

Great Lakes — St. Lawrence Precambrian Region

Represented by: St. Lawrence Islands, La Mauricie,
and Georgian Bay Islands National Parks



Common Loon

WHERE NORTH MEETS SOUTH

This is loon country, cottage country, famous for its dazzling autumn forests of scarlet and gold and its innumerable lakes and waterways. Like the boreal shield country to the north, this region is deeply ingrained into the image of Canada.

THE LAND

Although this region has three separate sections, it is united by two distinctive characteristics: the mixed forest of coniferous and deciduous trees and the ancient bedrock of the southern edge of the Canadian Shield. The entire region is a transition zone, where species from the decidu-

ous forests to the south intermingle with those of the boreal forests to the north and, to a lesser extent, those from the western plains, the Atlantic coast and the Arctic.

Each section is remarkably similar in appearance - knobbly wooded hills incised by rivers and streams and dotted with thousands of lakes. Rivers and streams run slowly, backed up by numerous beaver dams and rocky ledges. The effects of the Ice Age are everywhere written on the land. Extensive areas of exposed bedrock are common, much of it scoured and scraped smooth by the passing of the glaciers; in other areas, glacial till or deposits left by ancient meltwater rivers soften the relief.

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St. Lawrence Islands

VEGETATION:

The three sections making up this region are covered with a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous forest that are aflame with colour each fall. The region is one of continuous transition, with many species reaching their

Natural Region 19

northern or southern range limits here. Along its northern border, species common to the boreal forest - white spruce, black spruce, white birch, jack pine, balsam fir - make up a high percentage of total forest cover. In the southern portion of the region, sugar maple, American beech, basswood, white elm, red maple and other species common to the pure deciduous forests predominate. Eastern hemlock, yellow birch, white pine and red pine are found throughout the region.



Red Fox

WILDLIFE:

This is also a region of transition for wildlife, with many species reaching their northern or southern range limits here. Wildlife typical of the boreal forest, such as moose, lynx, snowshoe hare and timber wolf are widespread, but reach their southern limits here. Chipmunk, mourning dove, cardinal and wood thrush are just a sampling of widespread species from southern forests that reach their northern limits here. Range limits change quickly in this region, reflecting the habitat alterations that are continuously occurring because of the effects of humans or natural fluctuations in climate, with some expanding northward and others spreading to the south. Many species have limited ranges or disjunct populations within this region - eastern hognose snake, black rat snake, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, eastern ribbon snake, southern flying squirrel, piping plover, the re-introduced wild turkey, and Blanding's turtle, among many others.

STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

Three national parks represent this region:

St. Lawrence Islands (9 km²), La Mauricie (536 km²) and Georgian Bay Islands (26 km²). St. Lawrence Islands National Park, composed mainly of granite islands scattered for 80 kilometres along the St. Lawrence River, presents a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna, including many species considered rare, threatened or

endangered such as the pitch pine and the black rat snake. Each island has its own particular mix of species, depending on its size, bedrock and recent history. A short walk across many islands can take you from a hardwood forest typical of areas much further south to moist shady slopes where northern species flourish.

The islands that make up the park were formerly Indian lands, surrendered under treaty and held in trust by the Govern-



Red Trillium

Natural Region 19



Autumn leaves,
La Mauricie National Park

These formed the nucleus of the park, which was formally established in 1914.

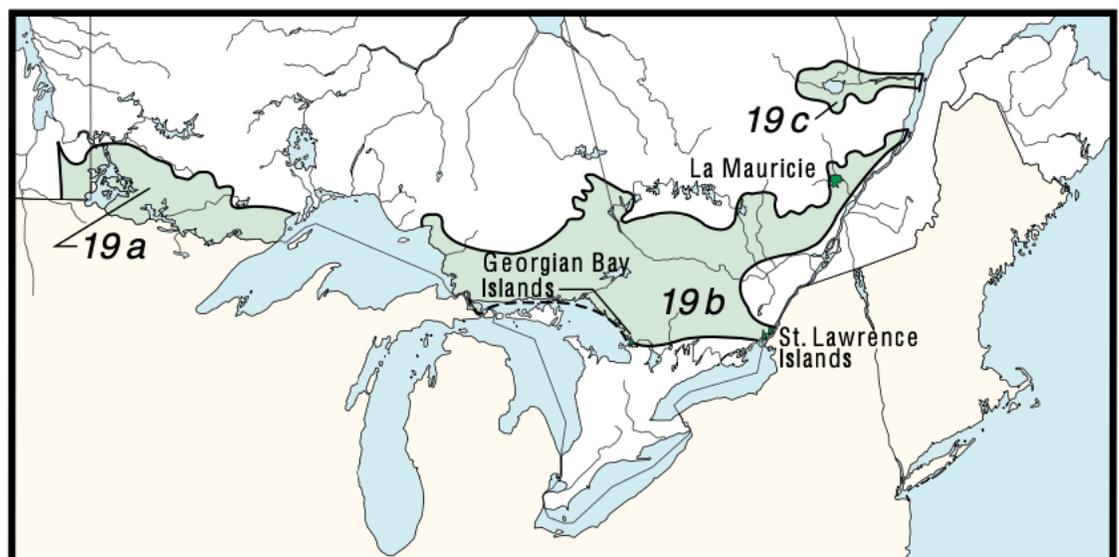
La Mauricie National Park is quintessential "Shield Country", a land of rich mixed-wood forests and over 150 lakes set into the gently rolling Laurentian Hills. Sport fishing for speckled and lake trout and canoe tripping along the routes that crisscross the park are the best ways to experience La Mauricie's Laurentian heritage. The park was established in 1970 pursuant to a federal-provincial agreement with the Government of Quebec.

