

# localnews

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## LIVING

■ PETERBOROUGH AND AREA IS HOME TO ABUNDANT AND VARIED HABITATS, AND HABITANTS

# Wildlife and where to find it

People often ask me where they can go to see birds, but turtles or other interesting species that are part of our local flora and fauna. My initial answer is often "just about anywhere." Although this is true, I realize it might not be terribly helpful. This week I'd like to begin a series of articles on "where to go" in the Kawarthas territories available. But first, a little background information is necessary.



**Drew Monkman**  
OUR CHANGING SEASONS

Peterborough County and the Kawarthas embrace two of Canada's principal physiographic regions. Driving north from Peterborough along Hwy. 28, we enter the green park lands of the Canadian Shield as we enter Burleigh Falls. Suddenly, beautiful pink granite and other Precambrian igneous and metamorphic rocks are easily visible along the roadsides and lakeshores. With so much hard, granitic rock near the surface, the soil is thin, and abandoned farms attest to the difficulty of carrying out agriculture. Because farming in most areas is impractical, much of the land is forested.

The land south of the Shield is lower in elevation and has more fertile, calcareous loamy soils. It belongs to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Lowland. The rock here is limestone, most visible in road cuts all along the edge of the Shield such as the southern entrance to the village of Buchhorn.

The Kawarthas region is also defined, of course, by its numerous water courses such as the Trent Severn Waterway and the Kawartha Lakes. This mix of Shield country, lowlands and waterways makes for one of the richest assortments of habitats in the province. Let's begin with forest. The tree cover throughout the Kawarthas belongs to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Forest Region. Common trees are eastern white pine, red pine, eastern hemlock, and white cedar grow in the company of deciduous broad leaved species such as sugar maple, red maple, American beech, yellow Birch, American sycamore, red oak, and ironwood. However, species more common in the Boreal Forest Region to the north also exist here in good numbers. These include white and black spruce, balsam poplar, jack pine (especially north of Havelock along County Road 46), trembling aspen, and white birch.

Other habitats are abundant, and each, with its own coterie of species. Much of the land is made up of a patchwork of small woodlots (especially south of the agricultural land) and old fields, meadows and swamps. Marshes are dominated by cattails while swamps are characterized by the presence of black ash, speckled alder, and often white



The flat limestone "pavement" in the foreground and abundant junipers are typical alvar habitat east of Clear Lake.

DREW MONKMAN Special to The Examiner

cedar.

Finally, the Kawarthas is also home to some fascinating localised habitats. These include the bare rock, oak, and juniper ridges of places like Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park; the largely open, thin soiled expanses of flat, surface limestone known as alvars; the pockets of Atlantic coastal plain vegetation that expanded here from the eastern U.S. coastal region during the melting of the last ice sheet ten thousand years ago; and even a few tiny remnants of tallgrass prairie. Two rare wet land types can also be found, namely bogs and fens. Bogs are acidic wetlands that are low in nutrients and covered by spongy peat deposits and a thick carpet of sphagnum moss. Fens are similar but bogs but are less acidic, have higher nutrient levels, and are dominated by sedges, a grass like plant.

I am continually discovering new areas myself and never cease to be amazed by the richness of the flora and fauna to be found here.

### CITY OF PETERBOROUGH AND VICINITY

**Little Lake:** From south end of downtown Peterborough on George Street, go east along Crescent St. to the well treed Little Lake Cemetery. Good observation points also include the Mark Street boat launch, Edgewater Boulevard, and Lock 20. Highlights: Waterbirds in early

spring, late fall and winter (ice conditions permitting) including diving ducks, grebes and uncommon gulls; bald eagles possible in winter; land birds in the cemetery (e.g., merlin) and a wide variety of mature native trees

**River Road:** Also called County Road 32. Located on east bank of Otonabee River between Peterborough and Lakefield. Highlights: River has diving ducks such as goldeneyes and mergansers during migration and in winter; migrating swallows in spring; bald eagles and others sometimes seen in winter.

**Otonabee River South:** Located just north of the Peterborough By-Pass, this section of the river is best viewed either from Sherin Ave. on the east or Cameron St. on the west. Highlights: Diving ducks and sometimes grebes during migration and in winter; bald eagle possible.

