

Natural Heritage

The story of this island community begins with the land itself. Some 500 million years ago, during the Ordovician period of the Palaeozoic era, this area was inundated, and creatures living at the time became fossils as the limestone which now underlies much of the island was formed. About a million years ago, glaciers ground over the county and modified the surface of both the island and the shoreline. Sand deposited in areas resulted in the formation of the Sandbanks, deposits of glacial till introduced new soil types but also the boulders that make farming more interesting and landscaping options more varied. Streams flowing under the glaciers formed eskers, which are sources of gravel as well as holding basins for water retention.

These geological events provided the setting for the gradual evolution of the island to the way it is today, with areas of deep rich soils, unused or pasture lands on high limestone bedrock, and extensive swamp and marsh ecosystems.

The combination of these features with its location in Lake Ontario has resulted in The County being blessed with some rather unusual natural features and events:

- * Lake on the Mountain...geological anomaly similar to Roblin Lake...the water is nearly 200 feet above the lake that is only a short distance away.

- * Sandbanks Provincial Park...geological phenomena...the largest baymouth sandbar separating freshwater in the world.

- * Point Petrie and Long Point/Point Traverse...ecological interest...migrating birds crossing Lake Ontario use these staging points in numbers and varieties (334 species) almost equaling those of Long Point and Point Pelee on Lake Erie, the latter boasting 365 species.

- * Precambrian inlier, Ameliasburg vicinity...geological anomaly...a unique 13 acre area of precambrian rock protruding through a setting of much younger limestone.

- * Mature maple grove above Black River along County Road #13...the canopy of Grimmon's Woods creates a unique linkage between a high limestone ridge and the Black River valley.

- * Albury swamp heronry...ecological site...one of several major heronries on the island, the nesting sites for the majestic blue heron. Snakes (water and garter) abound, as do bull frogs. Other wildlife common to The County include deer, otter, coyotes, muskrat, turkey, grouse and fox.

- * Little Bluff Conservation Area...illustrative of the high limestone cliffs common in The County, the pebble beach with the marsh behind provides a view of the cliffs and habitat for a wide variety of birds.