



DURHAM'S ULTIMATE HIKING GUIDE

Tips and tricks for navigating Durham's trails



**Reconnect
Durham**



Welcome to **Reconnect Durham!**

Welcome to Reconnect Durham! In addition to curated local events and our other services, we've created this exclusive hiking guide, which includes some of Durham's best trails, a beginner's guide to hiking etiquette, fun activities for all seasons, and useful apps to enhance your experience. I hope you can use this guide to make the most of your hikes!

To see the rest of what I'm up to with Reconnect Durham, check out ReconnectDurham.ca. You can use our interactive map to find fun, local, and free/low-cost events happening in Durham Region.

Let the adventure begin!



Sincerely,

Brennan

Brennan@ReconnectDurham.ca

Types of Trails in Durham

Durham has it all—whether you're looking for an adventurous hike on a forest trail, a scenic bike ride along waterfront trails, or a casual nature walk through protected conservation areas, there's something for any type of outing! The main types of trails include:

- **Multi-Use Paths:** These paths often wind through subdivisions, with both paved and unpaved sections. They are designed for pedestrians, in-line skaters, and cyclists.
- **Bike Lanes:** Dedicated portions of the road surface exclusively for bicycle use, ensuring bikers can safely share the paths with pedestrians.
- **Forested Trails:** Created in parks and conservation areas, these trails allow safe travel through forests and around bodies of water while protecting the surrounding wildlife.



Enhance Your Hiking Experience with Apps

How can you bring your experience in the outdoors to life and connect more to the plants and animals around you?

Here are my recommendations for some great apps I always have ready on the go:



Merlin Bird ID app

Hear a bird chirping or cawing and don't know who the sound belongs to? Pull out this app and record what you hear. The app will identify the birds around you and play sounds to learn about different communication patterns. It also offers a photo ID feature which scans your image and offers potential matches.



Geocache

Find hidden treasures along your walk by following clues in this app! You can also create a cache of your own to hide in your community. Most caches have a logbook that you can sign, and see who else found it before you. They can be large and hidden in logs, or 'micro' and disguised on park signs. Whichever you decide, geocaching is sure to add some adventurous fun to your next walk.



iNaturalist

Walking by a new plant or animal you haven't seen before? Upload a photo of it on this app, and you can contribute to citizen science by identifying it from a list of recommended species. Your observation will be confirmed by scientists and naturalists worldwide, and you are supporting scientific data!



Avenza

Trail administrators like the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority use the app to share important information like closure notices and maps which you can download ahead of your hike, so that internet isn't required when you're on the trails.



DID YOU KNOW: "Urban Sprawl" is a term that describes unrestricted housing and road development over large expanses of land. There are many examples of this in our region and unfortunately, it threatens the biodiversity on trails and parks like these.

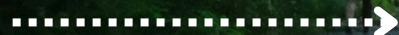
**STOP
DESTRUCTIVE
SPRAWL**

My Trail Recommendations

Here are our top recommendations for trails to visit. Have you explored any of these before?

This guide was created with care by Environmental Defence Canada to help you explore and connect with nature. Hiking comes with inherent risks, so please assess your own abilities, prepare appropriately and make informed decisions on the trail. Environmental Defence Canada cannot be held liable for injuries, accidents or incidents that may occur while using this guide.

While we strive to provide accurate and current information, this guide may contain errors or omissions. Please also keep in mind that trail conditions can change due to weather, season and other factors, so always check local conditions before heading out.



My Trail Recommendations



Photo: WaterfrontTrail.org

The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail



















-  **Address:** Rouge National Urban Park (195 Rouge Hills Drive, Scarborough)
-  **Trail Length:** 12.4km (Pickering) + 13km (Ajax) + 19km (Whitby) + 11km (Oshawa)
-  **Transit-accessible:** Yes
-  **Accessible trail(s):** Paved, though with steep inclines at some points which may be unsuitable for strollers or wheelchairs. Check out [All Trails](#) for an elevation map.
-  **Parking:** Yes, free along trail, or at Rouge National Urban Park
-  **Bikes:** Yes
-  **Features:** Picnic areas. Great views of Lake Ontario, sand and rock beaches, and playgrounds.
-  **Open:** Year-round
- Cost:** Free
- Administrator: The Waterfront Regeneration Trust**
-  The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail is a 3,600km trail running along the shore of Lake Ontario and other Great Lakes. Durham Region's portion of the trail includes scenic parks and adventure-filled beaches.
- 



Photo: BlogTO

Durham Regional Forest - Uxbridge

-  **Address:** 3821 Concession Rd 7, Uxbridge.
-  **Trail Length:** 16km total,
-  **Parking:** Yes, free along Houston Rd.
-  **Transit-accessible:** No
-  **Accessible trails:** No
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Features:** Safe and generally easy trails, lots of opportunities to observe wildlife! Washroom facilities
-  **Administrator/owner: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSCA)**
- This conservation area boasts rich biodiversity, large forest complexes, rolling hills, set right on top of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Prepare yourself for a vivid experience!

