



The Maitland Trail Guide

**Including associated trails
in the area of
Goderich, Ontario**

The Maitland Trail Guide

Published by the Maitland Trail Association
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Please Note

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, we are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide. Plus, things change. If you notice any changes or omissions that should be included in the next edition of this book please contact us at the address above.

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PREFACE

The idea of the first Maitland Trail guidebook was born in September 1998, when Daniel Holm and Patrick Donnelly hiked the Maitland Trail, without a guide book, from end to end as a 40th birthday celebration. It took them two days and some occasional head-scratching.

In collaboration with the MTA Board, it was decided to prepare a guidebook for release in celebration of the Maitland Trail Association's 25th Anniversary. Throughout 1999, Dan and Pat returned to the trail, hiking it in sections while making notes. Months of work by many people followed and at the MTA's 25th anniversary celebration in 2000, the first edition made its debut.

In the seven years since the first edition was published, thousands of hikers have appreciated its guidance. The need to print more copies gave us the opportunity to update the information; we used new technologies such as the Global Positioning System (G.P.S.) to map the trail fairly accurately. (G.P.S. can underestimate distances by up to five percent, so other measurement methods were sometimes used to double check.) The Geographic Information System (G.I.S.) provided accurate base (NAD 83) maps. Thus, while much of the original guidebook remains, there are many updates and changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Guide:

In January 2007, a group of Maitland Trail Association members started out on a journey with the goal of creating a revised and improved Maitland Trail Guide. Initial members of the group were Marg Bushell, Anne Capper, Patrick Capper, Cindy Fisher, Heinz Hoernig, Wendy Hoernig, Con Melady, Beth Ross, and John Thompson; they were joined by Ken Magee in the early March.

Others helped along the way, including: Lower Maitland Stewardship Group, Mava Holland, Jack Imhoff, Mike Malhiot, Mike Pullen, and Tim Wendel.

Thanks to The Ontario Trillium Foundation for the generous grant which made this guide book possible.



"The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario"

Much appreciation to the County of Huron Planning and Development Department GIS staff for their mapping expertise – in particular, Kristine Nickle and Nicole Brindley. Many thanks to Dwayne Rising, Goderich Print Shop, for his patience and skill.

The Maitland Trail:

The Maitland Trail would not exist without the generous agreement of the landowners along the Maitland Trail – they kindly grant access over their property and for that we are truly thankful.

Good trails are maintained trails and the dedicated members of both the trail-work crew and the trail rangers, who are essential to our system, deserve our sincere thanks. Trail rangers do routine cleanups and maintain their individual sections. Trail-work coordinator Heinz Hoernig and his team build and repair needed structures and carry out major jobs such as the removal of fallen trees.

It is the MTA's wish that this revised guide will accompany you on wonderful hikes, exploring the beautiful Maitland River Valley and area.

JOINING THE MAITLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION:

Since 1975, the Maitland Trail Association has been providing hikers and nature lovers with paths they can use to access the wonders of the Maitland River Valley. With a strong membership and a committed Board of Directors, the Association is dedicated to providing local residents and visitors with a convenient, and safe, hiking experience in an environmentally responsible way.

You can support the Maitland Trail Association by becoming a member. Members receive a membership badge, newsletters and notices of planned events. End-to-End badges are also available. The open annual meeting in November reports on the year's activities, trail maintenance and development updates, plans for the coming year and features a guest speaker.

Membership funds support communication amongst the members, the purchase of materials to maintain the trail and the cost of trail insurance. The trail is maintained by organized volunteers and monitored by volunteer trail rangers; we heartily invite you to join us for fresh air, exercise, rewarding tasks and camaraderie.

The Maitland Trail Association is a registered non-profit association and tax receipts are issued for donations.

The Maitland Trail Association – PO Box 443, Goderich Ontario N7A 4C7
Individual and family memberships are available.
www.maitlandtrail.ca



Membership Badge

Our mission is to maintain and develop trails in the Maitland Valley for discovery and appreciation of the natural environment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Maitland Trail Association shall strive to adhere to its guiding principles being:

1. Protecting the natural environment of the Maitland River Valley.
2. Providing safe, and where possible handicapped accessible, opportunities for physical activity, nature appreciation and recreation for the community.
3. Fostering community involvement and stewardship.

