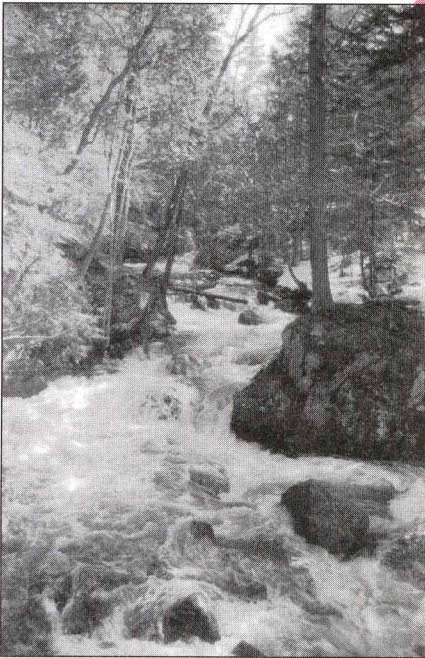


Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area



Crystal Creek





Something for Everyone!

Sault Ste. Marie is fortunate to have the natural splendor of the Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area. The area is part of the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority (SSMRCA).

Many kilometres of groomed cross-country ski trails wind their way through the conservation area, Kinsmen Park, the city's Wishart Park and Crown property surrounding the provincial fish hatchery. While skiers pay to use these trails in the winter and early spring, there is no charge to hikers or cyclists the rest of the year.

Crystal Creek provides a navigable waterway for paddlers to enjoy. Canoeists begin at Thayer Acres and travel to Crystal Lake and further.

Cyclists can try the trails or ride Connor Road to Crystal Lake and beyond.

Although each trail highlights unique terrain, one of the most spectacular views is Crystal Falls from the Crystal Creek Trail.

For visitor safety, and to prevent further exposed tree root damage, a wheelchair accessible boardwalk was constructed beside the trail.

The Sugar Shack

Each spring, the Conservation Authority opens its Sugar Shack so visitors can see how maple syrup is made. Pancake breakfasts are held every weekend during maple syrup season.

Demonstration Sawmill

The Conservation Authority harvests trees that have become diseased, windblown or overcrowded. Trees have also been harvested to thin the sugar bush and for certain forest and wildlife management programs.

Visitors are welcome to see the sawmill in action. Logs are processed into lumber or shingles for picnic shelters, boardwalks, lookout platforms or heritage buildings. Call first to ensure the sawmill is operating.



Maple Syrup Days every spring draw 3,000 people to the Sugar Shack on Fifth Line Rd. E.

Thayer Acres

This rustic campground offers access to Crystal Creek at Thayer Acres for fishing and canoeing. Scouts, Beavers and Cubs practise outdoor skills at the camp. Other large groups are welcome, but should call ahead to book the campground.

Heritage Village

Mockingbird Hill Farm offers visitors year-round a glimpse at the pioneer way of life. Farm animals include goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, horses and cows. Behind the farm is a Pioneer Church relocated from Goulais River. It serves as a classroom for discussing farm life and activities. You can arrange tours by calling (705) 253-4712.



Area Attractions

Kinsmen Park is a 97-hectare park in the conservation area with a ball diamond, children's playground, picnic areas, change rooms and a swimming hole. Landslide Ski Hill provides a lighted 91-metre alpine ski hill overlooking Crystal Creek Valley.

Tarentorous Fish Culture Station, open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, allows visitors to see various trout species being reared for the Ministry of Natural Resource's fish release program.

Wishart Park offers hiking trails and a view of Root River where salmon spawn during the fall.



Points of Interest

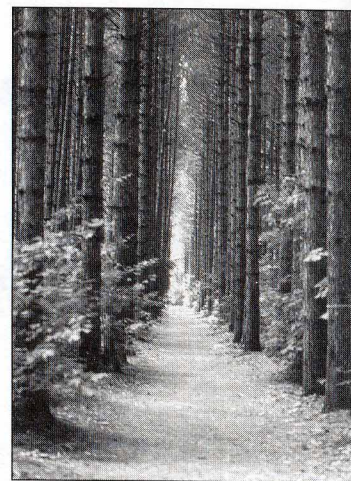
(Numbers correspond to posted signs at the conservation area.)

