Dog Paddling

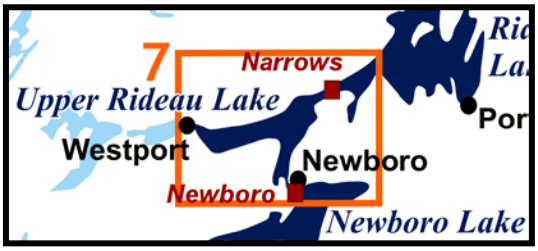
Rideau Paddling Guide 7
Newboro Lock to Narrows Lock

(Upper Rideau Lake)

Rideau Canal National Historic Site and World Heritage Site, Ontario, Canada

by

Ken W. Watson



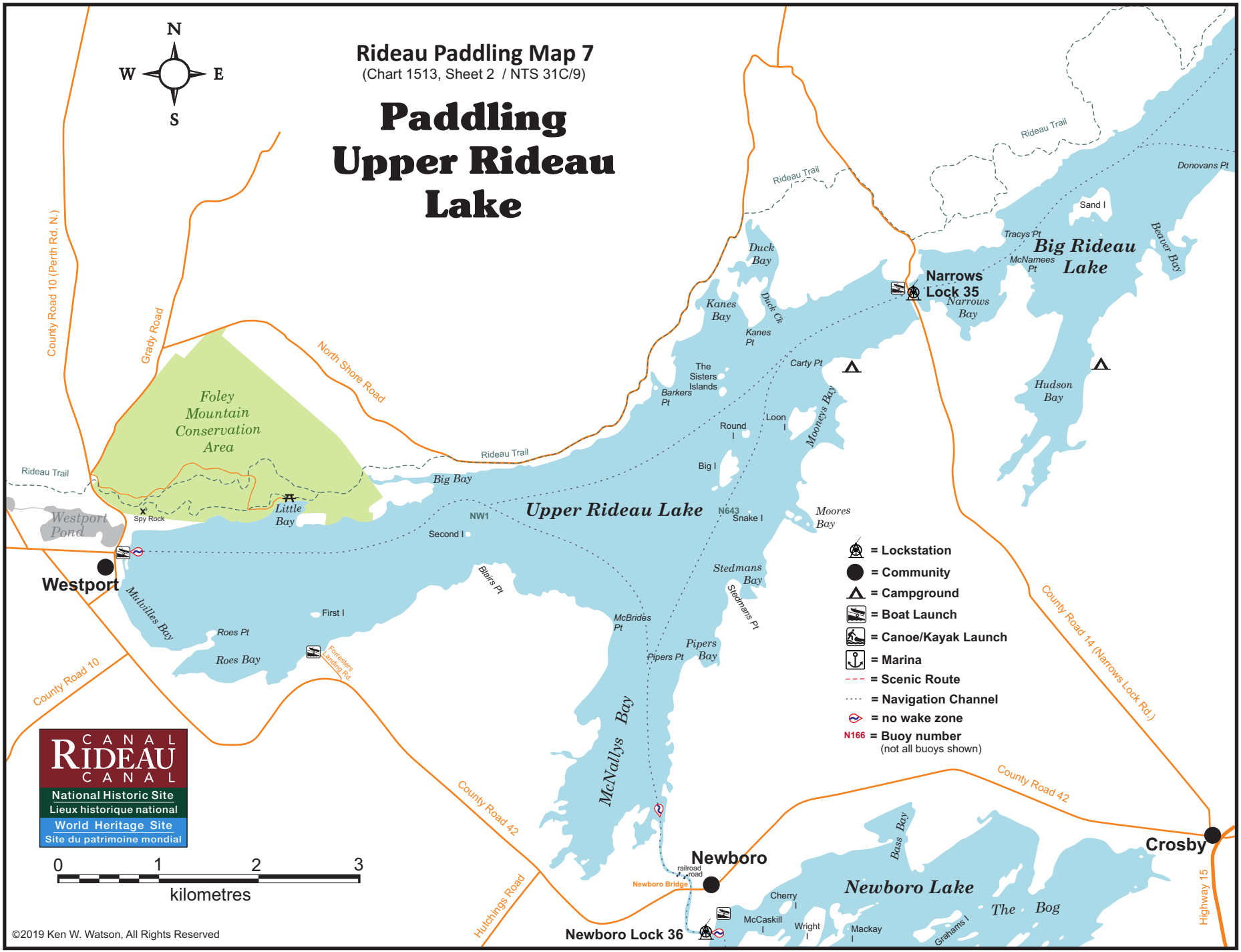
This is the area of Upper Rideau Lake, with Newboro Lock at the south end, Narrows Lock at the east end and the village of Westport at the west end. There is quite a bit of unsheltered open water, so paddlers, particularly canoeists, should ensure that they do a weather check to make sure the winds are light prior to heading out.

No specific route descriptions have been given for paddling the lake - you should explore it on your own. The detailed map in this guide (which can be enlarged while viewing the PDF to any level of detail you desire) will allow for travel planning.

