



Early Morning Paddling near Fiddlers Elbow

## Rideau Paddling Guide 3

### Lower Brewers to Brass Point Bridge

*(includes Cataraqui River, Cranberry Lake and Dog Lake)*

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

by

**Ken W. Watson**

This area bounded by the top end of River Styx to the south and Brass Point Bridge (top of Cranberry Lake) to the north. It includes part of the Cataraqui River, Cranberry Lake and Dog Lake. The area provides great day paddling experiences. In most areas, the winding shorelines and islands provide shelter and so can be paddled even when the wind is up. The map included in this guide can be enlarged (while viewing the PDF) to any level of detail you desire.



No specific route descriptions have been given for paddling the lakes - you should explore these on your own. The detailed map in this guide will allow for travel planning.

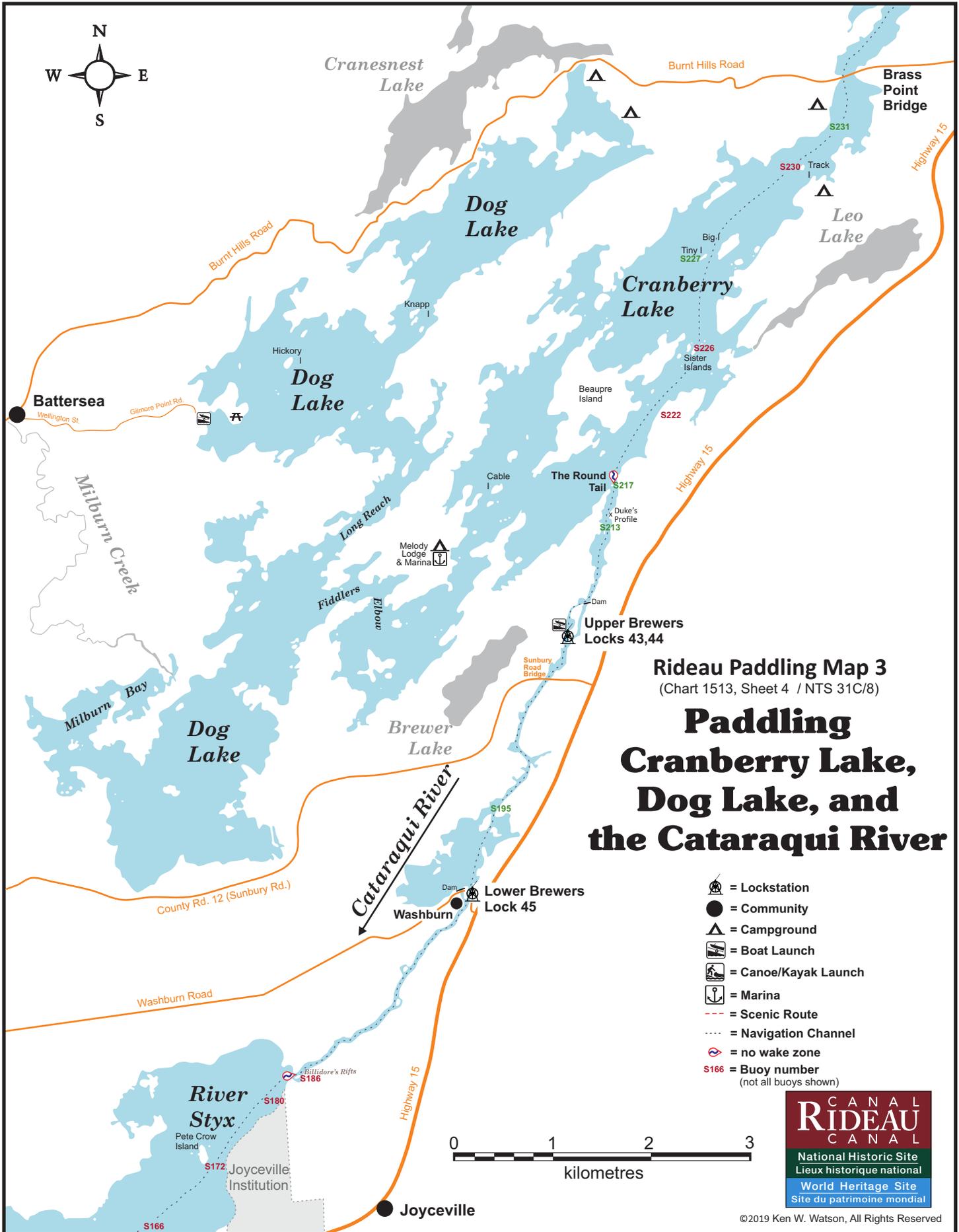
### Water Access

**Cranberry Lake:** The easiest point of access is **Upper Brewers Lockstation** which has lots of parking and a small gravel ramp. You can also paddle down to the lake from the ramp at **Seeleys Bay** (see Rideau Paddling Guide 4)