?

Did you know that you can see about half of the best farmland in Canada from the top of the CN Tower? Every day, Ontario loses over 300 acres of precious farmland, like ones seen in Durham, due to urban sprawl.

**STOP
DESTRUCTIVE
SPRAWL**

My Trail Recommendations



Photo: Durham Rail History

Heber Down - Brooklin

📍 Address: Main entrance: 5000 Cochrane Street. Additional entrance at 500 Lyndebrook Road, Whitby.

🚶 Trail Length: 5km

P Parking: Yes, paid (\$6/day via Visa or MasterCard).

🚌 Transit-accessible: No

♿ Accessible trail(s): Yes. One via main entrance, marked by a maple leaf.

🚲 Bikes: Yes

🌿 Features: Unique topography, amazing views, an enclosed off-leash dog park, picnic shelters, and group picnic areas (can be rented)

👤 Administrator/owner: **CLOCA (Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority)**

Great for quiet or adventurous walks, wetland exploration, and picnicking! In addition to its forested hills, it boasts a wide variety of unique habitats, some of which are one-of-a-kind within Durham!



Photo: Mishy's Corner of the World

Lynde Shores (beach, conservation area) - Whitby

📍 Address: 1225 Victoria Street West (for Annual Parking Pass holders), or 623 Halls Road, Whitby.

🚶 Trail Length: 5km.

P Parking: Yes, paid along Halls Road (\$6/day) or with an annual pass along Victoria Street (\$75/year, also available for borrowing at your local library).

🚌 Transit-accessible: Yes

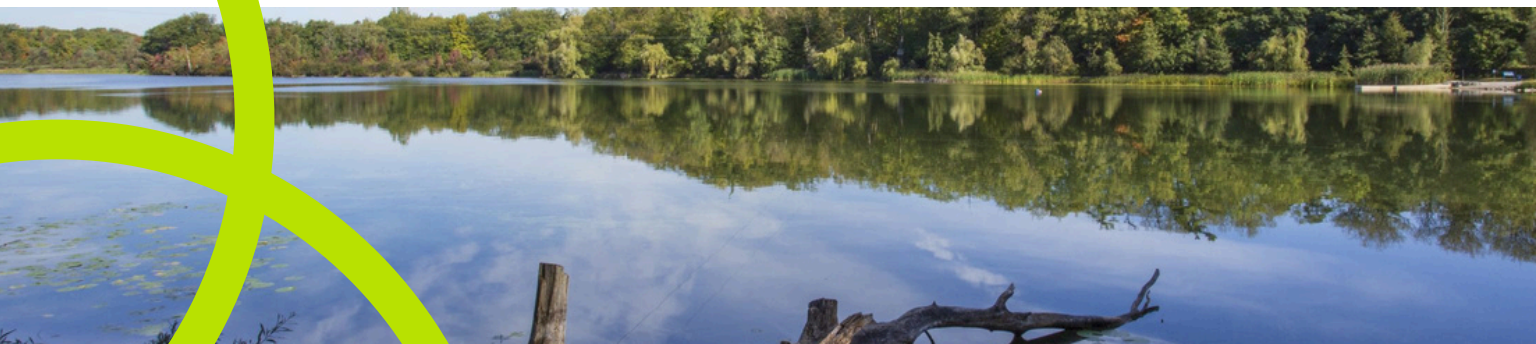
♿ Accessible trail(s): Yes, not specially designated, but it does have paved trails with no major inclines.

🚲 Bikes: Yes

🌿 Features: Lots of awesome wetlands and forests, accessible washrooms (May-October), kayaking and canoeing allowed from July 15 to September 15.

👤 Administrator/owner: **CLOCA (Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority)**

An excellent place to observe wildlife - deer, raccoons, swans, geese, ducks, and wild turkey can all be found here. You can also feed the chickadees here, try seeing if you can get a chickadee to land on your hand!



