, 2 species of toads, 8 species of frogs, 7 species of turtles, and 11 species of snakes.

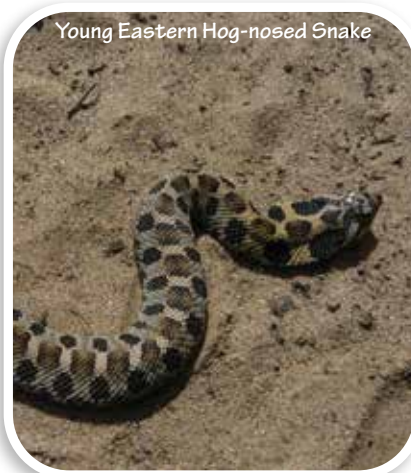
Where to look for amphibians and reptiles:

- Salamanders – In ponds, and under leaf litter and rotting logs
- Frogs and Turtles – ponds, marshes, swamps
- Snakes – sunny exposed rocks and logs, marshy areas, in trees, woodpiles

Check out our website at www.naturescalling.ca for our species identification guides.



Spotted Turtle



Young Eastern Hog-nosed Snake



Spotted Salamander

Did you know? A female American Toad will lay between 4,000 to 7,000 eggs in the water?



Blandings Turtle

FROG SONG

In late April and May visit a nearby pond or marsh and stand or sit quietly. Soon a cacophony of frog song will start up.

Hints on how to identify species of spring frogs and toads:

- Spring Peeper – a loud peep, often deafening when many peepers are calling
- Chorus Frog - a rasp that sounds like running your finger along the teeth of a comb
- American Toad – a long and continuous trill
- Wood Frog – a duck-like quack
- Leopard Frog – a long snore-like sound



Wood Frog



Western Chorus Frog



Leopard Frog



Grey Tree Frog

SALAMANDER HUNTING

Salamanders are fascinating animals, most spending part of their life in the water and part on land.

How to find them:

- Look under logs in the woods. Be careful to be very careful when you return the log to its original place so you don't squish animals living under the log
- Take flashlights and head into the woods on warm early spring nights after a rain. Shine your light in the water to locate mating salamanders and their egg masses.



Amphibian Hike



Eastern Newts

Did you know that gram for gram, the spring peeper is one of the loudest animals on earth?

Check out our website at www.naturescalling.ca for our species identification guides.



THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

Don't be Cavity Free!

Cavity trees, which are partially hollowed out dying and dead trees, are an important source of food and shelter for many forest animals.

Cavities are excavated by birds like woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches. They can also be formed after a branch breaks off or from decay.

Over 50 species of birds and mammals use cavities for food, roosting, nesting, rearing their young, escaping from predators and hibernating.

Look up and see if you can find some tree cavities!



Rotting Away

Did you know that, gram for gram, a dead and rotting tree often contains more living matter than a live tree?

That's because decaying logs are full of insects, bacteria, fungi and other species that break dead trees back down to soil for the next generation.

If you see a "dead" log, look closely for all the life it contains.

LIFE UNDER A LOG

Carefully turn a rotting log over and see how many of these you can find.



Ground Beetle



Moss



Snake



Millipede



Centipede



Ant



Red-backed Salamander



Spider



Mushroom



Worm



Sowbug (Pillbug)



Slug

THE WOODS AT NIGHT

As dusk approaches many animals look for a safe place to spend the night and go to sleep. But the woods are alive with many other animals at night! Moths, salamanders, owls, bats, deer, skunks, and coyotes are some animals that are active at night.

Going for a trail hike in the woods at dusk or after dark can be a stimulating experience! All you need is a good LED headlamp or flashlight.

Here's a few things to do in the woods at night:

- Go on an Owl Prowl. First familiarize yourself with the sound of common owls in the area – the Eastern Screech Owl has a horse-like whinny. The Great Horned Owl has a more typical “hoot” – then listen for them at night;
- Use your flashlight to examine leaves and branches of trees to find night-feeding caterpillars;
- Hang a white sheet and then shine a strong light on it to attract moths and other insects. How many can you identify?
- Make a moth bait out of ripe bananas, beer and brown sugar. Let it ferment in the sun for a few days. Then paint it on tree trunks. Return at night to observe all the moths that feed on the mixture.
- Howl like a coyote and see if you can get one to answer back.