**Dog Lake:** As with Cranberry Lake, it can be accessed from **Upper Brewers Lockstation**. You can access the west side from a public ramp on Gilmore Point (44° 25.950'N - 76° 21.540'W).

### Facilities

**Lodging:** If you're paddling and camping, the lockstations are a good choice for camp spots (a camping fee applies). There are also several campgrounds and few B&Bs. For information about local accommodations see: [www.rideau-info.com/canal/](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/) and general lodging sites (i.e. Airbnb, bbcanada).



Rideau Paddling Map 3  
 (Chart 1513, Sheet 4 / NTS 31C/8)

# Paddling Cranberry Lake, Dog Lake, and the Cataraqui River

- = Lockstation
- = Community
- = Campground
- = Boat Launch
- = Canoe/Kayak Launch
- = Marina
- = Scenic Route
- = Navigation Channel
- = no wake zone
- = Buoy number (not all buoys shown)

**CANAL  
 RIDEAU  
 CANAL**

National Historic Site  
 Lieux historiques nationaux

World Heritage Site  
 Site du patrimoine mondial

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**Supplies:** A local source for supplies is the village of Elgin (off Hwy. 15 opposite Davis Lock Road), which has a grocery store, pharmacy and hardware store. Supplies (grocery, some hardware) can also be obtained in the village of Seeleys Bay.

## **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/](http://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/8.

## **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/](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/) for the current fee schedule.

## **Distances:**

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

- Top of River Styx to Lower Brewers along navigation channel: 2.6 km (1.6 mi)
- Lower Brewers to Upper Brewers along navigation channel: 2.8 km (1.7 mi)
- Upper Brewers to Brass Point Bridge along navigation channel: 6.5 km (4.0 mi)
- Cranberry Lake circumference (main shorelines): 33 km (20.5 mi)  
(entire lake: Fiddlers Elbow to Brass Point Bridge)
- Dog Lake circumference: 55 km (34.2 mi).  
(South Dog = 22.5 km (14 mi), Long Reach = 8 km (5 mi) , North Dog = 24.5 km (15 mi))

## **The Lakes**

### **Cataraqui River**

This section, from the head of River Styx to the Round Tail, is a flooded remnant of part of the original Cataraqui River. The meandering nature of the original creek is obscured today due to channel straightening carried out during the building of the canal. Water levels are also elevated due to the canal

dams at Kingston Mills, Lower Brewers and Upper Brewers. The land bordering the river is privately owned, the exception being federal lands in the vicinity of the locks.

### **Cranberry Lake**

In the pre-canal era this was a very small lake (the area north of Beaupre Island bounded by the west shore, Big Island and Track Island). It was greatly expanded by the flooding caused by the canal dam at Upper Brewers lockstation (water impounded in conjunction with the canal dam at Morton). The deepest part of the lake at 17 feet (5.2 m) in the original lake section, the rest of the lake averages about 10 feet (3 m) in depth.

In the pre-canal era, the area from the Round Tail (just north of Upper Brewers Locks) to Deans Island (in the north end of Whitefish Lake - see Map 4), was the Cranberry Flood Plain. It was above water in the summer (non-navigable). This former flood plain, filled with sediment to form an almost flat bed, provides a contrast of high steep cliffs (particularly on the western shore) plunging into shallow water, not the deep water that the topography would imply.

The land bordering the lake is privately owned (the exception being the federally owned Beaupre Island, the southern section of which is leased to a private owner). Much of the lake has moderate density cottage and summer home development.

### **Dog Lake**

This is really two different lakes. The north end is an original pre-canal lake while the south end is a man-made lake, a result of the flooding from the dams at Upper Brewers and Morton. The lake also differs greatly in depth from north to south.

