

### 9 Bear Claw Bridge

On your left, just before this bridge you can see claw marks on the trunk of an American beech tree where a black bear has climbed the tree in search of beech nuts. Bears eat nuts and acorns in the fall to store up fat for the long winter.



Black bears look for a den in early November to sleep much of the winter but they don't hibernate deeply. They're not dangerous if you keep away from them. They can become a nuisance at bird feeders and are always looking for an easy meal.

### 10 Woodpecker Bridge

The dieback in this area is due to poor drainage. Although we never like to see trees die, wildlife depend on standing dead trees, called snags. These snags will become hosts for beetles, ants and caterpillars which attract woodpeckers.



There are three types of woodpeckers in this forest: the downy woodpecker has a shorter beak; the hairy woodpecker is larger with a longer beak, and the pileated woodpecker pictured here is as large as a crow. Can you find signs of woodpeckers?

Over time this area will become inhabited by tree species that are more tolerant of excessive moisture, such as spruce and cedar.

### 11 Yellow Birch Bridge

Yellow birch, unlike white birch, was not used by the natives to make canoes. Instead, this tough hardwood was used to make spear shafts, bows, arrows and snowshoes.

Old stumps can hold enough moisture for seedlings to sprout on top. In a few years new roots grow down the sides of the stump to the ground. When the stump eventually rots the yellow birch appears to be standing on stilts. See if you can spot some stilted roots.

After Bridge # 11 turn right to visit our pump house on Sap Island or turn left and take the road back to the Sugar Camp.



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### The Next Time You Go Into a Forest, Remember....

You are in a living ecosystem. Ecosystems are places where plants and animals live, interacting with the non-living things around them like soil, air, water, temperature and sunlight. Trees are the dominant plant life form in a forest ecosystem. Around the world you can find three different types of forest ecosystems: tropical rainforests, deciduous forests (leaves) and coniferous forests (needles & cones). This part of Lanark County has mixed deciduous and coniferous forests.

Try to learn the names of different trees and to identify them by their bark, twigs, buds, leaves, flowers, fruit or nuts. Remember that even dead trees are important to wildlife. Fungi, moss and lichen grow on stumps and rotting, fallen logs. Many animals, birds and insects depend on them and the hollow cavities within for habitat.

Learn to observe the different signs of animal life in a forest: tracks, scat (poop), feathers, fur, snake skins, nests, burrows, dens, bones and skeletons. The evidence of wildlife is everywhere; it's just a matter of recognizing the clues.

When you're walking in the forest remember that it's somebody's home, treat it respectfully and learn to enjoy it safely.

- Never pull the bark off a tree; the bare spot may bring disease and insect pests.
- Never light fires in a forest without adult supervision.
- Never "girdle" a tree with a rope or wire.
- Never eat any wild plants, berries or mushrooms without knowing first if they are safe to eat.
- Never go into a forest alone without telling someone where you are going.



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This 70 acre (28.3 hectare) woodlot at Ferguson's Falls was clear cut for firewood in the 1940s. The regeneration which followed included species such as ash, elm, basswood, hickory, birch, butternut, cherry and, of course, maple. Fortunately, the McEwen family and in particular Bob McEwen, decided to develop the mixed bush into a working sugar bush. Through the 1960s and 70s the bush became a demonstration woodlot, with the assistance of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, to show the value of sugar bush management and thinning techniques.

In 2001, Charles Temple purchased the property and began to rehabilitate the forest after the ravages of the 1998 ice storm.

Take a walk on our Nature Trail and enjoy the pleasures of being in a young forest and learning about the trees, animals and birds that inhabit it.

This nature walk will take about 15 to 25 minutes.



## 1 Sugar Maple Bridge

Sugar maples are used to make delicious maple syrup. Although maple trees grow all over the world, maple syrup is only made in Canada and the United States. The early settlers used wooden pails to collect sap by hand. You can see that we use plastic tubing which allows sap to flow down to our pump house on Sap Island. We tap about 5000 trees in our sugar bush.



## 2 Chickadee Bridge

You might spot a black-capped chickadee any time of the year. Listen for their cheery-sounding chickadee-dee-dee or their two whistled notes, the first whistle a little higher than the second.



