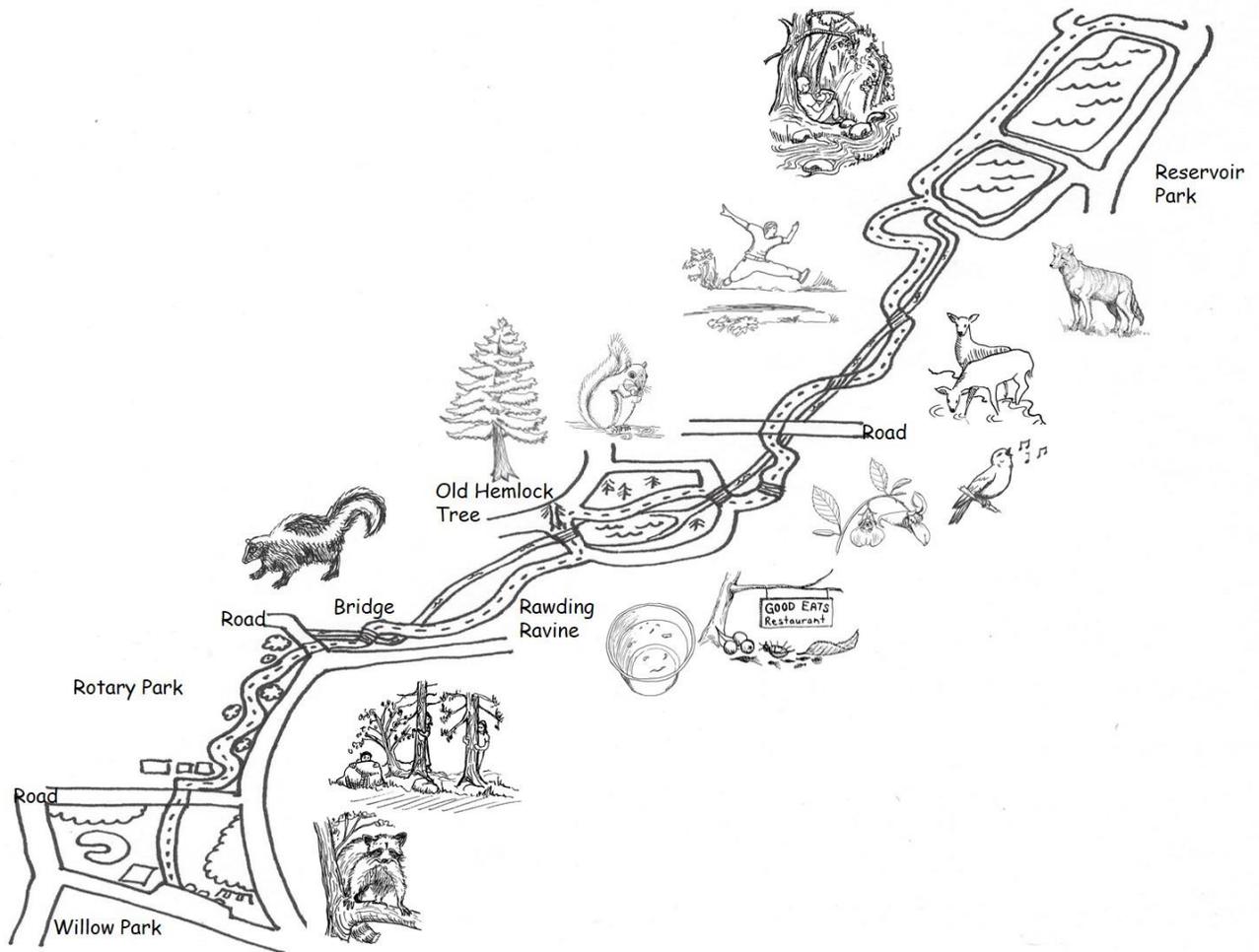


The Wild Side of Town: A Wolfville Millennium Trail Adventure



Distance: 2.6 km return

Approx. Time: 2 hr

Trail Info: This trail resembles a foot path in an English Village. The trail runs between houses and backyards at some points and emerges into wooded areas just off of the main roads. The trails are groomed and easy to walk but there are some steeper inclines and stairs as you gradually wind your way uphill from the Town of Wolfville.