Waterfall lookout at 9.1 km.



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USER'S GUIDE

THE BOOK

Descriptions: These are meant to confirm your location on the trail as well as prepare you for general trail conditions. Side trails may be offered as alternate routes. Many interesting features of the trail, as described, spice up the text with entertaining and educational insights.

The main trail is in regular type and side trails are described in shaded boxes. Bold is used for names of important locations either for navigational reference or as points of interest that may be described in a sidebar or other text.

Maps: A legend of symbols is provided on each map.

THE TRAIL

Trails in this guide are used at your own risk.

- Outdoor trails change with weather conditions; they can become slippery when wet, especially wet un-shingled wood structures covered with fallen leaves and wet earth slopes.
- There may also be broken boards on bridges and boardwalks, un-cleared windfalls and tripping hazards from tree roots, etc.
- Please let the association know if you encounter any hazards on the trail.
- Please also abide by the trail users code - see outside back cover of this guide.

Blazing

Look for these painted symbols that mark the trail. They are painted on trees, posts, concrete and steel structures at eye height off the ground. They may also be found on a rock or on the road when there is no alternative.

- Main Trail - white blazes.
- Side Trail - blue blazes.
- One vertical blaze - You're on the trail!
- Two vertical blazes offset - Turn in the trail! Read bottom to top to determine the direction of the turn. Verify that the turn is correct by confirming the next vertical blaze.
- One horizontal blaze above a vertical blaze - you've reached the end of the trail!



A left turn blaze

7

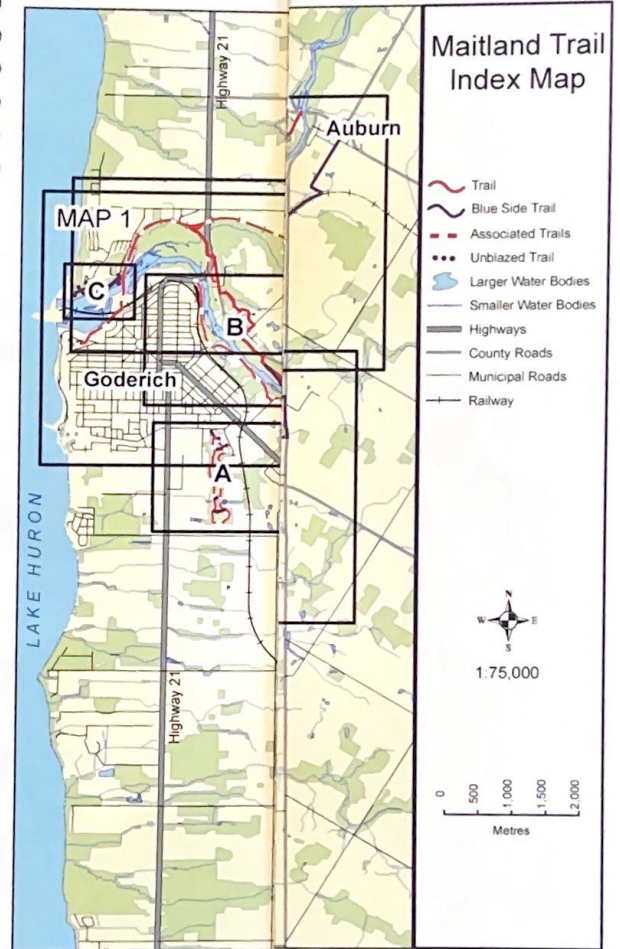
HISTORY OF THE MAITLAND TRAIL

The Maitland Trail Association was formed on July 2nd, 1975 to create a trail that would follow the path of the Maitland River.

After the first burst of enthusiasm and activity in the early years, when the route was chosen, landowners identified and contacted, and the actual work started, progress on the Trail's development slowed down for a few years. It was thanks to two dedicated, hard-working individuals, Rod Lafontaine and Bill Wisser, that the idea didn't fizzle out. These two men were eventually able to encourage others to become more involved. In recent years, both the Trail and support for it have steadily grown. Now, a group of mostly retirees work every Thursday almost year-round, and other members take part in weekend work parties. Trail Rangers inspect, maintain and report on their sections at least twice a year. The MTA community also has taken part in the federal Katimavik program, whose participants worked with the Thursday team.