ment of Canada. By the turn of the century, many had been sold for summer homes. In 1904, local residents urged the federal government to reserve for the public nine islands designated for sale.

These formed

Georgian Bay Islands National Park consists of 59 islands and shoals on the east side of Georgian Bay. The park is a transition between natural regions 29 and 19. This interface results in a merging of many habitats, giving the park a great diversity of flora and fauna and many rare species. More species of reptiles and amphibians, including the eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, are found here than in any other national park.

The islands making up the park were formerly Indian lands surrendered by the Chippewa in 1856 and held in trust by the Department of Indian Affairs. By the turn of the century, the Georgian Bay region had become a popular vacation area with waterfront lands quickly being bought up. With commendable foresight, the Commissioner of National Parks, J.B. Harkin, recommended the purchase of 28 islands from the Department of Indian Affairs in 1924. The park was formally scheduled in 1929.





Major Land Uses

Main Communities

Ottawa
Quebec City
Thunder Bay
Sudbury

Aboriginal Peoples

Robinson Superior Treaty (1850)
Robinson Huron Treaty (1850)
Williams Treaties (1923)
Ojibway

Further Information

The Gatineau Hills, with rounded hills, diverse forest and warm lakes, provide a great location for outdoor recreation for residents of the **National Capital Region**.

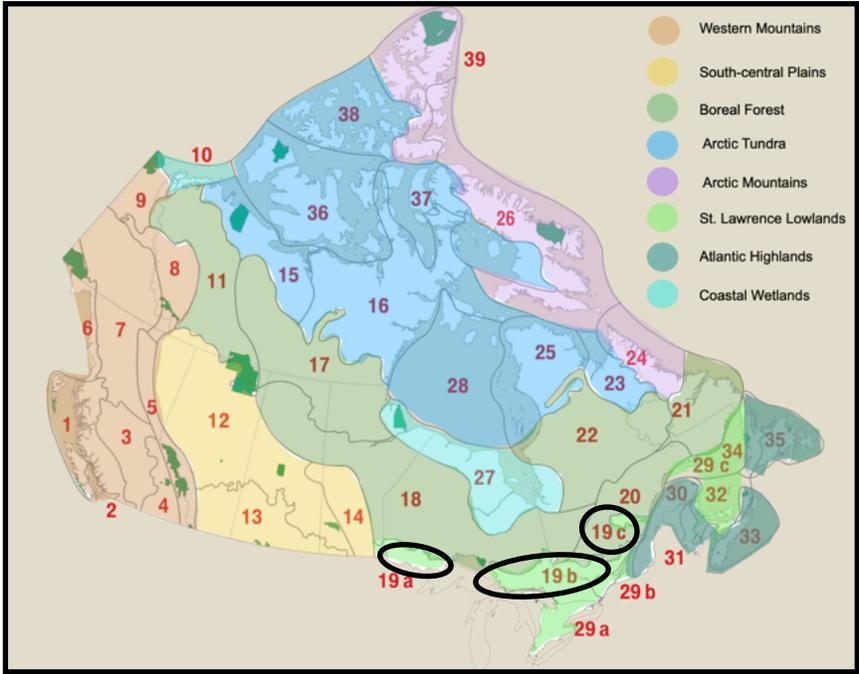
Watch for turtles sunning on floating logs.

Parks and Natural Areas

La Mauricie National Park
Georgian Bay Island National Park
Thousand Islands National Park
Quetico Provincial Park
Algonquin Provincial Park



This random view of the forest floor in North Bay, ON, illustrates the complexity of this ecosystem. I can see leaves from three species of maple (red, sugar, striped), red oak, large-tooth aspen, alder, eastern white cedar and a paper birch branch. Perhaps you can see other species here. How does this compare to forests near your home?





Mont Sutton, where these photos were taken, is best known as a ski hill. However, the views are spectacular in all seasons!





Fall colours are as Canadian as maple syrup. Sugar maples shade from deep yellows to glorious oranges and reds as the season progresses. Although the intensity of the display varies from year to year, even a subdued season will be long remembered. Just east of Montreal (below), small mountains host isolated patches of deciduous forest.



Groves of sugar maple trees come alive in March when sap is harvested for syrup.

