

MAD RIVER SECTION

Maps 24, 25, 26

The Mad River section derives its name from the river which runs parallel to the trail in many places. Sometimes in the spring, west of Avening, trout can be seen going upstream to spawn. There are some outstanding scenic views from Ten Hill and McKinney's Hill. The Mad River section passes through the Hogback, Brentwood, and Lawden Tracts of the Simcoe County Forests, as well as through the New Lowell, Carruthers Memorial and Glencairn Conservation areas, and the Escarpment Biosphere Reserve. The Mad River section meets the Bruce Trail high above Glen Huron at the Western Cairn of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail.

The section is mostly flat, with a couple of hills, and is suitable for beginners.

KM DESCRIPTION

0.0 44.34019, -79.84278

The east end of the Mad River trail meets the Barrie trail at County Road 90 (CR90). An underpass walkway provides access to both trails from this point. Erected at this location is a plaque acknowledging that the Ganaraska Hiking Trail passes through the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Wendat-Huron, and Haudenosaunee Nations.

44.34050, -79.84117

Beside CR90.

From the CR90 underpass the trail runs beside CR90 heading about 200 metres east to Line 6 where the trail turns right (south). Use caution - there can be ATV traffic on this short section so walk on the side and listen for oncoming ATV vehicles.

44.32940, -79.84752

Junction of 30th Sideroad and Private Property.

At this point the trail runs south onto private property from the 30th Sideroad. Stay to the edge of the private property.

44.32748, -79.84657

Junction of railway tracks and Private Property.

At this point, the trail follows the Simcoe's Barrie-Collingwood Railway (BCRY) Active Transportation Trail west toward Angus. This multi-use trail, designed for walking and cycling, officially opened on April 30th, 2026. Exercise caution at

intersecting roads and obey all posted trail signage. Stay alert for cyclists coming from behind you; be courteous and leave enough room for them to pass.

Angus is known for its proximity to the Canadian Forces Base Borden. Camp Borden was established during the First World War as a major training centre of Canadian Expeditionary Force battalions. Base Borden Military Museum is a military museum located on the grounds of CFB Borden that combines four separate museums; it has numerous items, equipment and vehicles from all eras of Canadian military history.

Within Angus's town limits is Peacekeepers Park, which is dedicated to the 160,000+ Canadians who have served on United Nations sanctioned missions since 1947. A stone path installed in 2016 is lined with mounted pedestals detailing the 59 United Nations missions since 1949. Included in the park is commemorative signage, a Wall of Honour, reconnaissance vehicles, parking and picnic tables.

While in the area, don't miss the Borden Legacy Monument on Cambrai Rd. It was erected as a lasting tribute to the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers who trained at Camp Borden and died on European battlefields. The monument features two black granite walls, one of which contains an urn filled with soil from the battlefield of Vimy Ridge.

2.8 *44.32557, -79.85354*

Junction of Line 5 and Simcoe's Barrie-Collingwood Railway (BCRY) Active Transportation Trail.

44.32111, -79.86901

Bridge

A former trestle bridge crossing the Nottawasaga River along the BCRY Active Transportation Trail.

44.31935, -79.88491

Bridge

A former trestle bridge crossing the Pine River along the BCRY Active Transportation Trail.

44.32456, -79.90742

Bridge

A former trestle bridge crossing the Mad River along the BCRY Active Transportation Trail.

44.35386, -79.96300

Junction of the BCRY Active Transportation Trail and Concession Road 3.

At this point the trail follows Concession Road 3 west to Hogback Road.

12.0 *44.35384, -79.96378*

Concession 3 junction with railway tracks.

13.0 *44.3526,-79.97323*

Parking

Roadside parking at the entrance of the New Lowell Campground. Do not block the entrance. <http://newlowellcampground.ca/>

From May 24 to October 31 parking is available inside the campground entrance gate to the right at the top of the driveway. Please inform the management when parking.

44.35211, -79.97554

New Lowell Conservation area.

The 140 acre New Lowell reservoir is located on Coates Creek. It offers swimming, canoeing, and fishing opportunities. The Ganaraska Trail winds its way through the southwest of the property, an area famous for its old growth cedar forest. The property is operated as a recreational facility. A reservoir separates the property into two parts; the north side is managed for "Day Use" only, while the south side is operated as a seasonal campground. There are no overnight sites, seasonal permits only. For a nominal fee, visitors have access to all "day use" facilities including a large clean beach and a roofed pavilion. <http://www.nvca.on.ca/recreation/ConservationAreas/NewLowell>

44.35148, -79.97693

The trail follows the main access road of the New Lowell Campground to the left of the seasonal camping area.

44.35179, -79.97861

Entrance gateway to the woodlands.

