

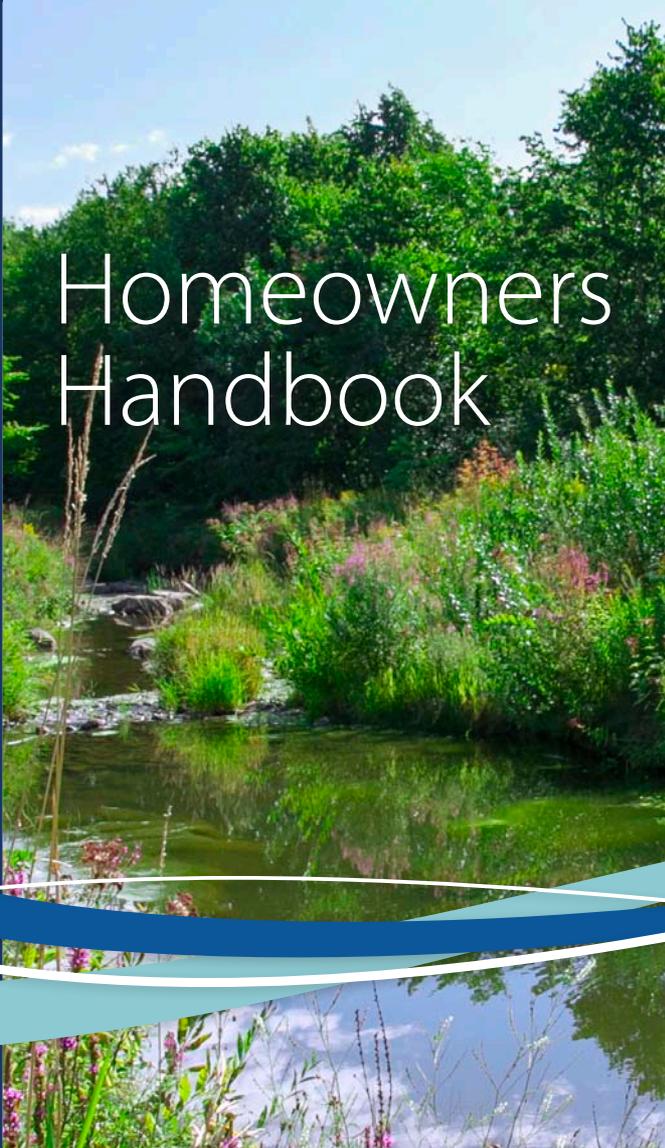
Riverside
South

Living on History's Doorstep

A Homeowners Guide to Conserving Natural Areas

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:





Homeowners Handbook

Riverside South is a community with a rich human and natural history. Living beside the Rideau Canal, one of Canada's most important heritage waterways, its residents have a window on the natural world—and a direct link to the capital region's past.

Two hundred years ago, settlers cleared forests to establish hand-hewn homesteads and cultivated the area for the first time. The modern farms that gradually replaced those early wilderness clearings have in turn given way to a new community bustling with families who are adding their own chapter to the region's evolving story.

All through the area residents will find creeks and tributaries that flow into the Rideau River. These waters and the lands adjacent to them are critical for the ecological health of the Rideau River watershed and for the recreational and agricultural activities that depend on it.

Today's Riverside South residents can touch history and nature without leaving their neighbourhood, while protecting this heritage for future generations. But having such an important heritage at their doorstep also gives them a responsibility to help protect it for future generations.

Human heritage of *Riverside South*

Humans have likely been active along the banks of the Rideau River region for about 9,000 years, ever since the water and ice of the last glacial age receded and left a barren plain. As early vegetation slowly matured into forest, birds and animals arrived to be followed later by hunters.

In the millennia before European contact and settlement, Algonquin People lived throughout the entire Ottawa River watershed including the lands drained by the Rideau River. Although archaeology of that era is incomplete, history tells us that, according to the seasons, the Algonquins harvested medicines and foodstuffs, hunted animals for meat and clothing, and camped and gathered in larger numbers on the many hospitable sites in the rich lands along the Rideau.

The River was part of an extensive First Peoples trading network at a time when birch bark canoes were the standard mode of water transportation. Many of today's roads including River Road began as trails, became cart roads and now link the many communities along the Rideau River.

After British surveyors established the concession lines of Gloucester Township in 1793, the forested lands were divided into 100-acre parcels and granted or sold to British and American homesteaders who began the backbreaking task of clearing it.

Settlement came slowly until construction of the Rideau Canal in 1826 triggered a new wave of development.

