

# Earth Day: Nature Walk in Riverwood Park

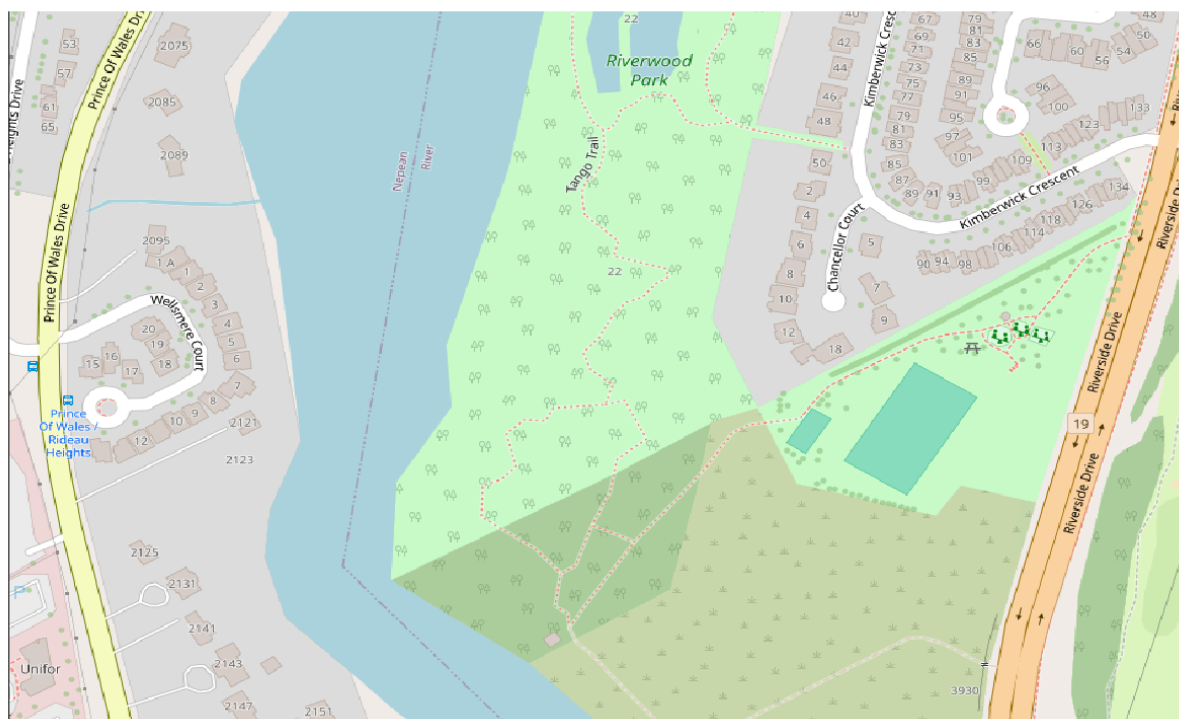
## Introduction

On April 21, 2024, Earth Day weekend, the HCCA co-sponsored a nature walk in Riverwood Park with the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club.

Some 40 field naturalists and local residents took part in the walk, which introduced us to a wide range of spring wildflowers and distinctive trees. Our guide was the amazing Owen Clarkin, a vice-president of the OFNC and an expert on trees of the Ottawa Valley.

Few local naturalists are aware of Riverwood Park. It is a small but high-value forest located between the Rideau River and the Quinterra-Riverwood neighbourhood. Along with McCarthy Woods, it is one of only two significant woodlands in the Hunt Club community.

Figure 1. Map of Riverwood Park (centre)



## The route of the ramble

Our walk began at the trailhead on Kimberwick Crescent. Since the trail leading from the stormwater pond was flooded, we all trooped up to Riverside Drive and back down again through Uplands-Riverside Park.

This route had the benefit of introducing us to an endangered Butternut tree which is unusually large and healthy, but is at risk of removal to make way for a proposed recreational pathway through the woods.

We then proceeded to the pump house by the river, rambled through the pine forest, and inspected a rusting 1968 Oldsmobile which had been deposited in the middle of the woods long ago.

*Figure 2. Old-growth Oldsmobile*





After lunch, we were down to about twenty participants. We paused for a group photo with a venerable Yellow Birch which, at 250+ years, is the oldest in Ottawa (*see below*). The nearby Peachleaf Willow is estimated to be the oldest and largest in North America – and, therefore, the world!

*Figure 3. The oldest Yellow Birch in Ottawa*





## The highlights of the walk

Owen and his OFNC colleagues identified two areas of special significance in these woods. One is the area around the Butternut tree, the Yellow Birch grove, and the Peachleaf Willow. The other is a small section of the park, away from the proposed pathway, which contains an unusually fine collection of Cedars, Hemlock, and Beech.

Among other highlights of the walk, we spotted the first Eastern Red-Backed Salamander of the season under a log in the Cedar swamp. We also admired a Slippery Elm in the pine forest, spotted a Double-Crested Cormorant on the river, and examined numerous spring wildflowers (including Trout Lilies, Red Elderberry, and both Red and White Trilliums).

*Figure 4. Eastern Red-Backed Salamander*



## **Conclusion**

Our primary goal was to raise awareness of Riverwood Park and we appear to have achieved that goal. The HCCA is grateful to the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club for co-hosting this walk and has made a donation to the OFNC in recognition of Owen's efforts. We look forward to further collaboration with the Club in promoting the conservation of Riverwood Park.