


Excerpt from *Exploring Sydenham*

BY RON SAVAGE

Woodlands are slowly regenerating abandoned fields on Kemble Wetland Nature Reserve.



Exploring *Sydenham* by Ron Savage is a collection of up-to-date maps and directions for hiking 50 trails in the Sydenham section of the Bruce Trail.

Ron describes this section as being located “between the quiet hamlet of Blantyre at the edge of the Beaver Valley and the bustling town of Wiarton at the gateway to the Bruce Peninsula. This large section contains over 171 challenging km of the Bruce Trail and 46 fascinating side trails.”

The Kemble Rock and Kemble Wetland Nature Reserve are just southwest of Kemble Mountain. Its 342 acres include regenerating fields, meadows, and an impressive wetland complex. The nature reserves secure more than two km of the Bruce Trail.

Kemble Rock contains a large, mature deciduous forest. The Bruce Trail traverses a narrow ledge along the cliff face through part of the reserve. Bird enthusiasts can find Pileated Woodpeckers, Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Eastern Wood-Pewee.

Kemble Wetland contains part of the Kemble Wetlands Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) and part of the Indian Creek provincially significant wetland complex. This nature reserve protects various habitats, including regenerating agricultural land, deciduous forests and wetlands dominated by Swamp Maple and Black Ash. The forest cover provides habitat for waterfowl such as the Northern Waterthrush and families of Sandhill Cranes.

In his book, Ron includes a “treasure hunt” component as an extra challenge on many of the loop hikes. Clues can help you find a secret code number hidden somewhere along the trail. Hikers, young and old, and families could create memories while exploring to find these hidden codes.

Kemble Rock Loops

Trail length: 6 km – multiple loop hikes.

Time: 3-4 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to strenuous.

Access: North out of Owen Sound on County Road 1 to Kemble. Continue north on Kemble Rock Road to Taylor Side Road and turn left. Continue west on Taylor to Coles Side Road.



Parking: Roadside parking. Suitable for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. (Avoid the Bruce Trail above the cliff edge, as many crevices exist.)

This enormous nature reserve holds several loops. The Don Richards Side Trail (900 metres) is the path that will first introduce hikers to these intriguing pathways. Soon after you enter the land, the footpath meets the former driveway to the farm. The West homestead is ahead, with the ruins of their barn

on your right. You will find the remnants of the West’s home behind the lilac trees on your left. The fencing in the distance protects the remains of the old well. The path continues to the west and north along abandoned meadows until it reaches a small seasonal stream. After crossing a bridge, the route climbs the talus slope.

37. Mystery Cabin Loop – 2.1 KM

The Mystery Cabin Side Trail is the first path intersecting

the Don Richards Side Trail. To follow this loop, turn right and follow this pathway to the north until it reaches the Escarpment’s talus slope. The path turns to the east and wanders along the cliff’s base. At one point, the pathway encounters a small cabin’s ruins overlooking a spectacular view. The abandoned structure is the source of the name for this side trail. Spend some time here admiring the view.

The loop path continues east along the talus slope



◀ The overgrown ruins of a small cabin are close to an impressive view.



▼ Sydenham trail workers building a footbridge over a small stream.



▲ Bruce Power funded Indigenous ecologists to view the wetland and record an inventory of species.

until it intersects with the unopened road allowance of Coles Side Road. The route turns north and climbs the talus slope to meet the Bruce Trail. Follow the Bruce Trail to the left (south/west) to complete your journey. The pathway follows the top of the bluff before dropping onto a spectacular cliff ledge that continues for hundreds of metres to the west. The shelf is a rare chance to hike literally along the cliff face. A tired hiker can find an excellent area to rest on some boulders at a scenic lookout near a donor plaque. From here, you will descend the Escarpment. Keep your eyes open for the Don Richards Side Trail on your left, which will take you back to your vehicle.

Code Clue: High on Kemble Rock near a plaque is a tree that temporarily forgot which

way was up. Find the tree, and you will find what you seek.

38. Kemble Wetland Loop – 2.6 KM

The second path leaving the Don Richard Side Trail is the Kemble Wetland Side Trail. To create a loop, turn left and follow this blue path through a mixed hardwood forest. After the trail emerges from the forest, the footpath crosses a meadow before entering a hawthorn thicket. Eventually, the track reaches a mature hardwood forest where you will find a large fallen tree through which we had to cut a hole to accommodate the path. The blue blazes end at the Bruce Trail. To complete your loop, turn right and follow the Bruce Trail north. The pathway will momentarily leave the woods at a spectacular clearing at the edge of an enormous wetland. The view is

nothing less than breathtaking. You will find an interpretive plaque detailing information about the waterfowl you will find living in this marshland. Spend some time here to appreciate the beauty of this majestic natural wonderland.

