

localnews

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Editor JIM HENDRY life@peterboroughexaminer.com 745-4641 ext. 242

LIVING

Wildlife with a northern flavour

Kirkfield to Apsley route dotted with parks, conservation areas and informal sites

This week, I continue my exploration of some of the best nature-viewing areas in the Kawarthas by looking at destinations north of Peterborough. I have started in the northeast in the Garden Alvar near Kirkfield and worked eastward towards the Havelock area. Almost all of these areas offer excellent opportunities to see a wide range of species and not just those mentioned in the highlights. As a general rule spring and early summer are the best time for birds and wildflowers but interesting sightings are possible all year round, including winter.



Drew Monkman
OUR CHANGING SEASONS

Garden Alvar - Located northwest of Lindsay. From Kirkfield, take County Rd. 6 north. Explore access points such as Wylie Rd. and Alvar Rd. Highlights: Best early summer birding destination in southern Ontario, especially for uncommon and rare grassland birds (e.g., loggerhead shrike, upland sandpiper, eastern bluebird, sedge wren, grasshopper sparrow, etc.) and marsh birds (e.g., yellow rail, Virginia rail, American bittern); unique alvar plant communities (e.g., prairie smoke, Indian paintbrush); Garden Nature Festival takes place every year in early June with numerous activities to learn about all aspects of nature. For an excellent on-line birding guide to the area, go to: <http://www.ofto.ca/report-sandarticles/gardenalvar.php>

Alberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve: From Norland on Hwy. 35, take County Rd. 45 east for 7 km. The property is on the south side of the road at address marker 4164. Highlights: 470 hectares of high-quality forest straddling the contact between the granite rocks of the Canadian Shield and the limestone of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Lowlands; great diversity of habitat types, breeding birds (e.g., red shouldered hawk) and flora (e.g., showy lady's slipper). For more information, go to: <http://www.kawarthafairfieldnaturalists.org/Alberg.php>

KEN REID CONSERVATION

Ken Reid Conservation Area: From the junction of highways 7 and 35, go 5 km. north on Hwy. 35. Turn right on Kenrei Park Rd. and go 3 km. Highlights: Huge marsh with boardwalks; forest, meadows, and marshes; high density of active osprey nests.

Emly Trail: Located on Pecord Rd. (Kawartha Lakes County Rd. 14) just west of Cowan's Bay and Emly Provincial Park. Highlights: A heavily-wooded park with two looped trails; many diverse nature trees including very old pines; excellent display of trilliums and other wildflowers in spring.

Gannon's Narrows: On County Rd. 16 north of Ennismore at junction of Pigeon and Buckhorn lakes. Highlights: Waterfall in winter, spring and fall; eagles possible; otters on ice.

Gannon's Narrows Conservation Area: On north side of County Rd. 16, just east of the waterfall. Highlights: Large stand of mature hardwoods and conifers; large variety of woodpeckers; raptors sometimes nest here; good wildflower display in spring.

Six Foot Bay Rd. to Buckhorn Lake: From Buckhorn, go east on County Rd. 37 about 5 km. Take Six Foot Bay Rd. south near Sandy Lake. Highlights:



TERRY CARPENTER Special to The Examiner (top)
KARL EGRESSY Special to The Examiner (bottom left)
The wide variety of wildlife you might encounter in the northern section of the Kawarthas includes abundant white-tailed deer (top) and the occasional golden eagle.



DREW MONKMAN Special to The Examiner
The Alberg Wildlife Sanctuary is near Norland.

Migrating waterfowl in spring during ice break up and, to a lesser extent, in fall.

Galway-Cavendish Forest Access Rd.: From Buckhorn, take County Rd. 36 north to County Rd. 507 and follow north to just past the Mississauga Dam Rd. Turn west onto Galway-Cavendish Forest Access Rd. Highlights: excellent butterfly including rarities such as West Virginia white; watch for some species (e.g., eastern comma, Compton's tortoiseshell) perched on road; excellent warbler habitat.

SELWYN BEACH

Selwyn Beach Conservation Area: Located just north of Selwyn off of County Rd. 23. Highlights: Northern portion of area has been left undeveloped. A nature trail passes through a variety of habitats, ranging from wetland to woodland and open field; Impassive stands of beech, maple and oak; excellent wildflower display in May.

Lakefield Sewage Lagoons: On southeastern edge of Lakefield. Turn east off County Rd. 32 (River Rd.) onto County Rd. 33, parking on right. Open to public, but please do not block the gate. Most of the birds are in the first lagoon. Highlights: Wide variety of migrating ducks in spring and fall; rare black terns in summer.

Lakefield Marsh: Located at south end of Lake Katchewanooka. At Lakefield Secondary School, turn north off County Rd. 29 onto Clement Street. Turn right on D'Yncourt St. Follow signs. Highlights: Wetland birds including black terns, American bittern, and migrant ducks; large assortment of dragonflies and damselflies in summer, especially when explored by canoe; observation tower and interpretive signage.

