1800s. It has no natural enemies here. It has invaded wetlands all across the continent and is so successful that it tends to push out native plants.

Please follow the trail and you will end up back at the start.

The Patrick J. McManus Conservation Centre is staffed most days during the week and during special events on weekends including Winter Experience Sundays in January and February. Teachers and youth group leaders are invited to call (613) 489-3592 to ask about interpretive programs.

If you do not wish to keep this trail guide, please leave it in the deposit box at the end of the trail, for others to use.

Partners in Conservation

Programs at Baxter Conservation Area are supported by:

Adopt An Acre donors
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For more information about other Conservation Areas in Eastern Ontario contact the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Box 599, Manotick, ON K4M 1A5 (613) 692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504. You can also check us out on the internet at www3.sympatico.ca/rideauca or call Baxter at (613) 489-3592.

fiddlehead TRAIL

The Fiddlehead Trail

Welcome to the Baxter Conservation Area. The Fiddlehead Trail is about two kilometres long and takes the average person about 45 minutes to walk. The brown numbered triangles and the arrows will help you find your way. Please stay on the trail so as not to disturb the wildlife. Please keep your dogs on a leash. Poison ivy grows close to the trail in many places.

The Fiddlehead Trail got its name from the tightly-curled leaves of young ferns in spring-time. The wet, shady forest at Baxter is a great place for ferns to grow.

While you are at Baxter you can also visit the **Baxter Community Wildflower Garden, Baxter Energy Trail** and the **Fillmore R. Park Nut Grove.**

1 BAXTER BOARDWALKS

Baxter has many Friends that help keep our programs going and maintain and improve the trails. Boardwalks are being added to the trails thanks to generous donations. Boardwalks not only help visitors keep their feet dry but also protect the surrounding vegetation from damage.

The wet forest here acts as a sponge. In the spring during the snow melt or after heavy rain fall, the wetland absorbs water. The water is released slowly which helps to prevent flooding.

2 ALDER SUCCESSION

This area was once a farmer's field but is now covered by speckled alder. Alders flourish in this area because of the wet soil. Alders are fast growing, short-lived trees which will be replaced eventually by longer-lived, shade-tolerant trees, such as red maples. Alders have

limb. Porcupines have about 30,000 quills which can easily become

embedded in the skin of unwary predators. They can not shoot their quills.

8 YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

The hundreds of tiny holes in some of the hemlock trees were made by the yellow-bellied sapsucker. These black and red woodpeckers drill lines of holes in the tree trunk and then drink the sap that flows out. The eastern hemlock thrives at Baxter because it grows well in moist, cool places.

Large, rectangular holes are made by the pileated woodpecker. This black woodpecker with white bands and a red crest is the largest woodpecker in Canada. You can also see hairy and downy woodpeckers here. They are both smaller black and white woodpeckers. The males of both species have a red cap.

9 MARSH LOOKOUT

The Baxter marsh separates the Fillmore R. Park Nut Grove and the Baxter Workshop from the rest of the conservation area. The marsh is like a giant sponge which soaks up excess water during spring run-off or after heavy rainstorms and releases that water slowly later in the summer. Marshes help prevent flooding along rivers and creeks in this way.

The marsh provides food and shelter to a large number of animals. Beaver and muskrat, ducks and geese, great blue heron and ospreys, frogs and turtles all find food, shelter and space to live here.

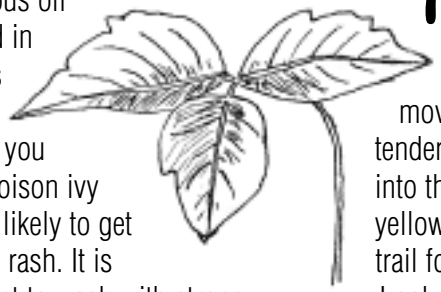
In late summer you may notice a plant with beautiful purple flowers growing at the top of square woody stems. Purple loosestrife was introduced to North America in the

to its disappearance from many of its usual habitats.

The shady, wet riverbank and forest at Baxter are also home to cinnamon fern, grape fern, interrupted fern, lady fern, marsh fern, New York fern, royal fern, and many others.

5 POISON IVY: DO NOT TOUCH!

Poison Ivy is located all along the trail. Its fruit is food for many birds who disperse the seeds. The poisonous oil is found in all parts of the plant. If you touch poison ivy you are likely to get an itchy rash. It is important to wash with strong soap immediately after contact, and also wash clothing and tools that might have touched the plant.



Severe rashes may need medical treatment. Leaflets three, let it be!

6 SPAWNING AREA IN THE "RIBBON OF LIFE"

In early spring this area is visited by pike and carp who lay their eggs in the shallow, weedy water close to shore. The "ribbon of life," the small band that includes shore lands, shoreline and shallow water is important for breeding and feeding and living for a great variety of wildlife.

Shoreline vegetation prevents soil erosion by buffering the effects of wind, ice and waves. Natural shorelines absorb floodwaters and filter out fertilizer and other pollutants.

7 PORCUPINE ALLEY

The solitary, slow moving porcupine feeds on the tender inner bark of trees. Look up into the hemlock, red maple and yellow birch trees near the nature trail for signs of porcupine feeding. Look at the base of the trees for droppings and quills. Porcupines are active at night. During the day, they rest in tree holes or on a high

nitrogen fixing bacteria living in their roots. The bacteria take nutrients from the tree. In return they supply nitrogen to the alders. When the alders die and decompose, their nitrogen is returned to the soil.

