

Like the aboriginal peoples, voyageurs, and loggers whose footsteps echo in the history of this area, you'll hear the roar of the Eau Claire Gorge waterfalls before you see them. Preserving the distinctive natural and historic features of the picturesque Amable du Fond River and the Eau Claire Gorge was key to the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority's 1976 purchase of the land.

The area is steeped in natural and human history and the 12 interpretive sites along the trail capture the essence of its past. It takes about 1.5 hours to hike the trail, not including the moments you'll stop to savour or photograph the views along the way.

The Eau Claire Gorge Conservation Area is preserved as a natural environment area so **caution is advised** due to dangerous terrain and steep slopes, especially during wet and inclement weather. **All children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.**

Fast Facts about Eau Claire Gorge Conservation Area

- Conservation Area: 120ha (400acres)
- Main Trail: 1.9km (1.2miles)
- Amable du Fond River drops 263m (877ft) over its entire 84km river length
- Waterfall in Eau Claire Gorge drops 12m (40ft) over 30m (98ft) with 18m (60ft) high walls
- Gorge formed by ancient fault ridge, smoothed by glaciations 11,000 years ago



John Muir (1838-1914), naturalist and explorer



FACILITIES & ATTRactions

- Bridge/Platform
- Fast Water/Rapids
- Interpretive Sites
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Point of Interest
- Portage
- Trailhead
- Washrooms

PERMITTED USES

- Hiking
- Snow-shoeing
- Scenery/Photography
- Wildlife Viewing
- Pets on Leash
- Poop and Scoop

- ### 1 Mixed Forest

The mixture of evergreen and broad-leaved trees you see here - Eastern White Pine, Red Pine, Eastern Hemlock and Yellow Birch - are typical of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Region "transition zone". (North of us is the Boreal Forest, south is the Deciduous Forest). The moderate slopes and well drained soils along this section of the trail support Poplar, White Birch, Sugar Maple, and Balsam Fir.
- ### 2 Logging Begins 1850s

The lumber and square timber industry took off in the 1850s with the arrival of loggers to harvest the abundance of Red and White Pine.

William Mackey, the first lumberman to transport logs on the Amable du Fond River, constructed a log slide to bypass the gorge en route to his saw mill at Crooked Chute Lake. Mackey sold his logging rights in 1902 to J.R. Booth, a lumber baron from Ottawa who logged the area until 1920, for his mills further down the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers.
- ### 3 Thin Soils

As glaciers retreated from this area 11,000 years ago, the soil was removed leaving a hard bedrock surface. Since then, lichens and mosses have broken down the bedrock to produce a thin layer of soil. In this thin soil trees produce less stable, shallow, horizontal root systems which make trees prone to uprooting.
- ### 4 Red Pines

In the early 1900s, large quantities of natural stand White and Red Pine were harvested to meet Britain's growing demand for square timber. Although more White Pine were exported, Red Pine's suitability for poles, pilings and railway ties as well as its preferred appearance, made it more valuable in the early days of the timber trade. The dominant Red Pine stand you see here is growing on very shallow, sandy soils. Their origin dates back to the late 1800s.
- ### 5 Amable du Fond River

The picturesque Amable du Fond River originates at Pipe Lake within the boundaries of Algonquin Provincial Park and flows north for 84 kilometers (53 miles) through the gorge to Smith Lake and eventually empties into the Mattawa River. The River was allegedly named after an Indian Chief from the Montagnais tribe which came from the Montreal area and settled upstream from the gorge prior to 1848.

With the influx of loggers in the late 1800s, the Amable du Fond River was an essential transportation link to the mills despite its many challenges and risks along the way.

NBMCA Conservation Areas and Trails



Explore these other fascinating Trails and Conservation Areas in your area.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 J. P. Webster | 9 Shields-McLaren |
| 2 Powassan Mountain | 10 Eau Claire Gorge |
| 3 Kate Pace Way | 11 Shirley Skinner |
| 4 Laurier Woods | 12 Eva Wardlaw |
| 5 Kinsmen Trail | 13 Elks Lodge 25 Family Park |
| 6 Laurentian Escarpment | 14 Mattawa Island |
| 7 La Vase Portage | 15 Papineau Lake |
| 8 Corbeil | |

More detailed information about each Conservation Area and Trail can be found on our website

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Trail Interpretive Sites (continued)

6 Past Forest Fires

Several fires swept through this area in the 1800s, destroying prime timber, but saving it from large scale commercial lumbering. Some of the timber, however, was used to construct the log slide, dam, logger's shanty and squatter's cabin.

This charred stump and others you may see along the trail remain because charcoal is a natural element that does not decay.

