

## NAMING THE LAND

September 15, 2006

Stretching accross eight counties, from the eastern edge of Lake Huron to the celebrated greenery of Frontenac County, lies a mosaic of granite barrens and limestone plains. This unnamed area forms a transition zone between the rocky plains of the Canadian Shield and the more fertile farmlands that surround the Great Lakes. A diverse range of plant and animal species thrive on the unique piecemeal ecology of this area. Here you can find the golden-winged warbler, Blanding's turtle and the five-lined skink, Ontario's only native lizard species.

The area – only 240 kilometres in length and 40 kilometres across at its widest point – is under threat from urban development, mining interests and a conspicuous absence of municipal attention. And so, three years ago, Orillia's Couchiching Conservancy banded together with other concerned groups to raise awareness of what they call "The Land Between."

Ron Reid, executive director of the Couchiching Conservancy, says that The Land Between Collaborative wants to increase awareness of, and protection for, the unique features of the area. "We want to bring more attention and protection to this band of land along the southern edge of the [Canadian] Shield, primarily because it is ... so rich in biodiversity," says Reid. "It has great transitions in geology, elevation and climate."

According to Reid, the biggest challenges for the Collaborative relate to the location of this area. Because it crosses so many municipal boundaries, it has often been overlooked as a whole. And now, because of increased protection for areas to the north and south, specifically in cottage country and the Greenbelt regions, The Land Between is of increasing interest to the development industry.

"It's kind of everybody's backyard," says Reid, "the backyard of backyards that no one pays attention to. We need to look at this as a whole and figure out how to push for protection. We don't want to inadvertently lose the features that make this zone so special."

*This article, written by Geoff Nixon, appears in the Autumn 2006 issue of [ON Nature](#) magazine.*