The Maitland Trail Association encourages hiking, walking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, photography and nature study as forms of recreation along this Trail. It is built largely on private land through the courtesy of the landowners whose permission is, for the most part, granted for use of the Trail only as a foot path. Motorized vehicles of any type are not permitted on the Maitland Trail except in a few areas where they have been authorized by the landowner. The Maitland Trail is closed one day per year, on December 30th, to ensure landowners' rights.

Great emphasis is placed on making the Trail as gentle on the environment as possible, and work will continue over coming years to improve it even more. Encouraging people to walk and hike can't help but create a certain amount of wear and tear on the actual footpath, no matter what measures are taken. The MTA firmly believes, however, that the benefits far outweigh the few problems encountered. Hikers develop and enhance their love, understanding and concern for our environment and are active in efforts to protect it. Moreover, they are healthier and more fit as a result of this activity. The MTA is very proud of the many positive benefits that are provided to the people of our community and its visitors by the trail system it has created. For most, it has been a labour of love.



MAP A: THE MAITLAND WOODS

Perimeter Length 3.3 km

This trail should take 1 to 1½ hours.

OVERVIEW

The Maitland Woods Trail is basically a flat trail, providing easy walking conditions. Originally an extremely muddy environment a good part of the year, hundreds of hours of labour have turned it into a dry trail for all but the wettest times of year. Drain pipes have been installed, to carry excess water in problem areas and most of the trail has been covered with a layer of gravel. (Reports tell us that an unexpected bonus to the gravel layer is that it makes following the trail possible at night.) As of Sept. '07, 21 boardwalks plus one bridge have been constructed over the most vulnerable areas.

It is a natural environment with a rich diversity of bird, animal and plant life. You can feel like you are far from 'civilization' a good deal of the time, yet you can reach the trail in minutes from any part of town. There are several short trails that cut across the woods, so that your walk can be tailored according to the time available. The intersections are lettered, to help you recognize where you are in the system. Dogs may be walked here, but they MUST be on a leash.

There are four access points: 1) at the south end of the Knights of Columbus parking lot, on Parson's Court, 2) just behind the back of the Knights of Columbus Hall, 3) a walk-in entrance (no parking) on the east side of the Fire Hall on Suncoast Drive and 4) at the east end of Huckins Street (which travels east from the Bluewater Highway (#21) at the south end of town).

This description starts at the Maitland Woods trail entrance at the south end of the Knights of Columbus parking lot, on Parson's Court.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

As you head down the trail, you come to intersection 'A' almost immediately. To walk the main trail, you can go either to your left or to the right. This description heads to the left. As you head out, the first thing that you will notice about this trail is that it

undulates gently, a feature that keeps it always interesting. Initially you pass through mixed woods, including, among others, yellow birch, maples and cedars. After about four minutes, you will cross over three short boardwalks, one right after the other. Shortly after crossing them, notice the huge old yellow birch on the right. This is an excellent example of a tree that grew out of a "nursery stump."¹

A couple of minutes later, you will cross two more short boardwalks and a minute further along, a really long boardwalk with a railing about half-way along where it crosses a small stream. Usually there is open water here, even during the winter, but in very dry summers, there may be mostly mud! This area is also a 'skunk cabbage-ville'. Because this woods has many fallen trees and branches, and is a relatively damp environment for a good part of the year, watch for many varieties of fungi as you travel through - often in beautiful clusters.

At intersection 'B' (632 m) is the first chance to take a 58 m short-cut across the woods to intersection 'G'. A couple more minutes along, notice the large patch of lily of the valley on the left; lily of the valley has beautiful flowers in spring and red berries in fall.

The next intersection is 'C' (905 m) and it provides a 104 m trail across the woods to 'F'. A couple of minutes past this point, the trail brings you out into the open by a large pond with a little island in its centre. This is a good site for spring viewing of nesting Canada geese; turtles and frogs also populate this area. After skirting the pond's western edge, the trail dips back into the woods. A short walk takes you to an opening in an old fence after which is intersection 'D'.