At this point, the trail enters into the mixed deciduous and coniferous woodlands for approximately 1.5 km of undulating topography that parallels the southshore of the reservoir. The tree cover is age-variable and includes Maple, Ash, Poplar, American Beech, as well as Spruce, Pine, Hemlock and Balsam Fir. The walking experience is interesting because hikers are moving up and down and across drainage gullies, leading from the southern height of land towards the reservoir. This overland route is an excellent habitat for birds, animals and wildflower species in the spring. It ends at a cleared forest trail that leads upslope southerly.

44.35179, -79.97861

Plaque honoring Blackdown Cadets.

Years ago, the Blackdown Cadets of Base Borden did some extensive work to improve the trail. A plaque is erected in the gateway in appreciation.

44.35046, -79.98615

New Lowell Reservoir.

Take a short walk to the right, for an excellent viewpoint or picnic spot on the shore of the reservoir.

44.34801, -79.98546

Fork in the road.

Proceed up the sloped forest road to almost the top of the valley height of land, where there is a double right hand blaze. The trail continues for about 50 meters, where it meets another right hand blaze, at the edge of staghorn sumac on the right and an evergreen reforestation stand on the left.

44.34762, -79.98565

Shared trail.

This westerly heading part of the trail is easy walking, with a broad, needle based surface that gradually enters a mature Red Pine forest, where the tops of little valleys can be viewed to the right. This part of the route is also a snowmobile and ATV route, running all the way to the property boundary of the New Lowell Conservation Area. Use caution - listen for snowmobiles in winter and ATVs in summer.

44.34652, -79.99184

Trail heads south from this point.

At the northwest corner of the New Lowell Conservation area lands, turn left (south) and follows the limits of the Simcoe County Forest Hogback tract all the way along the western boundary.

44.33907, -79.99008

Viewpoint.

A short side trail at this point will lead to a point where you can enjoy the view of a tree plantation from on top of the sandpit. A fascinating feature in this section of the trail is the incidence of blow out sand dunes. These are examples of why the County of Simcoe and Conservation Authorities purchased Class 5, 6 and 7 lands in the area, so that reforestation would heal such wind-eroded sites.

44.33838, -79.98909

Poison Ivy – Use Caution

Please note that the trail passes through a section of poison ivy in this location.

16.1 *44.33577, -79.98736*

Parking

Forest Gate at Simcoe County Forest Hogback Tract. Parking alongside Concession 2 Sunnidale.

16.9 *44.33385, -79.99656*

Junction with 6/7 Sunnidale Sideroad. Turn left (south) on a sand road that becomes paved after crossing Hogback Road. Watch for the trail turning east into Brentwood Forest Tract.

44.32139, -79.99392

Trail runs north and east from this point.

The trail turns east into Brentwood Forest Tract.

44.3185, -79.9926

Brentwood Forest Parking.

While not exactly on the Ganaraska Trail, there is a parking lot on the east side of the road.

44.31509, -79.98536

Simcoe County Forest.

Follow the trail running east into the Simcoe County Forest Brentwood Forest Tract as it winds through scenic Red Pine and deciduous trees. The trail follows the eastern boundary of the forest for a bit, then turns west again, and goes through an area where the forestry department of the County of Simcoe did a “controlled burn” several years ago and has since replanted the area.

44.31093, -79.99116

Interpretive Plaques

A series of interpretive plaques along the trail describing the history of Simcoe County Forest management. The forests originally intended to rehabilitate lands not suitable for agricultural now provides a wide range of benefits including wildlife habitat, a scenic landscape, opportunities for forestry and areas for public recreation.

21.8 *44.30968, -79.99097*

Intersection of 6/7 Sunnidale Sideroad and Sunnidale-Tosorontio Townline. Turn right (west).

44.30605, -80.00162

Caution - be careful here.

A dangerous corner on Brentwood Road, as you approach Concession Road 3 and the Mad River bridge. No parking!

44.30542, -80.00219

Escarpment Biosphere Reserve entrance.

Just before the bridge, enter the Escarpment Biosphere Reserve on the north side of the Mad River. The Escarpment Biosphere Reserve is a 111 acre nature reserve along the Mad River, adjacent to the Glencairn Conservation Area. It was donated to the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy by the Stephen’s family, who also own the General Store and gas station in Glencairn. There are many wet areas and potential for fallen trees through this section. Take care crossing man-

made structures.

<https://escarpment.ca/see-our-preserves/niagara-peninsula-to-creemore/mad-river-stephens>

22.8 44.30549, -80.00188

Kilometre reading

25.3 44.30161, -80.02096

Parking is available for a nominal fee.

44.30185, -80.02051

Glencairn Conservation Area.

Located in the village of Glencairn, this pleasant area offers a scenic getaway for an hour or the entire day. The Mad River winds through offering opportunities for fishing, short hikes and simple relaxation. The Glencairn Conservation Area is maintained by the Glencairn Park Committee.

44.30181, -80.02129

Caution - PLEASE NOTE THAT WILD PARSNIP HAS BEEN SPOTTED IN GLENCAIRN CONSERVATION AREA. WILD PARSNIP IS A MEMBER OF THE CARROT/PARSLEY FAMILY, AND LIKE GIANT HOGWEED, PRODUCES SAP CONTAINING CHEMICALS THAT CAN IRRITATE HUMAN SKIN. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS PLANT CAN BE FOUND ON THE NOTTAWASAGA VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (NVCA) WEBPAGE.

