

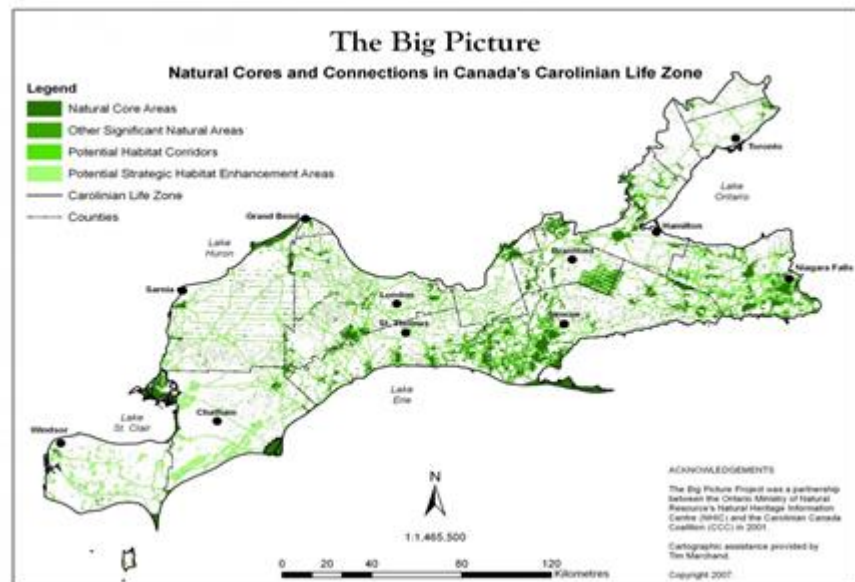


Branching Out

Summer 2023

The Carolinian Forest

The Carolinian Forest (zone) is an area of South Western Ontario that stretches from the east, at Toronto's Rouge River Valley, westwards through Guelph, across to Grand Bend, down the shores of Lake Huron and St Clair, along the Canadian shore of Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and around the west end of Lake Ontario back to the Rouge River.



This area is defined mainly by its distinct plants especially trees (there are more species of trees here than in any other area of Canada, and many entirely unique to this area) as well as its species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, insects, and invertebrates.

Although this Carolinian Forest covers only 1/4 of one percent of Canada's land area, about 25 percent of the country's people live and work here. As a result of this human encroachment, the impact is that close to 40 percent of the country's rare and endangered plants, and animals are within the areas borders.

Biologically this zone has more in common with North and South Carolina, than the rest of Canada. Not only the southern latitude, but the Great Lakes' ability to hold vast quantities of heat during the summer, dictates the ecology. The result is humid summers and when this heat is released back out, moderate winters.

All of this incredible diversity that we enjoy, has evolved in the last 12,000 years, previous to that the entire area was covered in an immense sheet of ice.



This Carolinian zone is not really a single type of forest, but contains a variety of forest types based on local variations in soil types, moisture, and sunlight. Other diverse systems, aside from true forests, such as marshes and wetlands, open areas, fens, bogs, and alavars occur. As well, savannahs and grasslands exist in areas where fires regularly swept. Pinery Park and the surrounding area is home to the 3rd largest oak savannah in the world.



Plant and Animal Diversity in the Carolinian Zone

- Almost 1400 of Ontario's more than 2300 plants grow in this zone
- 50 of Ontario's 79 mammal species can be found here. 46 of the 50 being native
- 180 species of birds nest in this zone
- Although shy and many are often not seen, 51 amphibians and reptiles live here.
24 amphibians (12 types of salamanders, and 12 types of frogs)
27 reptiles (10 types of turtles, 16 types of snakes, and one lizard)
- Canada has 230 species of fish, and over half can be found in this Carolinian Zone

Every one of the above species is dependent on its own niche in this environment, and why preservation of all species of plants and animals is such an important responsibility. We are the custodians of our forest.