

Habitat

Rivers need to meander. It's what they do! When people build channels or force rivers into a certain path, water may destroy these efforts over time. See how this stream meanders? Leaving a vegetative buffer and avoiding development alongside a river or stream can prevent future problems when it changes course.

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...look for signs of animals—birds chirping, holes in the ground, or tracks over the snow. Riversides can provide so much habitat for diverse wildlife!

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As you head back to the trailhead, see if you can find any of these things in the landscape:



___ Cricket



___ Willow



___ Goldenrod



___ Milkweed

UPPER LA PLATTE RIVER



About us

The Lake Champlain Land Trust is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1978 that preserves the islands, shorelands, and natural areas of Lake Champlain. Upper La Platte River Natural Area is a 65-acre wildlife preserve boasting hiking trails through diverse forest habitat and fields perfect for cross-country skiing. The Lake Champlain Land Trust permanently conserved this property in 2011. Many thanks to the Vermont Zen Center, the Town of Shelburne, the Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee, and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board for being great partners, and to the Lake Champlain Land Trust members for their support!

Do you have QUESTIONS about something you've seen on the trail today? Need directions to more of our natural areas? Want to donate online? Contact us via www.LCLT.org or 802-862-4150!



Water forest Land & Habitat

A family hiking guide to the Upper La Platte River Natural Area



Upper La Platte River

Water

1 You are in the Lake Champlain WATERSHED. Do you know what a watershed is?

It's all the land that drains into a body of water. The La Platte River empties into Lake Champlain just a few miles west from where you are! When it rains, water will run over the land to the nearest water body (in this case, the La Platte River).



So all the land you see now affects Lake Champlain!

2 When you look around as you stand on the bridge, what do you see? If you said the home of a RARE FISH, you'd be right! The Stone Catfish, a type of small fish only found in two places in Vermont, lives in these waters! They like shallow water with lots of rocks for protection. We are so glad that these fish can live safely on this protected property!



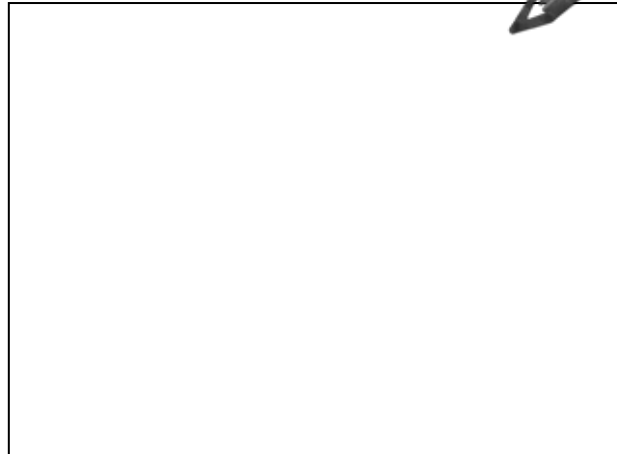
Stone Catfish

3 ROOTS. The glue that holds the land together! We keep plants growing near rivers so the roots will hold the soil together, the fallen leaves will provide food and habitat for insects, and the trees will provide shade to keep the water chilly for cool-water-loving animals!



Forest

Find a small item from the trail to sketch below!



4 A FLOODPLAIN is the land that can be flooded when water rises up high after rainstorms. Floodplains act as sponges, soaking up and cleaning water as it drains through the soil. It is important to keep floodplains in their natural state so they can continue to perform these critical services.



5 Phosphorus is an important nutrient for plant growth. Unfortunately, we are dumping too much of it onto our lands and waterways, which is causing too much algae to grow. Excess phosphorus can cause dangerous algal blooms in certain spots on Lake Champlain in late summer.

Have you seen blue green algae on the lake this year?



Blue-green algae in Lake Champlain

photo credit: Vermont Public Radio

Here are some ways you can reduce the amount of phosphorus entering Lake Champlain:

- TEST your soil (and don't add phosphorus to your lawn or garden if you don't need it!)
- Reduce the use of FERTILIZERS that contain phosphorus
- Keep YARD WASTE out of your street (the waste may contain a lot of phosphorus, which could wash down the storm drain during the next rain storm)
- PLANT VEGETATION along rivers and slopes (plants will take up the phosphorus and the root structure will allow water to drain into the soil, rather than running down to the nearest storm drain)

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Land