

# The South Huron Trail

Exeter, Ontario

Health • Recreation • Nature

Welcome to South Huron Trail  
- Beautiful in all seasons

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## The South Huron Trail

The South Huron Trail is an eight-kilometre, all-season trail that winds through the scenic Ausable River Valley. This accessible trail links MacNaughton Park in Exeter, Ontario and Morrison Dam Conservation Area (MDCA), at 71108 Morrison Line, just two kilometres (km) east of Exeter. The South Huron Trail combines the MacNaughton-Morrison and MDCA trail sections.

Thanks to trail loops of different lengths (2 km; 4 km; or 8 km), you can spend 20 minutes or two hours enjoying nature.



Morrison Dam Conservation Area

The trail is home to many community events and charitable fundraisers. It attracts thousands of people to the area and it provides many health benefits.

## Trail Markers

There are 40 trail markers placed every 200 metres along the trail for 8 km. Locations are on the maps in this brochure. These markers are helpful ways to stay aware of where you are on the trail. You may also use them to find plants and sites of interest.



## The Ausable River

There's more than meets the eye in the Ausable River. The river begins in Perth County, near Staffa, and enters Lake Huron at Port Franks. The river winds through some of Canada's best farmland and was the focal point of many towns and villages through settlement times. If you look closely, you'll discover a highly diverse aquatic community that has historically supported more than 85 fish species, 26 species of freshwater mussels, and more than 21 reptile species. This variety of aquatic life makes the Ausable River one of the richest watersheds of its size in Canada.

Forests along the trail help improve and protect water quality here and downstream in three ways: Tree roots hold the soil and prevent erosion; trees provide shade that cools the water; and leaves falling into the river help sustain aquatic life.

People who live in the Ausable River watershed do their part by keeping contaminants out of streams and drains; conserving soil; planting trees; and preserving, enhancing, and creating wetlands.

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## MacNaughton-Morrison Trail

The MacNaughton-Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail is four kilometres long. This all-season trail passes through towering hardwood and pine forests, skirts along the Ausable River, and gives a bird's eye view of the river valley at several lookouts.



Lookouts, including the tree-top boardwalk, provide scenic vistas of the forest, river valley, or golf course. Benches allow you to pause and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. Education kiosks identify the birds and animals that call the corridor home.

The trail includes Stirling Bridge and Jones Bridge.

## Location of MacNaughton Park

MacNaughton Park, in Exeter, Ontario, is where you find the start of the MacNaughton-Morrison Trail. The park is located at 62 MacNaughton Drive. A parking lot is located at the end of Hill Street, near these coordinates:

N 43° 21' 16.911" • W 81° 28' 46.338"

## Morrison Dam Conservation Area

Shaded, accessible nature trails surround Morrison Reservoir (Morrison Lake) for hiking, running, birdwatching, bicycling, cross-country skiing, and nature appreciation. The 30-acre lake, two kilometres east of Exeter, is a favourite spot for family fishing. Thousands of people use the conservation area for recreation each year. Hiking and fishing are the main activities. Be aware of and follow Ontario fishing regulations.

Morrison Dam Conservation Area (MDCA) is owned and operated by Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA).

## Location of MDCA Trail

The start (trailhead) of the Morrison Dam Conservation Area Section of South Huron Trail is at 71108 Morrison Line, RR 3 Exeter, near these coordinates:

N 43° 21' 35.12" • W 81° 27' 27.395"

## Washrooms

Privies are located south of Morrison Reservoir (Morrison Lake), along the Morrison Dam Conservation Area Section of the Trail. These restrooms are marked on the map in this brochure. Washrooms in MacNaughton Park are available seasonally.

## History

The former Ausable River Conservation Authority, Ontario's first conservation authority, was formed in 1946. Protection of life and property from flooding remains a key role for Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority today. ABCA owns more than 9,500 acres of land in the watershed for conservation purposes.