Today, the Rideau is North America's best-preserved "slackwater" canal—a 202-km living example of European transportation technology that combined natural waterways with engineered locks to create shipping routes. With its completion in 1832, farmers and businessmen used small steamboats and barges to move passengers and merchandise between Montréal and the Great Lakes ports. (Eventually, locks on the St. Lawrence River opened a much shorter route to Montréal, leaving the Rideau Canal as a backwater conduit to the villages between Kingston and Ottawa—a five-day journey through flooded forests, small lakes and the original Catarauqui and Rideau rivers.)

Despite its limited commercial possibilities, the canal drew hundreds of people to the area. Many were Irish immigrants fleeing famine; others were canal workers who had survived the accidents and disease that killed up to 1,000 men during six years of construction.

The settlement process happened quickly after the completion of the canal. Mills were built, farms were expanded, and villages sprang up. By the 1860s, Manotick was a thriving mill site, serving a cluster of families that had settled in the area after completing work on the canal. Along the river, enterprising farmers built docks so that passing boats could pick up crops for markets along their route. From historic sources, we can see the names of farm families, such as the Birts, the Caldwells and the Larkins, who worked the land that became Riverside South.

In 1854, the fate of the canal was sealed with the construction of the Prescott and Bytown Railway. It moved passengers and freight from the St. Lawrence River to Bytown in just three hours and had two stops in the South Riverside area—Manotick Station and Gloucester Station. The tracks are long gone now but sections of the rail bed are being used as a multiuse recreational trail.

In 1950, the crossroads community of Bowesville disappeared when almost 4,000 acres were expropriated for construction of Ottawa International Airport. About the same time, the federal government's National Capital Commission began assembling 150 square kilometres of farmland for its Greenbelt around Ottawa.

Today, some evidence of the human history of Riverside South can be found in the scattering of old brick and stone houses and barns that remain from 19th century farms and in the village of Manotick. But the real link to earlier times is the Rideau River that continues to flow past as it has for centuries.

Parks Canada has invested heavily in the canal (named in 2007 as a World Heritage Site) as a living historic place. While there are no more steamboats plying its waters, it is still possible to walk along its shores and visit the old stone locks and mill sites.

Natural heritage of *Riverside South*

While most of the old growth forest has disappeared, the Riverside South area has retained an interesting mix of flora and fauna, particularly along its creeks and river.

Mosquito Creek Valley

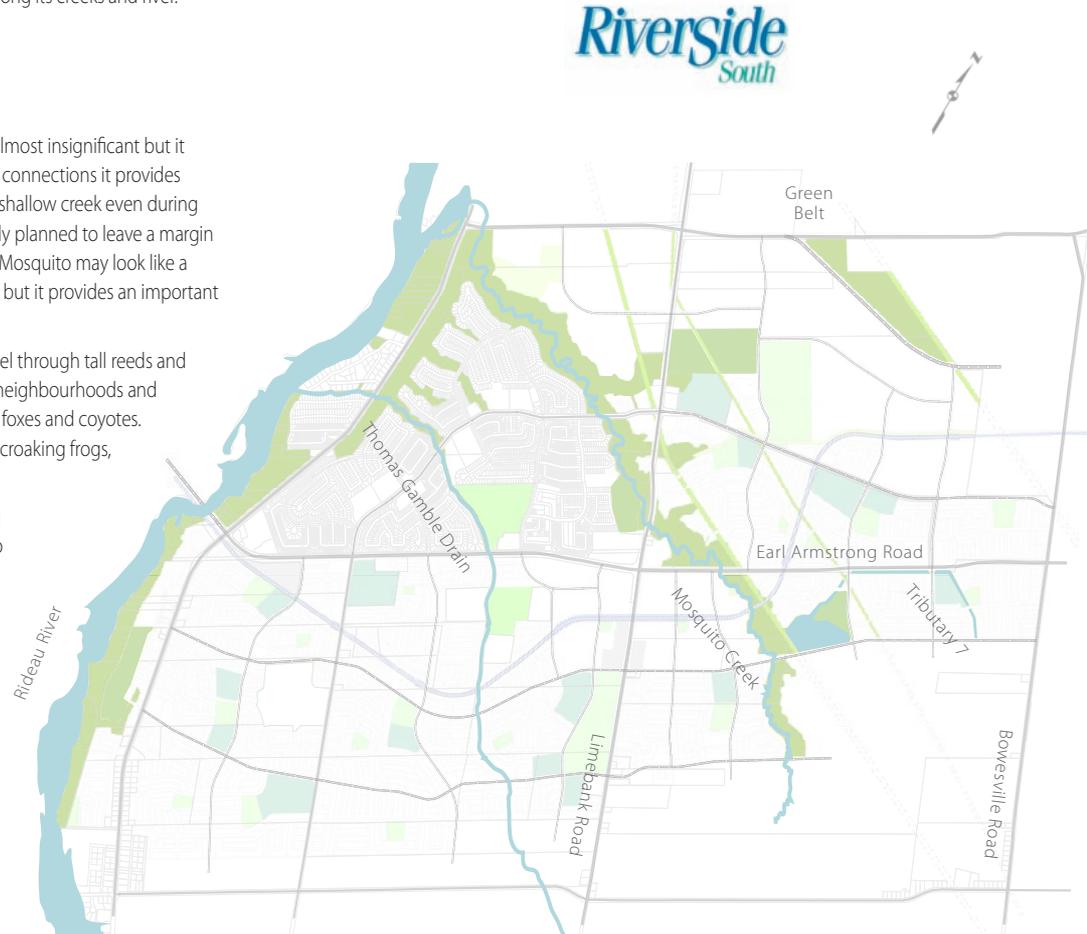
Compared to the Rideau River, Mosquito Creek may seem almost insignificant but it is important to the drainage of the land it traverses and the connections it provides between natural features and systems. It remains a narrow, shallow creek even during spring run-off, but development around it has been carefully planned to leave a margin of meadow and woodland along its meandering path. The Mosquito may look like a kids-scale brook with a sandy bed dotted with large stones, but it provides an important micro-habitat for a variety of plants and animals.

