

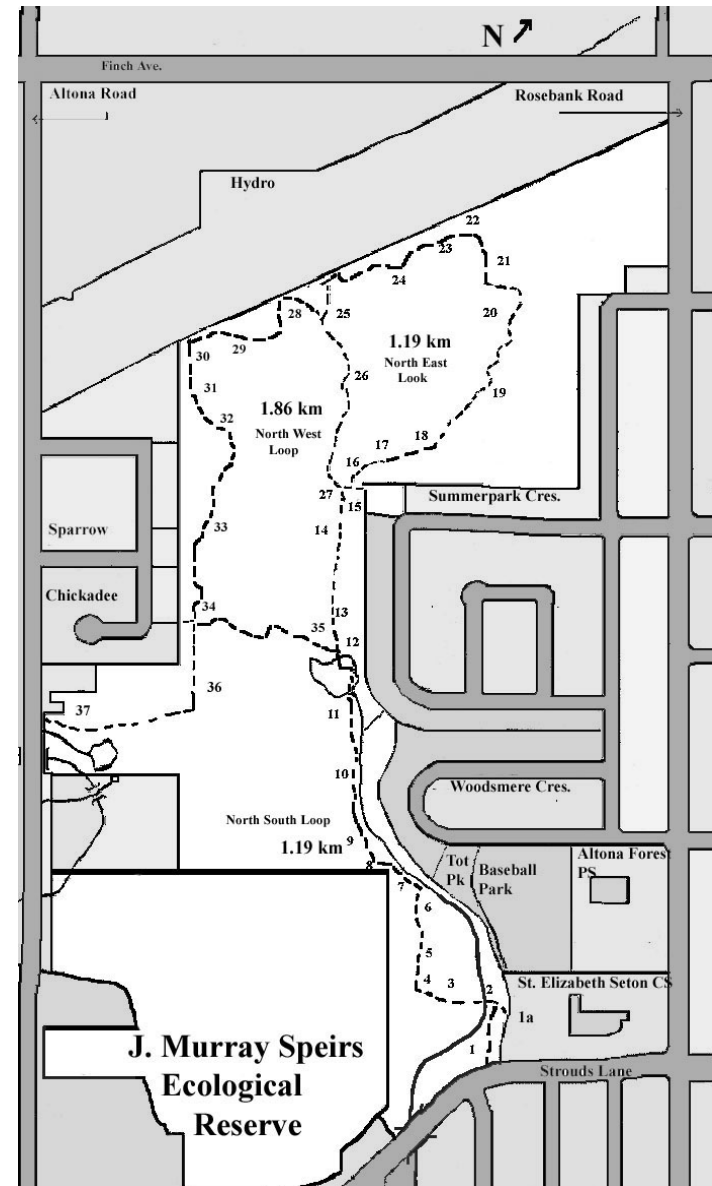
ALTONA FOREST HIKING TRAILS



GUIDE

2002

This document was prepared by Larry Noonan with input and editing by Doug Lockrey.



The hiking trails of Altona Forest start at any one of the seven (7) access points. These are:

- Stroud's Lane Entrance - on Stroud's Lane just west of St. Elizabeth Seton School
- St. Elizabeth Seton Entrance - from soccer field at St. Elizabeth Seton School
- Summerpark Entrance - through the small park on Summerpark Road
- Chickadee Entrance - through walkway from Chickadee Road off Altona Road
- Altona Road Entrance - this entrance off Altona Road across from Pine Grove Ave.
- Hydro Central Entrance - for now, you may park on Rosebank and walk along the hydro property to the entrance.

This booklet is arranged so that you can take a leisurely hike in Altona Forest or a more brisk walk. The INTRODUCTION will give you some of the history of the area. SECTION I will take you through the trails while referencing INTERPRETATIVE POSTs which will be found along the way. The INTERPRETATIVE POSTs will give you some information about what you might see in the vicinity along with other important information. If you are taking a longer hike or looking for more information, refer to SECTION II of the booklet for details about most of the plants and animals which are referenced in the short explanations in SECTION I. SECTION II is arranged alphabetically for your convenience. It is suggested that you download this document and print

out what parts you find useful to better enjoy your hikes in Altona Forest.

INTRODUCTION

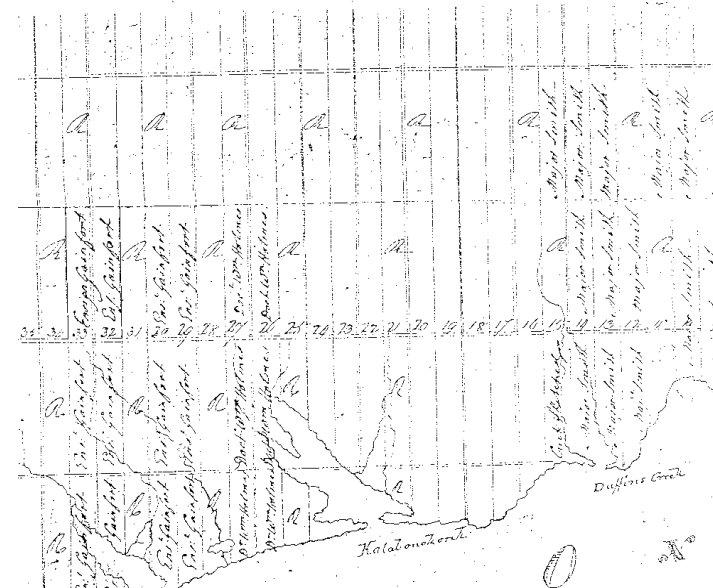
About 20,000 years ago the last great Canadian ice sheet invaded Southern Ontario. As the ice sheet retreated, a drumlinized till plain from the Oak Ridges Moraine south to what is now the Lake Ontario shoreline was formed. The smooth drumlin hills formed islands in ancient Lake Iroquois. Approximately 12,000 years ago, the waters of glacial Lake Iroquois cut a prominent fossil bluff just north of the Altona Forest, a remnant shoreline of this ancient glacial lake.¹ The Oak Ridges Moraine is the source for a number of rivers which flow south to Lake Ontario. One of these is Petticoat Creek which runs through a portion of the west side of Altona Forest. One of Petticoat Creek's small tributaries is the Rosebank Tributary which courses along much of the east side of Altona Forest but is dry to intermittent for part of the year.

The meltwater from the receding glaciers sorted and stratified the soils around Toronto, including the Altona Forest area, into layers. These soils are underlain by more dense till layers at an average depth of 0.6 metre. Many residents in the area are familiar with these impermeable lower clay-like layers which tend to retard deep percolation of water and make for difficult digging. As a result, the water in Altona

Forest saturates the upper soil horizons and accumulates in depressions. The topography varies from uniformly level to gently undulating, except where man-made drainage channels have been dug through the overburden.²

Roaming First Nations hunters followed the melting glaciers 6,000 to 7,000 years ago. These hunters roved much of Ontario. Stone spear points and other artifacts have been found in many parts of Pickering including in Altona Forest. The earliest of these artifacts has been dated to 2000 B.C. About 100 B.C. some limited farming by Iroquoian Indians was carried out along many of the rivers in the region. By 1100 A.D., First Nations people were hunting, gathering and farming in various parts of what is now Pickering. These tribes constantly moved as the soil was depleted and game became scarce. Evidence of villages have been found along Duffin's Creek, around Frenchman's Bay, on Concession 3 north-east of Pickering Village and on Kingston Road west of the Rouge valley. Although it is unlikely that any early inhabitants farmed Altona Forest, because of the poor soil, they did travel up Petticoat Creek and along Rosebank Tributary into Altona Forest in search of game.