Directions: From Halifax take Highway 101 west to the Annapolis Valley. Take Exit 10 to merge onto the Number 1 Hwy toward Grand Pré / Wolfville. Drive 6km along the Number 1 Hwy into Wolfville and turn left onto Willow Ave. Park 100m just past the Tourist Bureau on the left. Start on the lawn just behind the building.

Trail Tools: Bring a daypack with water, snacks, first aid kit and anything else you need. Prepare and gather these tools for each person.

- Pencil and this sheet.
- Scope (toilet paper roll – decorate before the adventure)
- 1 small plastic container for every 2 people
- Snack and water

Go Wild:

The animals of Wolfville want to invite you on an adventure into their world. The wild side of town! Can you survive as an animal in town? Can you outsmart the humans and avoiding being seen? Use your animal senses to explore the paths ahead and try not to get caught!

A message from the animals:

We are the animals of this town
You are invited to join us now
As we survive among the trees
Around the houses unseen!

Our eyes are keen, Our noses sharp
Our ears perk up at every bark
Be sneaky, sure and smart
Ready now? Let's start!

1. Raccoon Tag

⇒ Facing East, away from the building, walk to the bottom of the grassy hill 45 m.

Raccoons live in this town and these furry nocturnal scavengers roam the streets at night, playing and searching for food. They can make quite a racket outside your window while you sleep. Let's wake up the humans by being rowdy raccoons!

- 1) Everyone get on hands and knees like a raccoon.
- 2) One raccoon is "it" and chases the others up and down the hill trying to tag them.
- 3) When you are tagged, roll over onto your back with legs and arms in the air and trill to alert your friends that you need help. The trill is made by vibrating your tongue at the back of your mouth "Trrrrrrrrrr!"
- 4) To get free, two raccoons must tag one limb each.
- 5) Once you have been flipped three times you are now the tagger.



Now that you have had some raccoon fun, you are hungry. Watch out for humans and their dogs! If you see a human or dog, make the trilling noise to alert the other raccoons.

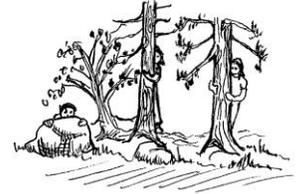
2. Hide and Sneak

⇒ At the top of the hill, walk up the stairs and cross the road, carefully watching for vehicles. Walk 40 m to the back of the building and 2 sheds.

There may be lots of young humans here at the playground so watch out. You don't want to be seen or caught. They might pull your fur!

- 1) Sneak and peek between the buildings to spy on humans. Trill your alarm call if you see any.

- 2) Quietly peek around the farthest shed.
- 3) If the all is clear, silently motion to your friends with your head and eyes that it is ok to go.
- 4) Run to the nearest big tree up on the hill in front of you. Hide behind it quick!



You are really hungry now! Dig around under leaves to find bugs and seeds to eat. How many different ones can you find?

Now it is time to get to the woods so you can find shelter for your day sleep. When it is safe and no humans are watching, run from tree to tree along the edge of the field until you see a red fire hydrant. Run to the lone tree close to the fire hydrant beside the road. Look at this tree. Is there anything interesting about it?

3. *Smell like a Skunk*

- ⇒ From the tree, carefully walk diagonally across the road to the trail sign at left. Walk up the trail 35 m to the first bridge.

Does anybody smell something? Like Racoons, Skunks are omnivores so they eat both meat and plants. Be skunks and make a smelly skunk stew.