Look for mounds of dirt in the soft mucky soil. They are from star-nosed moles who live in tunnels close to the soil surface. Star-nosed moles are named for their unique noses that are tipped by 22 fleshy tentacles.

3 WOODCOCK OR "TIMBERDOODLE" CLEARING

This opening in the alder thicket was created to provide the male woodcock with a singing ground. At dusk on spring evenings the male woodcock emits a nasal "peent" from its resting position on the ground. It then spirals high in the air with such speed that its

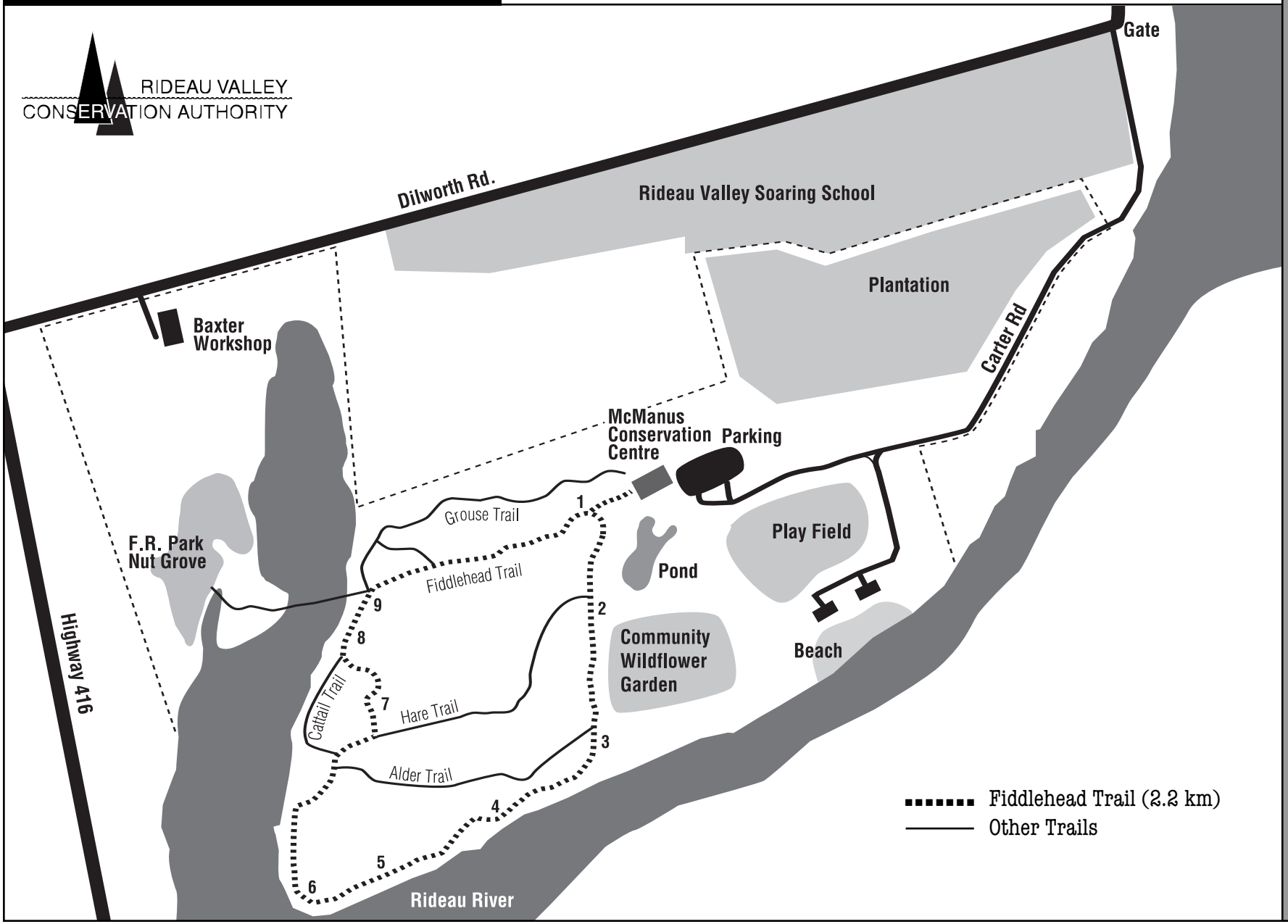
wings whistle. It performs an amazing sky dance at the peak of its spiral before plummeting back to the ground to resume its calling. This marvellous display is repeated to attract female woodcocks to the clearing for mating.

A second clearing is maintained further along the trail. The clearings provide singing grounds; the soft moist soils provide earthworms and the alders provide cover.

4 OSTRICH FERN

These dark, green ferns that are on both sides of the trail grow in clumps of ostrich-plume shaped leaves. In winter you can find the erect, dark brown, stiff, fertile fronds containing the spores. In the spring, you can often find ostrich fern fiddleheads in the supermarket. It is one of the first fresh vegetables of spring and is considered a delicacy. Over harvesting of ostrich ferns has led

fiddlehead trail



MAP