In 1791, Engineer Augustus Jones started surveying all of Pickering in preparation for settlers. In 1799, the first settlers began arriving. Many of these were United Empire Loyalists. The first recorded owner of the land which included Altona Forest was an Ensign Gainfort. Presumably he was a soldier who was granted this



Map #1 Early map of the area. Notice Ensign Gainfort has lots 32 and 33 from the lake north to what is now Finch on the northern boundary of the Altona Forest.

land. However, the official records show the original official government grant of “All” 200 acres of Concession 1, Lot 32, (which includes Altona Forest) was granted to Dr. William Holmes and not Ensign Gainfort! This is a mystery that perhaps one of the readers of this booklet will be able to clear up and notify the Stewardship Committee.

The Altona Forest is a critical component in the Rouge-Duffins Wildlife Corridor which joins the Rouge, Petticoat and Duffins watersheds. In turn, these watersheds provide linkages to a large network for

wildlife movement to the Oak Ridges Moraine, Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario. The Altona Forest and the larger Rouge-Duffins Wildlife Corridor provide vital habitat, contribute to wildlife movement and enhance the health and biodiversity of plants and animals east of Toronto.³ The Altona Forest consists of mature forest with old growth characteristics and numerous early- to mid-secessional growth areas, such as old fields and wet meadows. A person who walks all of the trails of Altona Forest will experience all of these diverse vegetation communities.

Altona Forest is a unique urban forest. Less than half of one percent of the wooded habitat remaining in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) provides mature interior forest habitat that has a core area at least 300 metres from the forest edge. Altona Forest is one of the few large areas remaining, adjacent to Lake Ontario, where



migrating birds have the protection of forest cover for resting and feeding during migration.⁴

No matter which entrance to Altona Forest you use, the numbered stations in this booklet correspond to numbered posts which you will find along the way. INTERPRETIVE POST Number 1 is located through the Stroud's Lane Entrance. The numbers progress from that point northward.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS OF ALTONA FOREST

The trees of Altona Forest are many and varied. They include uncommon trees for southern Ontario, including white elm and blue beech. The trails of Altona Forest will take you through hardwood forests, softwood forests and mixed forests. Specific stations will refer to many of the trees and shrubs that grow in Altona Forest. Identification diagrams and hints will be given for each season.

Wildflowers are so named because they have developed over time without human intervention. Many were thought to be weeds as they grew so freely in the meadows and fields. Because of habitat destruction and pollution factors, many have become endangered. Many varieties of wildflowers are found in Altona Forest. Wildflowers and other seasonal plants will be reference, where possible d according to season.

, spring ' summer
 „ autumn † winter

The animals of Altona Forest are also varied with some species which might surprise you. It will be uncommon for any hiker to see many animals, as some are nocturnal, while most of the others are very good at hiding when people are near. However, with care and some luck while walking very quietly on the trails you may see one or more of the following: **deer, woodpeckers, coyotes, racoons, red tailed hawks, rabbits, ruffed grouse, various song birds, foxes** and much more.

Most of the plants and animals which are typed in **bold** in the booklet are written up in more detail in Section II.

SECTION I

INTERPRETIVE POST 1

Welcome to Altona Forest. Please read the introduction which is found at the beginning of this booklet.

You are entering the Altona Forest at the southeast side. For a short distance you will be travelling beside the Rosebank Tributary. From here the Rosebank Tributary travels under Stroud's Lane and joins up

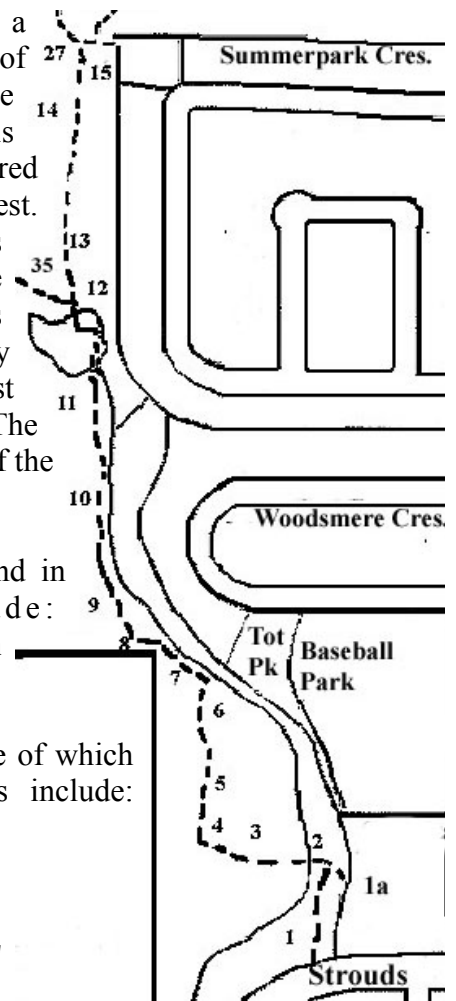
with Petticoat Creek a short distance south of Stroud's Lane. The vegetation in this area is relatively young compared to much of Altona Forest. Rosebank Tributary has its source in the wetland which is located approximately in the middle of the east side of the forest. The wetland drains much of the interior of the forest.

The trees you will find in this area include: **buckthorn, staghorn sumac, hemlock.**

The wildflowers, some of which are considered weeds include: **poison ivy and fern.**

INTERPRETIVE POST 1a

Welcome to Altona Forest. Please read the introduction which is found at the beginning of this booklet.

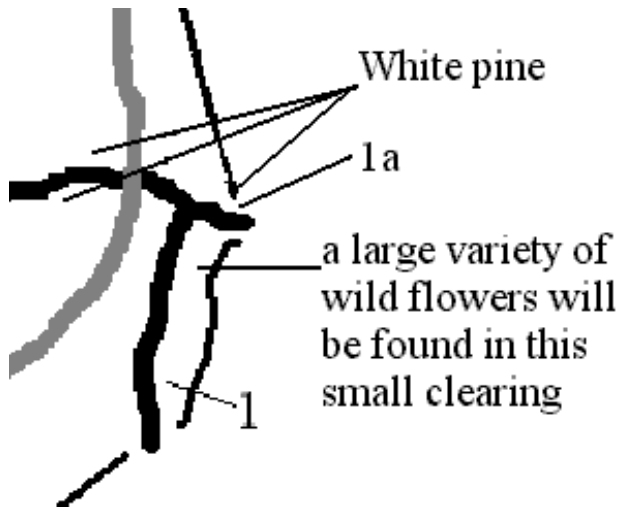




This trail proceeds west and then north to the Summerpark Entrance. The distance from here to the Summerpark Entrance is approximately 1.19 km.