- 1) Working in pairs, make a smelly stew in your container
- 2) Half fill with water from the stream
- 3) Add ingredients from around the trail to make a delicious smell stew.
- 4) Name your stew and share the smell with the others.
- 5) Which one was the smelliest?



When the smelly feast is finished, empty the stews off the trail for other skunks to enjoy. Stomp your feet like a skunk whenever you see humans to warn and scare them away.

Skunks are everywhere! They live all over North and South America, in rural areas, suburbs, and cities. You may not have seen a skunk in your neighborhood, but you've probably smelled one. Their smelly spray, called musk, comes from two glands near the base of the skunk's tail and can hit a target 3.7 meters away. Skunks are not dangerous and will only spray when they are scared. They will also give a warning before spraying. If threatened, skunks stamp their front feet, lift their tail, and growl.

4. *Listen to Trees*

- ⇒ Continue up the trail for 165 m, enjoying the mixed woods of hemlock, birch, maple and ash trees as you walk. At the fork in the path turn left and walk 25 m across a bridge.

Raccoons and skunks depend on the trees for places to hide. They realize that the trees have stories to share. See the hemlock tree on the other side of the bridge with the big hole in it. What happened here? Is it still alive? Are there any signs of it healing? Look in and around it to find clues to its past, present and possible future.

- 1) Everyone stand around the tree in a circle to tell the story of this tree.
- 2) One person begins the story by saying one word and each person going around the circle adds another word.
- 3) Continue to add words until you have a story about the tree's life.



Look at the other trees, dead and alive, in this woodland as you walk along. What are their stories?

5. Look for Pond Monsters

⇒ Go into the woods to the right and walk 15 m down to the edge of the pond.

What is going on in this murky pond? Raccoons use this pond and you might be able to see their tracks in the mud around it. Their feet are like our hands only smaller. See if you can find raccoon tracks around the pond. The pond water is brown because there are a lot of mud particles floating in it. This is due to large amounts of storm water flowing into it when it rains. Is there anything living in the pond for the racoon to eat? Let's look and see.



- 1) Use your plastic containers to dip out a bit of water. Try not to get the mud.
- 2) Did you catch any mini-monsters? Water insects?
- 3) What other creatures are using the pond?

Earth Steps



Here are some things you can do to help keep ponds and other bodies of water safe for wildlife:

- Conserve water at home by using low flow appliances and turning taps off when brushing teeth
- Use sand instead of salt on driveways and walkways in winter. Road salt hurts ponds and streams.
- Don't use pesticides and herbicides around your home and garden. Frogs, Salamanders and Fish can be hurt by these chemicals.
- Join groups like the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) to learn more about protecting wetlands and wildlife (<http://www.cpaws.org>).

6. Visit a Rodent's Restaurant

⇒ From the edge of the pond, walk left up into the trees 40 m to the top of the hill.

Raccoons and skunks are busy at night but there are lots of town animals out in the day as well. Can you see or hear any rodents like squirrels and chipmunks scurrying about this forest? Look on the ground to see signs of Rodent Restaurants. Look for nuts, seeds berries and insects.

- 1) Split into 3 groups, one each for Red Squirrels, Grey Squirrels and Chipmunks.
- 2) Crouch on the ground and put your hands out in front of you like paws.
- 3) Make a sucking noise and jump high in the air.
- 4) Hop around and call "chit, chit, chit, chit!"
- 5) Which rodents can find 5 different kinds of nuts, seeds, berries and insects?
- 6) Make a shelter for your stash in case it rains.



This hemlock woods is home to **Red Squirrels** and **Grey Squirrels** and **Chipmunks**. They are living here successfully together since they have different shelter needs. Red squirrels are about half the size of grey squirrels and chipmunks are a bit smaller than red squirrels and have stripes down their back. Grey squirrels are usually the silent, calm ones but red squirrels are very feisty and loud; scolding anyone who comes close to their food stashes. You will hear chipmunks by their loud chirping from the ground as they signal an alarm call when you get too close. Squirrels eat cones on raised areas so they can watch for predators or other squirrels. The squirrels eat only the seeds attached inside to each leaf of the cone, and the leftover cone piece pile up. The pile is called a "midden".

