

A Beautiful Pocket of the Jijuktu'kwejk River Floodplain

BY IAN MANNING

The twisted/messy floodplain of the Jijuktu'kwejk (Cornwallis) River would have once occupied a huge amount of the Valley floor. With seasonal flooding, an unobstructed river could inundate its banks, dumping huge volumes of sediment and debris into the floodplain, creating a highly disturbed, nutrient-rich, dynamic environment that would have been host to some amazing forests! Over the previous 300+ years, the floodplain has been diked, drained, directed, and cleared of forest and its complexity.

Luckily, if you know where to look, you can find pockets of this wonderful habitat scattered across the Valley. While many of these pockets are on privately-owned land, Waterville Recreation Park in Waterville, Nova Scotia, offers fantastic public access to explore this area.

The trail twists through 7 hectares of woodland along the banks of the river. Along the trail, you will see several pockets of floodplain habitat that possess species including Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), False Solomons Seal (*Maianthemum racemose*), Nodding Trillium (*Trillium cernuum*), Rose Twisted-Stalk (*Streptopus lanceolatus*), and Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), as well as a huge diversity of colourful fungi when conditions are right. The proximity to the river also makes for great birding/wildlife watching. Belted Kingfisher, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Common Yellowthroat, Gray Catbird, Barred Owl, Raccoon, Beaver and Eastern Chipmunk can all be found reliably along the trail.

Access to the park can be found at 1015 Maple Street. There is excellent parking. The park is also home to a well-loved frisbee golf course (follows the trail), playground, and baseball fields, so your best bet for uninterrupted access is in the morning. The trail is also used by horseback riders. The river can be accessed from the north side of the trail. However, please take caution because the property boundary is marked by barbed wire and the ground can be slippery.



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