

# Foster-Blake Woods Preserve and Nature Trail

# Formed by the Power of Ice and Water

Foster-Blake Woods Preserve and Trail Brochure  
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All Illustrations by Robert McNamara of The Art of Wilderness

Foster-Blake Woods Preserve is named for two Clayton men who were committed to conservation of the Thousand Islands region and were outstanding stewards of the land.



## How were the St. Lawrence River and the Thousand Islands formed?

As planet Earth formed, powerful forces manipulated rocks and minerals into layers that were heated, cooled and put under great pressure. Of all the forces at work, perhaps the most powerful was water in its liquid and frozen forms. It continues its work today: scouring, scraping, and washing away rock and soil. What will this River look like in another 10,000 years?

### Sculpting

Ice movement sculpted the islands, sliding up the downstream side of the islands while "plucking" rocks from the upstream side, and carrying them along. Rocks and gravel embedded in the bottom of the glacier acted like sandpaper, continuing to shape the land below.



### Glacial Erratics

Have you noticed large boulders in the woods that look out of place? They are called glacial erratics, and were carried here by the advancing glacier. When the ice melted, they were left behind.



Directions to the Preserve: From the intersection of Rt. 12 and Rt. 12E in Clayton, head west on Rt. 12E toward Cape Vincent for 3.7 miles. The parking area is on the right (river side), opposite Pelo Road.



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The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT)

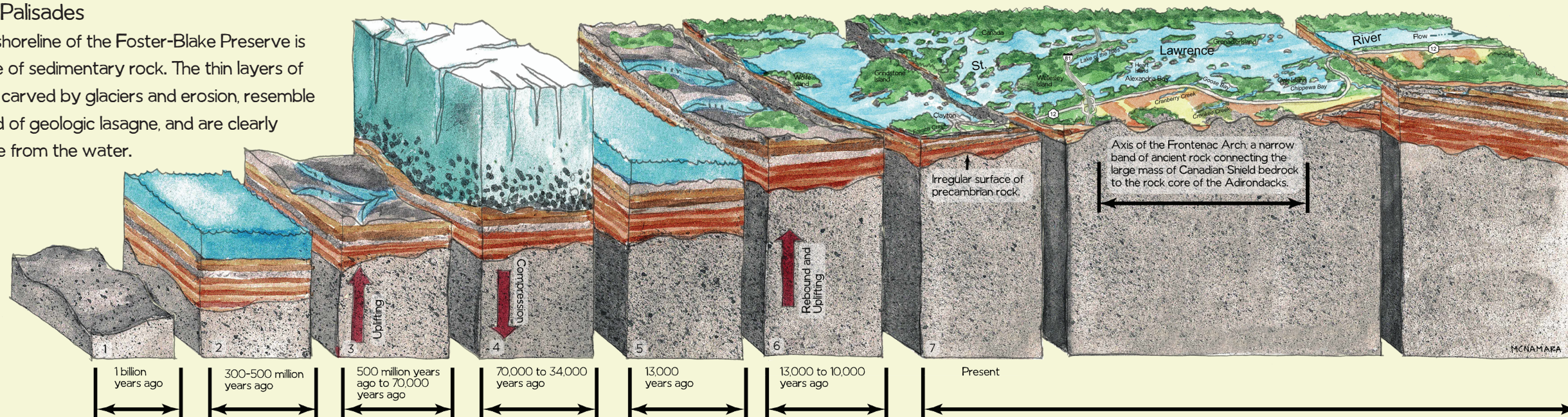
FOSTER-BLAKE WOODS PRESERVE TRAIL GUIDE



## THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ONE BILLION YEARS AGO TO TODAY

### The Palisades

This shoreline of the Foster-Blake Preserve is made of sedimentary rock. The thin layers of rock, carved by glaciers and erosion, resemble a kind of geologic lasagne, and are clearly visible from the water.