Underwing Moth



Screech Owl

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COLLECTING MEMORIES

Years ago naturalists would shoot and stuff “specimens” of different species of animals to study them. Plant enthusiasts would collect plants from the wild and press them. Kids collected insects and pinned them in collection boxes.

Today, we realize that taking plants and animals from the wild is not a good thing. Thank goodness for digital cameras, iPods, and cell phones!! Now everyone can make collections without affecting the environment around us!

Here's some fun things to do with your camera:

- Make a photo album with pictures of flowers.
- Take pictures of different butterflies and when you get home see how many you can identify using a field guide.
- Create a trail journal and add photos of all the interesting things you saw.
- Have a contest to see who can photograph the most species of animals on your hike or paddle.

Send your best photos to us at info@naturecalling.ca and we'll post a selection of them on our website at www.naturecalling.ca



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TREES PLEASE!

Trees come in a variety of shapes, colours and sizes...and so do the leaves that grow on them. Leaf identification is the best way for a beginner to start learning the many different tree species. As you begin to become more comfortable in identifying leaves, try using other clues to identify trees including bark, twigs and buds.

As you search for and explore leaves, can you find evidence of animal life among them? Can you find a leaf that has been nibbled on? Or maybe a leaf that has provided a home for an insect? What other clues can you find? How might an animal use a leaf?

Your hand is like a leaf - look at the underside of your wrist and see all the veins running from your arm into your hand. Leaves also have veins that carry important nutrients - can you find them?

While on your hike, look for leaves that have fallen on the ground. Can you match them to the leaves below? How many different species can you find?

Did you know that beech trees
can live up to 300 years?



☐ American Beech



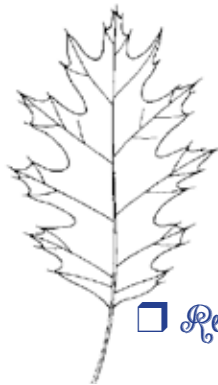
☐ Sassafras



☐ Sugar Maple



☐ Tuliptree



☐ Red Oak



☐ White Oak



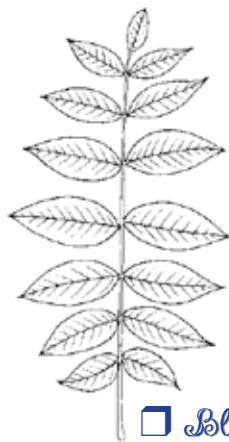
☐ Yellow Birch



☐ Black Cherry



☐ White Ash



☐ Black Walnut



☐ Shagbark
Hickory



☐ Eastern
Cottonwood

Why not start a leaf collection? You can find instructions on how to press and store them on our website: www.naturescalling.ca

BE A TREE DETECTIVE!

The formulas below help you determine how tall and how old a tree is. Of course, these are estimates only as the soil, climate, tree health, and site conditions have a significant effect on annual growth of a tree.

For this activity all you need is a **tape measure and a calculator**. A tree identification guide will be useful for the second exercise.

How tall is that tree?

Start by standing next to a tree you want to measure.

Walk away in a straight line from the tree.

Every 5 strides, stop, bend over and look back through your legs at the tree.

Stop when you can see the top of the tree.

Remember to keep counting your strides.

The distance you are from the tree is roughly equal to its height. Each stride is equal to 50 cm.

Example:

If you have to walk 20 strides, multiply 20 strides x 50 cm = 1000 cm, or 10 metres tall.

How old is that tree?

Identify the species of tree you want to age.

Measure the circumference of the tree, in inches, at 4'6" (137 cm) from the ground.

Determine the diameter by dividing the circumference by 3.14.

Multiply the diameter in inches by the factor below:

 Ash species	x5
 Beech, American	x6
 Birch, Yellow	x4
 Hickory, Shagbark	x8
 Maple, Silver	x3
 Maple, Sugar	x6
 Oak, Red	x4
 Oak, White	x5
 Sycamore	x4
 Tuliptree	x4
 Walnut, Black	x4

Example: A Tuliptree has a circumference of 5' 10" (70"). Divide by 3.14 to give you a diameter of 22.3". Now multiple by 4. The tree is roughly 89 years old.



Tulip Tree

FOSTERING NATURE PLAY AT HOME

Play, especially outdoor play, fuels healthy brain development in children. It promotes creativity and imagination, engenders a sense of place and self, fosters cognitive, emotional and moral development, and improves motor skills such as balance, coordination and agility. In short, play is important work for young minds!