1. Red Pine Forest

Surrounding you is a red pine plantation established in the 1930s. The red pine is not as common as the white pine because it grows in small isolated areas. Red pines grow best in sandy soils and are not susceptible to white pine weevil and white pine blister rust (diseases that restrict growth). The thick corky bark of older red pines makes them fire-resistant.

2. Conifer Swamp

Surrounding you is a conifer swamp, a wooded area with



Towering pine planted about 1929 grace this Hiawatha Highlands trail.

shallow water. Most of the swamp is cedar, giving it its name, with a mixture of black spruce and balsam fir. There's also a trace of red maple and yellow birch. The unique tamarack in this swamp is the only conifer to shed its needles in the fall.

3. **Tree Harvesting**

Strip cutting, shown in this area, encourages forest regeneration. Unlike clear-cutting, this type of tree harvesting maintains moisture and reduces surface run-off. Strip cutting protects wildlife habitat and looks better.

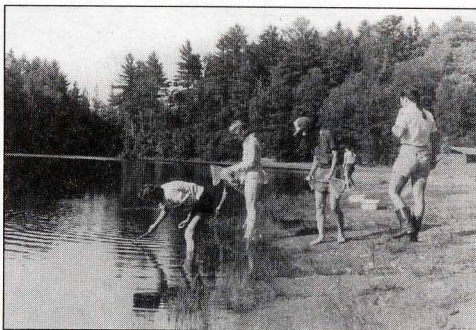
4. **Old-growth Forest**

Hiawatha Highlands contains 20 hectares of old-growth forest — trees that are at least 130 years old. This is the way Ontario forests looked before the arrival of settlers. The forest provides the ideal habitat for wildlife, including the flying squirrel, pine vole, red-bellied woodpecker, Carolina wren and the bald eagle.

Ecology Trail

5. **Kinsmen Reservoir**

This swimming reservoir was created when the W.C. Thayer Memorial Dam was constructed above Minnehaha Falls. The Kinsmen stock rainbow trout, speckled trout and other fish here for children's fishing.



Students study wetland habitat at Crystal Creek in Kinsmen Park.

6. **Preventing Erosion**

Erosion occurs when soil is worn away by man, water or wind. The forest canopy protects against soil erosion because roots hold the soil in place and absorb moisture. To prevent erosion in other areas, gabion baskets (metal baskets filled with rocks) have been constructed. The rocks act as strainers, allowing water to pass through the basket while holding back the soil.

7. **White Pine**

The white pine was chosen as Ontario's tree emblem May 1, 1984, to commemorate Ontario's bicentennial. Identified by its soft needles arranged in clusters of five, the white pine has branches resembling outstretched arms. The tree's honey-colored soft wood does not warp or split and can be used for manufacturing everything from tools and furniture to barns and houses.

8. **Water Power**

The W.C. Thayer Memorial Dam above Minnehaha Falls is the site of a small hydroelectric project developed by the Kinsmen Club. Water flows through an intake valve and penstock to a power house 315 metres downstream, powering a 200-kilowatt generator.

9. **Minnehaha Falls**

Over time, the falling water has worn away the rock, creating pools. The cool temperature and high oxygen content of the water, caused by the constant churning, allow speckled trout to thrive. The erosion also creates sand particles that are carried downstream.

10. **Corduroy Road**

This part of the trail is made of logs laid crosswise. In the past, forest access roads were constructed this way to carry wagons and vehicles over swamps and other wet areas.

11. **Granite Rock**

Found throughout Hiawatha Highlands, this igneous rock is pale or greyish and resists erosion. Granite is widely used for construction and monuments. Over time, the rock enriches the soil and nurtures the forest.

12. **Wetland Habitat**

Ponds contain a wide variety of plant and animal life, including turtles, frogs, fish, beaver and ducks. Lining the pond's edges are cedar, spruce and tamarack as well as cattails and rushes.

13. **Forest Succession**

This area is being transformed from a cut area to a mature forest. Grasses and shrubs shade the soil, keeping it moist and fertile. Hardwoods such as birch, aspen and maple will sprout first, followed by conifers like spruce and pine.