The north end of the lake is very deep with a maximum depth of 167 feet (51 m). It averages about 50 feet (15 m) deep. It hosts typical Rideau warm-water species of fish (largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike and crappie). The deeper part of the lake used to host lake trout but they have disappeared due to overfishing and development. It is a typical Canadian Shield lake, with some beautiful rocky exposures.

In the pre-canal era, the man-made south end of Dog Lake was the upper reaches of the Cataraqui River (or creek) which flowed through this area from its headwater in Loughborough Lake (now Milburn Creek). This was part of a native travel route from the mouth of the Cataraqui River to the Rideau at Opinicon Lake. There was no direct connection at the time, the native route went up Milburn Creek (then part of the Cataraqui River) to Loughborough Lake, then to Hart Lake and from there to Opinicon Lake.

The land bordering the lake is privately owned. Much of the lake has moderate density cottage and summer home development.

## **POINTS OF INTEREST** (listed south to north)

**River Styx:** Much of the shoreline of this man-made lake is undeveloped (farm frontage). Keep your eye out for Green Herons, a colourful smaller member of the heron family. As with Colonel By Lake, you

may see stumps off the navigation channel, remains of the drowned forest, and the reason for the original name of the lake as River Sticks.

As noted in the Colonel By Lake writeup, the buoyed channel doesn't directly follow the original channel of the Cataraqui River, which was more of a meandering creek. As of this writing, the present navigation channel and old meandering creek channel can be seen in satellite photos (i.e. Google Earth) at the head of River Styx.

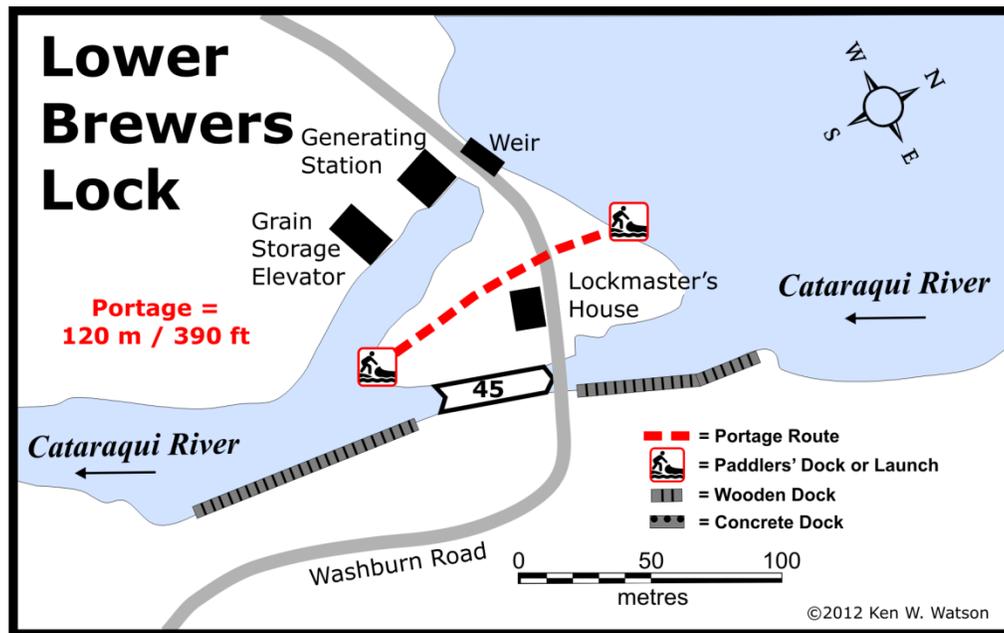
**Joyceville Institution:** This is a medium-security federal penitentiary.

**Billidore's Rifts:** The head of River Styx marks the location of Billidore's Rifts, a small set of rapids where a lock was originally proposed. These rapids were drowned by the water raised by the canal dam and berms at Kingston Mills.

**Cataraqui River:** The Cataraqui River is a deeper, straighter river than the original meandering creek. Much of today's navigation way was cut through the pre-canal forests (to straighten the route). But you can still spot some of the meanders of the original creek.

