Thanks to the Heritage Green Community Trust, the Eramosa Karst Conservation area opened on June 20, 2008 as a Cornerstone of Hamilton Conservation Authority’s 50th anniversary celebration. The 180-acre site was donated $1.5 million to pay for the development and long-term maintenance of the conservation area. The Heritage Green Community Trust was established in May 1997 to provide support in the form of grants to community, educational or charitable organizations of upper Stoney Creek. The Heritage Green Trust successfully distributes grants to qualifying recipients or organizations that clearly provide demonstrable benefits to residents in the City of Stoney Creek residing south of the Niagara Escarpment and within three kilometers of the perimeter of the Newalta Stoney Creek Landfill Site.

**GEOLOGY**

The Eramosa Karst is filled with underground caves and streams, meadows and karsts. This unique natural gem was the watershed’s first major conservation area to open in 20 years. Eramosa Karst is located in the southwestern section of the Stoney Creek area of Hamilton. It extends from Highland Road south to Rymal Road, and from Upper Mount Albion Road to Second Road West. A perfect location for hiking, nature appreciation, and education, Eramosa Karst adds one more unique feature to Hamilton’s natural inventory.

**WHAT IS A KARST?**

Karsts are geological formations including underground drainage, caves and passages caused by dissolution rock, found in limestone formations like the Niagara Escarpment. The Ministry of Natural Resources designated the Eramosa Karst lands as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest in 2001, because it is believed to have the largest number of unique karst features in any single area in the province. The Eramosa Karst contains examples of 16 different karst features, several of which are provincially significant. These include soil pipes, sinkholes, seeping streams, dry valleys and a 335 metre-long cave (the tenth longest in all of Ontario).

Surface water and underground water flows began carving out this landscape we call “karst” about 13,000 years ago, after the last glacier retreated in this part of the province and meltwaters covered the land. Today, the drainage system sustains the karst and provides examples of this erosion process and karst features in different stages of development.

**BIOLOGY**

The Eramosa Karst natural area is made up of meadow, thicket, woodland and forest remnants communities. It is located in the Dundas Creek watershed. The forest area is made up of Sugar Maple, Ironwood, Hawthorn, Grey Dogwood, White Ash, Black Cherry, American Beech, Red Oak, Butternut, Shagbark Hickory and a variety of smaller native plant species. Living in these diverse habitats are numerous species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects including wild turkey, coyote, white-tailed deer, meadow voles, and the cottontail rabbit. Red-eyed Vireos, Indigo Buntings, Savannah Sparrows and the Red-tailed Hawk are common birds found throughout this naturally rich area.

**EDUCATION**

The diversity of geological and hydrological features and its central location in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, makes the Eramosa Karst one of the best sites in Ontario for education and research opportunities. Protecting the Eramosa Karst’s unique network of features will ensure that scientists, students and naturalists can continue to enjoy this natural resource for now and for generations to come.

HCA has developed Teacher’s Kits which help teachers conduct self-guided field trips. If you are interested in getting a Kit, please contact Beth Stormont, HCA Education Coordinator at 905-627-1233 or bethdvca@conservationhamilton.ca
The East Mountain Trail Loop is a result of the Red Hill Valley Open Space Replacement Strategy which identifies 69 ha of new public open space for a multi-use trail. It connects the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area to other HCA and City of Hamilton open space, parkland and waterfalls on the East Hamilton and Stoney Creek Mountain such as Felker’s Falls, Albion Falls, Valley Park and Mount Albion Conservation Area. The Loop provides links to the Chippawa Rail Trail, Bruce Trail, Red Hill Valley, Trans Canada and Ontario Waterfront Trails.

The project brings a new inventory of natural areas with strong connecting green corridors that provide significant human and wildlife habitat in East Hamilton. HCA’s 3.1 km share of the 10 kilometre trail has now been completed thanks to fundraising by the Hamilton Conservation Foundation. As of this printing, some trail connections have yet to be completed.