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Greenbelt Foundation

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Greenbelt Foundation Backgrounder

The Greenbelt Value of Nature Survey for Recreation in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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Overview

[*The Greenbelt Value of Nature Survey for Recreation in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*](#) examines the way in which people connected with nature over a one-year period and the impacts of COVID-19 on nature-based activities. Interviews were conducted in July and August 2021 to examine participation in nature-based activities between July 2020 and August 2021.

The purpose of the study was to collect in-depth data from residents of the Greater Golden Horseshoe region (GGH) about their interactions with nature to build a “case for support” for continued protection of and investment in parks and natural areas.

This research updates and build on the findings from the 2012 *Canadian Nature Survey*, including to better understand the activities and expenditures of people living in the Greater Golden Horseshoe on a wide range of nature-based activities over a one-year period.

The 2012 *Canadian Nature Survey* was developed through active collaboration between the federal government and all 13 provincial and territorial governments. Details about the 2012 Canadian Nature Survey are available [HERE](#).

Objectives of the Greenbelt Study

To examine:

- Overall importance of access to nature.
- Ways in which people have connected to nature in the study period.
- Impact of COVID-19 on amount of time engaged in different activities.
- Number of trips greater than 20km away from home to areas in Ontario’s Greenbelt.
- Locations of most common nature-based trips.
- Participation in volunteer nature conservation activities during the study period.
- Donation, maintenance, restoration and/or purchase of land for nature-based purposes.
- Motivations for and barriers to seeking out nature-based activities.

Key Findings

The key findings of *The Greenbelt Value of Nature Survey for Recreation in the Greater Golden Horseshoe* were:

1. Over a one-year period, one-half of Greater Golden Horseshoe residents – approximately 3.7 million people – took a trip to a destination in and around the Greenbelt for the purpose of engaging in a nature-based activity.
2. Eighty-five per cent of adults living in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region (GGH) participated in nature-based activities in the one-year period.
3. Greater Golden Horseshoe residents cite a range of reasons for seeking out nature-based activities, most of which relate to mental and physical well-being.
4. Eighty-four per cent of GGH residents indicate that it is important to them personally to live in an area with good access to nature. However, only 67 per cent rate the access where they live as “excellent” or “good”.
5. People spent the most time walking or hiking in natural areas, relaxing in outdoor settings, gardening, bird watching, and cycling.
6. Some active participants engaged in a number of activities at a high frequency, especially walking/hiking, birding, relaxing, gardening, cycling, recreational vehicle use on land, photography, and golfing.
7. The pandemic had a big impact on the amount of time – and ways in which -- people engaged in nature-based activities over the one-year period.
8. Greater Golden Horseshoe residents spent over \$6.5 billion participating in nature-based activities in the one-year period.
9. About one-in-six GGH residents report making a donation or paying a membership fee to a nature or conservation organization in the one-year period.
10. More than one-in-ten GGH residents indicate that they maintained, restored or purchased land for a nature-related reason in the one-year period.

About Greenbelt Foundation:

Greenbelt Foundation is a charitable organization, solely dedicated to ensuring the Greenbelt remains permanent, protected and prosperous. We make the right investments in its interconnected natural, agricultural, and economic systems, to ensure a working, thriving Greenbelt for all. Ontario's Greenbelt is the world's largest, with over two million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers working together to provide clean air, fresh water, and a reliable local food source.

The Greenbelt Foundation’s website has resources such as the [Greenbelt Explore Page](#) to help people find the best options for hiking and cycling routes, food and farming discovery routes, and many more Greenbelt adventures. Research into the state of large parks and near-urban nature in the Greater Golden Horseshoe can also be found on Greenbelt Foundation’s website. These reports are entitled [State of Large Parks in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe](#) and [Near-Urban Nature Network: A Solution to Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss](#).

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