Water Access

Upper Rideau Lake: The are four points of access to the lake; Newboro Lock, Narrows Lock, Forrester's Landing ramp and the public ramp in Westport. The first three offer the easiest access (lots of parking + access)

At **Newboro Lock**, there is a bit of a portage from the public parking area (a day fee for parking applies) to the docks above the lock. However, with the lockmaster's permission, you can bring your vehicle to near the docks via Lock Road and then after unloading, park in the public parking area. At **Narrows Lock** there is lots of parking available and a small gravel ramp (44° 42.200'N - 76° 17.770'W) that provides access into the lake. At the end of **Forrester's Landing Drive** there is a gravel ramp (44° 40.240'N - 76° 26.160'W) maintained by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority. In **Westport**, there is a public ramp at the foot of Bedford Street (44° 40.780'N - 76° 23.640'W). Parking in Westport during the summer can be problematic.



Facilities

Lodging: If you're paddling and camping, the lockstations are a good choice for camp spots (a camping fee applies). There are also a few campgrounds, many B&Bs and hotels (in both Westport and Newboro). For information about local accommodations see: www.westportrideaulakes.on.ca, www.rideau-info.com/canal/ and general lodging sites (i.e. Airbnb, bbcanada, TripAdvisor).

Supplies: Local sources for supplies are the villages of Elgin (off Hwy. 15 opposite Davis Lock Road - grocery, pharmacy and hardware) and Westport (grocery). Some limited supplies can be obtained from Kilborn's in Newboro.

Big Boats

You'll be sharing the Rideau with big power boats (cruisers). The Rideau is generally not a crowded waterway and often you'll find the large boats in "packs" - travelling from lock to lock - once they pass by you won't see any for awhile. Some of these boats can generate a large wave. The general rule for a paddler and large waves is to meet them head on, this can actually be fun in a kayak (not as much fun in a canoe).

The main navigation channel is shown on the map as a blue dashed line - this is where the big boats will be travelling. So, if you wish to avoid these, pick a route away from the navigation channel. Many paddlers prefer paddling near shore, it's more interesting (i.e. wildlife, cottages) and it keeps you farther away from the waves produced by big boats.

There are several "no wake" zones on the Rideau - these have been marked on the maps. Boaters within these areas are supposed to be travelling at a slow enough speed (less than 10 kph) that their boat doesn't generate any potentially damaging or dangerous waves. .

Wind

A question often asked is which way does the wind blow? The prevailing wind, powered by the jet stream, is from the southwest. That's about the only rule of thumb. If a front is moving in then the wind can come from any direction. I've been on several paddles where I've been paddling into the wind on the way out in the morning and into the wind on the way back in the afternoon because the wind swung around 180 degrees (for some reason it never seems to work the other way around - at your back both ways). So, if you're going to travel the entire Rideau, going from Kingston to Ottawa improves the odds of having the wind at your back - but be prepared for anything.

Etiquette

Your trip planning should include a "leave no trace" approach - carry out what you carry in. Many areas are un-serviced (no garbage cans) – so plan to be self-contained. The lockstations provide waste disposal facilities.

Preparation & Safety

Please read the trip planning information on www.rideau-info.com/canal/paddling/. While these lakes are easy paddling, normal paddling preparations should be made (all required safety gear, maps, food, water, first-aid kit, etc.). Zebra mussels are present in many areas along the Rideau, so a pair of water shoes (to avoid cut feet) is recommended.

Please take all normal safety precautions, including checking the weather forecast before you head out and making sure that someone on shore knows your planned travel route and itinerary

Navigation

While the Rideau is generally easy to navigate, taking along a set of maps is a must (in addition to any GPS you might have). Although the map in this guide is an accurate 1:50,000 representation of the waterway (when printed to 8.5" x 11"), you may also wish to also have the 1:20,000 hydrographic chart for this section (Chart 1513). For power boat navigation, the charts are an absolute must (the map in this guide should not be used for power boat navigation). The charts are also very handy for the paddler, since they show the Rideau in great detail, including depths (which can be helpful when looking for wildlife habitat or just interesting places to paddle).

The charts also show all the navigation buoys. These are all numbered (red buoys have even numbers, green buoys have odd numbers) and so can be used as an aid in locating yourself on the map when you're on open water. A subset of those buoy numbers have been included on the paddling guide maps.

For those wishing to go off the beaten path or want to know more of the topography and geographic features of the surrounding countryside, the 1:50,000 NTS map for this section is 31C/9.

The Locks

Most Rideau lockstations offer facilities such as washrooms, water, recycling cans, waste cans and picnic tables. Most also allow camping for paddlers travelling the Rideau for a modest camping fee. Paddlers can portage the locks for free, but you owe it to yourself to lock through at least one lock in order to get the full experience of paddling the Rideau Canal. See www.rideau-info.com/canal/ for the current fee schedule.

Distances:

Circumference distances are approximate, following the main shorelines & bays. The navigation channel is shown on the map.

- Newboro to Narrows along the navigation channel = 8.4 km (5.2 mi)
- Newboro to Westport along the navigation channel = 9.2 km (5.7 mi)
- Westport to Narrows along the navigation channel = 8.4 km (5.2 mi)
- Upper Rideau Lake Circumference: = 34 km (21 mi)

The Lakes

Upper Rideau Lake

In the pre-canal era this was the west end of a large single Rideau Lake. The dam and lock at Narrows (a narrow constriction in the original lake) raised the water in this area by about 8 feet (2.5 m). The lake has a maximum depth of 76 feet (23 m) with an average depth in the main part of the lake of about 40 feet (12 m). The west end of the lake is shallower with an average depth of about 18 feet (5.5 m).

