

This area boasts an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Nearly 50 tree and shrub species, over 115 bird species, including 55 breeders, and around 20 mammal species have been identified within its borders. Each trail offers a different experience.

Before you set out on your adventure, please read the National Wildlife Area regulations.

1 Three in one

The Piassetki area features three distinct trails in one, offering one of the few upland forests in this wildlife area and ever-changing scenery. Admire one of the only conifer stands as you walk Le Caryer trail, marvel at migrating birds in L'Érablière trail's semi-open environment and discover the diversity of the Piassetki trail, home to 10 tree species within a 20 m radius and a large swamp.

2 Tough as nails

This maple tree is truly amazing. Centuries old, it lost its heartwood after being struck by lightning. So how can it still be alive? The part just below the bark is the most important to survival, whereas the heartwood functions mainly as support. This resilient tree, which continues to fascinate visitors today, provides food to insects, birds and mammals in the forest.

3 Prickly shrub

Roses aren't the only plants with a reputation for being prickly. The northern prickly ash is a thorny tree—and a force to be reckoned with! A thicket of prickly ash is so impenetrable it would make a good protective hedge. A member of the citrus family (grapefruit, orange and lemon), the northern prickly ash was used to treat toothache and chronic rheumatism.



4 Plant show

It's amazing to see ostrich ferns unfurling in the spring. This herbaceous plant, which can grow to two metres, is in the perfect habitat for maximum productivity. Admire its green fronds, reminiscent of ostrich feathers, as they flutter in the wind.



5 Forest chorus

Many bird species hide in this dense canopy because of its habitat diversity, so keep your ears open. You may hear the serenade of a song sparrow or the meowing of a gray catbird. You'll no doubt recognize the red-eyed vireo, which can sing "vireo, viri, vireo-i" up to 40 times a minute! Listen for the wood thrush's flute-like warble, too. These birds are here all summer but easier to observe in May and June when the mating season is in full swing.



6 Fascinating, smelly plant

The only thing that surpasses this plant's beauty and uniqueness is its smell—of skunk! The eastern skunk cabbage is certainly aptly named. As you take a deep breath, take a moment to observe this fascinating plant. Being thermogenic, it generates its own heat—something just four plants in the world can do.

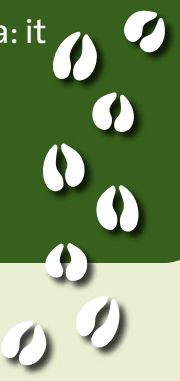


Phantoms of the forest

White-tailed deer have keen hearing and a remarkable sense of smell. They'll probably see you long before you see them. So, it's not surprising that they're hard to spot. However, these deer are widespread in this part of the National Wildlife Area: it offers food galore and is a great place to hide. You might just find fresh tracks on the ground.

7 Don't get burned!

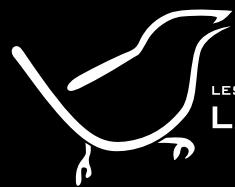
Poison sumac, also known as thunderwood, is a shrub, all parts of which are toxic—even the roots. It's in the same family as poison ivy, but even more toxic. The sap can cause serious skin burns. Back in the day, people used it as firewood. Imagine the respiratory troubles they must have had! So, to avoid injury, please keep your distance!



Lake
Saint-François
National
Wildlife Area



L'Érablière: 1.3 km
Le Caryer: 1.8 km
Piassetki: 2.8 km
Total: 5.7 km



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LAC-SAINTE-FRANÇOIS



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Changement climatique Canada



Picking plants and flowers,
among others, is forbidden
in the territory of the National
Wildlife Area.

8 Got your tail!

This swampy area is a great environment for four-toed salamanders, considered rare in Quebec. When threatened, they can shed their tail, which continues moving to distract the predator. One of a kind, this is the only salamander that can self-amputate when under major stress. But that's okay—its tail grows back.



photo : Adobestock

9 Camouflage expert

Can you hear a quacking sound, similar to a duck? It's probably a wood frog, whose call is a short, raspy croak. The resemblance is even more striking when a group of wood frogs is singing. These terrestrial frogs like forests, but may also take up residence in wet fields or bogs. Their colouring provides them with excellent camouflage so keep your eyes peeled. They're almost invisible in the leaf litter.



photo : Christian Marcotte, ECC

10 Ready for take-off!

If you hear something that sounds like a helicopter, you know a ruffed grouse is nearby. The noise is created when it drums its wings against its chest to attract females and ward off other males. The sound when it takes flight is also quite remarkable and catches many visitors by surprise. Be careful not to confuse the ruffed grouse with the partridge. They're both related to chickens, but the ruffed grouse has a fantail and crest.



photo : Régis Fortin

11 Did you say bitter?

Imagine a tree with nuts so bitter that even squirrels will only eat them as a last resort. This is true of the bitternut hickory. Abundant in Canada but rare in Quebec, it thrives here because of the rich upland. In fact, there are so many that the trail was named after it! Bitternut hickory is used to smoke meat and makes excellent firewood.



photo : Hydro-Québec

Keep your distance

You may be tempted to approach some of these wild species to observe them better, but it's important to keep your distance at all times. During nesting, for example, birds are vulnerable. If parents are disturbed, they may leave the nest and expose their eggs or young to predators. On protected land, it's important to respect the regulations to preserve wild species and their habitat.



photo : Adobestock