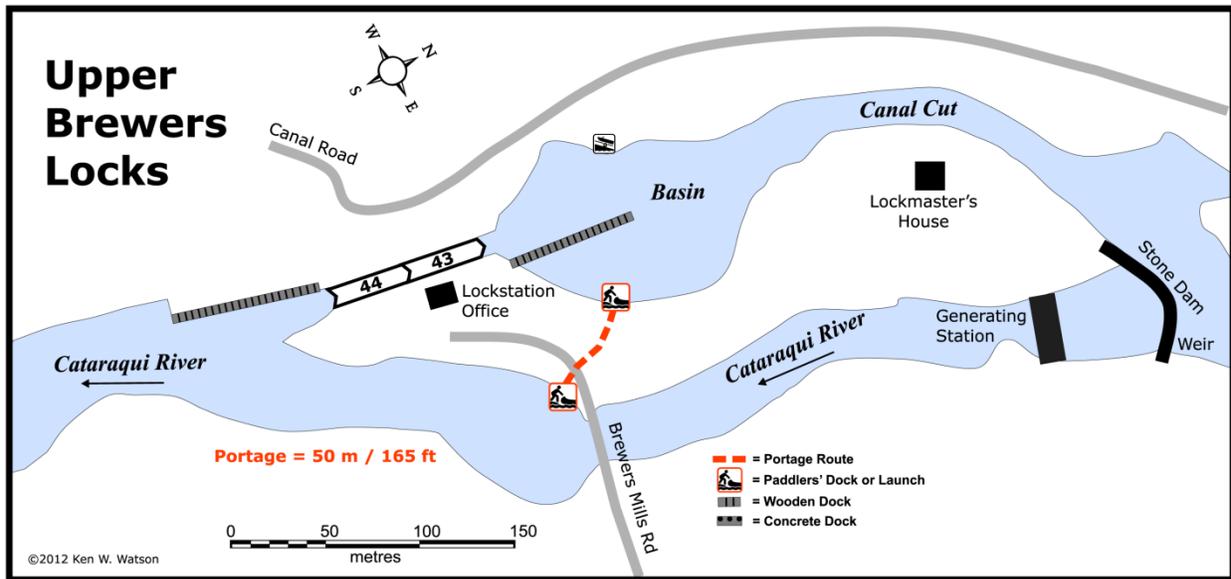
Just south of Lower Brewers, you'll find some apple trees growing on the banks of the river (presumably grown from seeds blown from the apple orchard located near Lower Brewers). So, if you're paddling that area in September and want a snack, you may find some nice apples within picking range from your boat.

**Lower Brewers Lock:** This is a single lock with a lift of 4.0 m / 13.3 feet. A feature of this lockstation is the unequal arm, center bearing timber swing bridge, one of only four remaining on the Rideau. It also has a defensible lockmaster's house, originally a one storey stone building, built in the early 1840s. The second wooden storey was added in about 1899. A grain storage elevator located adjacent to the bywash was built in about 1865. The hydro generating station at this site was erected in 1942.



**Sunbury Road Bridge:** This fixed high level (6.7 m / 22.0 ft) bridge was built in 1967. It carries Country Road 12 over the canal. Prior to this bridge, Country Road 12 went across a timber swing bridge over Lock 44 (the first swing bridge over the lock was installed in 1850) and a low level fixed bridge (still existing) over the Cataraqui River.

**Upper Brewers Locks:** There is a set of two locks with a lift of 5.9 m / 19.5 feet. The locks were constructed to the west side of the Cataraqui River in order to bypass the mills at this location and leave them intact. A man-made cut leads to the basin (formed by two embankments) above the locks. The defensible lockmaster's house on the top of the knoll was built in 1842 (today leased to a private owner). The hydro generating station below the dam was erected in 1939.



**The Ark:** On the west side of the Upper Brewers' basin, hidden behind cedar trees is a large houseboat (now a private residence) known as "The Ark." The original name for this houseboat was the "Wenona" and it was originally owned by Otto Rohr of Rochester, N.Y. It was towed to this location sometime between 1900 and 1915 (it shows up in a 1915 air photo of Lower Brewers).

