

# Stewardship & Citizenship:

## Partnership for Our Future

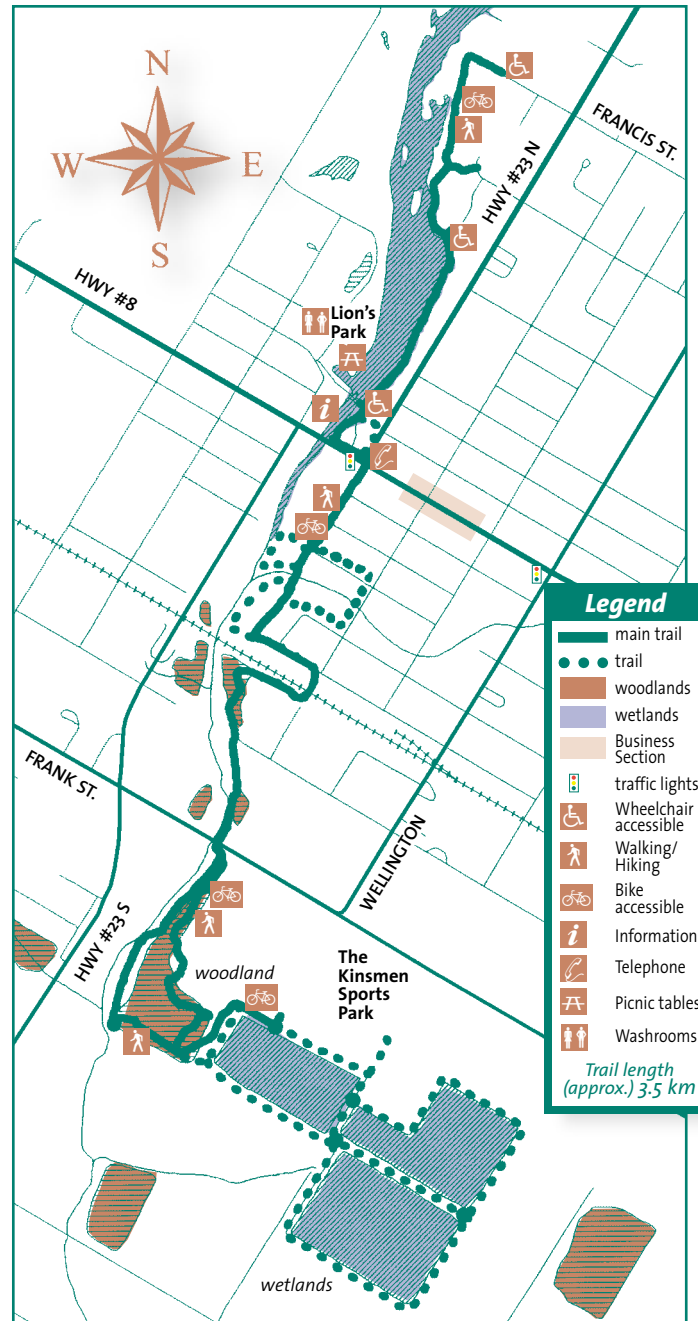
We can work together to restore balanced, natural ecosystems while still allowing residential and industrial use. Emphasis is needed on the development of community-based partnerships to stimulate awareness of all aspects of our environment. Once we truly understand why it is so important to protect and restore our natural environment, we will make it our choice to do so.

To begin...

**Experience** the trail.

**Think** about how Nature's processes create balanced cycles of growth.

**Ask** how you can help and follow through!



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THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION  
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



MITCHELL  
OPTIMIST



Ontario

# West Perth Thames Nature Trail & Wetlands

## Stewardship:

taking  
responsibility  
for actions  
today, to  
protect our  
environment  
tomorrow.

There is a trail,  
unique in its diversity, located  
in and around, the heart of  
Mitchell, Ontario.

This trail  
represents  
vision and  
desire.

*Vision* to  
create natural  
habitats, such  
as wetlands, in  
new locations.  
*Desire* to retain  
current valuable  
features, while  
restoring  
features which  
once existed.

This trail is the  
**West Perth  
Thames  
Nature  
Trail.**



## Nature is 'messy'

Often, there is a misconception that Nature needs to be 'cleaned up'. As humans, we are trained to strive for simple orderliness. Ideally, our streets are paved, our homes are tidy and our gardens are planted in neat rows. We consider anything else to be messy! A natural community has a huge diversity of living organisms and although it may look messy to us, it is that complexity that allows natural communities to be balanced.