Heading to the right here is an old logging road, (short route to

1 Nursery Stumps/Trees

There are trees that have fallen from old age or in storms, and stumps left after a tree was cut or broken off, that, as they rotted, provided an excellent environment for new growth. Many trees start their life when a seed or nut lands and is caught in such a place and shoots its roots down through the nourishing and protective environment of rotting wood. Such decaying trees and stumps also support the life of countless fungi, insects, bacteria and of course, little critters. In the case of a nursery stump, after decades have passed and the stump has rotted away, the now heavy roots of the young tree growing within are left exposed, looking rather like legs, straddling an empty space. There are many examples of this fascinating phenomena in this woods.

intersection 'E'), and along this side trail there is another lovely small pond (also with an island). In this tranquil setting you will find a large rock commemorating **John Hindmarsh** (see endnote), after whom this part of the trail is named. There is also a bench in memory of another remarkable local man, **Joey Salkeld** (see endnote).

Continuing along the main trail, after you cross two boardwalks, the path turns right, and a few paces further you will see a pond on your right. There are many beech trees in this area (bark looks like an elephant's leg) and also many 'serious' grape vines, draped over their 'host' trees. Next, at about two minute intervals you will cross first a set of three small boardwalks, (after which is intersection 'E' - the side-trail to 'D') then a longer boardwalk, and finally an even longer one that crosses a swamp. Here you will see many bullrushes, and large patches of jewelweed, also known as 'touch-me-not' because of the way its mature seed pods 'explode' when touched.

Intersection 'F' (1986 m, and the 104 m side-trail to 'C') comes next, and shortly after that, on your left.....surprise! There's a 'seat' created in a tree stump. Next you'll find yourself walking through a cedar woods where there is little undergrowth, and the sun (if shining) creates beautiful ever-changing patterns throughout the day.

Just past intersection 'G', (2296 m, and the 58 m shortcut to 'B') is another large patch of lily of the valley to the right, and not long after this you will be in a mixed forest again. As you approach intersection 'H' (at which point you'll see the Huckins St. access), you will realize from the sights and sounds through the trees on your left, that you aren't so remote from civilization after all. At 'H' you'll find the only bridge on this trail, followed by a boardwalk. Stay on this boardwalk and the trail on the other side of it...the thick patches of three-leaved plants are poison ivy!

There are two more boardwalks, (one of which is 'a beaut', about 75 m long), before you arrive at intersection 'J', (2906 m, also the 106 m side-trail over to 'A'). Along the main trail past 'J', after crossing two more short boardwalks, you'll come to intersection 'K' (3101 m).

If you follow the 140 m blue-blazed side trail that leads off to the left, you will arrive at the walk-in access point next to the fire-hall.

Continue another 20 m or so along the main trail, and you will find another intersection 'L'.

This is a 70 m side-trail leading to the area directly behind the Knights of Columbus Centre.

You are now on the last 190 m stretch, that leads back to the starting point, intersection 'A'. When you get there, you will have traveled over 3.3 km (3311 m) and hopefully also had an invigorating walk, and a refreshing break.



Shingling a boardwalk in the Maitland Woods

ENDNOTES

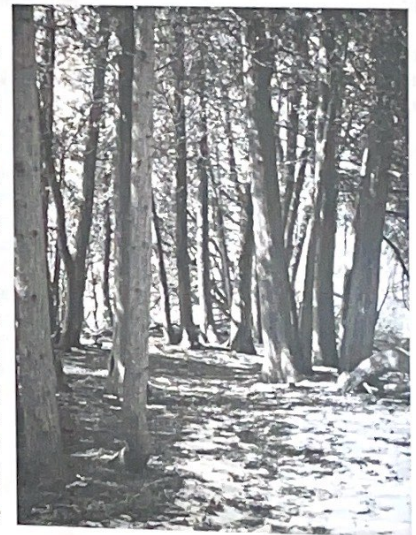
John C. Hindmarsh (1918-1995)

John Hindmarsh came to Goderich in 1942 to train as a pilot, and then as a flight instructor. The area lured him back shortly after World War II, and he spent the rest of his life here, farming, and at the same time, working tirelessly towards environmental protection. On his farm he reforested marginal areas, created ponds for fish and waterfowl (you have just hiked around one of them) and implemented soil and water conservation techniques.