Construction of Morrison Dam and Morrison Reservoir (or 'Morrison Lake') began in 1956 and was completed by 1959. The dam was built to ensure water supply for the former Exeter Canning factory. The dam is not used for that purpose now but the conservation area has become a thriving lake ecosystem. Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority continues to run and maintain the dam.

The MacNaughton-Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail was constructed between 2002 and 2004 through a community partnership that included Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority; Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation; Exeter Lions Club; Municipality of South Huron; local landowners; and other donors, including service organizations, businesses, and individuals. Check out the entrance kiosks for funding partner logos.

The 75-metre Stirling Bridge spans the Ausable River mid-way between MacNaughton Park and Morrison Dam. Stirling Bridge was created with funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation and a family memorial donation. The name comes from Scottish history.



Stirling Bridge



Jones Bridge

Generous community donors and volunteers raised more than \$300,000 to build Jones Bridge, downstream of Morrison Dam, in 2018. This new pedestrian bridge links the two sections of the South Huron Trail. The bridge allows trail users to safely cross the Ausable River without having to walk along Morrison Line. The bridge is dedicated by Donna Jones, in loving memory of Ted Jones. Also built, thanks to a family donation, are the Brian Clarke memorial stairs, near the bridge.

## Flora and Fauna

The South Huron Trail is a great place to find and learn about flora (plants and trees) and fauna (birds and other animals).

The trail offers excellent habitat because it provides three essential elements for wildlife – food, water, and shelter. Check out the education kiosks along the trail to find out more.

The South Huron Trail is within the Ausable River Valley. The headwaters are near Staffa and the river enters Lake Huron at Port Franks. The variety of aquatic life makes the Ausable River one of the richest watersheds of its size in Canada.

The river, trees, birds, and wildlife, along the South Huron Trail, make this an ideal setting for a nature trail. It's also one of the best places to meet the area's unique white squirrels. You may also encounter beavers and other animals.



White Squirrel

The trail provides health, recreational, and social benefits and also nature appreciation.

## Birds

The South Huron Trail is a great place to see or hear a number of bird species. They include:

- Blue Jay
- Eastern Screech Owl
- Great Blue Heron
- Green Heron
- Northern Oriole
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Warblers



Green Heron

**Record birds you saw on trail:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



South Huron Trail • 62 MacNaughton Drive • Exeter, Ontario

## Contacts:

Ausable Bayfield Conservation  
 Phone: 519-235-2610 • Toll-free: 1-888-286-2610  
 E-mail: [info@abca.ca](mailto:info@abca.ca)

## Websites:

Ausable Bayfield Conservation: [abca.ca](http://abca.ca)  
 County of Huron: [huroncounty.ca](http://huroncounty.ca)  
 Municipality of South Huron: [southhuron.ca](http://southhuron.ca)  
[southhuron.ca](http://southhuron.ca) • [southhurontrail.com](http://southhurontrail.com)  
[abca.ca/recreation/southhurontrail](http://abca.ca/recreation/southhurontrail)

Most of the MacNaughton-Morrison Trail is on private property and this project is only possible because the landowners allow the trail to cross their properties. Please show your respect by staying on the marked trails. Thank you.

**Please keep this brochure or pass it on!**  
**That helps to save paper, save money, and reduce waste.**

This brochure was first created, by volunteers, as a project of the community committee, in 2014, for the Tenth Anniversary of the MacNaughton-Morrison Section of the South Huron Trail.

The addition of water quality protection information was made possible thanks to County of Huron Clean Water Project support.

For more information on water quality, forest conditions, and wetland cover in the Upper Ausable Watershed visit:  
[abca.ca/watershedreportcard](http://abca.ca/watershedreportcard)





## Woodlands

Trees you may find along the South Huron Trail include hardwood forests, plantations, and valleyland trees. Tree species here include:

Basswood  
Beech and Blue Beech  
Black Cherry  
Black Maple  
Hemlock  
Ironwood  
White Pine

## Plants

You may find wildflowers along the trail and other plants such as Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). (Did you know some parts of the chokecherry are poisonous?)