Mosquito Creek ends in the Rideau River as a narrow channel through tall reeds and bull rushes after winding its way from open fields through neighbourhoods and past parks. Its route provides a natural corridor for prowling foxes and coyotes. In spring and summer, its banks are alive with the sound of croaking frogs, buzzing insects and bird song.

Naturalists of all ages and expertise have no trouble finding noteworthy specimens to enjoy when they take the time to explore the creek. It is particularly appealing to parents with youngsters who want to connect with nature on a weekend stroll.

LEGEND

- Arterial Road
- Valley Land
- Woodlot
- Waterbody



Mosquito Creek Valley Flora and Fauna Highlights

MAMMALS

Brown bat
Grey squirrel
Groundhog
Meadow vole
Mink
Muskrat
Raccoon
Red fox
White-tailed deer

BIRDS

American goldfinch
Black-capped chickadee
Black duck
Canada goose
Downy woodpecker
Eastern phoebe
Great blue heron
Kingfisher
Mallard
Marsh wren
Northern harrier
Osprey
Pied-billed grebe
Pileated woodpecker
Red-winged blackbird
Ruffed grouse
Song sparrow
White-breasted nuthatch

FISH

Blacknose shiner
Bluntnose minnow
Brassy minnow
Brook stickleback
Common shiner
Common sucker
Creek chub
Mottled sculpin
Northern pike
Northern redbelly dace
Pumpkinseed
Rock bass
White sucker
Yellow perch

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Bullfrog
Eastern garter snake
Green Frog
Midland painted turtle
Mudpuppy
Yellow-spotted salamander

SMALL PLANTS

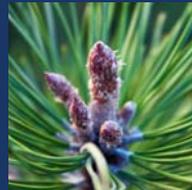
Birds-foot trefoil
Colts foot
Coontail
Evening primrose
Goldenrod
Lady's-thumb
Marsh marigold
Meadowsweet
Milkweed
Morning glory
Orange hawkweed
Red raspberry
Tall buttercup
Trout lily
Water milfoil
White trillium
Wild carrot

TREES

American elm
Balsam fir
Bur oak
Red maple
Red oak
Sugar maple
Trembling aspen
White ash
White cedar
White pine



White-tailed deer



White pine



Bullfrog



Evening primrose



Blue heron

Rideau River Corridor

The banks of the Rideau River can be explored on foot and afloat. Early morning paddlers poking along the shore have no trouble spotting blue herons, kingfishers and a variety of waterfowl. Deer and muskrat feed along the shoreline and beavers, best spotted at dawn and dusk, glide silently by while foraging for saplings to add to their lodges and larders.

In fall and spring, migrating geese and ducks fly low above the river. Nesting redwing black birds scold everything in sight from their reed perches. Throughout the summer, anglers of all ages fish for bass, pike, and catfish among more than 40 fish species.

Public parks and trails provide ready access to the natural world of the Rideau that is within easy walking and biking distance for many residents of Riverside South.



Red fox



White-breasted nuthatch



Yellow-spotted salamander



Red oak

Rideau River Corridor Flora and Fauna Highlights

MAMMALS

- Beaver
- Mink
- Muskrat
- Porcupine
- Raccoon
- Red fox
- River otter
- White-tailed deer

BIRDS

- American bittern
- American black duck
- Blue-winged teal
- Canada goose
- Cerulean warbler
- Common goldeneye
- Eastern phoebe
- Green-winged teal
- Great blue heron
- Killdeer
- Sora
- Spotted sandpiper
- White-breasted nuthatch
- Wood duck