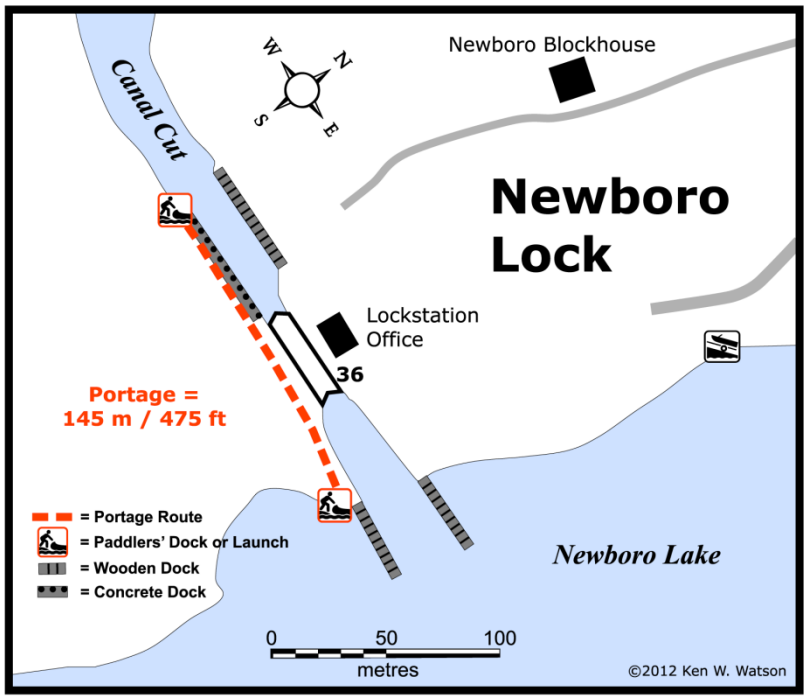
The north side of the lake features a large exposure of syenite and monzonite (types of granite: the Westport Pluton) and much of the northern shoreline marks the trace of the Rideau Lake Fault.

The land bordering the lake is mostly privately owned (the exceptions being federal land in the vicinity of the locks and the Foley Mountain Conservation Area). Most of the lake has moderate density cottage and summer home development.

Upper Rideau Lake is part of the Rideau River watershed. While it is the highest lake on the Rideau Canal, 99.9% of its flow goes north to the Rideau River. There is no south flow to the Cataraqui River, the only contribution to that watershed is the small amount of water that gets locked through at Newboro (there is no weir at Newboro). Some incorrectly assume that since Upper Rideau Lake is the highest spot on the Rideau Canal, that it must contribute water to both "sides" of the Rideau. That assumption is incorrect.

Points of Interest (listed south to north)

Newboro Lock: The lockstation here has a single lock (lift of 2.6 m / 8.7 ft). It is located on "The Isthmus," the watershed divide between the Rideau River watershed to the north and the Gananoque/Cataraqui watershed to the south. In the pre-canal era, a 2,400 m (2,600 yd) portage connected Rideau Lake with Newboro Lake. The original intention for the canal was to simply excavate an open cut between the two lakes. But the water couldn't be sufficiently raised at Chaffeys so Colonel



By decided to put in a lock here at Newboro. In the end, with many difficulties, a lock and an excavated channel leading to Upper Rideau Lake were completed. At the lockstation you'll find a blockhouse, built in 1832, one of only four built along the Rideau. The lock was converted to electrical operation in 1966.

An interesting feature of this lock and also of Narrows Lock is that both were built without breastworks (an upper foundation). Colonel By didn't intend for these locks to be permanent, he thought that when conditions and technology permitted, his original plan, of simply having the isthmus at Newboro crossed by an open cut, with no locks here or at Narrows, could be implemented.

Newboro: Newboro features some excellent shopping opportunities for those who wish to exercise their credit cards.

This community had its roots with the building of the Rideau Canal. Originally it was just the portage route across the isthmus separating Rideau Lake from Mud (Newboro) Lake with no permanent settlement. A fair sized community grew during the building of the canal, but this was abandoned once the canal opened. It wasn't until about 1836 that Benjamin Tett built the first permanent home that was to form the nucleus of a new community, known as New Borough. He also became the first postmaster for the village, whose name was later shortened to Newboro'. It was officially incorporated as a village in 1876.

The village features lots of interesting history and a heritage walking tour brochure of Newboro is usually available in the village (and also on-line).

Royal Sappers and Miners Cemetery: For those willing to take a little hike, this cemetery, first used as a burial ground for workers who died during the construction of the canal at Newboro, is located on the north side of County Road 42, 300 m (1,000 ft) to the west of the bridge over the canal. If you're at the lock, a shortcut is to walk up the road on the south side of the lock (Fire Rd H1) to County Road 42. You'll find the cemetery about 140 m (450 ft) west of that point. The area around Fire Rd H1, near County Road 42, was the site of the main construction camp (1829-1831) for the building of the Newboro Lock.

There is a plaque commemorating the Royal Sappers and Miners (who worked to help build the Newboro lock and cut). A memorial notes that 13 of them are buried in this cemetery although the actual number is 12. The present name of the cemetery is misleading, the original name was the Military and Civilian Cemetery since civilian workers, along with some of their wives and children who died during construction of the canal, are also buried here. That cemetery saw continued use as a burial ground until the 1940s and had the name "Old Presbyterian Cemetery" for many years.