<https://www.nvca.on.ca/invasive-species-wild-parsnip>

44.30827, -80.03483

Private Property / Christmas Tree Farm

The trail passes through a Christmas tree farm that previously operated as a tobacco farm. Buildings used in the operation for drying the tobacco remain on the property.

The first planting of Christmas trees began in 1988. Once the trees reach 7 years, they are graded for height and fullness at which time; the best are tagged and cut for that year's Christmas harvest. The process continues each year until the 12th year, at which time, the remaining trees are cleared off the land and the land is prepared for a fresh batch of seedlings the following spring. A select few of the trees remain and reach a height tall enough to be harvested and used for hotel lobbies and Town centres.

This is private property so please stay on the marked trail. Heading north the trail exits onto Centre Line Road and continues north.

29.5 *44.33051, -80.04212*

Parking.

There is off-road parking on the west side of Centre Line Road, where the all-purpose trail (used by ATVs and snowmobiles) enters the Simcoe County Forest Lawden Tract and continues west then turns south to connect with Sideroad 6/7 Nottawasaga (undeveloped road).

44.32059, -80.07442

Concession Road 42 and 6/7 Sideroad.

The trail continues south along County Road 42 (a very busy road – walk facing traffic) from Sideroad 6/7 Nottawasaga turning west (right) onto Fisher Street in the Hamlet of Avening. **Cross with great care as this is a busy highway.**

44.31361, -80.07304

Avening

Trail turns west (right) onto Fisher Street in the Hamlet of Avening.

Located in Avening is The Avening Community Centre (or ACC North as some like to call it). It is a smallish town hall used for concerts and has a bowling alley in the basement.

44.31274, -80.07543

Trail enters forest path

After curve on Fisher Street watch for trail turning west (right) onto forest path. At fork in path take trail to the left leading to Carruthers Memorial Conservation Area.

34.3 *44.31031, -80.07543*

Trail meets Mad River at Avening.

At Avening the trail passes through Carruthers Memorial Conservation Area which has many features for the outdoor enthusiast, from fishing the Mad River, hiking, picnicking at the pavilion, a playground and washrooms are available. Between the community of Avening and Creemore the trail follows the Mad River shore line.

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), working with the Friends of the Mad River and Clearview Township, completed a pilot stream bank stabilization project along the Mad River at Carruthers Park.

Erected at this location is a plaque acknowledging that the Ganaraska Hiking Trail passes through the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Wendat-Huron, and Haudenosaunee Nations.

44.31276, -80.08362

Mad River.

At this point the trail passes through a field along the shore of the Mad River.

44.31750, -80.09066

South of Creemore.

From this point the trail runs north through Creemore and continues north and west from Creemore on municipal roads until close to Glen Huron. Creemore is home to Creemore Springs Brewery, North American's smallest jail, and the community hosts a weekly farmer's market and many annual events.

39.3

44.33019, -80.11019

North end of Creemore trail continues west along County Road 9 (a busy road - walk facing traffic), turn north just before green sign #7888 onto Old Concession Road 5 (an unmaintained road).

44.32666, -80.12664

Stoney and steep with great views

From this point the trail follows Old Concession Road 5 north to Sideroad 12/13 Nottawasaga. A portion of this trail can be wet and is very stoney with a steep climb providing great views from the top. Trail turns west following road to Concession 6 South. Continue along Concession 6 South northwards towards Nottawasaga Sideroad 15/16.

44.35591, -80.15028

Junction point for the Mad River and Wasaga Beach trails is located at the intersection of Concession 6 South and Nottawasaga Sideroad 15/16. Turn west on Sideroad 15/16 following the road to the scenic rural hamlet of Glen Huron. At the t-intersection turn south on Concession 8 Nottawasaga Road.

Glen Huron is known as one of the smallest, prettiest, historical villages with an estimated population to be around 51 to 93 residents. It is home to the Hamilton Brothers Farm and Building Supply store, located in the village since 1874 and currently operated by the 4th generation. In 1874 there was a water powered saw mill with the feed mill coming 20 years later. The water powered feed mill still operates today and is an important part of their business.

44.34899, -80.18237

Intersection with road to Bruce Trail junction.

At this point, the trail runs west from Concession 8 along an unopen road allowance (Sideroad 15/16) and up a very steep stoney track to the junction with the Bruce Trail. Road side parking is possible here for a small number of vehicles.

50.0

44.34718, -80.19329

Cairn.

Updated : 20260523

This is the most westerly point of the Ganaraska Trail providing a spectacular view. The cairn marks the connection of the Ganaraska Trail with the Bruce Trail.

Erected at this location is a plaque acknowledging that the Ganaraska Hiking Trail passes through the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Wendat-Huron, and Haudenosaunee Nations.