Over the years, he extended his interests to the restoration and preservation of areas such as Naftel's Creek and the Saratoga Swamp. The potential of such areas for recreational use was obvious to him. He planted trees to reduce soil erosion, established fish and wildlife habitats, created trails and then later he donated these lands for public use. If you haven't already hiked or cross-country skied through Naftel's Creek, one of his legacies to us, (7 km south on highway 21) then do so. You will then understand his foresight and his generosity.

There are few local children who grew up in the 50's to the 90's, who didn't at one time or another, enjoy a hay-ride or sleigh-ride, pulled by his current horse-team, with John at the reins.

John had a vast store of knowledge about nature, and communicated it so well that those hearing his comments usually didn't realize that they were being 'educated'. He loved log cabins and over



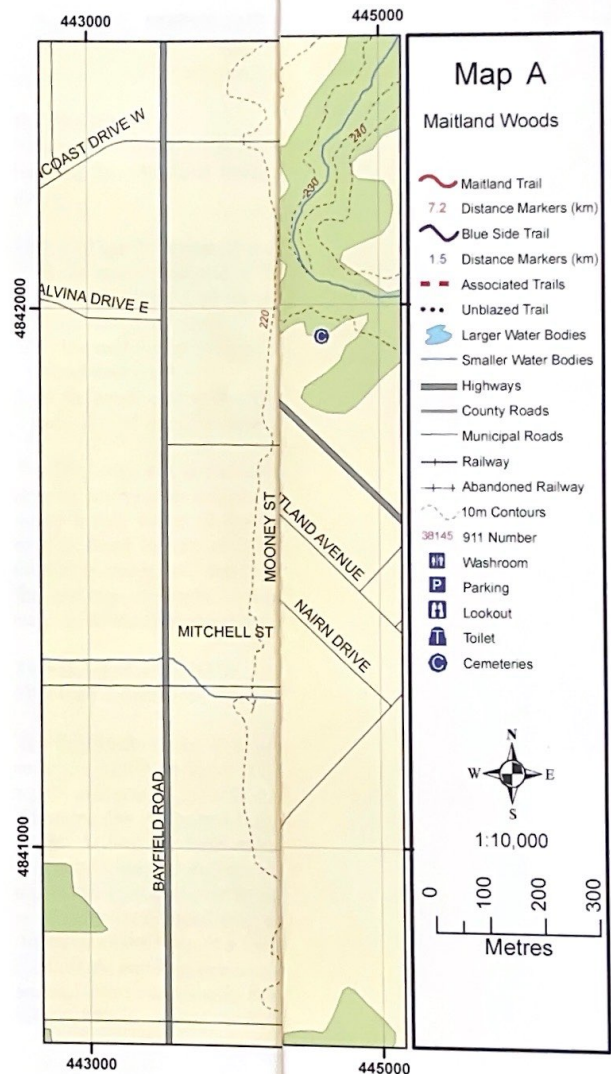
the years, moved or rebuilt 13 of them in the area, each of them wonderfully unique, with special 'John' touches (e.g. – stairs built into a log, a curved cedar harvested from the woods especially for a handrail, rustic furniture, and unusual door-handles, wrought by the artist, Mother Nature). He had a passion for life and explored his corners of the world on horseback, on foot, by canoe and from his beloved Tiger Moth bi-plane.

He died tragically in May of 1995. However, his influence lives on in the enjoyment and increasing awareness of our precious natural environment that we experience along the portion of this trail that crosses the Hindmarsh property, as well as on the Naftel's Creek, and Saratoga Swamp trails. He was the kind of person who looked beyond his own interests, and invested much of his time, effort and money to environmental education, preservation and protection, and into recreational locations for all of us to enjoy.

Joseph (Joey) Salkeld (1930 – 2003)

This man was greatly admired in the community over his lifetime because of his victory in achieving a successful and rewarding life, despite life having dealt him some cruel blows. Immediately after suffering a serious bout of rheumatic fever as a child, he was struck with debilitating juvenile arthritis which twisted his hands and rendered his legs virtually useless. Pain from this disease was a constant in his life.

Nevertheless, having an indomitable spirit and a creative mind, he determined to find a way to do most of the things he wanted to do. He mastered the ability to get where he wanted to go by leaning on his crutches, and swinging his legs forward. He and his father, George, adapted their farm machinery so that Joey could operate them. They set up a woodworking shop, including a lathe, where Joey created many beautiful bowls, candlesticks and other wood products. He was always interested in the lives of his many friends, and had an incredibly sunny nature. Those who knew him, who at times might have thought they had reason to grumble about facets of their own lives, would come away from a visit with Joey realizing that they were actually mighty lucky. He was an inspiration to all!