You might want to have a brief look at the small clearing just to the south of this INTERPRETIVE POST. Ground cover and wildflowers found in this area, include: **white clover, red clover, plantain, vetch, yarrow, Queen Anne's lace, chicory, goldenrod, aster and small staghorn sumac.**

Butterflies which you might be lucky enough to see in this clearing or in the clearing along the northwest loop include: **monarch, cabbage white, cabbage yellow, and red admiral.**



As you entered the forest, there was a very large tree which is on your right at the very edge of the forest. It is clearly visible from the school yard. This tree, **white pine**, has a distinctive shape.

The white pine is the tallest tree in eastern Canada. Eastern white pine is the provincial tree of Ontario as well as the state tree of Maine and Michigan. During colonial times, it was reserved for the Royal Navy who used it for ship masts. The Canadian artists, the Group of Seven, often used Algonquin Park white pines as part of or the main themes of their paintings. Altona Forest white pines have also been the subject of artistic projects.



You are entering at one of the two south east entrances into Altona Forest.

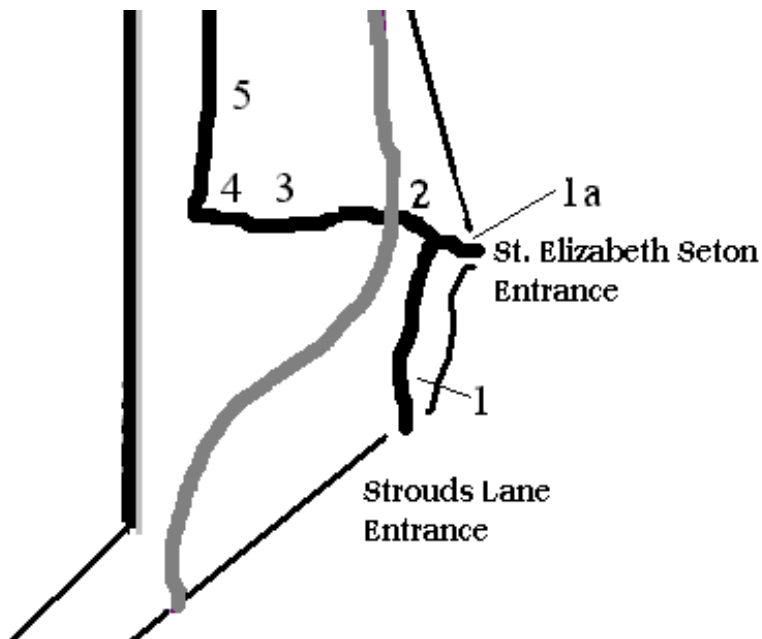
CAUTION: There is some **poison ivy** on all the paths of Altona Forest; indeed, from here to INTERPRETIVE POST Post 3 there is abundant **poison ivy** on both sides of the path. **Please read the Poison Ivy information section at the end of this booklet.** Be careful to stay in the middle of the path until INTERPRETIVE POST



Poison Ivy with small flowers in the spring. This picture was taken at Post 1a where it is abundant against the fence and along the path.

3. Thereafter be watchful for **poison ivy** in reduced quantity unless cautioned again.

There are many **white pines** in Altona Forest. Between INTERPRETIVE POST Post 2 and INTERPRETIVE POST Post 3 an observant hiker will see small and medium sized white pines. Look for the cones which are light brown with white tinges which are sticky and aromatic. Along this narrow path there are **chokecherry, slippery elm, white cedar, white birch** and **sugar maple**.



INTERPRETIVE POST 2

In front of you is the Rosebank Tributary. This tributary was deepened by a developer to drain the wetland which you will see later on the hike. Watch for the removed soil which is mounded beside the tributary in many places.

- , spring the rocks across the Rosebank Tributary are often underwater during the spring run-off
- ' summer the water in the tributary slowly reduces in quantity until it appear to be just standing water. In some dry summers, the tributary dries up entirely
- „ autumn little to no water flows during this season
- † winter what little water is left in the tributary freezes totally

Because of the disturbance caused by the developer when deepening the Rosebank tributary, buckthorn has taken hold in a number of places. See note on buckthorn under INTERPRETIVE POST 1.

Poison Ivy

On the south side of the trail, about three metres east of the bank of the Rosebank Tributary, are particularly good samples of poison ivy. The fruit, which persists into the next summer, is usually visible. Please do not touch but observe this patch carefully and read the

notes on poison ivy in INTERPRETIVE POST 1 section of this booklet.

Cross the Rosebank Tributary using . Watch for white pine near the path for about 20 metres west of the tributary.

Pileated woodpeckers can sometimes be heard or seen in the trees along this part of the trail.

INTERPRETIVE POST 3

You are now entering a hardwood forest. Notice the change in plant life and upperstorey cover above your head. The upperstorey shades the ground and results in the growth of shade-loving flowering plants and shade-tolerant trees.

The amount of **poison ivy** along this wider path from here to the wetland is much reduced from the trail you have just left. Poison ivy does not like shade. However, there is the occasional poison ivy plant along the way so please look where you step if you get close to the edge of the path.

You are in a hardwood forest. Hardwood trees are those which lose their leaves in the autumn. Most of the trees in this section are **sugar maple, white ash, slipper elm, white birch** (some very large ones), and **ironwood**. There are very few **white cedar**. **Trout lily** is common in this and the rest of the hardwood forested parts of Altona Forest. **Trillium** can also be seen in the spring along this part of the path and past

INTERPRETIVE POSTs 4 to 14. Please be careful with any trilliums that you see, as they are tender plants and it is illegal in Ontario to pick or transplant trillium. (Trillium is Ontario's provincial flower.)

INTERPRETIVE POST 4

Dr. J. Murray Speirs Ecological Reserve is located immediately to the west of this INTERPRETIVE POST. Please do not enter the Reserve but stay on the official path. The Reserve is an ecologically sensitive area and there are not public paths through it.

Dr. J. Murray Speirs was a Pickering resident for more than 50 years. A graduate of the University of Illinois, where he received his doctorate in 1946 for his thesis, *Local and migratory movements of the American Robin in Eastern North America*, he went on to teach at the University of Toronto for many years. He was an



Dr. J. Murray Speirs

author, teacher, researcher, naturalist and avid bird watcher. He co-founded the Pickering Naturalists in 1977. His love of birds led him to write and publish the two-volume book *Birds of Ontario* in 1985. In 1995, he donated a large piece of his property in the Altona Forest to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in order to ensure that this site would remain a place for scientific research, monitoring and study of

nature. Thus the Dr. J. Murray Speirs Ecological Reserve came into existence.



Dr. Speirs' long and distinguished career was acknowledged in November of 2000, when Governor General Adrienne Clarkson visited his Altona Road home to invest him in the *Order of Canada*. Dr. Speirs passed away on Monday September 3, 2001. His legacy lives on in his family, his students, his friends and the many natural areas, including Altona Forest, which he worked to preserve.

You will notice as you walk north from here, that the part of the Reserve is usually very wet with marsh type bodies of water and vernal⁵ pools in many areas west of the path.

