

7.2 Natural Heritage Integrity Assessment

Although many aspects of the natural heritage of the Ottawa River have been found to be exceptional, the river cannot be nominated based on its natural heritage due to the several impoundments located within the nominated section.

However, the river has exceptional natural heritage values, including the following:

- The Ottawa River traverses segments of the lithosphere that represent the past 3 billion years of the Earth's history, and a uniquely wide variety of these geological features can be easily accessed along the river.
- The Ottawa River is the only river that crosses four major geological subdivisions in Canada.
- The Ottawa River is the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence, flowing 1271 kilometres from its source.
- The Ottawa River hosts over 300 species of birds, especially waterfowl, and is one of the continent's most important migratory bird refuges.
- The rich ecosystems of the Ottawa River, including its wetlands, floodplain ecosystems and forests, sustain more than 50 species at risk, including the River Redhorse, American Shad, Least Bittern, and the Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle, one of the most rare turtles in Canada.