- 1 billion years ago**  
The Precambrian gneiss rocks are the roots of an ancient mountain system.
- 300-500 million years ago**  
The overlying sandstones and limestone/dolostones are sedimentary rocks formed from deposits in an ancient sea.
- 500 million years ago to 70,000 years ago**  
Millions of years of erosion and deposition sculpted the uplifting landscape, creating a drainageway to the Atlantic Ocean, following a depression through the St. Lawrence lowlands. Dinosaurs roamed the Earth during this period.
- 70,000 to 34,000 years ago**  
Several episodes of glacial advancement along the axis of the drainageway scoured the surface rock, deepening the channel, plucking rocks from the upstream sides of the islands and leaving a blanket of glacial debris.
- 13,000 years ago**  
Alternating glacial flooding and ocean flooding episodes resulted in a complex pattern of alluvial beds and fossil bearing marine deposits. When the most recent glacial ice melted, the river basin was flooded by seawater from the Atlantic Ocean.
- 13,000 to 10,000 years ago**  
Once the ice burden was gone, the rock layers rebounded. That, along with continuing uplifting of the Precambrian bedrock, drained the seawater back to the ocean. Plant life became established, followed by animals like the woolly mammoth.
- Present**  
The Thousand Islands of today are the scoured tops of the 'bumps' in the uplifting Frontenac Arch in the Wellesley Island area and eroded remnants of uplifted and tilted sedimentary beds both upstream and downstream.

Once covered by a sheet of ice over one mile thick, the St. Lawrence River Valley's underlying bedrock was resistant to the erosion of the glacial retreat about 13,000 years ago. Today the region is defined by rolling forests, meandering streams, vibrant wetlands and stunning outcrops.

The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) is...

*Working to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations!*



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The Foster-Blake Woods Trail is a .75 mile looped trail that winds through 9.4 acres of shrubland and forest land along the shores of the St. Lawrence in an area called the Palisades, because of its high bluffs and rugged geology.

### Mature Northern Forest

With species like Sugar Maple, American Beech, White Pine and Eastern Hemlock, the mature northern forest typically has regrown from early timbering or agriculture. It is renowned for beautiful fall color. With its downed woody debris adding complexity to the

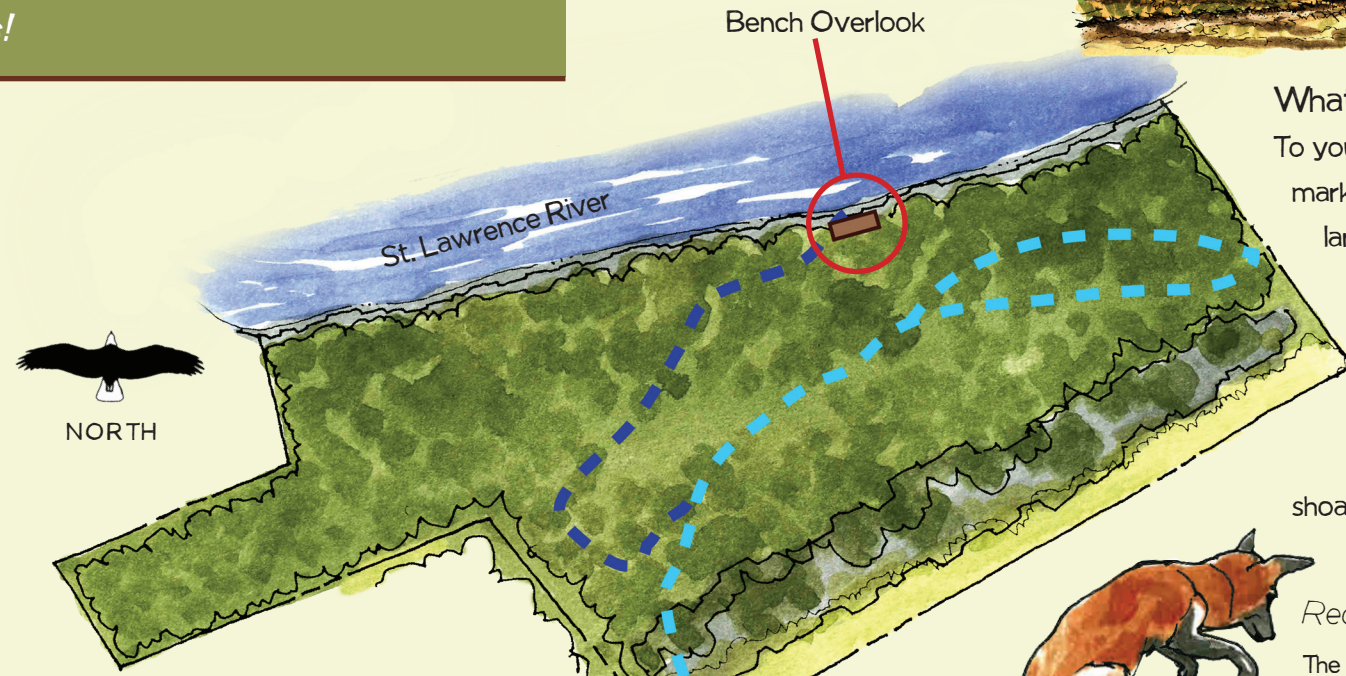
forest floor, it is an inviting passage for wildlife that move along the River banks.