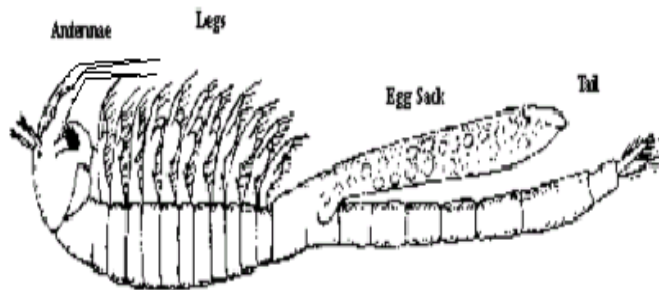
The trees in this area include a very large **sugar maple**. As you walk along the path which now goes in a north/south direction, look for more sugar maples of various sizes, **white ash** and some **hemlock**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 5

This INTERPRETIVE POST is located beside a unique tree in this area, the **blue-beech**. Look for a tree with a trunk which looks like a muscular arm. Beyond this tree is more of the Reserve swamp area. You may notice, depending on the time of year and the amount of rain, a number of small fresh water pools towards the Reserve. These are called vernal pools and you might see a number of them along the trail in other locations.

Vernal pools are important ingredients to the fresh water world. Because of the nature of the ground in Altona Forest, shallow topsoil with hard clay and rock underneath and the fact that the forest is protected, vernal pools are more common here than many other parts of Pickering. The name comes from the Latin word for "spring", which is the season when vernal pools fill with fresh water from snow melt and rain. These pools, which can last from just a few days in the spring to a couple of months, quickly become aquatic habitats for a great variety of species which have adapted to a short wet-dry life cycle. Lack of larger predators, which inhabit the cool waters of larger ponds, rivers and creeks, give vernal pool dwellers a relatively uninterrupted development time. In Altona Forest, vernal pools range from small puddles near the

path to larger swamp-like expanses as can be seen to the west of this site inside the Reserve. Some of the vernal pool dwellers include, **fairy shrimp, wood frogs, toads, salamanders** and **turtles**. Often seen as useless puddles, children sometimes splash in vernal pools or walk through them. People who do this or ride their bicycles through vernal pools, may kill the inhabitants. At the very least, they churn up mud which clogs the gills of **tadpoles, salamander larvae** and the larvae of very useful insects such as **dragonflies** and **damselflies**. Please try to avoid all areas of standing water in Altona Forest, even if it is on the trail. These vernal pools are critical to the continued development and ecological health of the forest.



Fairy Shrimp

There are many sugar maple along this part of the trail. Ironwood can also be seen. To the north of where you are standing, on the west side of the trail, is a very large **hemlock** tree which has its branches extending

out over the trail.

Large numbers of squirrels live in this area. They are watching you from the trees. You may see them if you are walking quietly.

INTERPRETIVE POST 6

In this area, off to the east and west, you will see a number of tree stumps. These are vandalized trees - **sugar maple, white birch, ironwood, white cedar, white elm** and **white ash**. More than a hundred trees have been cut down in this area by vandals in the summer of 2000. They have removed much of the understorey of trees. When the larger trees grow to full maturity and fall, there will be considerably fewer trees to take their place. The evolution of the forest has been severely damaged in this area. It is very important that any damage to the forest be reported to the Conservation Authority. If you see someone vandalizing the forest, call Durham Region Police at (905) 668-0552. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO STOP THEM BUT CALL THE POLICE WHO WILL COME OUT IMMEDIATELY IF THE VANDALS ARE STILL IN THE FOREST.**

As you leave this area and enter into a small clearing, notice a mound off the path near the tributary. You will see a number of these as you hike from here to the wetland. They are explained in greater detail at INTERPRETIVE POST 9. Other trees in this area are **sugar maple, ironwood, white elm, black cherry, white birch** and some **white cedar**.

You will notice that there are a number of large white birch trees on the ground in this area. There are also some large dead white birch to the west of the trail. These trees are returning to the soil. Many insects and various types of fungi are breaking down the nutrients in these logs. This type of debris is natural and a vital part of the natural ecosystem of Altona Forest.

INTERPRETIVE POST 7

This small clearing is unique. If you look carefully, you will see a number of small water channels arising in the forest to the west and running to the tributary. This flat open area drains an area of the forest which stretches about 100 m to the west.



Wild grape

There are a great variety of plants growing in the clearing including an abundance of **wild grape**, **wild raspberry**, **goldenrod**, two types of **fern** (**marginal wood fern** and **northern beech fern**), some **poison ivy**, **thistle**, **milkweed**, **spotted Joe Pye weed**, **asters**, **flowering dogwood** and **boneset**. (Refer to SECTION II for explanations of each of these plants.)

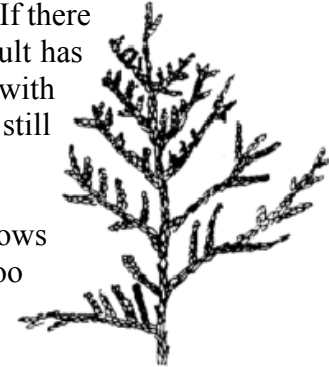
Many of the **goldenrod** have galls on their stems. These galls are created by the plant when an wasp lays an egg in the stem. The plant expands around the egg and larva as it grows. When the larva is



Spotted Joe Pye Weed

ready to change to an adult it eats its way to the edge of the gall. If there is a hole in the gall, the adult has left. If the gall is complete with no hole, the larva is still contained.

White Cedar



There are also some willows near the tributary. These too have galls. The willow galls resemble cones from a coniferous tree. (see INTERPRETIVE POST 24 for a picture of this type of gall)

As you leave the clearing, be careful of your footing as the trail gets close to the edge of the Rosebank Tributary bank in a few places.

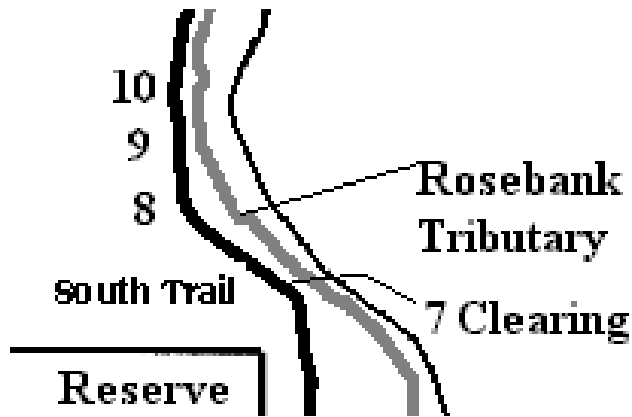
INTERPRETIVE POST 8

There are a couple of more mounds near the tributary in this area. Remember these when you are at INTERPRETIVE POST 9.

The forest here is predominantly **white cedar**. It is called a softwood forest. Interspersed with the white cedar are young and mature white birch, red oak, and near the Rosebank Tributary where there is more sunlight, large slippery elms. If you are hiking on a warm summer day, you will notice a drop of temperature while you are in the cedar forest. As you walk along the trail you will notice a cedar rail fence on the west side quite close to the trail. This cedar

fence was built at least 55 years ago. Cedar was used by the farmers to mark boundaries or, more importantly, keep livestock from roaming away. This fence was likely built to keep cattle from escaping. Most of the cedars here are 50 to 65 years old. The farmer's field here, failing as an area that could support crops, was likely used to graze cattle.