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- 7) Leave the stash for the rodents in the woods to find and enjoy.

Take a bit of rodent ration (your own snack and drink) from your backpack, sit down in the restaurant and feast with the rodents.



7. Call the Birds

- ⇒ Continue to walk through the wooded area 40 m until you come to the main path again and a little bridge. 15 m after the bridge turn left at the Y in the path. Walk 20 m until you come to another bridge.

The birds love this little wetland with its thick ferny understory and lots of berry bushes and tree fruits. Use your scope to search for birds in the trees and bushes. Try calling some birds to you:

- 1) Stand very still and do not talk.
- 2) Make this sound: “psh, psh, psh.”
- 3) Repeat it several times. This often attracts birds if they are nearby.



Birds use special calls to find each other. How many bird calls can you hear?

- 1) Spread out 5 meters along the trail and listen for a couple minutes.
- 2) How many different bird calls do you hear? Compare your numbers.



Can you convince the others that you are a bird?

- 1) Take turns making your favourite bird call you just heard.
- 2) Have everyone else close their eyes and imagine the bird that is making that call.
- 3) The group scores each call out of 10 for how close it sounds to a real bird

Using your spy scopes, continue to look and listen for birds on the trails ahead.

Spotted Touch-Me-Not, also known as Jewel Weed, is a plant that is everywhere in this wetland. Hummingbirds love their dangly orange-spotted flowers. In August, the seed pods form and are really fun to play with since they explode when touched. Despite the name, this plant wants you to touch them so their seeds disperse far away from the parent plant. Try them!

8. Move like a Deer

- ⇒ Continue along the path 50 m until you come to a set of steps.

At the top of these stairs is a road hazard. Animals don't need or want roads. They are very dangerous places since roads cross animal territories and habitats creating obstacles to them getting the things they need to survive, like food and water.

- 1) Be a wild deer, perk up your ears to listen for cars on the road above. Use your hands to cup your ears to make them big like deer ears.
- 2) If you don't hear any cars, quietly signal to your herd that it is safe and cautiously walk up the stairs.
- 3) At the road, look for cars and quickly walk across and down the other set of steps.

Phew! We are safe across the road.



Deer are swift and can leap and outrun most predators such as coyotes. You are thirsty now and we have a long trail ahead to get to the watering hole.

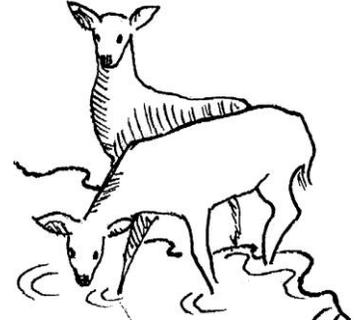
- 1) Be deer as you leap and prance up the trail ahead.
- 2) Put finger antlers on your head.
- 3) Shake your white tail.
- 4) Wiggle your nose and sniff for danger. Let's go quickly!

9. Avoid Predators

⇒ From the bottom of the stairs.

Work together as a herd to avoid predators on your way up the trail. Deer are really good at avoiding predators with their keen sense of hearing and smell. Cup your hands up to your ears and listen. When you see or hear a threat make a distress call to warn the others and freeze.

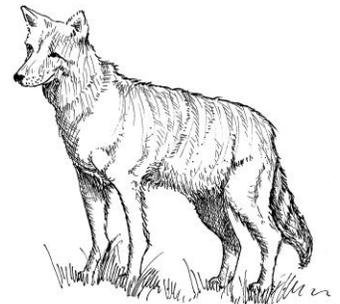
- 1) The alarm call sounds like when you blow a "raspberry" really loud! Close your teeth tight with your lips loose. Blow out fast and hard and make the "Ppprrrrrp" alarm call.
- 2) Freeze when you hear a deer alarm call.
- 3) What signal do deer make to signal that all is safe? Make up a signal to tell your heard that the coast is clear to start moving again.
- 4) Once all of the threats are clear, make the "All Clear" signal and continue to bound up the trail to the watering hole.