### Geology & Topography

The Thousand Islands lie in a region called the Frontenac Arch, a unique formation of ancient rock that ties together the Canadian Shield and the Adirondack Mountains. It is overlain by newer sedimentary rock. Uplifting raised the older rock bed. The sedimentary rock eroded, and exposed the older granites which form the islands and many other features in this region. This varied topography results in a remarkably wide array of biodiversity.

The Frontenac Arch has become a highway for flora and fauna that migrate between the habitats of the Canadian Shield and the Adirondacks called the "A2A", the Algonquin to Adirondack Wildlife Corridor. The Preserve lies on the western edge of the A2A.

All Illustrations by Robert McNamara of The Art of Wilderness



NORTH

- Woods Trail
- Bench Overlook Trail



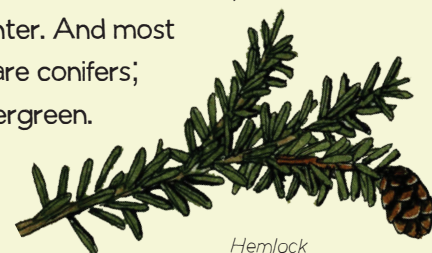
Sugar Maple

### Hardwood vs. Softwood

Although hardwoods tend to be denser than softwoods, it is not the density of the wood that determines a hardwood vs. a softwood tree. Instead it is how the tree reproduces.

Hardwood trees, like Sugar Maple, produce seeds with a covering like a nut or a fruit. Softwood trees, like Hemlock, produce a simple seed, often in a cone, that can fall on the ground and sprout.

Most hardwoods are deciduous; they lose their leaves in winter. And most softwoods are conifers; they are evergreen.



Hemlock



Pileated Woodpecker

Pileated (pill-ee-ated) Woodpeckers drill unique rectangular holes in search of their favorite food, carpenter ants. Many other species use their holes for nesting and shelter. Think of woodpeckers as "first responders" for trees. They are showing us that a tree has insects in it. Some of those insects may be threatening the life of the tree, but many do not. Generally, the woodpeckers are not killing the tree when they peck on it.



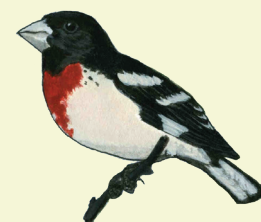
Red Fox

The Red Fox isn't always red. They are sometimes silver, or black, but red is most common. They can hear a rodent digging far underground and can see better than humans do. Fox live in a den where they raise a litter of 4 to 5 pups.



Gray Catbird

Gray Catbirds hang out in thickets and shrubland like the edges of the Foster-Blake Woods. Keep your ears open; they are very vocal with a call that sounds like a meowing cat.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

The Rose-Breasted Grosbeak nests in mixed forest like the Foster-Blake Woods. In the summer, they live high in the trees. It is easier to hear its lovely whistled song than see it. During nesting, both the male and female will incubate the eggs.



Ruffed Grouse

This common grouse walks quietly on the forest floor blending in to its surroundings. In the spring woods, you can hear the male drumming. Its drum beat can be imitated by thumping your chest. During the winter, Ruffed Grouse burrow into the snow using it for insulation.

### What do you see from the bench?

To your left, a red-roofed former lighthouse marks the foot of the Canadian Wolfe Island, the largest island in the River. The farthest shore you see is Howe Island, another Canadian Island. Both Wolfe and Howe have year-round communities on them and are accessible by ferry. Straight ahead, beyond several smaller islands and shoals, is the head of Grindstone Island, which is entirely in the United States.

NYS Rt. 12E Parking & Trailhead



Preserve Rules: Preserve open sunrise to sunset • Stay on trail • No motorized vehicles

• No camping, dumping, fires, or collecting flora & fauna • Keep pets on a leash • No hunting or trapping



Donate today!

The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization created in 1985 to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations!

TILT is supported by donations from people who care about the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River. Our conservation work is only possible through the generosity of our supporters.

Donations of land, conservation easements, and financial resources to TILT are tax deductible under provisions of the Internal Revenue code. To find out more about donating land, creating a conservation easement, or including TILT in your will, please call us at 315-686-5345.