There is a myth that the soldiers and civilians were originally buried in unmarked graves. That is pure myth, funerals were held for everyone who died and their graves were marked with wooden markers (which have long since rotted away). Their graves often had field stones as footstones which were later incorrectly interpreted as the unmarked (no name) grave marker.

Newboro Cut: This is the channel extending from the Newboro Lock to Upper Rideau Lake. It was excavated through hard bedrock (migmatite) during the building of the Rideau Canal. If the original canal design for an open canal cut to link Newboro Lake with Rideau Lake had been implemented, there would now be a very long stretch of canal, from Chaffeys to Poonamalie, with no locks. In the end, due to problems with the hard bedrock of the Isthmus, disease and a survey error of the levels of the two lakes, a lock had to be put in at Newboro and another lock at Narrows in Rideau Lake (the full story is told in my book *Tales of the Rideau*). In the 1890s, the cut was deepened and also widened a bit in places. However most of the piles of rock that line the shores of the cut are the original rocks excavated during the building of the Rideau Canal. You'll also notice a few drill holes in the bedrock lining the cut. These

are most likely from the original excavation (hand drilled, blasted with black powder), but it is possible they could be related to later channel widening.

Newboro Bridge: While this high level bridge (8.2 m / 27 ft above the water), built in 1952, is no visual treat, it does sit in the location of Tett's wharf and warehouse, a major dockage for goods and people for almost 100 years. The original wharf was built by Benjamin Tett and John Kilborn, two of the early entrepreneurs in Newboro, sometime after 1840 (when they acquired the lease). It seems to have been solely in Tett's hands by 1849. It was still in use in the early 20th century with both cargo barges and passenger steamers such as the Rideau King and Rideau Queen docking there.

Newboro Cut - Stone Bridge Abutments: You'll paddle past two sets of cut stone bridge abutments. The one closest to the lock (southern set) is on the original road alignment (former Canal Street in Newboro) across the cut. The first bridge here was a high level timber bridge erected during canal construction. It was replaced in 1860 and rebuilt in 1897, these are the stone abutments that you can see today. The bridge itself was removed in 1952 when the present day concrete bridge was erected.

The second, northern set, are the abutments for the railway bridge, erected in 1886 by the Brockville, Westport and Sault Ste. Marie Railway and rebuilt in 1919 by the CNR. The bridge was removed in 1953 after the rail line had been abandoned.

Upper Rideau Lake: Due to the underlying geology, Upper Rideau Lake is a contrast of topography, with the large granitic (syenite and monzonite) exposures on the north shore and low lying flat lands (generally Paleozoic sandstones) on the south shore (see map in Geology section). The plutons (large rounded areas of igneous rocks) are Precambrian, between 1.06 and 1.09 billion years old. They intrude into older (1.3 billion year old) marbles and quartzites. Near Westport is the Westport Pluton (Foley Mountain) and near Narrows is the Rideau Pluton. Running along the north edge of the lake is the Rideau Lake Fault - some of the cliff faces in the area are due to this fault. There are a few scattered very small scale mica mines (from the late 1800s) in this area.

The lake has a long history of cottaging and there are some lovely old cottages to be seen along the route.

Westport: This is a lovely little village with many interesting shops and is well worth a stop. It's also home to the **Rideau District Museum** which showcases local heritage. Westport Harbour (run by the village) is on a little island (the navigation channels leads to it) with an arch concrete walkway over the channel leading to the village. Public washrooms and showers are available at the Visitor's Centre in the village.

The village got its start in the 1820s. Part of the attraction was the water potential of the flow from Westport Sand Lake to the western end of Rideau Lake (one single lake at that time). The first person to tap this potential appears to be Sheldon Stoddard, who built a sawmill here in 1828. The little community that started to form was known as "Head of the Lake". In 1829, David Manhard built a dam and mill downstream of Stoddard's mill, creating a mill pond. That pond still exists today. The opening of the Rideau Canal in 1832 allowed the village to flourish. It became known as Manhard's Mills until 1841 when the name "Westport" was adopted. It was incorporated as a village in 1904.

A heritage walking tour of Westport is available on-line.

Foley Mountain Conservation Area: This large conservation area covers part of Westport Mountain. Not far from the road entrance to the conservation area (off of County Road 10) is **Spy Rock** which provides a great view of Westport and the surrounding countryside (well worth the hike). There is a beach and picnic area in Little Bay. There are also numerous interesting walking trails in the

