

# HIKING IN SOUTH EASTERN ONTARIO

## SPRING EDITION

Below are some of the most common species you might find when hiking in South Eastern Ontario in the spring (in no particular order) and how you might go about identifying them.



### Sugar Maple

*Acer saccharum*

The Sugar maple is a large deciduous tree that can grow up to 35 metres tall and can live for more than 200 years. Its yellowish-green leaves are 8 to 20 cm long, and have five lobes. The shape of the leaf is well known – it's found on the Canadian flag. These trees prefer deep, fertile, moist, well-drained soils with some lime content and can be found all across the Canadian Shield.



### American Robin

*Turdus migratorius*

The largest thrush in North America, American Robins can be found running across lawns or stalking earthworms in your yard or a nearby park. Adult American robins have grey-brown backs, characteristic reddish breasts, white bellies, white chins, yellow bills and throats with dark streaks. Males are not only more vocal than females, but also slightly larger and more brightly coloured. Juveniles have dark speckles on their backs and on their cinnamon-coloured breasts.



### Dandelion

*Taraxacum officinale*

These common perennial plants can be found on lawns, garden beds, and roadsides. Dandelion leaves don't have stalks and grow in a basal rosette (in a circle at the base of the plant). They can grow from 3 to 12 in long with irregular teeth that have considerable variability from leaf to leaf. Flower stems also grow directly from the base of the plant. Each yellow flower blooms atop a hollow stem that has a milky sap. They open on sunny days and close when the sky darkens. Seed heads resemble perfectly rounded fluff balls bearing small brown seeds at the centre.



### Eastern Smooth Green Snake

*Opheodrys vernalis*

Often called Grass Snakes, Smooth Green Snakes, as their name implies, are an emerald green colour with a white or yellow underside. This small- to medium-sized snake has smooth scales and ranges in size from 30 to 60 cm. They are often found in grassy areas such as meadows, pastures, abandoned farmland, woodland edges, city parks, lawns and gardens.



### Mourning Cloak Butterfly

*Nymphalis antiopa*

One of the most widely distributed butterfly species in South Eastern Ontario. As caterpillars, they are black with tiny white dots and black-branched spines, and a row of red marks on its back between the bases of these spines. As adults, the upper wings of the Mourning Cloak Butterfly are red-brown with a thick yellow border along the edge. On the inside edge of this border are bright blue elongated spots. The underside of their wings are dark with thin irregular lines. The border is duller than the upper side and the blue spots are more V shaped. Their wingspan can range from 5 to 10 cm.



### White-tailed Deer

*Odocoileus virginianus*

The only deer species in South Eastern Ontario, the White-tailed Deer is best known for its characteristic white underside to its tail, which it raises when it is alarmed. Its coat is a reddish-brown in the spring and they have a white ring around the eye, white band around the nose, white throat, white belly, and bucks have antlers. Though they vary in size, adult males weigh between 150 to 300 lbs whereas adult females weigh 88 to 198 lbs, on average.



### Eastern Red Columbine

*Aquilegia canadensis*

This non-woody plant, also commonly known as Canadian Columbine, features nodding, 2 to 5 cm wide, long-spurred flowers with scarlet sepals, pale yellow petals, and bushy stamens. They rise elegantly above the fern-like leaves, which are lobed and grouped in threes. They are often found in rocky woods and open areas such as woodland edges, in shallow dry soil and full sun.



### Northern Leopard Frog

*Lithobates pipiens*

This common frog is green or brown with dark, rounded, light-edged random spots, and a white belly that occasionally has a yellowish tinge. A pair of dorsolateral folds, lighter in colour, starting from the back of the eye runs parallel to each other down the back. Adults are, on average, between 5 to 9 cm long. They ordinarily live near ponds and marshes, but will sometimes venture into well-covered grasslands.



### Eastern Cottontail

*Sylvilagus floridanus*

Known to many as the familiar 'bunny rabbit', the Eastern Cottontail is chunky, red-brown or gray-brown in appearance, with large hind feet, long ears, and a short, fluffy white tail. They range in size between 36 to 28 cm and weigh, on average, 1.8 to 4.4 lbs, with the female being heavier than the male. They can most often be found in meadows and shrubby areas.



### Staghorn Sumac

*Rhus typhina*

This large shrub has compound leaves (each leaf is composed of several leaflets), which hang down and have serrations (teeth) along the edges. The thick branches are hairy and resemble the velvety antlers of a male deer (stag), hence the common name of "staghorn." Clusters of small greenish flowers form an upright cone that yields crimson red berries covered in fine hairs. They generally grow in open spaces such as roadsides, forest edges, and clearings.