

COOTES PARADISE SANCTUARY, ONTARIO



Photo: Royal Botanical Gardens

PROTECTED AREA

Located within the Traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat Nations, on land covered by a Treaty between the Mississaugas and the Credit First Nation and the Crown, the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) is a large botanical garden and complex of nature sanctuaries spanning 1,100ha. It also contains a little piece of paradise.

Botanical gardens are dedicated to the collection, preservation, and display of a wide range of plants and natural features. Located where the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario intersect, RBG was incorporated through a special provincial Act in 1941 and is part of the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere Region, and RBG is a National Historic Site of Canada.

Included in the RBG property is Cootes Paradise Sanctuary, which is designated as a Provincially Significant Wetland, a City of Hamilton Environmentally Significant Area, and an Important Amphibian and Reptile Area. Managed by RBG as a nature sanctuary, Cootes Paradise Sanctuary is a privately protected area home to numerous Species at Risk and other species of

concern. It serves as a significant stopover for migratory birds and includes southern forest trees such as Sassafras, Oaks, and Hickories, as well as northern species like Hemlock, Beech, and White Cedar. Located within the Hamilton Harbour Great Lakes Area of Concern, its restoration is critical to the ecological future of the harbour. Significantly degraded over the past century, RBG has been restoring the wetland for many years, including reducing invasive common carp, removing invasive species within the sanctuary's forests, and restoring areas of prairie and savanna. While lots of progress has been made, much remains to be done to see the marsh return as a healthy, thriving ecosystem.

The Cootes Paradise Sanctuary also provides benefits to people. The wetland helps to reduce flooding and is a major fish spawning habitat. Visitors are welcome to use the sanctuary's low-intensity hiking system that includes a trail interpreting Anishinaabe cultural uses of native plants. In cold winters, skating on the frozen shallow wetland is also a highlight.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE COOTES PARADISE SANCTUARY IS A PROTECTED AREA?



Does the property have a defined geographical space?

Yes! The boundaries of the Cootes Paradise Sanctuary are well identified and can be accurately placed on a map.



Is there an effective way of ensuring that biodiversity will continue to be conserved into the future?

Yes! There are several layers of protection for the Cootes Paradise Sanctuary, including Provincial Acts, designations, and policy statements, as well as guidelines in municipal plans. These require that the RBG exclude or manage all activities on the site that could negatively impact biodiversity.



Is there an expectation that the biodiversity on the site will be conserved for the long term?

Yes! The site has existed as a nature sanctuary for several decades, and the designations and ownership of the site all help ensure this area will remain protected year-round for many decades to come.



Is biodiversity conservation the primary objective of the area?

Yes! Management objectives for Cootes Paradise Sanctuary focus on environmental protection and education, including the need to maintain their nature preserves as well as living collections of plants and animals.

Quick tip

If this answer was "no" for the Cootes Paradise Sanctuary it would likely be assessed as an Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measure, or OECM. Both types of areas are important and both achieve biodiversity conservation.



Is biodiversity on the site conserved?

Yes! Considered a biodiversity hotspot, biodiversity conservation at Cootes Paradise Sanctuary has been effective. The RBG has a number of biological monitoring programs which show that the biodiversity in the sanctuary is typically stable or improving.