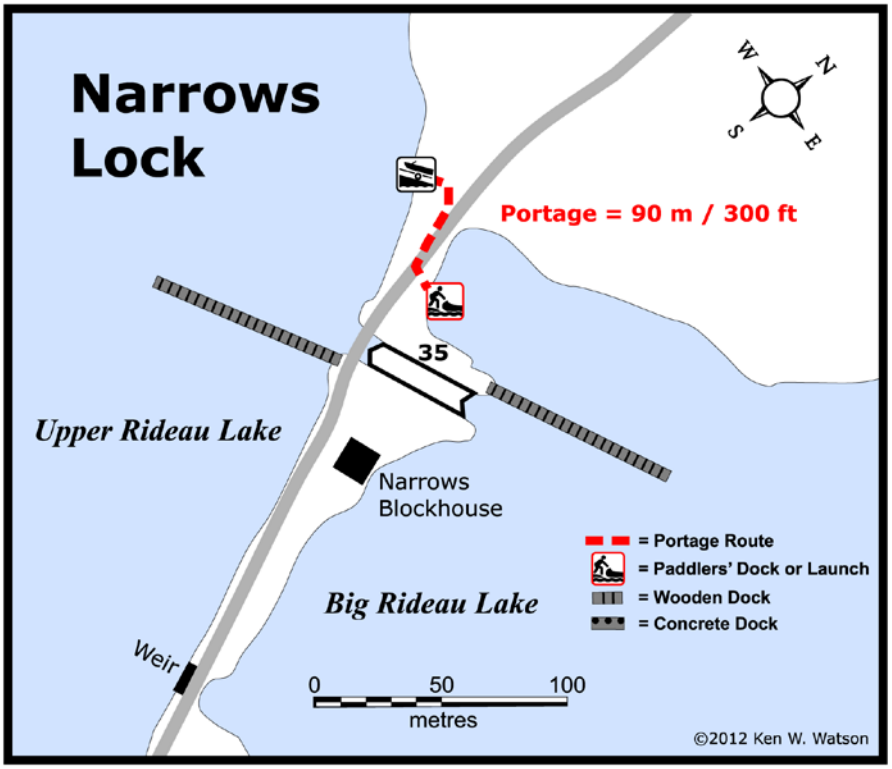
conservation area, including those which are part of the Rideau Trail (see below). The conservation area is run by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority.

The Rideau Trail: This hiking trail, marked with orange triangles (blue for side loops), extends from Kingston to Ottawa. In this area it runs along the north shore of Upper Rideau Lake (see map). For those interested in the trail, the Rideau Trail Association provides maps on their website, rideautrail.org.

Narrows Lock: The lockstation here has a single lock (lift of 0.8 m /2.5 ft). It is located on a narrow spit of land, originally known as First Narrows, where the width of the channel in this area prior to the canal being built was only about 30 m (100 ft). For a short time it was used as a ford, connecting to a road (bridle trail) that led to Perth. By the time of lock construction (late-1820s) this path was out of use. The lift of the lock used to be about 4.8 feet (1.8 m) but the rebuilding of the dam at Poonamalie has raised the level of Big Rideau Lake, lowering the lift at Narrows to its present day 2.5 feet (0.8 m).

The lock was excavated into the bedrock of the spit, with the waste weir positioned near where the original channel existed. The spit was raised (dammed) to impound more water. A blockhouse, one of only four on the Rideau, was built here in 1832 to protect the lock. It is used today as the lockmaster's office (and public washrooms). The reason this lock is here, in the middle of a lake, is a story of disease and geology as recounted in *Tales of the Rideau.*

An interesting feature of this lock and also of Newboro Lock is that both were built without breastworks (an upper foundation). Colonel By didn't intend for these locks to be permanent. He thought that when conditions and technology permitted, his original plan, of simply having the isthmus at Newboro crossed by an open cut, with no locks here and at Newboro, could be implemented.

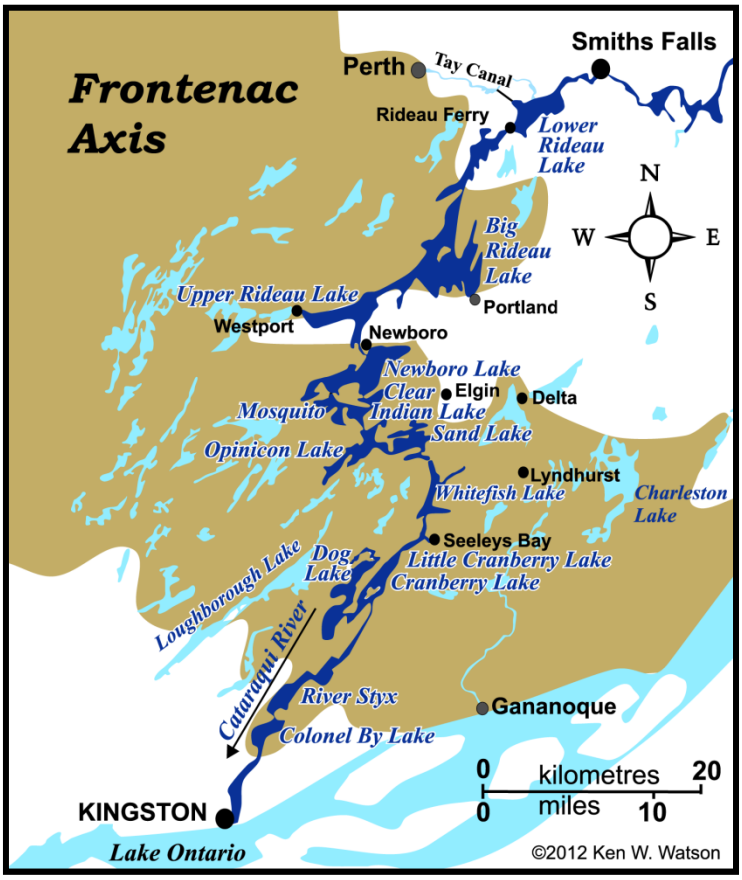


Route Suggestions

No specific route suggestions have been provided - but the circumference of Upper Rideau Lake can be done as a day paddle. I usually do this by launching from Narrows (with the prevailing westerly winds, odds are that I'll get blown back to the lock in the afternoon). If you're paddling this as a route trip along the entire Rideau, then it is worth following the shorelines to Westport (from either Newboro or Narrows).