In this area you will see a number of samples of trees which are a good indicator of the health of the forest. These are **balsam fir**, which is also called blister pine, sapin mountain goose and cho-kho-tung. Look for prominent gum blisters on the trunk of the **balsam fir** tree. Large healthy balsam fir trees tell us that the forest here is in good condition.



Called cho-kho-tung by First Nations peoples, the soft needles were used as bedding by them and by early explorers and pioneers. Unlike other coniferous trees, the cones of the balsam fir stand upright. When the seeds fall out of the cone, a cone spike is left which resembles a thin candle. Some historians think that the cone spike, when snow-covered, inspired the Germanic people to decorate trees with candles or lights. Evergreens like the balsam fir also inspired the Yuletide song "O Tannenbaum" (O Christmas Tree).



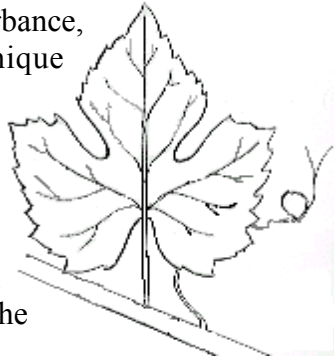
You may also see some **black-eyed Susans** along the trail.

INTERPRETIVE POST 9

You have climbed up a mound which is just one of many along the Rosebank Tributary. Around 1970, the developers who owned this property planned to build houses but were not satisfied with the water drainage in the area of the present day Altona Forest. They brought heavy equipment into the forest and dug up Rosebank Tributary to make it deeper and drain the wetland and the surrounding area. They were successful in lowering the water table and in draining much of the wetland which resulted in the destruction of breeding areas for many birds, small reptiles and amphibians. The pond in the wetland was all but destroyed. Its reduced size was unable to sustain the diverse animal life which was formally there. The developers deposited the earth and clay, which they dug up, on the sides of the waterway. You are

standing on the largest of these mounds.

Being an area of major disturbance, this area evolved a unique appearance with a mixture of trees and wildflowers. On the west side of the mounds you will see white ash, white birch and white cedar. On the Tributary side can be seen sugar maple and white ash. The intrusive buckthorn has found the mounded clay a perfect place to grow. Shrubs and wildflowers on the mounds include **cat grape, honeysuckle, milkweed, yarrow, daisies, goldenrod** and **thistle**.

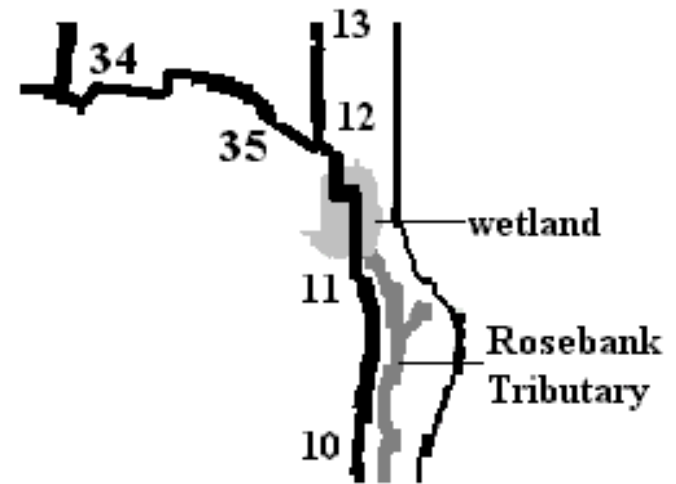


Cat Grape leaf

The south towards INTERPRETIVE POST 8 is the cedar forest while to the north grows a large patch of **flowering dogwood, vetch, asters** and **dog strangling vine**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 10

More large mounds of clay and earth can be seen north and south from here along the trail next to the tributary. The farmer's cedar rail fence seen here is a continuation of the one which is seen in the area of INTERPRETIVE POST 9. These examples of white cedar split rail fences are around 60 years old and in still good condition. Farmers used **white cedar** for their rot-resistant qualities and their strength. Notice that some of the trees, including **white cedar**, are



growing through the rails of the fence. Originally no nails were used in the construction of these fences as they snake back and forth supported by each other. In later years some wire and nails were added where needed.

INTERPRETIVE POST 11

You have arrived at the source of the Rosebank Tributary. This wetland once covered the entire flat area that you are looking at. Migratory birds used to stop here on their way north or south on their yearly trips. **Ducks** used to swim on the open water and nest in the cattails by the water's edge. **Frogs** used to add their voices to the crickets nightly concerts, and **deer, fox** and **coyote** used to come here to drink and hunt. Other wetlands were located east of here where there are now houses.

Deer, fox and coyote still roam the forest and they do come here during the spring and early summer when there is more water.

This is an excellent place to stop for some quiet time and observe. If you are very quiet, **cardinals** and **blue jays** can often be seen in the trees. Song birds are often heard and sometimes seen flying around the wetland.

This is a prime place to hear the mating call of the **cicada** or to see **dragonflies** and **damselflies** hunting. Many varieties of butterflies, including **monarch, cabbage white, cabbage yellow** and **red admiral**, are often seen flitting around the many flowers, especially on the south side just to the west of the trail where large flowering dogwood grow in abundance.



The large variety of plant life here include: **cattails, dogwood, purple loosestrife, various grasses, honeysuckle, Joe-Pye-weed, goldenrod, swamp thistle, wild lettuce** and **trembling aspen**. There are also some **black cherry** on the north side.

To the south of this post you might be able to see some **wild roses** growing on the bank of the tributary. Tradition has it that these roses growing on the bank of the waterway are what gave the tributary its name of Rosebank.

INTERPRETIVE POST 12

You are in a softwood forest dominated by **white cedar** with some **hemlock** and **balsam fir**. Walk carefully here, as the ground cover can include **trout lily, fern, white trillium, red trillium, showy orchids** and **elecampane**. A reminder that it is illegal to remove any plants from this forest and it is illegal to pick or dig up trilliums in Ontario anywhere. **Showy orchids**, which flower in the spring and early summer, need a particular type of soil where the acidity and mixture of clay and soil is just right. They do not survive transplanting.



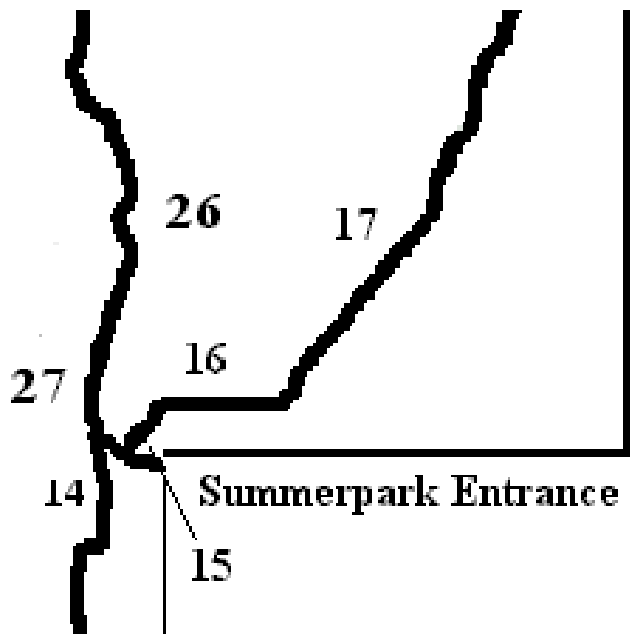
INTERPRETIVE POST 13

This is a continuation of the cedar forest with the same characteristics as the area further south. See **INTERPRETIVE POST 12**.

