



Ancient Forest Exploration & Research

Powassan Office: 3492 Memorial Park Dr., RR#4, POH 1Z0

Peterborough Office: The Mount, 1545 Monaghan Rd., K9J 5N3

(705) 312-AFER (2337) | info@ancientforest.org | charitable number: 89288 2762 RR0001

SITE VISIT REPORT #10

An Old-growth Forest Assessment for

Harold Town Conservation Area

Peterborough County, Ontario

Prepared January 06, 2020 by Carling Dewar

Site information

Property name and location:	Harold Town Conservation Area 2611 Old Norwood Rd, Peterborough, ON K9J 6X8
Date visited:	Thursday August 22, 2019 for reconnaissance and iNaturalist project ¹ testing
Surveyors:	AFER staff: Carling Dewar, Laura Collings, and Hayley McGregor
Land designation(s):	Private but open to the public (property of the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority)

Summary

We visited one of the trails on this property where there are numerous large, and likely old-growth, white cedar trees. However, there is a lack of tree regeneration in the area (probably due to heavy recreational use) that prevents us from designating this forest as “old-growth”. Due to the size of this property, there may be old forest stands in other areas that we did not reach. Further research is recommended to search for these potential stands and conduct standardized surveys (including tree aging) to characterize these old forest stands.

Site Description

This 130.5 hectare Otonabee Region Conservation Authority (ORCA) property is located a few minutes’ drive east of the City of Peterborough boundary and serves as a recreation area mainly designed for mountain bikers, although hikers and skiers frequent the area as well. Land use and ownership varied greatly, from fruit orchards to ski hills, prior to ORCA’s acquisition in the 1990s (ORCA 2017). There is also an expansive trail network on this property (Figure 1). For a more detailed description, see [Harold Town Conservation Area](#) (ORCA 2016) and [Conservation Area Management Statement: Harold Town Conservation Area](#) (ORCA 2017).

On August 22, 2019, we visited the “Kessel Run Trail” (northernmost trail on the property, Figure 1) where we found dozens of white cedars and a few sugar maples that exceeded our size criteria for old-growth (Quinby 2019). We also observed some non-native invasive species, such as dog-strangling vine.

No trees were aged during this visit. An ORCA permit for this specific property is required for further research.

In addition to information provided here, several tree observations were added to our iNaturalist project: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/31301615> (AFER 2019).

Maps

¹ [Peterborough Old-Growth Forest Project – Protocol Level 1](#) (AFER 2019).