Geology of the Rideau Canal

As you paddle the Rideau Canal, the route you follow is defined by its geology. The area is underlain by part of an old mountain range, the Grenville Mountains, eroded down over many millions of years. Much of this eroded mountain range has been covered by younger sedimentary rocks, but portions of the old mountains are exposed, partly a result of their original topography and partially due to the eroding away of younger overlying rocks. This area is known as the Frontenac Axis. In essence, if you paddle from Kingston to Smiths Falls, you'll be paddling over a (very old) mountain range.



The Frontenac Axis can be thought of as a ridge connecting the extensive area of the Canadian Shield to the north and the Adirondack mountains to the south. On the Rideau, the southern irregular boundary of the Frontenac Axis is near Kingston Mills and the northern irregular boundary is on the northern reaches of Big Rideau Lake. The Frontenac Axis is made up of rocks formed 1.35 to 1.06 billion years ago (Precambrian: middle to late Proterozoic age) and then deformed and metamorphosed 900 million years ago. The rock types that you'll be able to see as you travel through the Frontenac Axis include granite, syenite, monzonite, migmatite, gabbro, quartzite, marble, gneiss and pegmatite. Many of the lakes are underlain by marble (crystalline limestone) which provides some buffering against acid rain.

To the north and south of the Frontenac Axis are younger, 520 to 460 million year old (Paleozoic: Cambrian to Lower Ordovician age) rocks including limestone, sandstone, dolomite, shale and conglomerate. Most of these rocks were laid down in a shallow sea that covered this area, which was near the equator at that time (part of Laurentia which eventually became part of North America due to continental drift). The rocks near Kingston are dominated by limestone which provided much of the building material for the early town (hence the nickname, Limestone City). In the centre part of the

Rideau, on the margin of the Frontenac Axis, the younger sedimentary rocks tend to be dominated by sandstone. Beyond that, from Smiths Falls to Ottawa the rocks are mostly dolomite, limestone and shale.

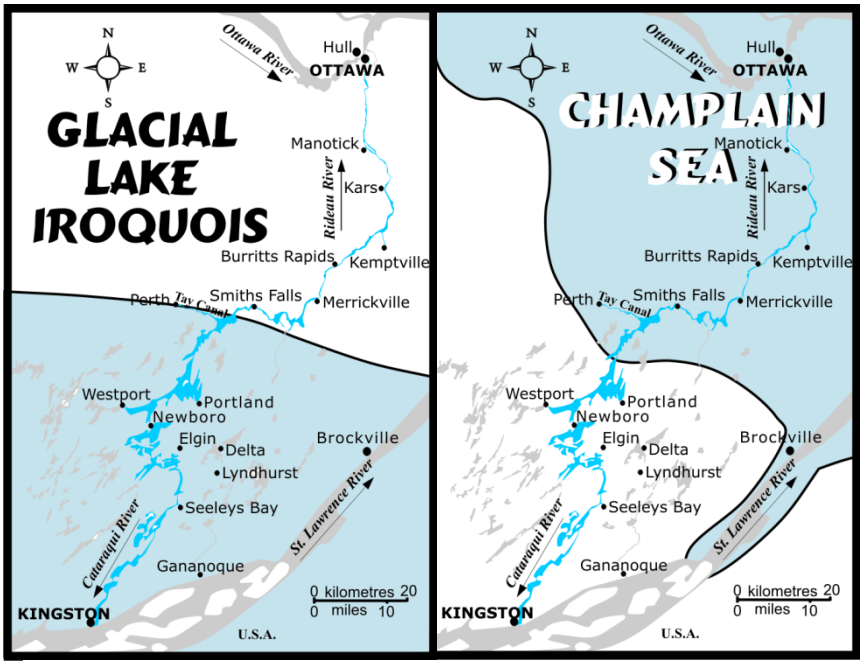
More recently, three events have impacted on the landscape - the ice last age, glacial Lake Iroquois and the Champlain Sea. During the last ice age, which peaked about 20,000 years ago, the Rideau area was covered by ice up to 1.5 kilometres (1.0 mi) thick. The ice polished and moved rocks, excavated some of the landscape and left large deposits of sand and gravel. The weight of the ice depressed the landscape by about 175 m (575 ft) below where it is today.

By 14,000 years ago, the climate began to warm up, melting the glaciers and forcing them to retreat. In the area of Lake Ontario, today's exit of the lake down the St. Lawrence River was blocked by ice and a large lake, about 30 m (100 ft) higher than today's Lake Ontario, formed. That lake, known as Lake Iroquois, extended as far north as Perth and Smiths Falls.

Evidence of that lake exist today in form of glaciolacustrine (a big word for glacial lake) deposits. These include near shore sediments such as gravel and gravelly sand, and deeper water deposits such as silt and clay. These deposits are found all over the southern Rideau, including on heights of land, such as near the top of Rock Dunder. This is because the overall landscape was depressed, and features such as Rock Dunder formed part of the bottom of this large lake.

By about 13,350 years ago a channel opened up in the ice dam (near Rome, NY), rapidly draining much of the lake. At the same time the land was rising as the weight of the ice was removed (this rising is called "isostatic rebound").