MILLER CREEK

Miller Creek Conservation Area: Take Seventh Line of Smith about 2 km west from County Rd. 24 or take East Communications Rd. about 2 km east from Bridgenorth. Highlights: Wetland birds (e.g., American bittern, Virginia rail, swamp sparrow, blue-winged teal) in huge marsh when water levels are high enough - not the case in recent years; observation tower and trails.

Bridgenorth Trail: Located between Brunwell St. (off East Communication Rd. on east edge of Bridgenorth) and Hilliard St. N. where it meets the Fifth Line. Highlights: birds, butterflies (including gravel pit at Bridgenorth end), amphibians, late summer flowers, etc.

Lynch's Rock Rd. and Sawyer Creek Wetland: Follow Hwy. 28 (formerly

Hwy. 134) north almost to Lakefield. Turn east on Strickland Rd. and then north on Douro Fifth Line. Turn east on Lynch's Rock Rd. and follow through Sawyer Creek Wetland. Continue south along Douro Third Line. Highlights: Good birding in a variety of habitats. Sandhill cranes possible in adjacent fields.

Warsaw Caves Conservation Area: Take County Rd. 4 north from village of Warsaw. Turn east at Cave Rd.. Follow signs. Highlights: Fascinating limestone geologic formations including kettles and caves; large variety of ferns including walking fern; good birding in a variety of habitat types; trails through alvar habitat; whole area very good for fungi.

LAKE KATCHEWANOOKA

Lake Katchewanooka: The lake is best viewed from the bottom of Stenner Rd. off east side of Hwy. 28, just north of Lakefield. Highlights: Waterfowl in fall, winter and especially spring; eagles possible all year. They can often be seen perched on the pine trees on the islands to the south of Stenner Rd..

Clear Lake Rd. to Clear Lake: Turn east off Hwy. 29 on Clear Lake Rd. 2 km north of Young's Point. Follow to lake. Highlights: Migrating waterfowl in spring, especially during ice break up.

South Beach Rd. to Clear Lake: Turn

east off Hwy. 28 at south end of Young's Point. Follow road to lake. Highlights: Migrating waterfowl lake in spring, especially during ice break up; warblers such as pine warbler in pine forest along the road.

Petroglyphs Provincial Park: Follow Hwy. 28 north from Burleigh Falls to just past Woodview. Turn right on Northey's Bay Rd. and follow for about 11 km. Highlights: Situated on southern edge of Canadian Shield; extensive trail system; diverse flora including large stands of red and white pine; abundant white-tailed deer; birds of interest include bald eagles, crossbills and other finches in winter; purple finch, evening grosbeak, pine warbler, etc. in summer; five-lined skinks are fairly common; diverse butterflies along edges of lakes.

Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park: Located north of Buckhorn Lake between County Rd. 507 and Hwy. 28. Access from Anstruther Lake Rd. at Apsley. Highlights: A huge Canadian Shield park with vast rock barrens and some wilderness qualities; high-quality bogs, fen communities, alvar and Atlantic coastal plain plant communities, all with interesting flora; mature forest stands; high concentrations of some species at risk including whip-poor-will and common nighthawk; dark skies for astronomy.

JACK LAKE RD.

Jack Lake Rd.: Turn south off County Rd. 504 on east side of Apsley. Follow to Jack Lake and then west and south to sand and gravel pits at end of road. Highlights: birds (e.g., eagles possible over Jack Lake in late fall and winter; crossbills in tamarack bog just south of Hwy 504, excellent warbler habitat), large variety of butterflies, especially in tamarack bog and in sand/gravel pits; abundant deer.

The Gut Conservation Area on Crowe River: From Apsley, drive east on County Rd. 504 to Lasswade. Continue east for about 7 km. Watch for signs. Highlights: Impressive gorge in basaltic rock; Canadian Shield birds; impressive showing of spring wildflowers in May; excellent place to look for ferns and mosses.

County Rd. 46: From Apsley, drive east on County Rd. 504 to Lasswade. Turn right onto County Rd. 46 and follow south to Havelock. Best birding is between Lasswade and Round Lake. Highlights: A bird-rich area of mixed forest and wetlands; typical Canadian Shield species (e.g., hermit thrush, veery, red-eyed vireo, common raven, ovenbird, northern waterthrush, etc.); excellent frog chorus in spring; nesting snapping turtles in June; otters and fishers possible.

Sandy Lake Rd.: From County Rd. 46, turn right about 6 km north of Oak Lake onto Sandy Lake Rd. Highlights: Diverse butterflies including uncommon skipper (e.g., mulberry skipper) and (emerging in summer) along the edge of the sedge marshes; uncommon spring butterflies in May (e.g. Chryxus arctic, Olympia marble, pine elfin); pine warblers possible.

Next week, I'll look at some great destinations south of Peterborough.

Drew Monkman is a Peterborough teacher and author of Nature's Year in the Kawarthas. He can be reached at dmonkman1@gogocan.ca. Visit his website and see past columns at www.drewmonkman.com.

Karl Egressy is a Guelph nature photographer. To see more of his work and to contact him go to www.egressy.com.