Between here and the **INTERPRETIVE POST 14**, you will travel through a small clearing. In that clearing are **willow, goldenrod, mullein, bedstraw, white cedar, white elm, white ash, horsetail, tall buttercup** and **chickweed**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 14

Approximately 30 years ago a number of children and young adults who lived in the area built this log structure as a centre for playing. More recently it has been used for paint ball games and rave parties. These types of activities are illegal. If you see any of this



type of activity, please phone 911 and report what you see. Do not attempt to stop or interrupt these activities. The police will come immediately if you tell them the illegal activity is still going on.

This area was cleared of trees many years ago. Farming was attempted and an apple orchard was planted here. Look around. You can see some of the very large apple trees. In the fall there are many apples on the ground here. It is a very good area to see a variety of animals in the fall as they come to collect the apples.

Cicada can often be heard in the trees nearby.

Just north of this post the trail intersects with the Northwest Loop hiking trail. To the east is the Summerpark Entrance or the start of the Northeast Loop hiking trail.



Wild grape

INTERPRETIVE POST 15

Welcome to Altona Forest. Please read the introduction which is found at the beginning of this booklet.

You are standing at the Summerpark Entrance. The trail to the west is the start of the Northwest Loop hiking trail. It is a 1.86 km loop returning to this spot.

To the north is the start of the Northeast Loop hiking trail. This trail is a 1.19 km loop returning to this spot. It proceeds to the Hydro Entrance and then west to join up with the Northwest Loop hiking trail.

If you proceed south on the North/South Trail, it is approximately 1.19 km to the St. Elizabeth Seton Entrance.



Dog-strangling vine

Dog-strangling vine is common here. It is an intrusive mass of ground cover. It is a member of the milkweed family.

Beside you is a medium sized tree with thorns. This is a **hawthorn**, which is uncommon along the trail. It has large

and small thorns. Some of its thorns have thorns!

Other trees in this area include **buckthorn**, **slippery elm** and **white cedar**.

Ground growth common on this part of the path includes **coltsfoot**, **purple loosestrife**, **goldenrod**, **wild grape**, **bull thistle**, **dog-strangling vine** and **aster**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 16 [next to orange

marker on white ash tree]

You have entered a mature **white cedar** stand with scattered **white ash** and **sugar maple**. Cedar leaves (look like scales) on the ground produces an acidic type of soil which is tolerated by few plants. Notice the lack of ground cover in this area because of the soil and the shade.

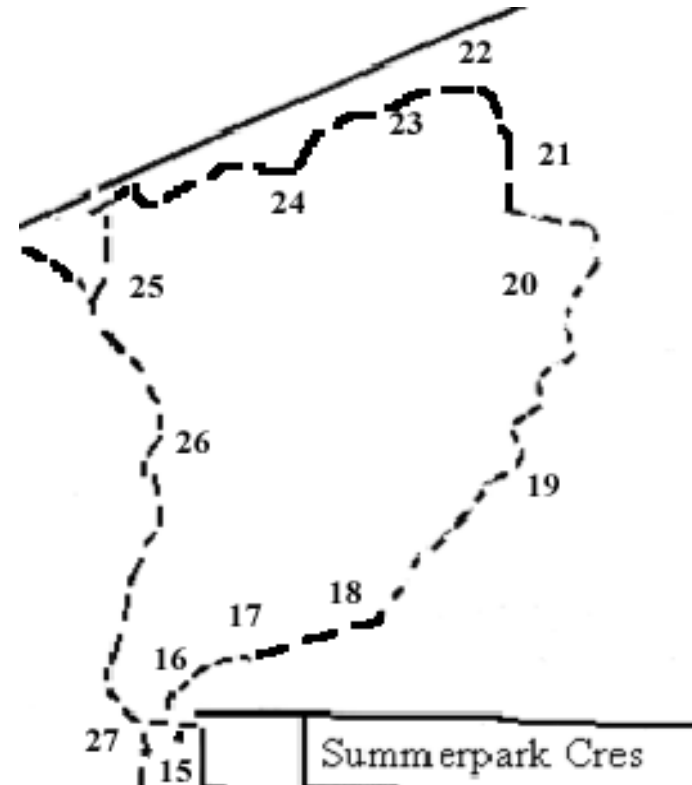


Notice the extreme bends in some of the cedar trees in this area. What do you suppose caused this? Some causes are the loss of the leader or main shoot from the tree; another tree falling on the young

Note the different growing habit of a number of cedar trees in this area.

tree forcing it to grow around the obstruction; human intervention. It is not known for sure what happened here to get these interesting shapes.

You will also see **dog strangling vine** in this area.



INTERPRETIVE POST 17 [beside pine]

Emerging from the **white cedar** stand, you have entered a **hemlock** and **white pine** area which leads

into a large area of medium sized **sugar maple** trees which make up the upper and under storey. Shrubs and flowers here include (seasonally): **baneberry, jack-in-the-pulpit, trilliums, meadow rue, blue cohosh and toothworts.**

INTERPRETIVE POST 18 [near hemlock which is just before two large beech trees]

This area has large **hemlocks** and a number of **beech** trees, two of which are located near where you are standing. Notice the elephant-like colour and texture of the trunk of the **beech.**

Look around and you will see some large wind falls. These are trees which have been blown over by the wind. The roots are sticking out of the ground. Often the trees continue to grow after this. In Altona Forest windfalls are common because the soil is very shallow and beneath the soil is a mixture of clay and rocks. To a large degree, we have the shallow soil to thank for the preservation of Altona Forest. It is this condition which made this area not suitable for farming. As a result the forest was allowed to develop and stay in a more natural state. Eventually it was recognized as an important natural and environmental area and preserved. If the soil was better, the farming would have been better and all the trees would have been cut down and the land cleared first for crops and then for houses.

As you walk on from here, you will see some **wood fern, arrowleaf asters, baneberry and blue cohosh**

growing beside the trail.

INTERPRETIVE POST 19[near fallen tree which must be cut for the trail]

There are a number of trees on the ground in this area. Some have bracket fungus growing on them. The **bracket fungus** or **polypore fungus**, has a mass of pores on the underside and it often looks like a shelf on the dead tree. Like other fungi, this one helps break down the dead trees and deliver the nutrients back to the earth.

INTERPRETIVE POST 20

Look around here to see two trees with unique bark. One, sometimes called the corn flake tree, has bark with large scales which resemble corn flakes pasted onto the trunk. This is the **black cherry.**

Another unique tree here has bark which looks like the white birch as it peels back in papery sections. The colour of the bark is a dark yellow. This tree is **yellow birch.**

Around this area and along the trail, look out for the following: fern, rattlesnake root, jack-in-the-pulpit and very large hemlocks.

INTERPRETIVE POST 21[near intermittent tributary]

You are standing near an unnamed intermittent tributary. The soil and clay have been washed away to

expose the rocks. You can clearly see here why this area was not successful as farm land.