**Upper Brewers Canal Cut:** The canal, from the basin to the dam, is an artificial cut. If you look closely at the vertical rock face on the east side of the cut, you'll see some half round vertical indentations, there are the inner half of drill holes (hand driven) used for blasting out the rock in the cut. Also, about halfway along the cut was the location of a safety gate designed by Colonel By. It was a gate that lay flat on the floor of the channel, which could be raised in the event of flood waters. The gate was placed there since a flood did occur in 1832 when a private miller's dam on Loughborough Lake (at today's Battersea) broke and almost flooded out the lock (this story is told in *Tales of the Rideau*). The gate was removed in 1847.

**The Duke's Profile:** Just south of The Round Tail is "The Court of the Duke" and on the east side there is a rock outcrop that juts out over the water, named the "Duke's Profile" for the Duke of Wellington, the Iron Duke – the man who was responsible for initiating the project to build the Rideau Canal.

**The Round Tail:** This rocky constriction had a profound impact on the Rideau Canal. Prior to the early 1800s, if you were paddling north through here, you would make almost a 90 degree turn left (west) to follow the Cataragui River up to its headwater, Loughborough Lake. To get back to the Rideau you would go from the northern exit of Loughborough Lake to Hart Lake and then to Opinicon Lake. You couldn't continue north by canoe, it was semi-dry land (a flood plain). But, sometime after 1805 and prior to 1816, a miller by the name of Lemuel Haskins erected a mill dam here in order to increase the head of water for his mill at Whitefish Falls (Morton). This put about 6 feet (2 m) of water over the flood plain, making it navigable. This "navigation by flooding" so impressed surveyor Samuel Clowes in 1824/25 that instead of proposing a conventional canal (canal cuts) such as he did for the rest of the Rideau, he proposed converting these mill dams (Round Tail and Morton) into canal dams to create a navigation way – a slackwater system. Colonel By ended up doing the entire Rideau as a slackwater system. Did the idea to make the Rideau Canal a slackwater system originate right here at the Round Tail? Something to think about (as you enjoy easy slackwater paddling).

Also of note, is that the marked navigation channel in this location is an artificial cut. The west (non-navigation channel) opening is the original, now drowned channel of the Cataragui River.

**Dog Lake:** The north end of the lake features typical shield terrain, pine trees and rocky exposures with deep clear water. The south end of the lake is a typical shallow water lake (this side of the lake is manmade, created by the flooding from the canal dam at Upper Brewers Locks), a mix of marshy and rocky shorelines. There are many interesting cottages on the lake.

**Carrying Place:** Although the trail is not visible today, the narrow neck of land between Dog Lake and Cranberry Lake (directly west of the south tip of Beupre Island) was a native portage route between Cranberry Marsh and the original pre-canal Dog Lake, which, due to its depth, offered fishing for Lake Trout (the trout disappeared a number of years ago due to development and overfishing).

**Cranberry Lake:** An expansive lake created by flooding by the canal dam at Upper Brewers, it has some interesting undeveloped shorelines and cottage development. Note the restoration of a lovely old cottage at the south end of Beupre Island.

**Brass Point Bridge:** You can't miss this - a long and narrow steel bridge with wooden decking which incorporates a wooden swing bridge (an unequal arm, center bearing timber swing bridge, one of only four remaining on the Rideau) at the west end. The swing bridge is operated by Parks Canada. This long (148 m / 485 ft) bridge was originally built in 1887. The wooden spans were replaced with steel spans in 1903 and new cribbing was installed in 1978. Paddlers can easily pass under the bridge.

This is the only remaining bridge of this type (multi-span with a swing bridge) on the Rideau Canal. There used to be similar bridges at places such as Rideau Ferry, Becketts Landing, Kars and Manotick - those have all been replaced by high level bridges.