Complete your hike by following the Bruce Trail north and then east, passing the Cedar Point Side Trail and the Birch Camp Side Trail, where you will turn south and then east. Upon reaching the Don Richards Side Trail, you will turn south again and follow that blue-blazed path back to your starting point.

Code Clue: Look for a scenic lookout near an interpretive sign. Now would be a good time to rest. You will find an excellent seat provided by the beavers within 14 paces. Perhaps your rest will help in locating what you seek.





▲ After being dropped off by the glacier 10,000 years ago, this erratic boulder split along its fracture lines. Water penetration, along with freezing and expansion, caused it to crack. You can find it on the Cedar Point Side Trail.



▲ Kemble Wetland Nature Reserve is owned and cared for by Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) as part of its mission to preserve a “ribbon of wilderness” along and near the Niagara Escarpment. BTC purchased the property in 2017 with funds from Bruce Power and many private donors. BTC owns about 1/3 of the marsh area. The rest is privately owned.



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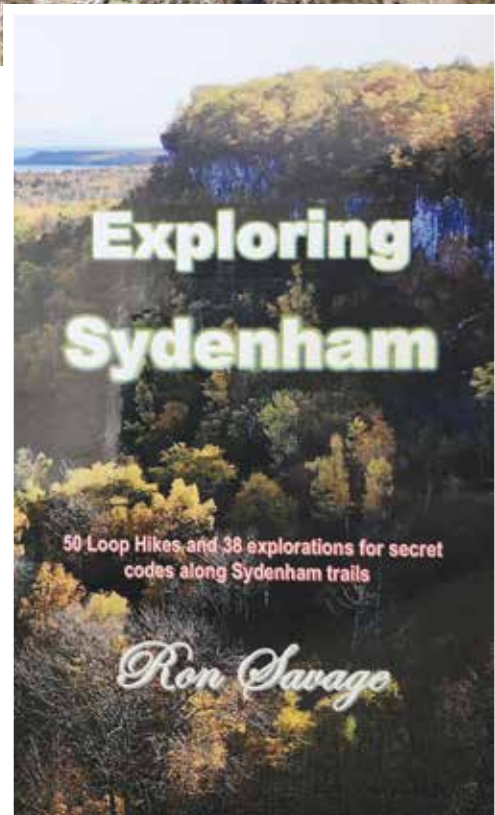
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▲ The Cedar Point Side Trail lures visitors to two scenic lookouts over the immense wetland.



39. Cedar Point Loop – 850 Metres

Cedar Point Side Trail heads west down what used to be a laneway connecting the Hurlbut's home and the marshland. The lane has now filled in with hawthorns. A few steps along the side trail, you will pass the ruins of the settler's barn. All that is left is the earthen ramp that gave access to the upper portion of the barn. As the path enters the cedar forest, it divides into a loop. We suggest continuing straight ahead and exploring the loop in a clockwise direction.

The pathway continues through the cedar forest before entering a clearing by the marshland. A split boulder and some logs provide a delightful resting place. During

the spring and summer, the air fills with the haunting sound of several families of Sandhill Cranes. This spot is an excellent location to observe these waterfowl and others who call Kemble Wetland their home. Continue your hike along the path to the north, skirting along the edge of the marshland. After one last scenic lookout over the marsh, the trail turns east and rejoins the pathway you came in on.

Code Clue: Enjoy the peaceful scenery of the north lookout. Twenty-five paces to the south are seven soldiers stumbling back to their barracks after a night in a bar. One of them is holding what you seek. **NEV**



▲ Author Ron Savage points out that not only did he have to research and write the book, he also had to create many of the paths he wrote about.

Ron Savage is trail director of the Sydenham Bruce Trail Club. He and his wife Pat live in Owen Sound, close to the Escarpment and the Bruce Trail. Exploring Sydenham can be bought at The Ginger Press, Coles in Owen Sound, Rockford Restaurant, Grey Roots Museum and the

Bruce Trail Conservancy. Ron will also ship books directly to a customer. Ron's previously published books are Silent Valley and Sydenham End To End. All proceeds from the sales of Ron's books are being donated to BTC for further land acquisition.

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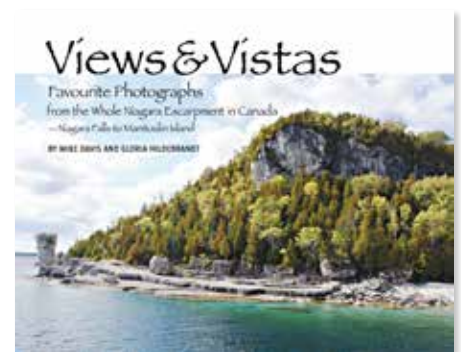
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