Take a look at the water's edge that is neatly mowed, clipped and trimmed. There's only water and grass.

Now look to where the water's edge has plants of varying heights, shapes, colours and types. Get much closer and you'll see signs of life – tracks, nests, tunnels, or evidence of feeding activities. There are a variety of aquatic creatures which find food and shelter along 'messy' water edges like these, not along the 'neat' edges.

We may think we are helping by clearing away those 'weeds' at the water's edge, but we have to stop to consider what we are really doing! With every push of the mower, application of fertilizers/pesticides, every clear cut, or brush fire we are disrupting the natural world. Sometimes destroying the balance in an ecosystem that has been in place since nature took hold of this earth, long before anyone can remember.

## When I was a kid...

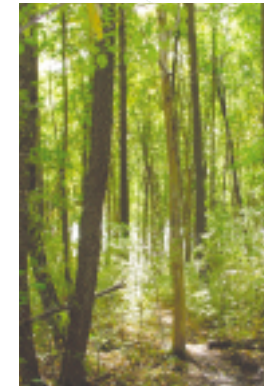
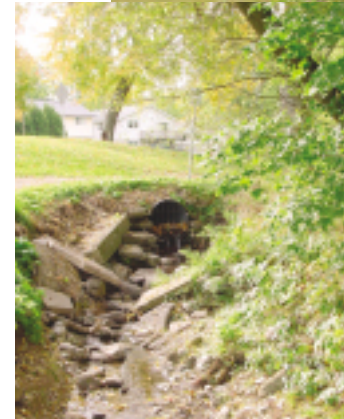
Have you ever heard anyone say that?

We've all heard about the snowdrifts up to the roof of the house, the 10 mile walks to school and the favourite after-school fishing hole. Things were much different back then. The air was fresh, the water was clean. Our environment hadn't yet been degraded.

How willing are we now to drink from the rivers and eat the fish that live in them? More often than not, on a hot summer day it's not even safe to swim in our lakes anymore.

## If we were to pay attention, what would Nature be telling us?

Our natural environment is not as balanced as it once was. It is not able to sustain itself. Within our own backyard we have an amazing opportunity. An opportunity to begin restoring some natural balance. An opportunity to revive some of those old memories we've all heard about at one time. Make no mistake – this is not going to be an easy task. We will not be able to accomplish what needs to be done within the span of a few days, or even weeks. Bit by bit, it took a long time to break down the balance of our ecosystems, and it will take many years to undo the damage we have done. However, if we think long-term, our children, grandchildren and their children will be able to tell their descendants about going down to the fishing hole to catch fresh fish for dinner.



## This trail is a valuable resource

The West Perth Thames Nature Trail and Wetlands offers variety...

- For all ages & fitness levels
- For many activities & interests
- cycling, walking, jogging, dog-walking, bird-watching, photography



## Natural Areas...

... include all those features of our landscape that have neither been created, nor significantly altered by man. They include **wetlands, uplands and aquatic areas**. A healthy natural environment has a diversity of these features that are interconnected on the landscape. The natural processes that occur in these areas provide two essential components that humans and wildlife need to survive... **oxygen and clean water.**



## The West Perth Thames Nature Trail

Explore it, Respect it, Enjoy it.

What do you see along the trail? Do you understand what you are seeing?

**Wetlands** are areas that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water. The water table could be at or near the surface. These areas are vital for the transition between land and open water. Wetlands are *essential* to the health of our landscape. They maintain water supplies, improve water quality, reduce flooding, and provide habitat for a great range of wildlife including many rare species. In addition, wetlands provide valuable resource products and support a number of recreational and educational activities. Now here's the bad news; over 80% of the wetlands in Perth County have been lost!

**Upland** areas are those which include woodlots, hedgerows, and grasslands. Forested uplands provide environmental and economic benefits such as erosion protection, water retention, wildlife habitat, and the sustainable harvest of woodland products. In the past 200 years, southern Ontario has been transformed from a predominantly forested landscape to one dominated by agricultural, industrial and urban land uses. In Perth county alone over 90% of our original forest cover has been lost.

**Aquatic** areas include streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, agricultural drains, and floodplains that are seasonally inundated with water. Since water is an essential element for human life, the health of our aquatic environment often reflects on human health. These areas play a role in the recharging of our groundwater aquifers. They provide habitat for a great number of wildlife species, as well as providing recreational opportunities for our community. A great majority of water-courses in Perth County have been altered to improve agricultural drainage.

Each component of the trail is unique in its own right. For more in-depth information please refer to the brochures available for the different aspects of the trail.