**Lock 19 on Otonabee River:** Take Sherburne St. south from Lansdowne St. Turn left at Morrow and follow to Lock 19 parking lot. Highlights: Spawning walleye and suckers in early April

**Jackson Park:** Located at junction of Parkhill Rd. and Monaghan Rd. in Peterborough. Highlights: migrant land birds in spring and fall; numerous large white pine, eastern hemlock, American beech; diverse ferns and wildflowers (e.g., turkchweed) along rail trail and especially the wooded section of the path that borders the east

side of the lagoon.

**Mark S. Burnham Provincial Park:** Located on north side of Highway 7, just east of junction with Television Road on east side of Peterborough. Highlights: Remnant stand of very large native trees (e.g., sugar maple, hemlock); rich and diverse flora, including ferns, sedges, spring wildflowers.

**Trans-Canada Trail:** From Jackson Park, east to Omenawe and beyond. Highlights: Wide variety of trees, shrubs (e.g., silky dogwood), ferns and wildflowers border the trail; wetland species at Lily Lake and east to Ackison Rd. (e.g., wood duck, swamp sparrow, nannery); fringed gentian and ladies' tresses orchids just east of Hwy 7 overpass

**Parkway Trail:** A paved trail extending from Highland Road to Cumberland Ave. Highlights: Hilliard to Cumberland section has large concentrations of migrant sparrows in fall and robins in winter; interesting flora including abundant Virginia creeper; wetland plants and birds (e.g., common yellowthroat) between Chemung and Hilliard; deer sometimes seen.

**Trent Wetland Nature Area:** Numerous trails traverse a variety of habitats on both sides of the Otonabee River. These include the Trent Wildlife Sanctuary trails east of University Rd., the Canal Nature Area west of University Rd., and the Promise Rock trail, which extends north from the Science

Complex parking lot. The Archaeological Centre Wetland is also worth a visit in the spring, especially for the amphibian chorus. Highlights: a wide variety of birds (e.g., American woodcock, great horned owl), butterflies, plants, amphibians, etc.

**University Road wetland:** Located just north of the Warsaw Road (Co. Rd. 4) on University Rd. Highlights: Impressive frog and toad chorus in the spring

**Rosely-Greenway Trail:** A 20 km, mostly paved trail from the Ecology Park on Ashburnham Dr. through East City in Peterborough and north to Lakefield. Highlights: Birds (especially the marsh just north of the Trent Science Complex), butterflies, amphibian chorus in spring.

**Peterborough Ecology Park and Beavermead Park:** Located on Ashburnham Dr. just south of Maria St. Highlights: Songbirds (e.g., American redstart, house wren), winter-bird feeder trail, but-terflies at gardens, demonstration gardens including native plants, tallgrass prairie, and much, much more!

**Meadow Creek to Downer's Corners Wetland:** Located between Ashburnham Rd. and Television Rd. Highlights: wetland birds and plants, amphibians, plants

**Cold Springs Wetland:** Follow Monaghan Rd. south of By pass to Johnston Dr. and Beardsmore Dr. Highlights: wetland birds in marshes and wet fields (e.g., great

egret in summer some years, blue-winged teal), amphibian chorus

**Crawford Bird Trail:** From Monaghan Rd., just south of Lansdowne, to Crawford Dr. Highlights: Good general birding, especially at Crawford Dr. end

Next week, I'll look at areas north and east of Peterborough.

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*Karl Eggressy is a Guelph nature photographer. To see more of his work and to contact him, go to www.klegressy.com.*

## Snowy owls popping up in south

This winter is turning out to be quite productive for anyone interested in seeing a snowy owl.

These large, mostly white owls lead nomadic lives and often venture vast distances from their Arctic home in search of productive feeding areas.

The owls have come south this year because their favourite food, namely small rodents called lemmings, are in short supply in the Arctic. They are searching for small rodents such as deer mice and meadow voles but will also catch birds, including ducks. Once they have found a productive feeding area, they will often stay put for a number of weeks.

In the past, snowy owls have sometimes turned up in the vicinity of the Peterborough Airport, where they find the large, open fields to their liking. Although I am not aware of any snowy owls in the immediate Peterborough area this year, there are at least four on Amherst Island (located just west of Kingston), one near Pippa's Point on the Leslie St. Spit in Toronto, and one in Oakville at 9th Line and Burnhamthorpe Rd.

Snowies differ from other owls in being largely diurnal. They usually stand out fairly conspicuously, even in a snow-covered field where they usually perch on a small hummock on the ground.

— Drew Monkman



**KARL EGGRESSY**  
Special to The Examiner