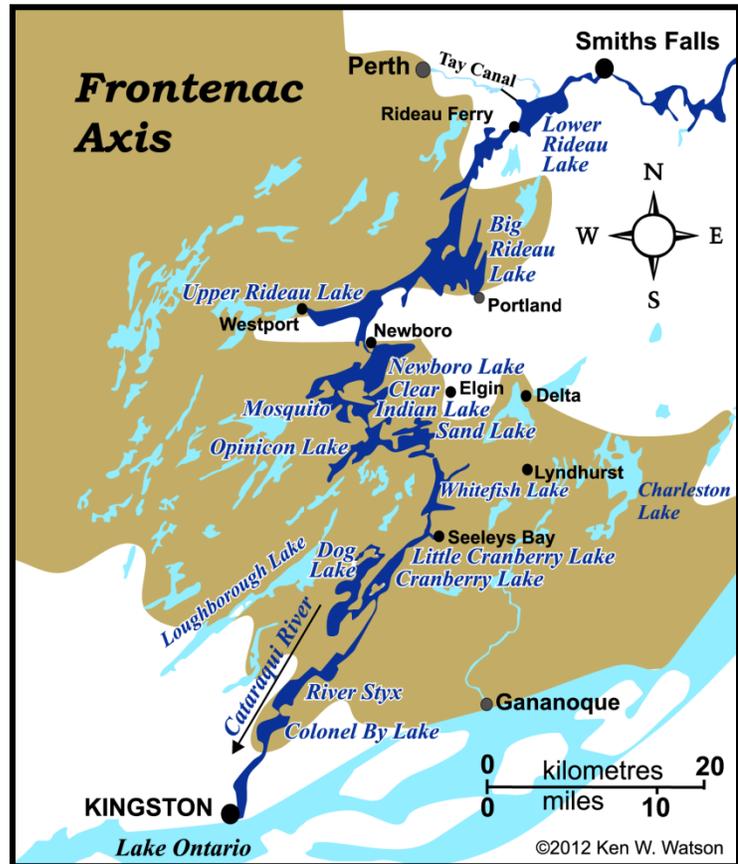
## **Route Suggestions**

No specific route suggestions have been provided - but Dog and Cranberry lakes do provide some nice day paddling experiences. The size of the lakes is such that, depending on your launch point and paddling speed, they can make three nice day trips - one doing Cranberry Lake, one doing the north half of Dog Lake and one doing the south half of Dog Lake. I tend to always launch from Upper Brewers since it provides an easy launch point and lots of parking.

## 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.

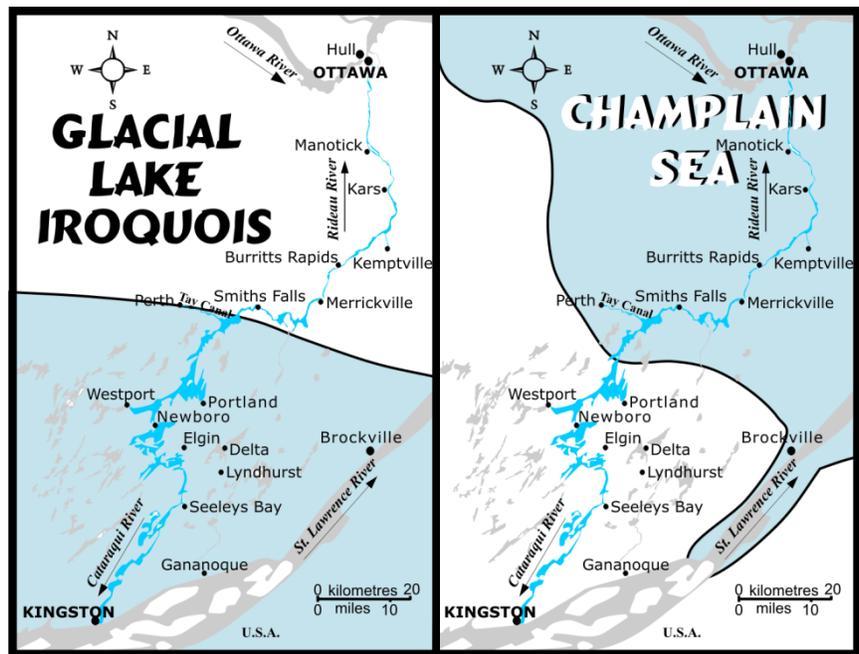
Evidence of that lake exist today in form of glaciolacustrine (a big word for glacial lake) deposits. These include near shore sediments such as gravel and gravelly sand, and deeper water deposits such as silt and clay. These deposits are found all over the southern Rideau, including on heights of land, 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.

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



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

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, used for fertilizer), 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

### ***Rideau Paddling Guide 3: Lower Brewers Lock to Brass Point Bridge by Ken W. Watson***

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](http://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)

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**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.ridearoundtable.ca](http://www.ridearoundtable.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](http://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](mailto:rideauken@gmail.com)) and I'll get them fixed.

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