My Trail Recommendations



Photo: AllTrails.com

Cranberry Marsh Lookout Trail - Whitby

















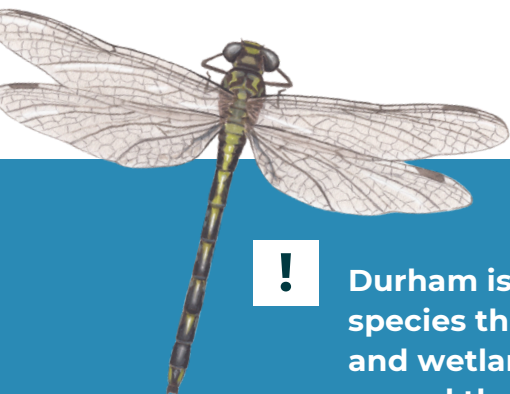
-  **Address:** 1225 Victoria Street West, Whitby.
-  **Trail Length:** 2.3km loop trail.
-  **Parking:** 700 Halls Road
-  **Transit-accessible:** Yes
-  **Accessible trail(s):** none specially designated, though the main trail is paved.
-  **Bikes:** no mountain biking.
-  **Features:** great for bird feeding/watching, breezy, next to the lake, plenty of wildlife in addition to birds.
-  **Administrator/owner:** **CLOCA (Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority)**
A beautiful 2.3km paved loop trail through a marsh. It's also a 20-minute walk down the road from the Lynde Shores Conservation Area.



Photo: Adventure Ontario

Greenwood Conservation Area - Ajax

-  **Address:** 2290 Greenwood Rd, Ajax, ON L1T 4S4
-  **Trail Length:** 38km total
-  **Transit-accessible:** No
-  **Accessible trail(s):** No
-  **Parking:** Yes, free.
-  **Bikes:** Yes
-  **Features:** great area for all seasons, a wide range of trail lengths and difficulties, fishing, overnight camping is allowed with a permit, two off-leash dog areas, playground, 3 shelters/pavillions, Discovery Pavilion (washrooms, seating area, rentable venue), soccer pitch.
-  **Administrator/owner:** **Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)**
A large conservation area with a variety of trail lengths and several amenities spread throughout the park. It's especially beautiful in the Fall when the leaves turn from a lush green blanket to a vibrant mosaic.



Durham is home to many wildlife species that depend on our forests and wetlands for survival. Urban sprawl threatens this. Learn how at TheBigSprawl.ca

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SPRAWL**

My Trail Recommendations



Photo: Trip Advisor

Orono Crown Lands - Clarington









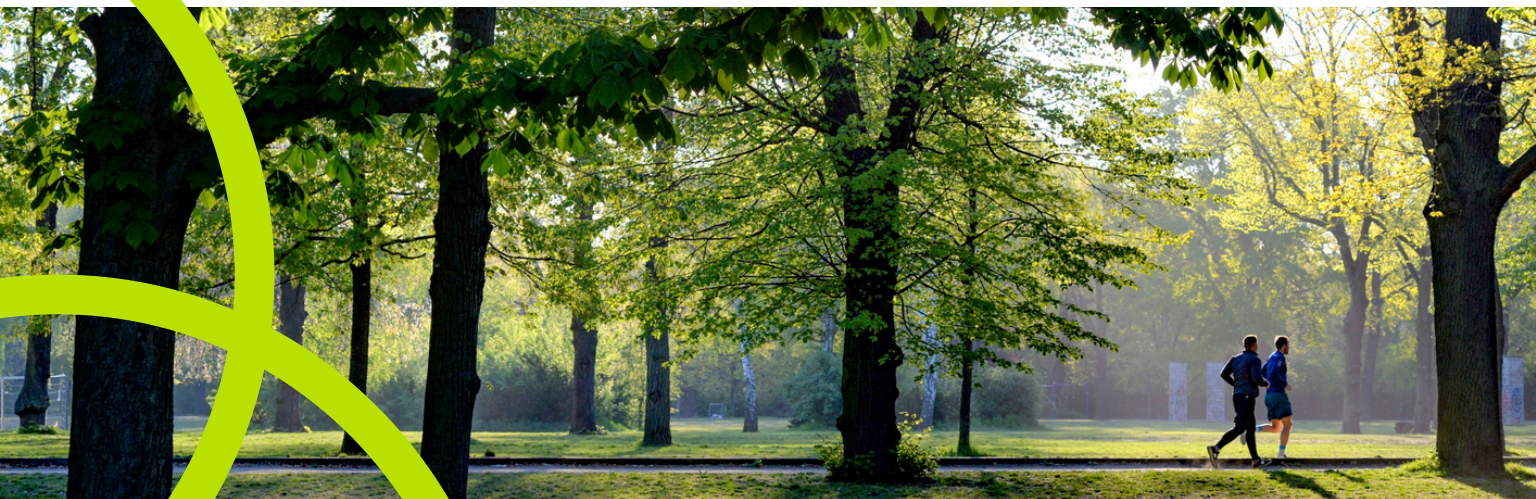
-  **Address:** Ochonski Road and Station Street, Clarington. For additional navigation information, visit oronocrownlands.com/locate-us.
-  **Trail Length:** 15km
-  **Parking:** Yes, free.
-  **Transit-accessible:** No
-  **Accessible trail(s):** No
-  **Bikes:** Yes
-  **Features:** Wilmot Creek Education Centre, picnic shelter, Wilmot creek, vibrant forests
-  **Administrator/owner:** **Orono Crown Lands Trust**
A successful soil erosion and desertification restoration project, made up of 633 acres and around a dozen interconnected trails. Formerly a tree nursery, the Crown Lands now host a vibrant ecosystem full of wildlife. Go bird watching, take a walk along the creek, or simply enjoy the beauty of the forest.



