

localnews

www.peterboroughexaminer.com

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

LIVING

Travel south to expand options

Head to Rice Lake, or farther to Lake Ontario shoreline, where waterfowl abound

This week, I would like to conclude my exploration of some of the best nature-viewing areas in the Kawarthas – and beyond – by looking at destinations located south of Peterborough. 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 times of year for birds and wildflowers but interesting sightings are possible all year round, including winter. Rice Lake should be especially interesting by March when waterfowl start migrating north. Presqu'île, Cobourg and Port Hope already have a large number of interesting ducks and gulls to be seen.



Drew Monkman

OUR
CHANGING
SEASONS



DREW MONKMAN Special to The Examiner

Maidenhair fern (top photo) is common along River Road near Hastings. Travel farther west across the top of Rice Lake and you might come across a flock of waterfowl like this one taking advantage of a flooded cornfield at Mather's Corners.

1. Peterborough Airport and Vicinity — Take Airport Rd. (County Rd. 11) south from Highway 115. Highlights: Check fields for shrikes and sometimes owls. Yellowlegs possible in spring in flooded fields.

2. Briar Hill Pond — Located at corner of County Roads 21 and 28. Highlights: Waterfowl and shorebirds, especially during spring migration.

3. Millbrook Valley Trails — Starts at the Medds Mountain Park and the millpond in the village of Millbrook. Highlights: The trail follows Baxter Creek and traverses a diversity of habitat types including forests, wetlands and meadows, each with its representative birds and plants. There are also a variety of local historic, environmental and cultural points of interest. Information: (705) 932-2929.

SCREECH OWLS

4. Pleasant Point Rd. — From County Rd. 21, take Fourth Line east. Highlights: Screech owls possible all year round in wooded areas along road. Large variety of warblers such as northern waterthrush and black-throated blue in the low, swampy forests.

5. North Shore of Rice Lake — Take County Rd. 2 east from Bailieboro. Turn south at Scriven Rd. and follow to lake. BB Beach Road, Perrin Point Road, Southview Drive, Wood Duck Drive, Hiawatha and Serpent Mounds (Keene) offer good views of the lake, as well. Highlights: Huge rafts of migrating ducks, sometimes numbering in the thousands, in early spring (late March through early April) and sometimes in late fall. Species usually include lesser scaups, greater scaups, ring-necked ducks, common goldeneyes, buffleheads, common mergansers, and often redheads and canvasbacks. This whole area is excellent for osprey, as well, with many active nests easily seen.

6. Bensfort Bridge — Follow County Rd. 2 to where it crosses Otonabee River. Highlights: Ducks and gulls in winter and spring. Watch for great black-backed gulls as well as white-winged gulls such as the glaucous and Iceland.

7. Bensfort Rd. — Take Bensfort Rd. south from By-pass and follow for 6 km to County Rd. 2. Highlights: Sandhill cranes are sometimes seen in the fields in early spring. The concessions east of Bensfort Rd. (e.g., Assumption Road) sometimes have yellowlegs, a type of shorebird, in the flooded fields in April and May.

8. Kent's Bay Rd. to Otonabee R. — Follow Hiawatha Line (County Rd. 31) south from County Rd. 2 to Hiawatha First Nation. Take Kent's Bay Rd. west to river. Highlights: Migrating ducks in the spring. Sandhill cranes possible.

9. Herkimer Point Rd. — Turn east off County Rd. 31 at Hiawatha First Nation. Highlights: Excellent birding in spring, summer and fall in a variety of habitats, including deciduous forest, swamp and marsh. Good views of Rice Lake from the end of the road. Species to expect include Virginia rail, American bittern, wood thrush, large variety of warblers, etc. Abundant wild columbine along roadside in late May.

DUCKS AT HIAWATHA

10. Harrick Point — Located at end of Paudash Street at Hiawatha First Nation. Highlights: Ducks in spring at mouth of Otonabee River.

11. Mather's Corners — Take Drummond Line just south from Mather's Corners on County Rd. 2. Highlights: Various ducks, geese and sometimes swans in early spring in flooded cornfield.

In years when there is sufficient meltwater, you can often find pintails, green-winged teal, northern shovelers, and sometimes even snow geese and tundra swans. The birds are best viewed with a spotting scope because of their distance from the road. If you carry on south to the end of Drummond Line, there is a heronry with large numbers of nesting great blue herons. The fields near the heronry are often good for bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks.