APPENDIX 1
PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF
THE MAITLAND RIVER VALLEY

A) PHYSICAL CHARACTER

Surface Geology

Eighteen thousand years ago most of Southern Ontario was covered with a massive ice sheet during the retreat of the Wisconsin Icesheet, the wasting glacier broke into several lobes. The Huron Lobe filled the basin of Lake Huron and had most influence on the surface geology of the Maitland River and surrounding areas.

Thirteen thousand years ago Lake Whittlesey covered the entire Lake Erie basin as well much of southwestern Ontario. About this time the melting edge of the Huron Lobe built the Wyoming Moraine, a ridge of land which runs parallel to the shore of Lake Huron but several km inland from the current shoreline. Melt water running off the icesheet formed a well-developed spillway along the front of the moraine. The spillway entered Lake Whittlesey at the location of Hensall.

The Maitland River runs in this ancient spillway, and from Auburn to Benmiller, it meanders south along the spillway almost as far as Holmesville before finding a break in an outlying section of the Wyoming moraine and traveling north again. At Benmiller, the river breaks through the main moraine in a deeply incised valley that has cut through to the underlying bedrock. The river then continues in a meandering valley to its mouth at Goderich. The process of rapid down cutting during the period when the Lake Huron shore was rebounding after the ice was removed, has left a series of terraces, slopes and meander scars visible in the sides of the valley.

As the river passes through the Wyoming moraine west of Benmiller, there are steep valley slopes and bottomland terraces. Tributary ravines are spectacularly narrow and steep-sided; a result of rapid down cutting by streams as they reach the level of the main river. At the outside of bends, the river is actively undercutting the valley walls. Here the valley slopes are steep and often actively eroding. At the base of the slopes, ice scouring keeps the exposed limestone bedrock relatively free of soil and vegetation. At the inside of river

meanders, deposits of gravel and cobbles form bars and swales. There is often a substantial bottomland between the river and the valley wall, and examples of meander scars well above the present level of the river.

River Channel Form and Shape

The channel form and shape of the Lower Maitland River is highly diverse and quite unusual compared with many other large rivers in southern Ontario. The channel forms from Auburn downstream to Goderich fall into two broad categories, moderately meandering floodplain channels (Auburn to Benmiller) and moderately meandering channels controlled by bedrock cliffs (Benmiller to Highway 21).

Flow Patterns

The upper section of the Maitland River cuts through relatively deep and large deposits of gravel and sand. These deposits encourage more water to soak into the ground than runs off, thereby creating excellent storage of groundwater that can slowly discharge into the river during periods of low flow. The Lower Maitland River has a relatively large and very stable low flow discharge. This type of low flow volume provides ample living space for aquatic creatures such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, insects, mammals, etc. and therefore more productivity than rivers with less and more variable low flows (e.g. Bayfield River).

B) PLANTS OF THE LOWER MAITLAND RIVER VALLEY

Floral Affinities

Most of the plant species occurring in the Lower Maitland Valley are typical of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest, however a number of species show affinity with southern and western floras.

The northern boundary of the region known as the Carolinian Zone in Canada lies just south of the Maitland River. A few Carolinian plants have ranges that extend northwards and include the Maitland River Valley, and a number of species found in the valley are either considered to be Carolinian, or are southern species near the northern limit of their range.

Table 1. Vascular plant species in the Lower Maitland Valley that have southern affinities.

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	Green Dragon
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Iron wood
<i>Carya cordiformis</i>	Butternut Hickory
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Hackberry
<i>Dryopteris goldiana</i>	Goldie's Fern
<i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>	Sweet Joe-Pye Weed
<i>Hybanthus concolor</i>	Green Violet
<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	Goldenseal
<i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i>	Twinleaf
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spicebush
<i>Menispermum canadense</i>	Moonseed
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore
<i>Vitis aestivalis</i>	Summer Grape

Some prairie species found along the river have the centres of their range to the west of Ontario. These include Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem and Indian Grass. Two species, Indian Plantain and Ohio Goldenrod, have ranges confined to the Great Lakes Basin.