Photo: RobFaucher.com

Samuel Wilmot Nature Area - Clarington

-  **Address:** Cobble Dick Rd, Clarington
-  **Trail Length:** 3.5km
-  **Parking:** Yes, free - at the end of Cobble Dick Road or near the end of Toronto Street.
-  **Transit-accessible:** No
-  **Accessible trail(s):** None designated. Trails are gravel.
-  **Bikes:** Yes
-  **Features:** marsh viewing areas, waterfront areas, creek, amenities including: WIFI, power, and EV charging.
-  **Administrators:** **Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee (Municipality of Clarington)**
A variety of trails wind through this wetland area bordering Lake Ontario. The area's forest, marsh areas, and winding creek make it a great location for spotting unique wildlife. There's also lots of beautiful open space, perfect for picnics.

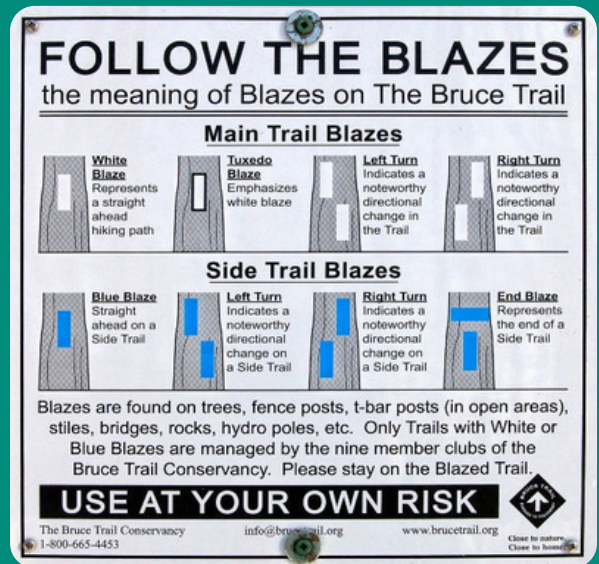


Hiking Etiquette

Did you know that there are ‘unspoken’ rules to follow when hiking in nature? Following them ensures that you are respecting nature and other guests.

Here are my top tips:

- **Follow the trailblazes:** You may have noticed white or blue rectangles painted on tree trunks. These are important markers that will guide you to stay on the trail!
- **Respect wildlife:** Avoid disturbing wildlife. Observe from a distance and do not feed animals. Sticking to designated paths helps protect plants and ecosystems.
- **Leave what you find behind:** Do not pick plants, disturb wildlife, or remove rocks or historical artifacts. Leave natural and cultural features as you found them for others to enjoy.
- **Dispose of waste properly:** Pack out all trash, litter, and leftover food. Do not leave anything behind. Use designated waste disposal facilities or carry a trash bag to pack out your garbage.
- **Observe park signage:** Trail signs provide important information about the route, including directions, distances, and points of interest.