7 Historic Log Slide (start)

William Mackey had a problem getting his squared timber safely through the gorge so in the 1870s he hired Roderick MacKenzie to build a log slide around it.

A channel was dug, a pine log foundation laid and a slide made of pine boards was constructed with steel sleigh runners reinforcing the curves and bottom of the slide. Nicknamed "The Long Slide", it measured 370m (1230ft) long, making it the longest slide on the Amable du Fond. Its opening measured 4m (13ft), wide enough to allow up to five logs to pass through at one time. In order to divert logs into the slide, a dam was built to raise the water level. Piers built on either side of the river were joined by a log gate to create the dam.

The spring "log drive" began when the ice under the winter cut timber melted. A shanty was built close to the slide for the lumbermen and camps were established along the river for those who guided the logs downstream.

The slide was used until the early 1920s and dismantled for timber in the 1930s. The dam was removed in the 1920s and its piers were destroyed by Hurricane Hazel in 1954.

Today you can still see the remains of the original slide trench.

8 The Gorge

Millions of years ago, the bedrock split and dropped one side, creating the fault ridge that extends throughout the Conservation Area. Glacier movement and erosion from the river flow have carved out the majesty of the thundering gorge along this ridge. As you continue along the trail, you will be walking down the fault ridge.

9 Historic Log Slide (end)

When you look along the upstream shoreline, you'll see the bank bulge to form two small spits of land. This is the point where the log slide ended and the logs reentered the river. As the logs tumbled into the river, they carried soil and other sediment with them which, over time, built up to form the two spits of land.

10 Flooded by Hurricane Hazel (1954)

As you walked down the fault ridge, did you notice the change in vegetation? This low-lying area is home to a variety of water tolerant species such as Black Ash and Eastern White Cedar. As well, the understory (the vegetation that grows under the forest canopy) is much denser with ferns, plants and shrubs.

Hurricane Hazel took its toll in 1954, flooding the area. When the waters subsided, it left behind the light coloured high water marks you see on the trees around you, leaving its mark in history.

11 Historic Squatter's Cabin

Abandoned by lumbermen in the late 1930s, this site became home for a squatter, Godin. The story is told that Godin left Gaspé to escape prosecution for the accidental shooting of his brother. He led a secluded life, leaving in the 1940s as mysteriously as he arrived.



The original cabin fell into disrepair but its heritage is preserved. It was reconstructed using wood from a 1910 area building and nearby logs. Using a broad axe, the logs were faced on two sides and stacked with the rounded sides adjoining, mirroring the construction techniques of the 1930s. The dovetailing of corners helped to secure the logs and shed water. Some modifications have been made to the original design to increase the life of the cabin.

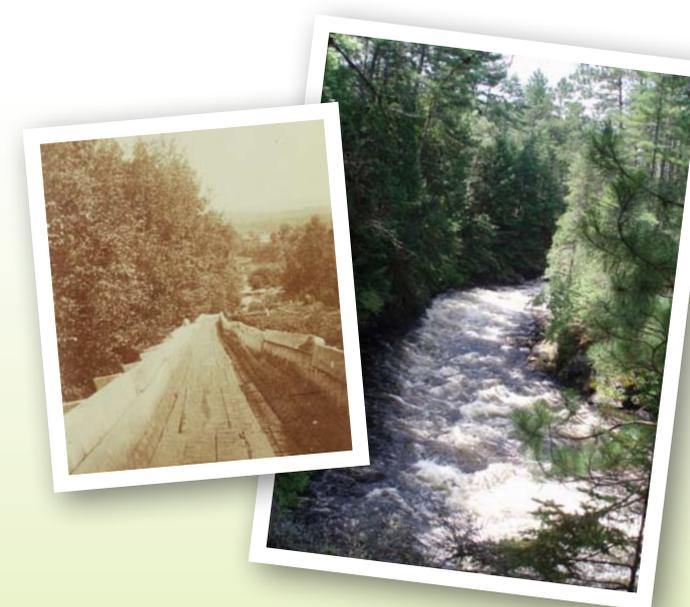
12 Forest Management

To ensure the sustainability of a strong, healthy forest in the Eau Claire Gorge Conservation Area, the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority has adopted a forest management plan to preserve the natural forest. A healthy forest promotes diverse plant and animal populations.

NBMCA's forest management plan includes selective thinning of less desirable trees to open up the forest and support the growth of young White Pines. Diseased trees are removed and burnt to reduce the spread of disease.

Rich in natural and human history, the economic development of the Eau Claire Gorge and its logging structures were relatively short-lived. Today you can enjoy the natural surroundings while imagining the thunder of the logs rushing down the Amable du Fond River, shooting through the log slide to the river below.

Eau Claire Gorge Conservation Area Trails



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