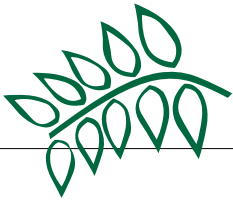


Brick Ponds

Wetland Complex



Woodstock's
Natural
Treasure

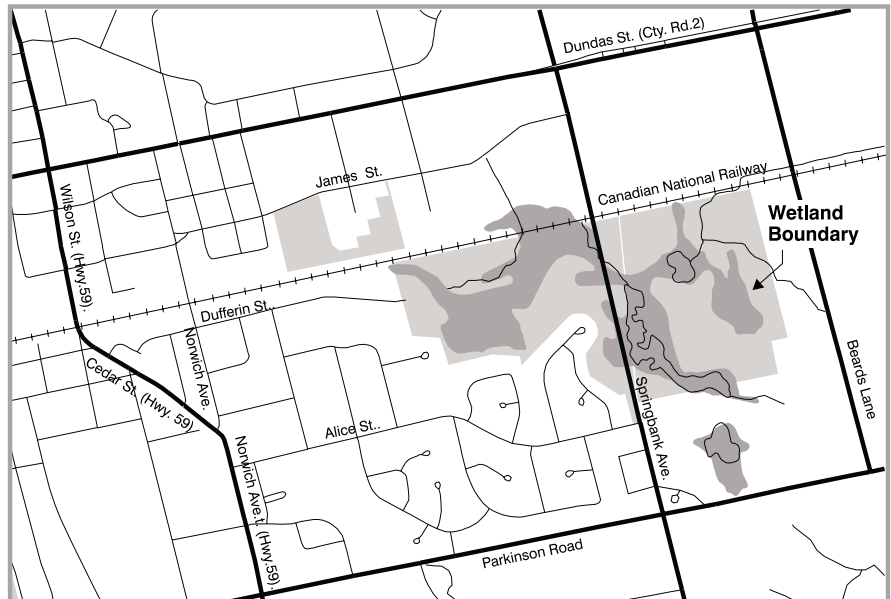


April 1998

More than wet land!

A wetland is an area where shallow water covers the land for part or all of the year, or where the water table is close to the surface. Wetland soils are saturated with water and support water-loving plants.

Brick Ponds is a 32-hectare (79-acre) wetland complex located in the east end of the City of Woodstock. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources evaluated this complex in 1988 and classified it as provincially significant (Class 2) based on its biological, social, hydrological and special features.

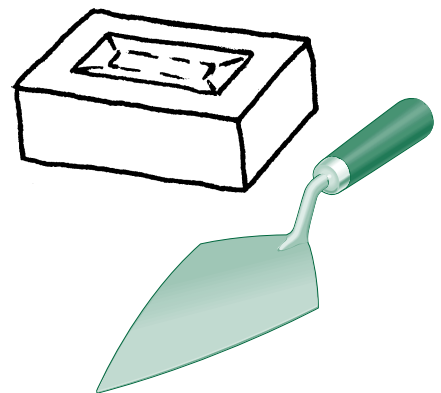


Four types of wetlands are found in southern Ontario: marshes, swamps, fens and bogs. These wetlands differ from each other in the amount of open water they have and the species of plants they support.

Half of Brick Ponds is marsh and half is swamp. Marshes are dominated by emergent and floating plants, such as cattails, bulrushes, sedges and water lilies, and have still or slow moving open water. Swamps are flooded forests, dominated by trees and tall shrubs such as silver maple, red maple, white cedar and dogwood.

From bricks to thickets.

Brick Ponds is a young wetland with an unusual history. It began when a brickyard opened west of Beard's Lane to supply bricks to the nearby town of Woodstock in the 1850s and 1860s. The red bricks made from the extracted clay can be seen in many local buildings today, including St. Paul's Church. When the brickyard closed, stormwater from northeast Woodstock was diverted to fill the depressions left from the clay extraction. Over time, water-loving plants and wildlife moved in, and Woodstock expanded east. The result is this significant wetland on the southeast edge of the city.



Life in the city.

The Brick Ponds Wetland Complex is one of the province's few urban wetlands. In the past, wetlands were often drained and filled for residential development and to create farmland. Due to such historical practices, less than one-quarter of the original wetlands in Ontario remain. Wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the land in Oxford County today.

Woodstock continues to have a major impact on Brick Ponds. In the 1980s, Springbank Avenue was built through the wetland. In 1992 when development was contemplated at the northeast corner of Springbank Avenue and Parkinson Road, the community became increasingly concerned with the wetland's future. The City of Woodstock worked with the developer and the other landowners to minimize the development's impacts by initiating a comprehensive environmental study. Brick Ponds is now zoned as open space and an environmental protection area, and a significant portion is owned by the city.



A place to call home.

Wetlands provide food, water and shelter to many plants and animals, including rare species. Migrating birds use Brick Ponds as a rest stop and feeding habitat. Look closely and you may find belted kingfishers diving into a pond for food or a green heron resting on a partially submerged log. Amphibians and reptiles, such as leopard frogs and painted turtles, also call Brick Ponds their home. Rare and significant plant and bird species were found by the Ministry of Natural Resources when the wetland was evaluated in 1988.

The sink and the sponge.

Wetlands improve water quality by filtering pollutants. A wetland is a 'sink' for water flowing in from nearby areas, holding the water and allowing soil or sediment to settle out, rather than be carried into downstream areas. Wetland plants are nature's water filters. Certain plants, such as cattails, are excellent at absorbing excess nutrients and pollutants in the water. However, there is a limit to how much they can absorb; excessive pollutants can seriously damage a wetland's health.

Stormwater drains from residential and industrial areas outlet into Brick Ponds from the north and the east. The ponds trap some of the sediments, nutrients and pollutants from the upstream area, improving the quality of the water that enters Spring Creek Drain. This underground stormwater drain outlets into Cedar Creek downstream of Southside Pond.

A wetland also helps reduce flooding by acting as a giant sponge during high water levels. As levels subside, the wetland slowly releases the water. Brick Ponds reduces flooding along Cedar Creek by slowing the water flow into the Spring Creek Drain.



A beautiful place to grow.

Wetlands are picturesque places that enhance the landscape. They are sensitive to disturbance by humans though, and recreational activities are often restricted to protect the health and beauty of these areas.

Brick Ponds is a treasured natural area in the heart of Woodstock. It can be enjoyed by all of Woodstock's citizens from the roads and sidewalks that skirt the area and from viewing platforms to be built in the next few years. However, because of Brick Ponds' sensitivity, recreational activities, including hiking and biking, are not permitted through the wetland.

You can help protect this natural treasure.

If you live next to Brick Ponds or in its catchment basin, your activities around your home and yard can directly impact the health of the wetland. Please refer to the brochure *Protecting Natural Areas in the City of Woodstock* for more information. You can obtain a copy by contacting the City of Woodstock at 539-1291.

Information in this brochure was compiled from several reports on the Brick Ponds Wetland Complex, interviews with members of the Oxford Historical Society and wetland books and brochures.

This brochure was produced by the Brick Ponds Education Program Committee:

City of Woodstock, Grassroots Woodstock and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority



UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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