Explore in the Winter

Winter doesn't mean that we need to hide from the outdoors! It doesn't mean we need expensive sports gear either. There are plenty of ways that we can connect with the outdoors during this time:

- **Birding:** With the leaves gone on the trees, the birds that live in our community are much easier to spot! Use Merlin Bird ID or other apps to identify their calls or appearance.
- **Tracking:** See who shares your habitat! When there is snow on the ground, it is a great chance to discover who shares our backyard or trails with us. When we are inside, we wouldn't know whether a mole or owl crossed our path just moments before, but thanks to winter, we can!

WINTER WILDLIFE

Who's been visiting your neighbourhood?

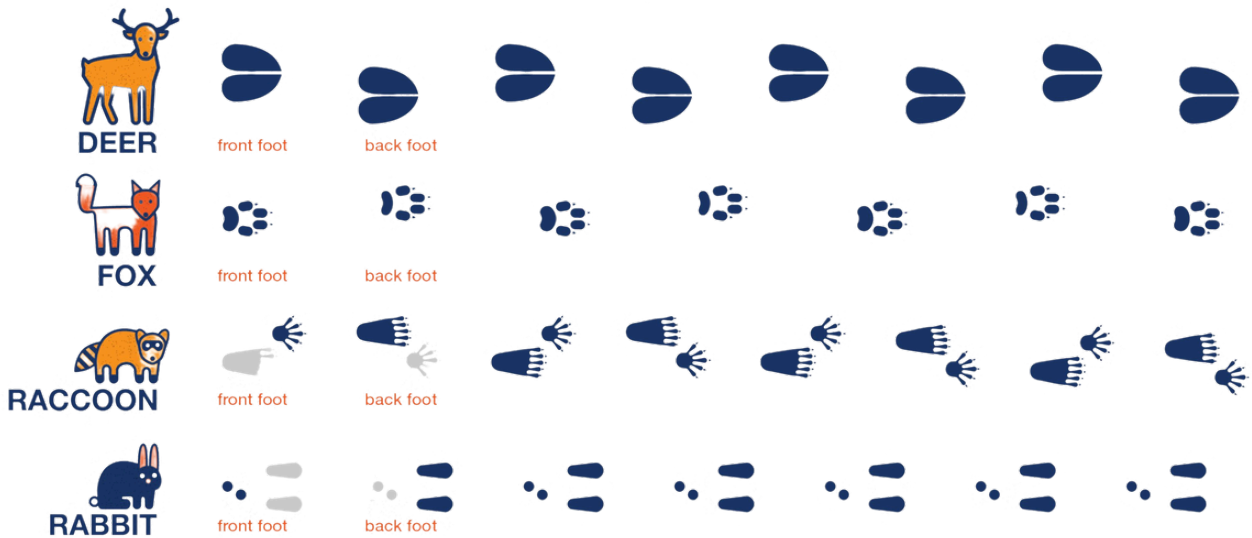


Photo credit: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry



- **Winter Art:** There are fun ways to make art in the snow and ice. Whether it's a snowman, igloo, or snow angel, you can elevate your experience by adding spray paint!

Steps:

- Fill spray bottles with water and just a dash of alcohol to prevent freezing
- Add drops of food colouring or create your colours with vegetables like beets
- Take your spray bottles outside and begin spraying in the snow



Photo credit: <https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/snow-paint/>

- **Dress well:** We need to show up in our best for Mother Nature —and by that, we mean: layer up! Many people cut their fun outdoor experiences short when they are underdressed for the cold. If possible, investing in quality winter gear can protect you from wind and freezing temperatures, but having many warm layers covering your feet, hands, and face, works just as well. Winter boots are a must. Ensure your face is moisturized with a thick lotion to protect skin from the wind too!

What are the Animals Up To?

Hiking throughout the year allows you to witness and appreciate the changing seasons, from the vibrant colours of fall foliage to the quiet beauty of snow-covered landscapes.

Observing wildlife activity can also add a special dimension to your hiking experience in different seasons.

(Note: Safe and friendly wildlife interactions are done from far away. Please do not touch or feed any animals, as it puts their ability to survive in the wild at risk.)

Spring

- Many bird species migrate during spring. Look for flocks of birds travelling to their breeding grounds.
- Spring is a time when many animals, such as birds and mammals, engage in nesting behaviours. Keep an eye out for nests in trees and on the ground.
- Reptile Activity: Warmer temperatures in spring may encourage reptiles like snakes and salamanders to become more active.