In this area and along the trail you might see **ostrich fern, jack-in-the-pulpit, barren strawberry**, and **moss** on the ground and rocks. Trees in this area are **ironwood, large hemlock, sugar maples** and **basswood**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 22 [pine forest]

You are at the edge of a white pine forest. Notice the ground. The pine needles in this area are so thick that in many places nothing else will grow. This is one way trees can eliminate competition.

INTERPRETIVE POST 23[two orange markers]

CAUTION: From this INTERPRETATIVE POST #23 through INTERPRETATIVE POST #24, 25, 26 and 27, there is an abundance of **poison ivy**. STAY ON THE TRAIL and do not venture off even a little.

Here is a moist area with **white cedar** and **aspen** and some dead trees which may have been killed by the moisture. Aspen and cedars like the moist conditions here but many other trees do not.

On the trail in this area look out for **barren strawberry, buttercups, horsetail, mullein, barberry, milkweed, enchanters night shade** and **poison ivy**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 24 [beside hydro]

North of your position is the hydro corridor. This area receives more sun light than many areas inside the forest and as a result has some different plants growing here. Look for **sedges, dogwood, goldenrod, highbush cranberry, grape, buttercup**, and **willows** with galls which resemble cones. The galls are the reaction of the willows to the incursion of an insect egg inside its twig. It does the tree no harm.



INTERPRETIVE POST 25 [fork in trail]

CAUTION: Abundance of **poison ivy** in this area. STAY ON THE TRAIL and do not venture off even a little.

You are at the junction of the Northeast and the Northwest loops in the Altona Forest Hiking Trails. To the west from here is a regeneration area. It is a sensitive area with many different trees, shrubs and wildflowers which you can not see in such abundance anywhere in the forest. It is part of the Northwest loop we urge you to consider walking there. To the north is the Northeast trail which goes through a number of forest types before arriving at the Summerpark

Entrance.



The plants here include: **rush, milkweed, dogwood, poison ivy and bush clover.** The trees include the **black cherry, chokecherry, white cedar, white pine and aspen.**

In the evening, if you are quiet you may hear one of two owl families which live in the area. Butterflies frequent this and the beginning of the Northwest trail. You might also see some white tailed deer emerging and looking for a comfortable place to sleep. The deer also cross into the hydro property and on to the Rouge Park system to the northeast of here. Other mammals also use the hydro property to move freely from Altona Forest to Amos Ponds and the Rouge Park system.

INTERPRETIVE POST 26 [farmer's rock pile]
CAUTION: From this INTERPRETATIVE POST #26 through INTERPRETATIVE POST #23, 24, 25, and 27, there is an abundance of **poison ivy**. Any area of the trail which gets ample amounts of sun light is likely to have poison ivy. STAY ON THE TRAIL and do not venture off even a little.

If you look into the cedar trees to the west of where you are standing, you will notice a large pile of rocks. Please do not remove or move any of these rocks. These are left over from the days when this area was partially cleared of trees and the farmer removed the

surface rocks. Upon finding that the rocks were not just on the surface, but underneath the soil blunting and damaging the plows etc., the area was used for grazing cattle and the trees were allowed to grow back. Notice that many of the trees in this area are about the same size and age. Farmers often made a rock pile in the middle of their area or used them to construct stone fences along their property lines.

Plants in this area include the **white cedar, ostrich fern and coltsfoot.**

INTERPRETIVE POST 27

You are standing at the junction of the South Trail and the Northwest Trail. To the east is the exit to Summerpark and the start of the Northeast Trail. To the south is the South Trail and to the west is the Northwest Trail.

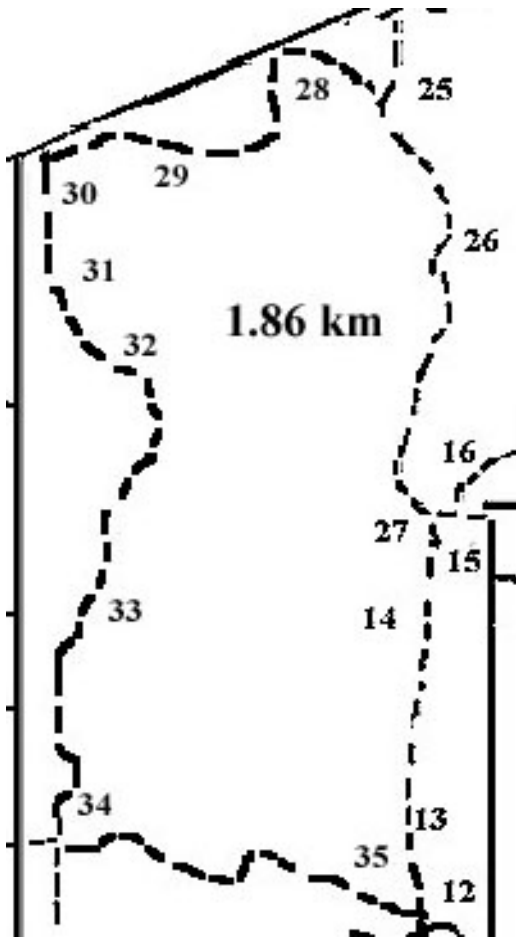
INTERPRETIVE POST 28

North of this location is the hydro corridor. Southwest is a meadow woodlot dominated by **white ash** and **white cedar**.

The ground cover in this area is **grass, sedge, goldenrod** and **poison ivy**. Please be cautious and stay on the path to avoid the **poison ivy**.

In the meadow you may also see some **highbush cranberry** and **English hawthorn** (smaller thorns than the native hawthorn and oak-like leaves),

dogwood and **grape**. This is a very good area to observe birds. It is also an area which is frequented by deer and rabbits as well as **owls** and **hawks**.



INTERPRETIVE POST 29

You are in the reforestation area of northern Altona

Forest. It is a meadow woodlot dominated by white ash and white cedar.

During the spring of 2002, over 200 white cedars, 5 to 6 ft tall, were stolen from this area. You may still be able to see the holes from the roots. Please be careful not to walk into any of these holes as some of them are located near to the path. **If you see anyone digging up trees in this, or any part of Altona Forest, please call the Durham Police by calling 911.**

The ground cover in this area is grass, sedge, goldenrod and poison ivy. Please be cautious and stay on the path to avoid the poison ivy.

In the meadow you may also see some **highbush cranberry** and **English hawthorn** (smaller thorns than the native hawthorn), **dogwood**, **tall buttercup**, **Virginia creeper** and **grape**. This is a very good area to observe birds. It is also an area which is frequented by deer and rabbits as well as owls and hawks. North of here is the hydro corridor.

INTERPRETIVE POST 30

There is an entirely different type of vegetation here than at INTERPRETIVE POSTS 29 and 31. The soil is damp and rich and supports **tall buttercup**, **grass**, **sedge**, **fleabane**, **white avens**, **horsetail**, **small Bebb's / beaked willow**, **chokecherry**, **basswood**, **white ash**, **dogwood**, **trembling aspen**, **white elm**, small and medium **white cedars** and an abundance of **common mullein** with its velvety leaves. In this area **slugs** and

snails with beige shells with dark brown stripes are common.