FISH

- Black crappie
- Bluegill
- Brown bullhead
- Common catfish
- Golden shiner
- Largemouth bass
- Logperch
- Minnnows
- Muskie
- Northern pike
- Pumpkinseed
- Rock bass
- Smallmouth bass
- Spottail shiner
- Walleye
- White sucker
- Yellow perch

AMPHIBIANS AND

REPTILES

- Bullfrogs
- Green Frogs
- Mudpuppy
- Northern leopard frog
- Northern water snake
- Snapping turtle
- Yellow-spotted salamander

SMALL PLANTS

- Broadleaf arrowhead
- Cattail
- Fragrant white water lily
- Pickeralweed
- Tape grass
- Water plantain
- Water stargrass
- Yellow-flowered bladderwort
- Yellow pond lily

TREES

- American elm
- Balsam fir
- Bur oak
- Red maple
- Red oak
- Silver maple
- Sugar maple
- Trembling aspen
- White ash
- White birch
- White cedar
- White pine

Protecting *Riverside South's* natural environment

Riverside South is close to some of the Capital Region's most treasured features—the Rideau River and the NCC Greenbelt. Perhaps the most important step to preserving the community's natural environment is to expose people, especially children and youth, to it. Learning about nature and appreciating it go hand-in-hand with one another.

DUMPING

Dumping of any kind is prohibited. Use municipal services.

GROUNDWATER

Cleaning solvents, detergents, oil, gasoline, pesticides and fertilizers all go directly into creeks and rivers if they are used on lawns or spilled in driveways. Rain and melting snow carry pollutants into storm sewers that eventually empty into the Rideau River. Dumping toxicants into a street drain is like pouring it into the river. It can harm water quality and affect ecosystem balance. Please use the City of Ottawa's recycling services instead.

- Use a commercial carwash that treats wastewater instead of cleaning your car in the driveway.
- Use organic gardening and cleaning products.
- Don't drain swimming pools into storm sewers.
- Don't sweep winter debris and sand into sewer grates.

BACKYARDS

- Choose native plants and trees when landscaping backyards.
- Compost yard waste or use City of Ottawa waste management services.
- Leave wild flowers and river rocks in the wild. Buy native plants and landscaping fixtures from nurseries.
- Don't dump yard waste in conservation areas, ravine lands, natural areas and public lands. It could spread seeds from invasive species.
- Keep garbage secure to discourage marauding skunks, raccoons, foxes and coyotes.
- Bird feeder spills can attract unwanted visitors like skunks.

PETS

Encounters between wildlife and cats and dogs can produce casualties on both sides.

- Don't let pets roam loose. Cats kill birds and can become prey for coyotes. Unleashed dogs can harm wildlife and become susceptible to rabies and deer ticks.

NATURE TRAILS AND RECREATIONAL PATHWAYS

The City of Ottawa maintains nature trails to give easy but guided access to areas that are often environmentally sensitive. Pathways through recreational parks are usually more resilient and often paved for bicycles, strollers and roller blades. It is important to understand the difference between the two and use them appropriately.

- Stay on established trails so as not to damage plants and to protect the natural environment against erosion, compaction, disruption of fragile natural ribbon of life along the watercourses and ravine lands.
- Look at the wildflowers but don't pick them. Leave them for the next visitor to enjoy.
- Ride bicycles on bike paths, not nature trails or through creeks.
- Don't feed wild animals or birds. They need to remain self-reliant so that they don't become pests.
- Keep dogs on a leash and a close eye on young children, especially near water.

Learn more

Following are some resources that are useful to further understanding and enjoying our local heritage.

ALGONQUINS

Algonquins of Ontario at www.tanakiwin.com

Omàmiwininì Pimàdjwowin (The Algonquin Way Cultural Centre) at www.thealgonquinway.ca

RIDEAU RIVER CORRIDOR NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Capital Woodlands: A Field and Armchair Guide to Ottawa's Urban Woodlands and Wooded Areas. Author: Seaton Findlay. Publisher: Penumbra Press, 2001.

Engineered Landscapes: The Rideau Canal's Transformation of a Wilderness Waterway. Publisher and author: Ken W. Watson.

Hinterlands Who's Who, Canadian Wildlife Service at www.hww.ca

Make Your Own Wildlife Garden, Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club at www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/howto/index.php

Rideau Canal National Historic Site of Canada, Parks Canada at www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/on/rideau/index.aspx

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority at www.rvca.ca

The Illustrated Historical Atlas of Carleton County, Ontario, H. Belden and Co., 1879 at www.digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/default.htm

The Native Plant Resource Guide for Ontario, Publisher: Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration at www.serontario.org

The Nature of the Rideau River, Canadian Museum of Nature at <http://nature.ca/rideau/index-e.html>

The Rideau Route: Exploring the Pre-Canal Waterway, Publisher and author: Ken W. Watson.

Learn
more:

myriversidesouth.com

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