GRAB A CANOE

12. Indian River at Keene — Large wetland located just east of village. Canoe recommended. Highlights: Typical wetland plants, amphibians, reptiles and birds such as Virginia rail, swallows, swamp sparrow, etc.

13. River Rd. — Take Second Line of Asphodel south from County Rd. 2. River Rd. is first road on left. Follow across to Sixth Line of Asphodel. Highlights: Beautiful old forest with impressive mature trees, diverse ferns, abundant spring wildflowers and sometimes birds like red-bellied woodpecker and

Louisiana waterthrush which are usually found further south.

14. Old C.N. Railroad Bed — One section between Drummond Line and County Rd. 34 (north of Base Line). Second section east of Indian River between Base Line and Cameron Line. Highlights: Excellent birding and butterfly-watching from early May through early fall. Watch for Baltimore checkerspot.

TRAVEL SPOTS

A little farther afield...

1. Fleetwood Creek Natural Area — Pontypool, drive north on Highway 35. Turn right onto Ballyduff Rd. and continue for 2.9 km. Highlights: 380-hectare property located within the Oak Ridges Moraine. Trails wind through mature lowland forests, meadows and steep valleys. You will find a diverse flora, interesting geological formations and impressive fall foliage.

2. Ganaraska Forest — From Peterborough, take County Rd. 28 south to County Rd. 9. Turn right and continue to Northumberland - Durham boundary. Turn right and go 3 km to Ganaraska

Forest Centre. Highlights: Located on the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Ganaraska Forest is southern Ontario's largest forest. There are hundreds of kilometres of trails with a good selection of woodland birds including both northern and southern species. Watch and listen for hooded warbler, hermit thrush and scarlet tanager. The new Ganaraska Forest Centre houses the Oak Ridges Moraine Information Centre. Information: (905) 797-2721.

3. Peter's Woods Provincial Nature Reserve — From County Rd. 28 at Bewdley, travel east on County Rd. 9 and County Rd. 29 to McDonald Road. Turn right (south) on McDonald Rd. to Nature Reserve. Highlights: Magnificent old-growth forest with huge maples, beech, etc. Diverse ferns (e.g., maidenhair), orchids (showy orchids), spring wildflowers, and birds. Southern species such as Louisiana waterthrush have shown up here.

4. Cobourg Harbour — From Exit 474 on Highway 401, go south on Division Street (Highway 45) to east pier. Highlights: A great place to see wintering and migrant gulls and ducks. October to April is best. Migrant shorebirds often show up along the west side. Further lake views can be had from the foot of D'Arcy Street where more gulls and waterfowl often loiter. Flat rocks here contain fossils. Watch for red-necked grebes in early April.

LAKE ONTARIO SHORELINE

5. Port Hope Harbour — Take County Rd. 28 south from Peterborough to Port Hope where it becomes Ontario Street. Follow south to Mill Street and to harbour. Highlights: Most of the common wintering ducks can be found here. Snowy owl, glaucous and Iceland gulls are regular winter visitors.

6. Ganaraska River Fishway — Follow County Rd. 28 to first set of traffic lights south of Highway 401. Go west on Molson Street to river. The fish ladder is at Corbett's Dam, north of the bridge. Highlights: In April, watch rainbow trout making the run upstream to spawn. In September, Chinook salmon – some up to 30 or 40 pounds – can be seen jumping the ladder. At this time, you may also see Chinook salmon and brown trout. For more information call 1-800-667-1940.

7. Goodrich-Loomis Conservation Area — From Campbellford, go south on County Rd. 30 to Loomis Road, south of Codrington. Turn right and follow to conservation area. Highlights: A wide variety of ecological communities including oak savannah, wetland and mature mixed forest. There is also a well-established bluebird population. A four-hectare tallgrass prairie site is being restored.

8. Presqu'île Provincial Park — Located south of Brighton on Lake Ontario. Follow signs. Highlights: The 10-km-long peninsula jutting into Lake Ontario is a migrant trap for many species of birds. Waterbirds and shorebirds migrate through in large numbers. Presqu'île has unique plant communities of over 700 species including false dragonhead, grass-of-parnassus and Kalm's lobelia. It is also a staging area for migrant monarch butterflies in late summer. Amenities include trails, marsh boardwalk, bird sightings board, visitor centre; special event weekends throughout year including Waterfowl Viewing Weekends in March.

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