Small plastic tubes have largely replaced the traditional metal buckets. In a few places, though, the quiet “plink” of dripping sap still brings the promise of a sweet treat.



Evan Gardner

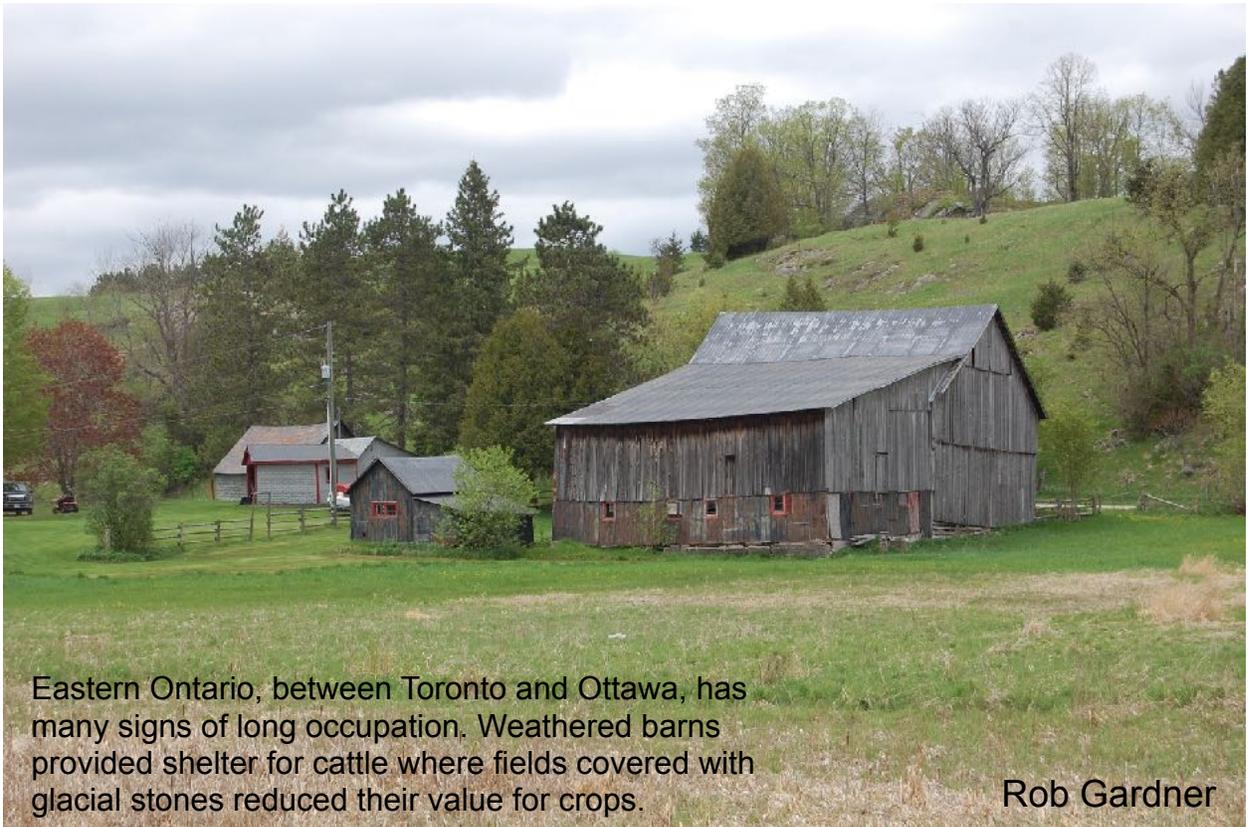


Evan Gardner



A. Y. Jackson's painting of the rapids on the Chippewa River as it approaches Lake Superior, in Algoma Country. When he visited this region in the mid-1950s, this land was virtually inaccessible and unknown to most Canadians. His exuberant style matched the land's wild nature!





Eastern Ontario, between Toronto and Ottawa, has many signs of long occupation. Weathered barns provided shelter for cattle where fields covered with glacial stones reduced their value for crops.

Rob Gardner



The Peterborough Lift Locks were an engineering marvel for their time: the very early 1900s. The 20 m (65 ft) lift was far higher than ordinary locks. Each of the two locks is a self-contained tub, balancing each other. The boats can be raised by moving just a little water, making it faster and more efficient. But seeing boats suspended in the air must be an amazing sight! (They were closed for the season when I visited.)

Giant grain terminals in Thunder Bay hold grain before shipping it down the St. Lawrence Seaway.



Rob Gardner

Sault Ste. Marie grew up at the confluence of Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron, where early shipments had to be unloaded and carried past the rapids. (“Sault” is the French word for “rapids”.) The earliest locks (below) were tiny compared to the modern versions. This long red iron-ore carrier in the bottom photo, at 320 m (1,000 ft), was built to just fit into the modern locks.



Rob Gardner



Rob Gardner



Just west of Salt Ste. Marie, a mix of deciduous trees covers rounded hills. Pastures and abandoned fields give a patchwork feel to the landscape.