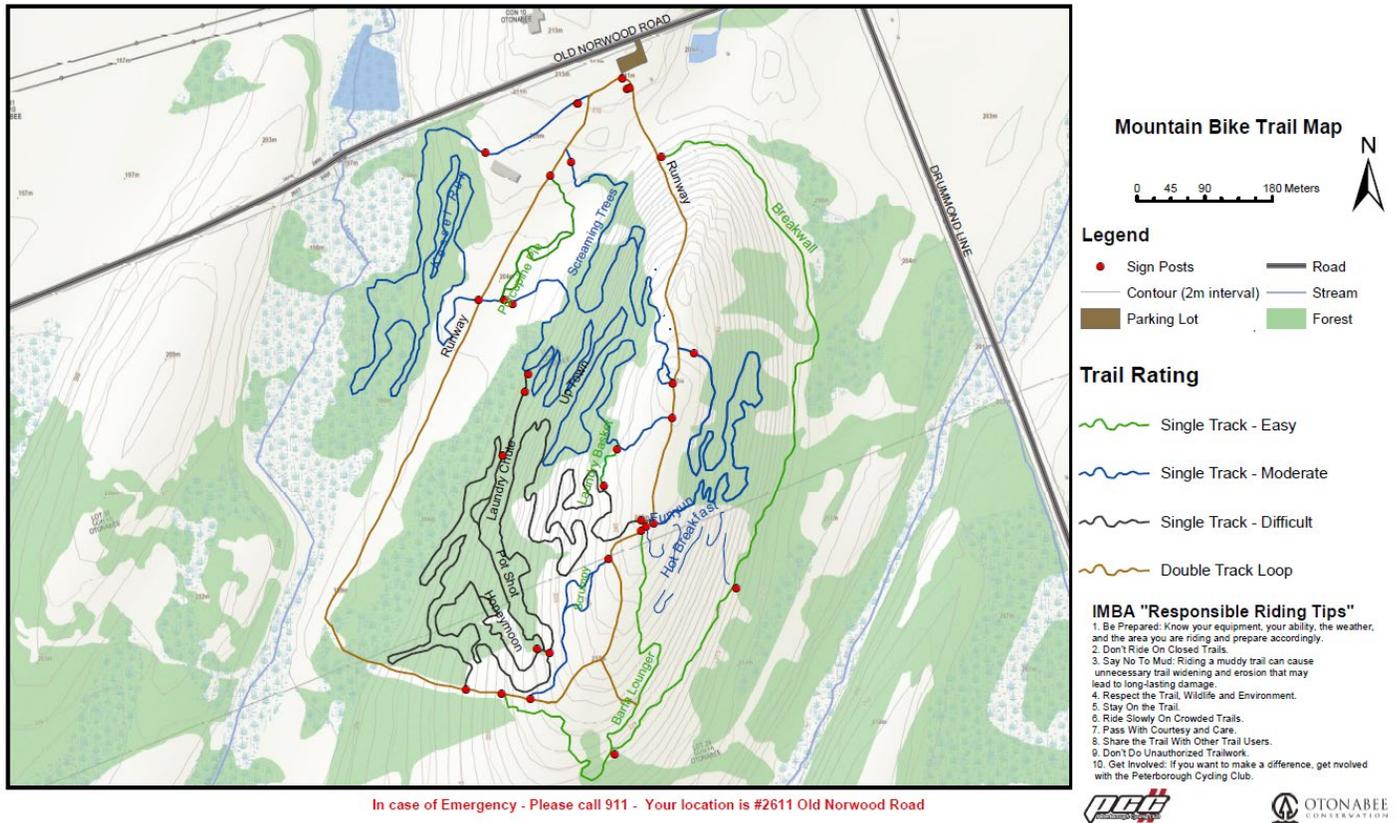


Figure 1. Map of Biking Trails at Harold Town Conservation Area (we conducted reconnaissance along the “Kessel Run Trail” (northernmost blue trail; from ORCA 2016))

Old-growth Features

1. **Tree ages:** No trees were aged.
2. **Tree species present:** White cedar (dominant species), sugar maple, ironwood, white spruce, balsam fir
3. **Coarse woody debris** (*none, uncommon, common, abundant*): Common
4. **Snags** (*none, uncommon, common, abundant*): Common
5. **Super-canopy trees present?** Not noted.
6. **Pit and mound topography present?** Not noted.
7. **Evidence of human disturbance?** Trails are well used and are likely impacting the regeneration of trees and understory plants. Some stumps were also observed; in most cases these appeared to be cut to maintain trails/remove hazard trees.
8. **Wildlife observations:** Woodpecker cavities observed in several trees.

Photos



Left: An AFER staff member measures a historic stump, presumed to be a sugar maple, measuring 107.3cm in diameter (see observation on iNaturalist at www.inaturalist.org/observations/31300436). Right: a white cedar measuring 59.2cm DBH (see observation on iNaturalist at www.inaturalist.org/observations/31302423). There are many other white cedars of a similar size in this area.

Forest Designation(s)²

Young

Mature

Old

Old-growth

Notes: Although no trees were aged here, dozens of trees far exceeded our old-growth size criteria (Quinby 2019) and have very likely reached their age of onset (i.e., old-growth age). We hesitate to describe this forest as “old-growth” because of the impact of recreational trails on tree and understory plant regeneration.

² Definitions for designations are in progress.

References

- Ancient Forest Exploration & Research (AFER). 2019. [Peterborough Old-Growth Forest Project – Level 1: https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/31301615](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/31301615). Accessed December 27, 2019.
- Otonabee Region Conservation Authority (ORCA). 2017. [Conservation Area Management Statement: Harold Town Conservation Area](#). Accessed December 27, 2019.
- Otonabee Region Conservation Authority (ORCA). 2016. [Harold Town Conservation Area](#): Downloads: Harold Town Trails Network. Accessed December 12, 2019.
- Quinby, P. 2019. Minimum Diameters for Old-growth Trees in Ontario's Northern Temperate Forests. Forest Landscape Baselines No. 36, Ancient Forest Exploration & Research. Powassan & Peterborough, Ontario. (https://14b54489-f611-4cf7-9e23-d1b121227c63.filesusr.com/ugd/1eacbf_d0fad9641f2a464986ae5d9b7478ed6a.pdf)