

## Ancient Forest Growth in KLT's Jeffrey-Cowan Forest Preserve



The KLT [Stony Lake Trails](#) is a 10 kilometer trail network which features scenic views of Stony Lake, hiking experiences from moderate to intermediate, benches at resting areas and abundant opportunities to view wildlife.

On Saturday, July 6<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate the three year anniversary of the trails at our [Stony Lake Trails Appreciation Day](#). Guided hikes lead by experienced naturalists will occur from 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. with the remainder of the day left for self-guided hikes. Join KLT along with [Wild Rock](#) and [Viamede Resort](#) to thank the generosity of donors, volunteers and land owners who have and continue to make this a spectacular trail network.

A significant property of this trail network is the [Jeffrey-Cowan Forest Preserve](#). This property has one of the largest undeveloped shoreline areas on the lake and significant forest comprising large older growth White Pines and White Oak which are rare to the area.



This spring, KLT invited [Ancient Forest Exploration and Research \(AFER\)](#) to visit the area and do an assessment of the property, primarily focusing on the forest growth in the area. What they discovered allows us to glimpse into the extraordinary natural history of this area.

AFER described the property as having a treasure trove of tree species and forest types, including several old-growth eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) stands and dozens of supercanopy white pines (*Pinus strobus*).

During the tour, AFER researchers measured a handful of impressive trees, each with a diameter-at-breast height (DBH) that exceeded the minimum DBH at age of onset (aka the age of old-growth) for that species.



AFER is not only interested in finding the biggest trees, but are also keeping an eye out for forests with average-sized trees where growth may be suppressed, such as wet areas or where soils are very thin.

“Trees found in these poor conditions, where resources are limited and growth is slow, can be deceptively old. These conditions exist in a few areas of the Jeffrey-Cowan Forest Preserve. For example, we noticed a few white oak (*Quercus alba*) stands among rocky outcroppings (a sign of thin soils) where trees may be older than they look. We are excited to visit again soon to conduct full surveys to better characterize these special forests,” said Carling Dewar, one of the researchers and the Forest Ecologist & Outreach Coordinator with AFER.

While there is no question that this KLT protected property contains mature and old-growth forests, they are not regenerating as well as they could be. Deer browsing on tasty seedlings is perhaps the biggest culprit, but foot traffic and numerous side trails may also play a part. This will all be taken into consideration when KLT is planning for stewardship activities on the property.

If you are interested to see and learn more about these old-growth forests yourself please join KLT and AFER for our upcoming [Ancient Forest Exploration Days](#) planned for this summer.

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Phone: 705-743-5599  
[info@kawarthalandtrust.org](mailto:info@kawarthalandtrust.org)

Mailing Address:	Office Address:
Kawartha Land Trust	Kawartha Land Trust
P.O. Box 2338	1545 Monaghan Road
Peterborough ON, K9J 7Y8	Peterborough, ON, K9J 5N3