Be careful of Poison Ivy during your hike. Hopefully most of the plants you find will lead to more pleasant encounters such as:

Astor/Aster (*Asteraceae*)  
Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum giganteum*)  
Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)  
False Solomon's Seal  
(*Maianthemum racemosum*)  
Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)  
Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)  
Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)  
Red Trillium (*Trillium erectum*)  
Trillium (Trillium, Wakerobin, Tri flower, Birthroot)  
(Did you know that pink trilliums are just more mature white trilliums?)  
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)



Red Trillium

At the water's edge and in the marshy areas, cattails, sedges, and rushes grow.

## Donations

We hope you enjoy the MacNaughton-Morrison and Morrison Dam Conservation Area sections of the South Huron Trail.



The trail is maintained for your enjoyment, thanks to your donations. You can donate to the trail online or directly to Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation. Charitable gift receipts for income tax purposes are available for donations of \$20 or more. Talk to Ausable Bayfield Conservation about gift certificates to support the trail as a novel way to buy a community-minded green gift for 'that person who has everything.'

Exeter Lions Club, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, Municipality of South Huron, and other community-minded citizens, businesses, and groups fund the trail. It took more than half a million dollars to create the MacNaughton-Morrison trail. This was raised through generous donations and in-kind contributions. Continued fundraising is needed to maintain South Huron Trail. Donate now and help support fundraising so people can continue to enjoy the health, recreation, social, and economic benefits of this accessible trail.

Reflect, enjoy nature, and remember loved ones at the Woodland Reflection Shelter pavilion, shown on the map, near the trail entrance off Morrison Line.

## South Huron Trail Mobile

The South Huron Trail Mobile gives people with limited mobility the chance to enjoy nature along the trail. There is no charge. Continued public donations make the service possible.



Volunteers drive this modified electric golf cart, giving people who could not otherwise walk the trail the opportunity to experience it. Contact Ausable Bayfield Conservation at 519-235-2610 or toll-free at 1-888-286-2610 to book your ride. (Rides are subject to weather and volunteer availability).

The Trail Mobile was created in 2006, thanks to a donation from the family of the late Gordon Strang. In 2018, a South Huron Community Grant, from Municipality of South Huron, combined with a donation from Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, made it possible to acquire and equip a new Trail Mobile.

## Have a Safe Visit

**CAUTION:** These are nature trails. Trail surfaces and boardwalks may be slippery or uneven. Be especially careful during windy, wet, and icy conditions.

- Wear appropriate clothing, footwear, and equipment for your preferred trail activity.
- Stay away from fast-flowing water.
- Ice conditions on Morrison Reservoir and Exeter Dam are not monitored.

## Rules for Morrison Dam C. A. and MacNaughton-Morrison Trail

Rules protect the environment, you, and your fellow users. These rules must be followed and are enforced under the *Conservation Authorities Act* and *Trespass to Property Act*. Refer to signs and entrance kiosks for permitted and prohibited activities.

- The property is closed to the public between sunset and sunrise.
- Motorized vehicles, motor boats, horses, hunting, alcohol use, and camping are not permitted.
- Campfires are permitted only in the one fire pit in the open area near Morrison Dam fishing docks.
- Dogs must be on a leash, under control, and you must clean up after your dog.
- Ensure your pet does not damage or interfere with vegetation or wildlife and does not interfere with others' enjoyment.
- Do not remove or damage plants, trees, wildlife, signs, or structures.
- Stay on trails. Respect neighbouring landowners.
- Fishing is permitted in compliance with applicable legislation.
- Don't litter.

## Trail Etiquette

- Share the trail. Keep on the right, pass on the left.
- Be a safe cyclist. Cycle slowly, give right-of-way to hikers, use a bicycle bell to warn hikers, be cautious at curves, and wear a helmet.

Please report vandalism and incidents to the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) at 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

# MacNaughton - Morrison Trail

62 MacNaughton Drive, Exeter, Ontario – Municipality of South Huron



# Morrison Dam Conservation Area

71108 Morrison Line, R.R. 3 Exeter, Ontario – Municipality of South Huron

