



Outdoor Education Programs

Baxter Conservation Area



For more information, please contact:

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"Let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful
blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous
inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains
and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that
death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life."

~John Muir~



Baxter Conservation Area is located on the shores of the Rideau River, five minutes south of Kars and North Gower. It is owned and operated by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority.

Baxter is 180 acres of mixed forest, open meadow, wetlands, beach, group camping areas and nut tree plantation. There are five kilometers of trails and boardwalks that provide wonderful, safe access for forest, meadow and wetland exploration.

The Patrick McManus Interpretive Centre is Baxter's program headquarters which can accommodate two to three classes as a starting point for an exciting day of outdoor learning.

Our philosophy at Baxter

is to provide students with a strong understanding of our natural world, how it functions and how we, as humans, fit into it. All our programs are interactive and experiential to provide students with a "hands-on" approach to learning about natural science in our "Ecology Lab."

If you don't see a program that meets your group's objectives, please give us a call — and our Interpreters will create one for you!

For more information about Baxter, fees and to book your program, please contact:

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Winter Education Programs

Baxter transforms into an extraordinary winter wonderland with many opportunities for learning about the natural world and enjoying the winter weather. Students can toboggan down "Mount Baxter," skate on the pond, roast a hot dog lunch over the campfire and warm up with a mug of hot chocolate.

Winter Ecology (grades 2-7)

When exploring the forest at Baxter in winter, students will understand how plants and animals adapt to their cold environment. By following animal tracks in the snow, students will learn exactly which creatures stay around to brave the winter cold. Students will also discover the secrets of snow and why it is so important to the plants and animals.

Snowshoeing (grades 3-7)

Come and experience one of the oldest forms of transportation in Canada! Students will learn how to safely travel with snowshoes and, once comfortable, follow the snowshoe trail through the forest and maybe even try snowshoe games.





Fall Education Programs

Fall is a beautiful time at Baxter and a great way to start the school year — and there are no mosquitoes!!!

Seeds of Change (K– grade 3)

Fall is a wonderful time of year to explore the change of seasons. By looking at leaves and seeds, students will discover the concept of change, the life cycle of plants, and how the forest prepares for winter. Where do seeds come from? What do they look like? Where do they go and how do they move around? Make a seed collection to grow at school.

Fantastic Forests (grades 3-7)

(Also available in early spring)
What is a forest? What are the different forest types? Who calls a forest habitat home? By exploring the Baxter forest, students will discover the structure of the forest and what makes a healthy forest. Older students can follow the tree identification trail using a simple dichotomous key.

Unearthing Soil (grades 3-7)

Is soil living or non-living? By exploring the forest floor, students will discover all about fungi, lichens and the creatures that call soil home. See decomposition in action in nature's giant composter!

Wayfinding (grades 3–7)

(Also available in the spring)
Through practical experiences, students will learn all about maps, how to “read” them and how to use them effectively. Students will learn to identify landmarks and topographical features, and then use their map to follow a course through the Baxter forest. Older students will learn how to properly use a compass with their maps.

Eastern Ontario Children's Water Festival (grades 3 –5)

This exciting program comes to Baxter for one day in the fall. Developed for the Grade 4 curriculum (but suitable for grade 3-5), students travel around the site in small groups, stopping at about 10-15 interactive “discovery centers,” learning everything there is to know about water. Learn all about water conservation, how wells and waste water systems work, the water cycle, water pollution, pond life, water filtration and erosion, plus a whole lot more! Call us for program and registration information or visit www.riverinstitute.com/festival.htm.



Spring Education Programs

Spring is the season of new life, renewal and growth. It is an extremely active time at Baxter! It is also our most popular season so book your program early! Programs are recommended for specific grade levels, but are not limited to them.

Program descriptions are general guidelines — please let us know if you have specific objectives that you would like us to accomplish with your classes.



Insect Ecology (K– grade 6)

Come and get a close-up look at the largest, but least known, group of the animal kingdom. Using bug nets and bug jars, students will explore Baxter's meadow and learn about the anatomy of insects, their colouration and their defenses. From the smallest beetles to the largest butterflies and moths, we will discover the diversity of insects and why they are so important to the rest of the animal world.

This program compliments Pond Ecology and the two go well together as a full day of program.

Pond Ecology (K– grade 6)

By exploring Baxter's pond, students will experience the diversity of plant and animal life in a freshwater pond habitat. Through the identification of some of the “indicator species,” students will understand exactly how fragile this ecosystem is and what we can do to protect it. Students will use dip nets, basins, magnifiers and field guides to get “up close and personal” with the reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates of this beautiful habita



Wetland Ecology (grades 4–12)
(Also available in the Fall)
With a thorough investigation and exploration of the Baxter marsh, students will gain an understanding of the diverse but fragile and vital ecosystems that we call wetlands. We will be able to identify the five wetland types in Ontario as well as the plants and animals that inhabit them. Students will also learn the functions of wetlands, the impact humans have on wetlands and what we need to do to protect and preserve wetlands.

Invasive Species (grades 7-12)
(Also available in the Fall)
What are they? Where did they come from? Are they good or bad? What can we do about them? Students will learn about and see a variety of invasive species up-close. They will also be given the opportunity to help rid Baxter of some of these pesky species!

Animals and Habitats (grades 1–4)
(Also available in the Fall)
Through a variety of interactive games and a nature hike, students will learn about the amazing animals (birds, mammals, insects, amphibians and reptiles) here at Baxter, the habitats they live in and what they need in order to survive (i.e. food, water, adaptations).

Instincts for Survival (grades 4–7)
(Also available in the Fall)
How do animals survive in their habitats? What are the skills of a predator? What is the human impact on animal life? Do you have the instincts for survival? Instincts for Survival is an active wide game which simulates the life of different types of

animals in a habitat. By playing the role of an herbivore, omnivore or carnivore in this interactive and fun activity, students will learn how animals survive in their habitats. They will also discover the relationships an organism has with other species, the environment, and humans.

The Wonderful World of Plants (grade 1-6)
Wander through the many habitats of Baxter and learn about the different plants, the role they play in a habitat and how plants and animals depend on each other. Students will learn how to identify different species including some neat edible plants.

Team Building (grade 7-12)
(Available all year round)
Students will be lead through a series of team building activities and problem solving exercises. These activities are designed to help groups work effectively together while developing useful communication and problem-solving skills.

Special In-School Program Spring Water Awareness Program (S.W.A.P.)

(grades 3-6)
S.W.A.P. is a free spring water safety program offered in March by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority. Through an interactive presentation that includes demonstrations, games, and discussion, S.W.A.P. teaches:

- Why spring water and ice are dangerous
- To stay away from waterways, especially in the spring
- To know what to do if a water or ice-related accident occurs
- To tell their family and friends about what they have learned