The lower Maitland Valley also contains arctic plant species, which are most likely remnant populations surviving on the ice-scoured riverbanks since the last ice retreat. The next nearest populations are on the northern shores of Lake Superior. These species include Hyssop-leaved Fleabane and a grass, Mat Muhley. Plants of cold limestone seeps along the shore cliffs are associated with fen floras, but in the lower Maitland River they grow only metres away from rare prairie species and unusual hybrids. It is partly this diversity of juxtaposed habitats that make the Lower Maitland Valley such a unique place.

Floral Distribution

Most of the gentle valley slopes and terraces in the Lower Maitland Valley are covered with deciduous forest on deep soils. One of the characteristics of such forest is a rich spring ground flora that blooms in April to May before the leaves open and the canopy closes. Typical species include Trout Lily, Red and White Trillium and Bloodroot. Some of these species such as the Trilliums retain these leaves all summer, while others such as Trout Lily die down

and disappear soon after they flower. Seeps and wet places on these slopes organic soils where Skunk Cabbage and Bulblet Fern grow.

On the steeper, less stable slopes, or in places that have been cleared and re-grown, or where the soil is poorer and thinner, the vegetation changes to mixed forest or coniferous forest dominated by Northern White Cedar. Often the canopy is completely closed, shutting out the light to the under story. Occasional deciduous trees of White Birch, Yellow Birch, Basswood or Red Ash may overtop the cedar canopy. The ground layer vegetation is confined to small openings where sunlight penetrates. A characteristic plant of such openings is sedge whose fine, bright green leaves can form a lawn-like carpet where few other plants grow.

The ravines and lower slopes with cool seeps may include Hemlock. The openings often provide habitat for weedy species that can thrive in unstable conditions. These include native species such as Red Osier Dogwood and Tall Goldenrod as well as introduced aliens such as Coltsfoot, whose yellow flowers, similar to dandelions, are one of the earliest plants to flower in spring. Also found on the steep, unstable slopes are species that do well in the calcium-rich bedrock and parent materials. These include Grass-of-Parnassus and Golden Ragwort.

Where the valley sides are exposed limestone cliffs, the Northern White Cedar trees cling tenuously to the rock face, and hold on by inserting their roots deep into cracks in the bedrock. As the top of the cliff crumbles trees may slip and hang precariously while they put out new roots. Over the decades, trees take on fantastic and distorted forms. Some of these trees have avoided fire and land clearing and are more than three hundred years old. The Northern White Cedar cliff communities are probably the only old growth forest that remains in the Lower Maitland Valley. The base of the cliffs is regularly ice-scoured, so trees don't grow below a certain height above the river. The cliffs here are bare except for small herbaceous plants such as Harebell and Wild Columbine that grow in cracks in the rocks. One species, Hyssop-leaved Fleabane, is a northern species that occurs along the cliffs of the northern shore of Lake Superior, and up into the Arctic. This plant may have survived on the ice scoured rocks of the Maitland Valley for thousands of years, since the retreat of the last glaciation.

Where the banks of the Maitland River have sufficient soil, the

vegetation is very different. Tangled shrubs dominate the banks below the forest of the bottomland terraces, and plants grow abundantly in the plentiful light. Species such as Ninebark, Willow and Riverbank Grape abound. Occasional trees of Basswood, Manitoba Maple or Hybrid Willow lean over the bank.

The river flood plain is divided into two main habitat types. Dense, lush meadows of Reed Canary Grass and Canada Blue-joint dominate the low cobble and gravel bars that form at the insides of bends in the river. Reed Canary Grass is a European import, and an aggressive invader. In all but a few places it has replaced the native prairie species such as Cord Grass, Indian Grass and Turkey Grass that were probably once more common. The dense growth of Reed Canary Grass almost conceals the diversity of other species such as Touch-me-not, Boneset and Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed that grow in these meadows. In the late summer Tall Sunflowers and Oxeye make a bright yellow display along the river.

In other places, level beds of exposed limestone form the river shore. High water levels can periodically flood this habitat, but in summer the rock shelves can be hot and dry. Plants survive in cracks where silt and organic debris may get trapped. Perhaps the most characteristic species of the limestone flats is Tufted Hair Grass. Less exposed areas, where flooding is less frequent, and some soil may begin to accumulate support more prairie species such Little Bluestem and Prairie Loosestrife. The habitats associated with these exposed limestone shorelines are poorly represented in southern Ontario, and are considered rare.

