

Geology app helps students hunt for fossils, study waterfalls

March 19 2013, by Don Campbell



A new app is making it possible to discover the natural wonders of Ontario all in the palm of your hands.

Called Let's Rock Ontario! the [app](#) is the brainchild of UTSC geology professor Nick Eyles and two of his undergraduate environmental [science students](#): Richard Gao and Shane Soohkan. It uses [Google](#) Map technology to pinpoint the exact location of significant geological and [natural history](#) sites across Ontario, while Google Street View and Navigation aids bring the sites a click away.

"This has huge educational potential because it brings the outdoors and the natural wonders of Ontario into the classroom through technology," says Eyles.

Field trips to remote sites by bus are becoming prohibitively expensive for schools notes Eyles, but this technology allows students to take a virtual tour for free. In addition to photos and descriptions, the app and website utilize [Google Street View](#) providing a detailed, panoramic view.

"I really like this approach because it frees up information that was only available in a textbook or journal article," says Eyles.

The website and app will correspond with a guidebook Eyles has written, scheduled for release in April. More information about Let's Rock Ontario! can be found at planetrocks.ca/

The app and website currently include more than 370 locations, divided into 11 categories including fossils, waterfalls, rocks and minerals, ice age, earth history, nature, recreation, landscapes, viewpoints, historic events or places and top sites.

While some well-known sites are obvious – Niagara Falls and Killarney Provincial Park are on the list– the real benefit comes in discovering the

lesser known gems, such as fossil hunting in Courtice or discovering the Elora Gorge near Fergus.

Existing apps and websites focus on the location of hotels and restaurants close to major tourist sites with very limited information on natural history, says Gao. But Let's Rock Ontario! offers detailed and easy-to-access information on where to discover the natural wonders of the Ontario landscape for free.

"There's no better guide to Ontario's geological and natural history sites than Nick Eyles," says Sookhan of his former professor who has written extensively on Canadian geology and hosted several documentaries on the topic for CBC and TVO.

The trio are encouraging users to send them feedback and offer suggestions of more locations to add to their growing list of sites. Meanwhile, they are looking at developing a virtual field trip function as well as making the app available for iPhone and Blackberry.

Provided by University of Toronto

Citation: Geology app helps students hunt for fossils, study waterfalls (2013, March 19) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-03-geology-app-students-fossils-waterfalls.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.