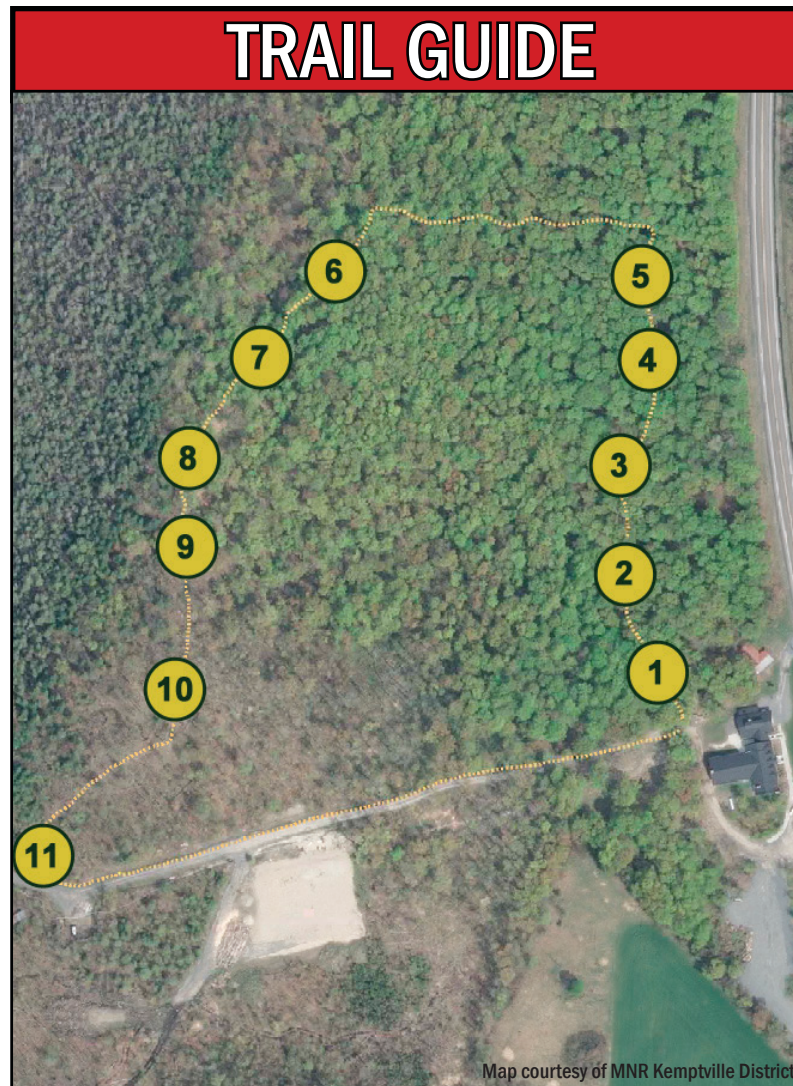
These birds are brave and curious and can be persuaded to take food from a person's hand. In the forest, chickadees eat seeds and tiny winter-buds that have formed on leafless branches.

## 3 Cherry Tree Bridge

Notice that many trees around you have shaggy bark that looks like burnt corn flakes. That's how you can identify a black cherry tree. Its fruit tastes bitter to us, but birds love it! Chipmunks, squirrels and mice like to chew the pits. The Algonquin tribes used to dry the cherries and mix them with ground, dried meat and nuts to make pemmican. This energy-filled snack lasted through the long, cold winters when fresh food wasn't available.

## 4 Wild Turkey Bridge

Wild turkeys disappeared from Ontario in the early 1900s due to over-harvesting. They were reintroduced in Lanark County in the 1990s and are now thriving. They stay around all year, travel in flocks and roost in trees at night. They eat nuts, seeds, berries, greens and any insects they can catch. Turkey tracks are 4-5 inches wide and look like arrows in the snow.



## 5 Hickory Tree Bridge

Just before you reach Bridge #5, you will see a bitternut hickory tree on your right. As its name implies, the nut is not enjoyed by humans but it is a favourite of squirrels. Can you see any remaining husks on the tree?

Hickory is valued by woodworkers for its hard, durable wood which is commonly used for tool handles and ladders.

As you walk towards Bridge #6 look high in a tree to see a hawk's nest. It could have been the nest of a red-shouldered hawk (right) or a broad-winged hawk, which both inhabit forested areas.



## 6 White-tailed Deer Bridge

White-tailed deer are named for the white patch under their tails. When they are frightened they flash their white tail patches to warn the other deer. This also makes it easier for a young fawn to follow the mother doe through the bush.



Deer eat tender twigs, buds, acorns, seeds and grasses. They're most active at night and early in the morning. Because they're so shy and nervous they will hide if they hear you coming, but you'll be able to see their tracks and their scat (poop) everywhere.

## 7 Coyote Bridge

One of the main predators of the white-tailed deer is the coyote. Coyotes also eat rabbits and rodents. They are amazing hunters with a keen sense of smell, excellent hearing and acute vision.

Researchers have discovered genetic evidence that the coyotes found in eastern Canada are a hybrid of the western coyote and the eastern wolf, which would explain their large size.



You can hear coyotes on winter nights howling, yipping and barking, especially during mating season in February. In the spring, coyotes protect their young pups in underground dens which they sometimes use at other times of the year.

## 8 Observation Bridge

From this bridge you can see eight different tree species: 1. black ash, 2. balsam fir, 3. yellow birch, 4. hemlock, 5. American beech, 6. basswood, 7. sugar maple, and 8. eastern white cedar. Which are deciduous and which are coniferous? Try to identify as many as you can! What other kinds of tracks can you see? Look for the ones below.



Snowshoe Hare



Raccoon



Wild Turkey