INTERPRETIVE POST 31

This meadow has an abundance of wildflowers and small trees. The plants include **hawkweed, buttercup, white avens, white ash, white pine, black cherry** and **chokecherry**. This is another area frequented by a variety of birds as well as **deer, rabbits** and **coyote**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 32

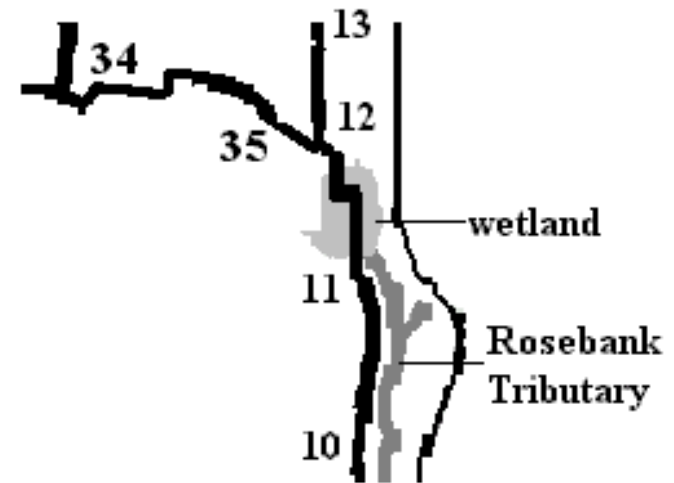
You are in a mature **white cedar** stand with some dogwood, moss and wood fern but mostly very little understorey. Look at the ground and look above. The ground is covered with a mat of dried cedar leaves while there is very little light coming through the upperstorey of cedars. These factors combine to discourage an abundance of understorey growth.

You might notice the occasional large apple tree along the path. The reason for this is not clear but this area was a farmers field in the 1940s and there is an old apple orchard on the east side of Altona Forest not too far from here.

INTERPRETIVE POST 33

White pine and **white cedar** are dominant in this area. Notice the ground cover of pine needles and the lack of an understorey. Watch out for large apple trees with scaly bark (very different from the other trees in this area). The apple trees may have been here before the

cedar trees as they are very old. You will see some **baneberry** and **dog-strangling vine** where the sun light reaches the ground.



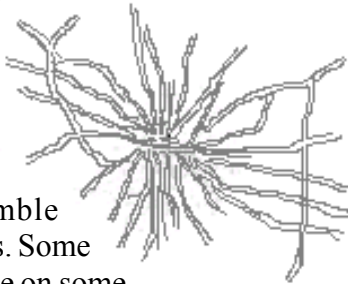
INTERPRETIVE POST 34

Welcome to Altona Forest. Please read the introduction which is found at the beginning of this booklet. To the west of this post is the exit from Chickadee. From here you can proceed north along the Northwest Loop toward INTERPRETIVE POST # 33, east toward the NorthSouth trail toward INTERPRETIVE POST #35 or south towards the Altona Road entrance and INTERPRETIVE POST # 36.

The North West Trail is approximately 1.86 km long

if you return to this spot.

In this area there are a number of fallen and decaying trees. Some of the logs which have been on the ground for a number of years no longer have the bark protecting the inner wood. On some of these trees you can see evidence of the **bark beetle**. These blackish brown, small and fat insects have enlarged tips on their short club-shaped antennae. They attack both live and dead trees. When the eggs hatch under the bark, the larvae make extensive tunnels which resemble complicated road systems. Some of these tunnels are visible on some of the old trees which have had the bark rot off.



Trails left under the bark of a tree attacked by a bark beetle.

Look out for large **apple trees, white cedar, white pine, hemlock, dog strangling vine** and **white ash** towards the edge of the forest.

Along the east trail you will also see (in season) some **Canada Mayflower, true Solomon's seal, wild lily of the valley, trilliums, baneberry, dog strangling vine, wood fern** and **spikenard**.

INTERPRETIVE POST 35

You are at the junction of the NorthSouth trail. To the

south is the wetland. To the north is the trail to the Summerpark Entrance. To the west is the Chickadee Entrance.

INTERPRETIVE POST 36

You are entering a mixed forest with a variety of tree types.



INTERPRETIVE POST 37

Welcome to Altona Forest. Before going on, please read the introduction at the beginning of this booklet.

This is INTERPRETIVE POST 37. Although it is the beginning of the hiking trail starting from Altona Road, this post was the last one placed on the hiking trails inside the forest, thus the number. From here you will hike north to the Chickadee Entrance where you can continue north or proceed east.

The area around you was once the drive way and yards of a home situated beside Petticoat Creek. Petticoat

Creek is situated in the valley to the immediate south of here, just beyond the parking lot. From here Petticoat Creek flows into private property and then to the other side of Altona Road before flowing in a southeastern direction under Sheppard Ave, CN Rail tracks, the 401 highway and into Petticoat Creek Conservation Area before emptying into Lake Ontario.

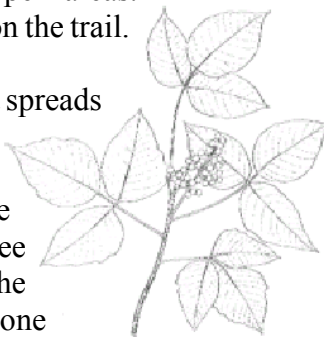
Rest of this information to be determined when the trail location is finalized.

NOTES ON POISON IVY

Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)

Poison Ivy is common in Altona Forest especially in disturbed areas and near the edges of the forest and along some paths. Poison Ivy is very common along the school fence, along the backyard fences where undergrowth has been removed and in the open areas. Please be cautious and stay on the trail.

Poison Ivy is a perennial that spreads by seeds and woody rhizomes. Its leaves are arranged alternately on the stem and consist of three leaflets. Look carefully at the middle leaflet which has one



stalk much longer than those of the two lateral leaflets. The edges of the leaflets may be smooth or toothed. The leaves vary greatly in size, from 8 mm to 10 cm long.

- , **spring** The leaves are reddish or purplish when they first emerge. Male and female flowers are normally found on separate plants. They are clustered, small, and cream to yellow green in colour.
- ' **summer** Leaves are green and the green to yellow-beige fruits are clustered, round, and waxy. They are 3-7 mm in diameter and contain 1-seeded.
- " **autumn** leaves turn shades of purple, yellow, orange, red, or bronze
- † **winter** leaves fall but the stems and fruit persists and can still transmit the harmful chemicals which can cause severe rash

The chemical which causes the allergic reaction in some people, can get on your skin, clothes, foot wear and on the fur of animals. It can then be transferred to your, or someone else's skin at a later time. If you feel that you have been exposed to poison ivy, wash the exposed area with mild soap and water as soon as possible. Wash boots or shoes and any clothes you suspect may have been exposed. If symptoms of

itching or rash appear, see a doctor immediately.

1. Altona Forest Environmental Management Plan, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, March 29, 1996, page 1

2. Altona Forest Environmental Management Plan, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, March 29, 1996, page 1

3. Altona Forest Environmental Management Plan, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, March 29, 1996, page 1

4. Altona Forest Environmental Management Plan, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, March 29, 1996, page 1