14. **Tree Stump**

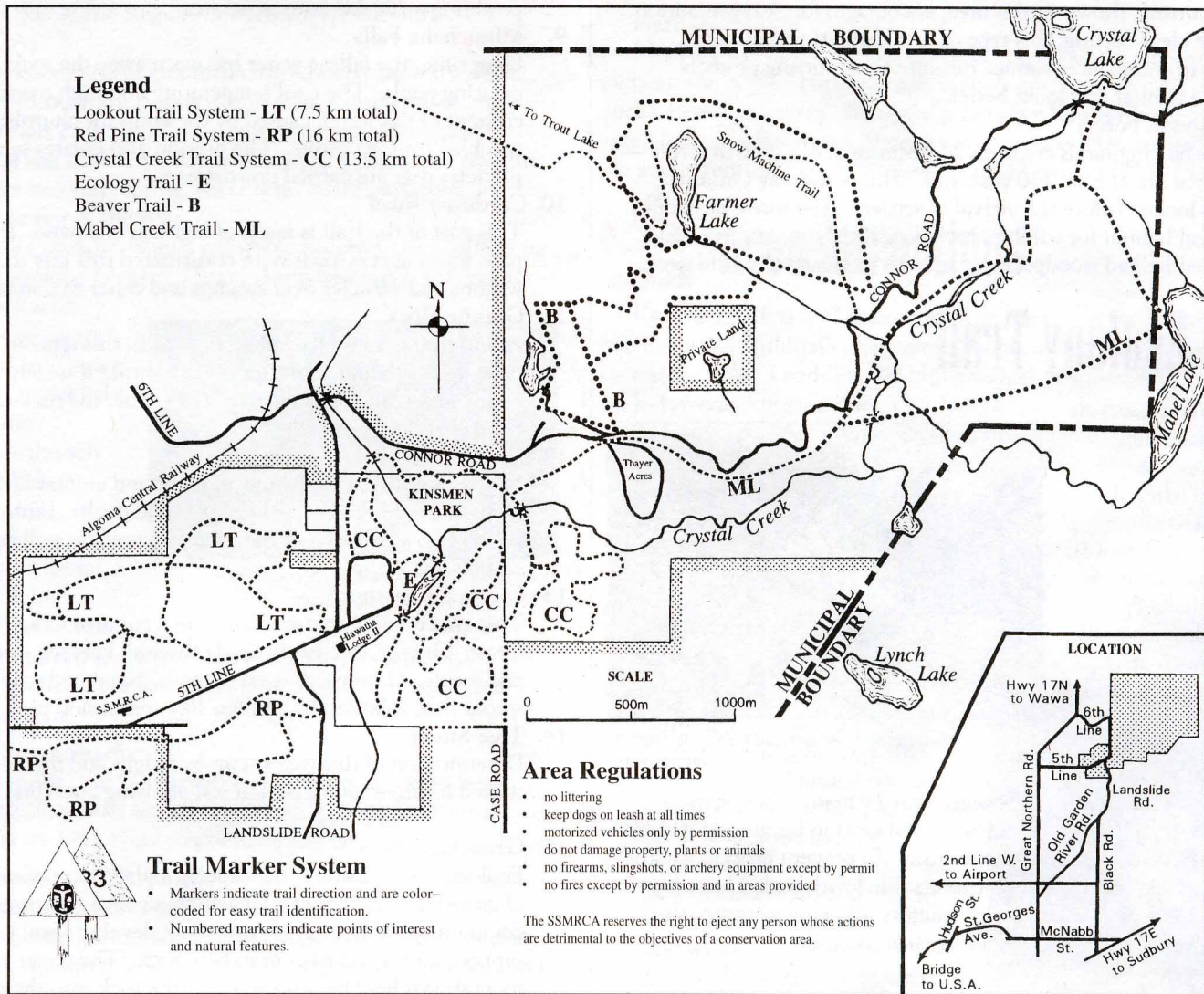
Deterioration of this tree stump by fungus and insects has turned it into a source of rich soil allowing birch and pine seedlings to take root.

15. **Growing Pains**

Ecological succession is the orderly replacement of one type of growth by another until reaching a relatively complex community. It may take centuries to develop a soil to support shrubs and trees from bare rock. The paper birch roots shown here have grown over the rock into the cracks. Lichens and mosses are usually the first plants to invade bare rock and shouldn't be removed.

For information on any of the Sault Ste. Marie conservation areas, call (705) 946-8530 or visit the SSMRCA office at 1100 Fifth Line E.

Hiawatha Highlands Conservation Area



This brochure has been published through the co-operative efforts of the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority and the Ontario Lottery Corporation.



Ecology Trail

*Numbered signs correspond to
numbered paragraphs in text.*

