



# 3. STUDENT INFORMATION CARD: GREENBELT

The National Capital Greenbelt comprises 20,000 hectares of green space, including farms, forests, and wetlands. It was created in the 1950s to protect the rural land bordering the capital from urban sprawl. It has since become the largest publicly owned greenbelt in the world. Most of the Greenbelt (14,950 hectares) is owned by the NCC.

The Greenbelt protects natural areas like forests, wetlands, streams, and sand dunes that sustain biodiversity. The natural areas in the Greenbelt support human and ecological health in the National Capital Region.

## Visiting the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt is a horseshoe-shaped green space stretching from west to east, curving south of Ottawa's urban core, with both extremities on the shores of the Ottawa River. The Greenbelt is divided into six main sectors, each with unique land features.

- **Mer Bleue**

Located in the southeastern sector of the National Capital Greenbelt, the 3,500-hectare Mer Bleue conservation area provides a unique opportunity to see a northern boreal landscape. The Mer Bleue Bog is approximately 7,700 years old, and is a habitat for many species of regionally and significantly rare plants, birds and other wildlife.



- **Green's Creek**

The steep, forested slopes of Green's Creek and the narrow, clay-based flood plain provide an important wildlife corridor. This corridor extends south from the Ottawa River to inland habitats, and crosses developed agricultural and urban lands. The creek also supports a wide variety of provincially and regionally rare species, including probably the largest Canadian population of the rare cattail sedge.



- **Pine Grove**

Located in the south end of Ottawa, Pine Grove is the largest forest in the greenbelt and is a mixture of tree plantations and natural forests. The red pine plantation from the 1950s today attracts red-breasted nuthatches, pine warblers, and pine siskins. The poorly drained area at the centre of the trail loop has a wetland with marsh plants, which attracts beavers and muskrats.



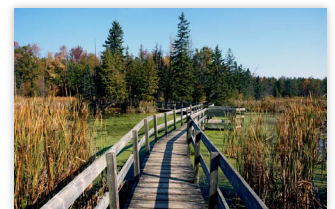
- **Southern Farm and Pinhey Forest**

Located in the southwest end of Ottawa, the Southern Farm and Pinhey Forest sector of the greenbelt boasts the largest parcels of quality farmland in Canada's Capital Region. The forest has 6.4 kilometres of nature trails open year-round. It is also an important conservation area which has a unique natural feature: Ottawa's only inland sand dune complex.



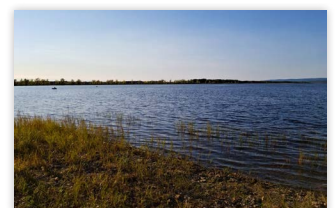
- **Stony Swamp**

Located in the southwest end of Ottawa, Stony Swamp features a network of beaver ponds, wetlands and forests, and is the most ecologically diverse protected area in the Ottawa Valley. The Stony Swamp sector has more trails than any other area of the greenbelt – more than 40 kilometres.



- **Shirleys Bay**

Located at the western edge of Ottawa's Greenbelt, Shirleys Bay is an internationally significant conservation area on the Ottawa River. The natural wetland features along the shore, as well as the inland wetlands, provide many benefits, including improved water quality and thriving wildlife habitats.



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