As Lake Iroquois and subsequent glacial lakes were getting smaller, the glaciers were continuing their retreat from the St. Lawrence lowlands. About 13,000 years ago this allowed waters from the Atlantic Ocean to mix with glacial melt-waters and river drainage to create a brackish sea known as the Champlain Sea which extended past (west and south) of Ottawa.



Very generalized representations of glacial Lake Iroquois and the Champlain Sea in the Rideau region.

The southern limit of this sea on the Rideau Canal was near Nobles Bay of Big Rideau Lake. If you were paddling the sea back then, you would have been enjoying it in the company of whales. The bones of a humpback whale were found near Smiths Falls and beluga (white) whale bones have also been found in Champlain Sea deposits. This sea retreated as the glaciers moved north and the land continued to undergo isostatic rebound. By about 11,100 years ago, the central Rideau had risen above sea level and the land that we see today was being revealed. Rivers and streams continued to modify the landscape up until the building of the Rideau Canal.

There are a some interesting geological features in the Ottawa area. The northern part of the Rideau River is the youngest part of the waterway (outside of canal altered sections) since, in the immediate post-glacial period, the Ottawa River had a channel to the south of where it is today, across much of urban Ottawa to the Mer Bleue area (where the trace of the old Ottawa River channel can be clearly seen). It eventually shifted north (due to isostatic rebound) to its present location and cut a deep channel. The faster excavation by the Ottawa River, through the underlying limestone rocks, compared to the Rideau River, formed Rideau Falls.

Another geological feature at Ottawa is that much of the area is underlain by a thick clay layer, a type of "quick clay" known locally as Leda clay (named after a type of small clam found in the clay deposits). Quick clay is a clay that is not well bonded and is subject to liquefaction, that is, when vibration is induced, it can turn into a liquid and flow. When undisturbed, it looks and acts like a normal solid form of clay. It was formed by glacial silt settling out on the bottom of the Champlain Sea. There it formed a stable type of marine clay, "glued" with salt. When the sea retreated due to the rising land, this clay was exposed to rainfall that removed much of that salt bonding, creating the unstable clay that is present in much of the region today. Earthquakes can cause this clay to liquefy, leading to landslides. Ottawa is a seismically active region (earthquake prone) and, in the future, an earthquake is going to play havoc with the city (if I lived in Ottawa, I'd check to see if my house is sitting on bedrock or on clay).

Mining in the Rideau Region

The rocks of the Frontenac Axis are host to some small mineral deposits, several of which were mined in the mid-late 1800s and in the early 1900s. In the Rideau Canal region, minerals such as apatite (for phosphate), mica, feldspar, graphite and iron were mined. A few of these old mining areas have been noted in the guides.

Some of the earliest mining in the region was for rocks to be used for the dams and locks of the Rideau Canal. Rocks of the Frontenac Axis were not suitable for this purpose (too hard and often fractured) and so quarries to mine rocks for the canal were established in the younger sedimentary rocks, mining sandstone or limestone. You can see the local sedimentary geology reflected in the type of rocks used for the building of the locks and dams along the Rideau; limestone in the southern area, sandstone (Potsdam sandstone) in the central Rideau and dolomitic limestone and limestone in the northern part.

The first mine on/near the Rideau Canal (excluding the small scale iron mining near Lower Beverley Lake in the early 1800s) was the iron mine on Iron Island near Newboro opened by the Chaffey brothers, John, Benjamin and Elswood, in about 1850. Phosphate mining (for fertilizer, most was shipped to England) started in the Rideau area in about 1867 and continued to the early 1890s. By the late 1880s, mica mining was also underway. Apatite (phosphate) and mica form in the same geological environment, so several mines which started off mining phosphate were later mined for mica. Mica mining ended in the 1920s as the value of the mineral fell to uneconomic levels.

Today, mining in the region is mostly surface quarrying for sand, gravel, and stone.

Wildlife of the Rideau Canal

The Rideau spans a wide variety of ecosystems, due in part to the underlying geology and man's activity in the last 200 years. The Frontenac Axis, a section of the Canadian Shield (Precambrian rocks - very old) underlies the Rideau from Kingston Mills to Lower Rideau Lake. These hard rocks form rugged

topography (hills, ravines), including the basins for the lakes on the system. Most of the lakes are underlain by crystalline limestone which acts as a buffer against acid rain (hence the lakes are very productive for fish and other aquatic life). Outside of the Frontenac Axis, younger (Palaeozoic) flat lying sedimentary rocks form the underlying bedrock (it is from these rocks that the stones for the dams and locks were quarried).

The area has been actively logged since before the canal was built, the entire area cut over several times. Most of the region (including many of the islands in the lakes) was farmed or used for cattle pasture at one time. By the early 20th century, small farms on poor Frontenac Axis lands were being abandoned in favour of better (more productive) pastures.

So today, along the Rideau you'll find forested areas (some now 100 years mature), active farmland, scrubland and abandoned farmland, low density cottage/summer home developed (rural) land and urban land. The forests are generally mixed, deciduous trees (oak, maple, ash, basswood, birch, elm) and conifer trees (most commonly white pine, white spruce and cedar). On flat lying topography you'll find cedar swamps, hardwood (black ash & silver maple) swamps, and bogs. Along the margins of the Rideau Canal you'll find cattail marshes. All these areas support a varied and healthy wildlife population.