C) ANIMALS OF THE LOWER MAITLAND RIVER VALLEY

Fish and Habitat

The Lower Maitland is a complex portion of river in which there is a good combination of water quantity, quality, space, shelter and food. The channel complexity is quite high so the "space" component of the river is relatively good with stable riffles and pools in good sequences although many of the pools are not very deep. Shelter is very abundant because of the large numbers of boulders, ledges and back bays. Food is very abundant because of the coarse substrate, stable form and abundant nutrients coming into the river from agricultural sources.

Habitat in the Lower Maitland River is relatively good to excellent for fish species. Spawning sites are abundant. The margins of the river with its shallow, scalloped edges and large cobbles make it ideal habitat for fry and juveniles. The complexity of the channel creates a wide variety of habitats for larger fish.

A total of 35 species of fish have been sampled in the river below Wingham, 30 of which are river residents or migratory spawners. In addition, five lake species have been sampled in the mouth of the river.

The river can be classified as a warm-water fish community, with localized zones of cold-water habitat where groundwater seepages or coldwater streams empty into the river. The river hosts runs of migratory trout and salmon, which spawn both in the main river and in tributary streams as far as 75 km up river. The assembly of warm water species is typical of most rivers in southwestern Ontario, however, one species, the Black Redhorse (sucker) is a nationally threatened species.

Most angling activity in the Maitland River is directed at one of three species: the river resident Smallmouth Bass, the migratory fall-spawning Chinook Salmon, and the migratory spring/fall running Rainbow (or Steelhead) Trout.

Birds

The Morris Tract Life Science Inventory (Boles et al., 1999) reported more than 70 species of birds using the area during the breeding season in 1995.

Some of the larger forested areas in the valley provide habitat for bird species that prefer relatively undisturbed, mature deciduous forests and interior habitat. Screech Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird and Scarlet Tanager are all in this group. These "interior" species generally require large tracts of forest and breed a long distance from the forest edge.

The proximity of the valley to the Lake Huron shoreline attracts a diverse assembly of birds during their annual spring and fall migration. Both Osprey and Bald Eagles use the river for migration, (and occasionally for winter feeding in the case of eagles), but no nesting has ever been documented. Turkey Vultures nest in the

area, and upwards of one thousand birds may congregate in the valley, especially upriver of Holmesville, during fall migration in September and October.

Canada Geese, Common Mergansers, Bufflehead, and Mallards make extensive use of the river at certain times of the year. Great Blue Herons and Green-backed Herons use the river for feeding during the breeding season and during migration.

Mammals

The more common forest mammal species are generally abundant in the valley (e.g. deer, raccoons, and coyotes). Fur-bearing animals, especially beaver, muskrat and mink are common.

Reptiles & Amphibians

A provincially coordinated survey of reptiles and amphibians, circa 1980, resulted in the reporting of 19 species in the lower part of the valley (below Holmesville). The species list included six snakes, three turtles, one toad, six frogs and three salamanders. A pond in the Fall Reserve Conservation Area is one of the richest sites for breeding amphibians in southern Ontario.

D) IN CLOSING

For more information concerning the geography of the Maitland River valley refer to the source document "Lower Maitland River Project Information Report" edited by Stefan Szczerbak, University of Guelph, and printed August 2000, reprinted April, 2006. This publication and additional information is available through the Lower Maitland River Valley Stewardship Group <http://www.lmsg.huronstewardship.on.ca/>.





Trail User's Code of Conduct

- Hike only along marked routes, especially on farmland.
Do not take shortcuts.
- Respect the rights and privacy of landowners and people living along the trail.
- Do not climb fences; use the stiles. Close gates.
- Leave the trail cleaner than you found it; carry out all litter.
- Fires are not permitted along the trail, except in approved campsites.
- Leave flowers and plants and animals undisturbed for others to enjoy.
- Do not damage live trees by breaking branches or stripping bark.
- Keep dogs on a leash, especially on or near farmland.
- Leave only your thanks and take nothing but photographs.
- Be responsible for the wellbeing of yourself and your company.
- Use the trail at your own risk.