Summer

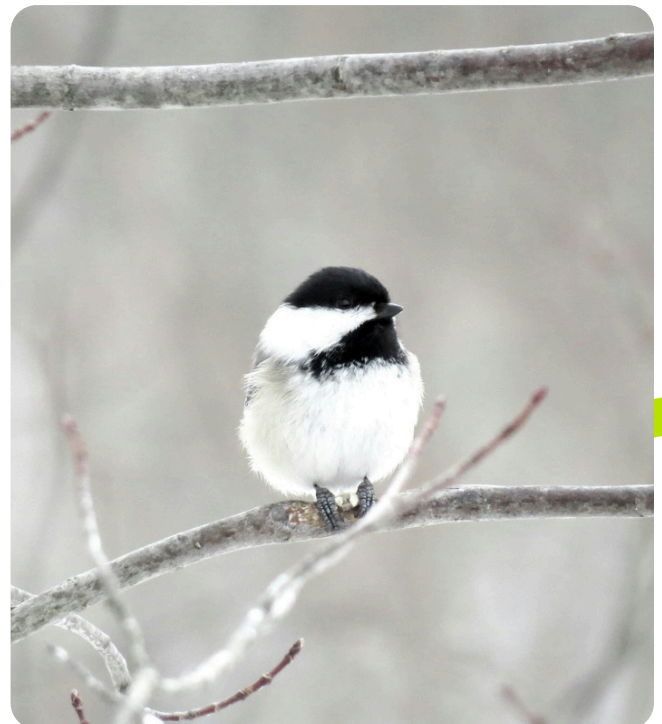
- Many bird species are actively vocalizing to attract mates or establish territories—listen to their songs!
- Summer is peak insect season. You may see butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, as well as spiders and other incredible insects.
- Some mammals give birth in summer, and you may come across some young animals.

Fall

- Prime time to view bird migrations as they head south for the winter.
- Many animals start preparing for winter by foraging and storing food. For example, squirrels may be actively collecting and burying nuts.
- Of course, the incredible changing colours of the tree canopy foliage

Winter

- Snow provides an excellent canvas for tracking wildlife. Look for tracks of animals like deer, rabbits, foxes, mice, and birds.
- Some mammals, such as certain rodents, change their fur color in winter to blend in with the snowy surroundings—can you spot them?
- Many birds choose to stay right here in Durham, all winter long. Take some binoculars and have a look!



Hiking Bingo

Transform your hike into an engaging scavenger hunt, making every trail more exciting!

<p>SQUIRREL</p> 	<p>BIRD HOUSE</p> 	<p>GUST OF WIND</p> 	<p>POLLINATOR</p> 	<p>DOG WALKER</p> 
<p>MAPLE LEAF</p> 	<p>BIRDS NEST</p> 	<p>ANIMAL BURROW</p> 	<p>TRAIL MARKER</p> 	<p>PINE CONE</p> 
<p>CONIFEROUS TREE</p> 	<p>MUSHROOMS</p> 	<p>FREE SPACE</p>	<p>FLOCK OF BIRDS</p> 	<p>OAK LEAF</p> 
<p>ACORN</p> 	<p>BIRD HOUSE</p> 	<p>THE SUN</p> 	<p>HOLE IN TREE</p> 	<p>BERRIES</p> 
<p>ANIMAL TRACKS</p> 	<p>Y-SHAPED TWIG</p> 	<p>BIRD CALL</p> 	<p>RABBIT</p> 	<p>BIG ROCK</p> 



Before You Go... Here are My Quick Tips

- In warmer conditions, choose lightweight and breathable fabrics to stay cool. In colder weather, wear layers to trap and retain body heat. Also, make sure you're not so toasty that you sweat a lot - this can make you even colder in the long run!
- In conditions of low visibility, wearing bright or reflective clothing enhances your visibility to others, reducing the risk of accidents.
- Hiking boots help prevent slips and give great ankle support on rugged terrain.
- Protect yourself from UV rays all year round. Wearing sunscreen, a hat, and long sleeves helps prevent sunburns and long-term skin damage.
- Stay hydrated — take a reusable water bottle or a water bladder.
- Bring snacks to sustain your energy level throughout the hike.
- Check trail status: Some trails may be closed or have limited accessibility in winter. Check with local authorities or park services for trail conditions.
- Always check the time of sunset so you can plan when you should stop hiking and plan your route back home.

Until Next Time

Our community is home to a lot of great opportunities and hidden gems, which I'm striving to uncover and share. To see what I've found, check out our website and newsletter, or connect with me for more awesome things to do in Durham Region!

If you enjoyed this guide, you can send a photo of your trail experience or creative outdoor art and we can feature it in our next newsletter.

See you on the trails!