The following is a list of the most common wildlife that you might spot on your Rideau journey. Note that photos of many of these birds and animals can be found on my Rideau website at:

www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/fauna.html

Water Birds

Common Loon - on all the lakes, this bird is distinctive for its haunting call. It's a diving bird, swimming underwater to catch fish

Great Blue Heron - along the entire Rideau, a large bird usually seen wading near shore.

Green Heron - most commonly in the shallow water sections (Colonel By Lake, River Styx, Rideau River) this is a small heron. Usually seen perched in a tree.

Canada Goose- yes, we have these (more each year)

Ducks - most commonly the Mallard duck (quacks when flushed), American Merganser duck (a pointed red bill) and Wood duck (squeaks when flushed).

Pied-billed Grebe - In some areas you'll also spot the reclusive Pied-billed Grebe (a small diving bird).

Ospreys - now common along the Rideau - often spotted in their large nest made of sticks perched high in a pine tree or a power line stanchion. It dives to catch fish (quite spectacular to see)

Ring-billed Gull - a gull with mark on bill

Terns - the Common Tern, a large white tern with dark bill and the Black Tern, small tern with black body (adult)

Trumpeter Swans - An extirpated native species in this region, they were re-introduced in the 1990s. Favourite haunts include Opinicon Lake and Big Rideau Lake (near Narrows and Portland).

Other Birds

There are many other types of birds that you might spot in the near-water environment; red-tailed hawks, red-winged blackbirds, turkey vultures, turkeys, ruffed grouse and many more (bring along your bird book).

Reptiles and Amphibians

Turtles: we've got lots of turtles - most common are the Common Map Turtle (a peaked shell and yellow-orange lines on the skin and shell); Midland Painted Turtle (a flat smooth shell with bright red splotches along the edge) and the Common Snapping Turtle (can get very large, a prehistoric looking turtle). You'll often find Map and Painted turtles sunning themselves on logs and rocks. The Snapping turtle almost always stays in the water, you'll find it floating or slowly swimming near marshy areas. There are also three other less commonly seen turtles, the Stinkpot Turtle (aka Musk Turtle) a small turtle found in areas with aquatic plant growth; Blanding's Turtle with a "war helmet" type shell and bright yellow chin and throat, usually found in wetlands and the Spotted Turtle, a small turtle with bright yellow spots on its shell, usually found in areas with aquatic plants and a silt bottom.

Frogs: we have lots of frogs that will provide you with a nightly serenade. The two biggest are the bullfrog and the green frog. Also the leopard frog, spring peeper and many others.

Snakes: we do not have any poisonous snakes. The two largest snakes are the Northern Water Snake and the Black Rat Snake - both generally found near water. The common garter snake can also be found throughout the region.

Mammals

In the near shore environment you'll likely spot muskrats and beavers. You may even spot the somewhat reclusive river otter (found in the lakes here as well as rivers). And there are the usual Eastern Ontario mammals to be sometimes found near the water: raccoons, black, grey and red squirrels, chipmunks, foxes, coyotes, white-tailed deer and skunks. Black bears, although quite rare in the region, are present.

Fish

The Rideau is home to healthy populations of many fish species. The lakes and most of the rivers are home to species such as Large Mouth Bass, Small Mouth Bass, Northern Pike and Crappie. Lake Trout are present in some lakes that have depths in excess of 80 ft / 24 m (i.e. Big Rideau Lake). There are Walleye in some areas (i.e. Upper Rideau Lake and the Rideau River) and Muskellunge (Musky/Maskinonge) in some sections of the Rideau River.

Aquatic Plants:

The Rideau hosts quite a variety of aquatic plants.

Submerged Plants: Waterweed (like aquarium plants); Pondweed; Smartweed (holds flower above surface of water); Tape-grass (like underwater grass, flower on coiled stem); Coontail (like a thick furry coon's tail); Water-milfoil (one species an invasive plant).

Aquatic Plants (floating): White Water-lily (white fragrant flower); Bullhead Water-lily (round yellow flower); Frogbit (invasive alien, small floating leaf like water lily); Duckweed (food for ducks, tiny plant)

Aquatic Plants (emergent): Cattail (big brown seed heads); Pickerelweed (blue flowers on stalk); Flowering Rush (invasive alien); Arrowhead (arrowhead-pointed leaves, white flowers); Purple Loosestrife (invasive alien, now controlled by beetles in some areas).

Oh - and those amorphous green blobs floating under the water in near-shore areas. They are benign (not due to pollution), a type of filamentous green algae. Their abundance is due to zebra mussels which don't eat this type of algae, but do eat their competition (single-celled algae) - and so, by removing the competition, have allowed these blobs to expand in numbers and length of season.

My thanks to Simon Lunn and the Rideau Roundtable (www.rideauroundtable.ca) for assistance with the wildlife and aquatic plants information.

Those interested in some tips for taking good photos of wildlife should view "The Nature of Wildlife Photography" on my website at: www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/nature-photography.html

One photography hint, a very simple one, is to choose a paddling route that puts the sun to your back for most of the day. Try to choose a route that has you on a west shore in the morning, a north shore at mid-day and an east shore in the afternoon. For those doing the entire Rideau, this means going from Kingston to Ottawa rather than the other way around. This will put the wildlife that you see on your paddle in the best light.

Errors

If you find any errors or omissions in this guide, please let me know (rideauken@gmail.com) and I'll get them fixed.

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