It makes sense then that nature connections start at home, where children and families spend most of their time. The backyard becomes the outdoor classroom!

The first step is to make your property nature friendly. Plant a pollinator garden, build a small pond, leave areas unmowed, plant trees. Then add things for children to play and explore in - build a sandpit, provide balancing logs and other wooden structures to climb, build a mud kitchen, provide loose parts (stones, branches and twigs, pine cones, etc.).

Step 2 – let the kids loose! Unstructured play, when providing plenty of stimulatory materials, leads to hours of fun and exploration.



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JOIN OUR NORFOLK FAMILY NATURE CLUB

Do you like getting outside with your family, but sometimes need some extra inspiration? Do you want to meet other families that share a passion for nature and exploring? Join our Family Nature Club!

At a time when children are spending less time in nature than any previous generation, family nature clubs are a growing movement to reconnect and build a community around fun and educational experiences outside. They forage life long bonds between people and nature - and we have some much nature in Norfolk County to enjoy!

The Norfolk Family Nature club holds events once a month and welcomes new members. From hikes in the woods and nature craft workshops to winter fun like lantern walks and sledding, an emphasis is placed on child-led discovery and unstructured time in nature. Parents/ caregivers attend events alongside their kids and are welcome to suggest ideas and plan future events. For more information check out www.naturescalling.ca or send an email to norfolkfamilynatureclub@gmail.com.

These books will be helpful:



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BE SMART! PLAN YOUR ADVENTURE!

- Listen to the forecast before heading out on your hike or paddle.
- Wear appropriate clothes and footwear.
- Bring a trail map, compass, GPS unit, and/or cell phone.
- Pack some snacks and water.
- Don't forget a First Aid kit, sunscreen and insect repellent.

PADDLING POINTS

- Use designated access points only.
- Be alert to water level conditions.
- Wear a lifejacket.
- Follow Boating Safety Regulations (www.tc.gc.ca).
- Don't trespass on private land.
- Be prepared to maneuver around or over log jams and low hanging branches.

Be a Trail Keeper!

Bring an extra plastic bag to carry out any garbage you find along the trail.

NATURE TRAIL ETHICS

- Before using a trail, be aware of rules and restrictions.
- Stay on trails – avoid trampling vegetation.
- Keep your best friend (dog) on a leash.
- After looking under logs and rocks, carefully place them back the way they were.
- Don't handle salamanders or frogs if you have insect repellent or sunscreen on your hands.
- Don't pick wildflowers, or harvest any mushrooms, nuts or fruit from protected areas.
- Be as quiet as possible and enjoy the nature around you.
- Pack it in, pack it out! Don't litter!



“TAKE ONLY PHOTOGRAPHS,
LEAVE NOTHING BUT MEMORIES”

!!! CAUTION !!!



Leaves of three, let it be!

Poison Ivy is commonly found on local trails. It grows as a ground-plant, vine or shrub. In all three forms the leaves grow in distinctive groups of three where the middle leaf has a much longer stalk than the other two. The edges of the leaves can be smooth or toothed.

Contact with poison ivy at any time of year can cause severe rashes in sensitive people.

The best way to avoid poison ivy is to stay on the trail.



Ticks and Lyme Disease

There are two types of ticks found in our area – the larger Wood (or Dog) Tick and the smaller Deer (or Black-legged) Tick. Both will feed on human blood, but it is only the Deer Tick that transmits Lyme Disease.



Not all Deer Ticks carry the disease, and even if they do it usually takes more than 24 hours of being attached and feeding before the disease is transmitted. Most people that are infected will develop a bulls-eye rash at the site of the bite within 3 to 30 days.

Tick avoidance:

- Stay on the trail. Avoid walking in tall grassy areas.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants and closed shoes – tuck pant legs into socks.
- Insect repellents containing DEET can be sprayed on pant legs and socks.
- Wear light-coloured clothing to make ticks easier to detect.
- Always conduct a “tick check” on yourself, your kids, and your dog after each hike.

To learn more about ticks (including tips on removing an embedded tick) and Lyme Disease visit the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit website at www.hnhu.org

"The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need"
- Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*



Our mission is to connect youth and families with nature and the outdoors, to raise awareness and appreciation for our natural world, and to foster a strong environmental ethic through community-based education and hands-on activities that benefit our local environment.

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