⇒ Leap like a deer along the trail for 290 m and go up the stairs. Turn left and walk 30 m along the north side of the 1st reservoir pond facing Wolfville and Blomidon.

This is the watering hole. Be alert since this is a popular place for predators to sneak up on thirsty prey. You'll be lunch if a coyote, bobcat or lynx sneaks up on you. Here is how to test your listening skills.

- 1) One person is the deer and everyone else is the coyote.
- 2) The coyotes line up across the trail.
- 3) The deer takes 20 giant leaps, facing away from the coyotes.
- 4) When the deer says "go", the coyotes sneak up the trail.
- 5) When the deer senses someone moving they turn around quickly. The coyote must freeze.
- 6) Coyotes caught moving are out.
- 7) The game ends when all coyotes are caught, or when a coyote reaches the deer.
- 8) Take turns being the deer.



Once everyone has had a chance practicing their listening skills as a deer, keep walking and make the deer alarm call whenever you see humans.

10. Stay Wild

- ⇒ Continue walking 180 m along the north side of the 1st and 2nd reservoir pond, facing Wolfville and Blomidon and go to the farthest corner of the 2nd pond. Walk around this corner to the right until you see a place to get to the water up and embankment to the right.



Now you that have experienced avoiding humans and predators, finding food and having fun, the animals have a final challenge for you. This will help you get to know each other better.

- 1) Everyone find a comfortable spot on the bank of the pond, 5 or so meters from the each other.
- 2) Sit so you can be comfortable and still for 10 minutes.
- 3) Close your eyes and listen quietly.
- 4) Imagine that the animals in the forest are as curious about you as you are about them.
- 5) They will come close and observe you if you are still and quiet.
- 6) The longer you are still, the closer they will come.

Afterwards, as a group, share what you saw, heard and felt as you sat silently.

To let the animals in your neighborhood get to know you, find a wild corner in your back yard. It could be under a tree or bush, tall grass, behind a boulder; any place that is a bit hidden will work. Make this your very own Magic Spot! Sit here for a few minutes every day or so and see if you can stay 1 minute longer every day. You can make a shelter at your Magic Spot or decorate it as you like.

Have fun and enjoy the Wild Places near you!

EARTHWORKS



We humans are connected to all of these creatures living around town. The wild areas behind the houses, with all of their trees, shrubs, streams and wetlands work to filter polluted run-off water from driveways and roads. They are also home to so many creatures. The animals eat the plants and move seeds around to keep the forests regenerating; the wetland plants filter out toxins before the water reaches the Bay of Fundy, which protects marine life from getting sick. We can do our part for the environment by encouraging more wild spaces in our own communities and enjoying nature.

BEYOND THE ADVENTURE



There are other nature trails in Wolfville that you can explore. The Reservoir Park has bike trails that go into a steep ravine while Acadia University has lovely Botanical Gardens and a Woodland Trail. Go to the Wolfville Recreation website for more information on Outdoor Natural spaces in town (<https://www.wolfville.ca/parks-and-trails.html>).

MORE ADVENTURES IN KINGS COUNTY

Go to the Kings County for more trail adventures in the Annapolis Valley. <http://www.countyofkings.ca/common/pars/>

CREDITS:

This document was created by Marina Myra of Wild Roots Nature Education Centre.

<https://www.wildrootsnec.com/>. This work was inspired by and adapts material from *Earth Adventures in the Halifax Region 3rd Edition*, by Alan Warner, Janet Barlow, and George Taylor.



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