

CLIPSHAM'S WOOD

UTM Ref. 17TPV297629

Morrison Township, Gravenhurst
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 7.5 ha

Site Characteristics

This site situated just south of the Kahshe River and east of Sparrow Lake is a fairly typical Sugar Maple-Beech woodlot in a relatively rich setting. The area is on bedrock-drift complex, largely underlain by glaciolacustrine fine-grained deposits of silt and clay. The combination of silty-clay soils in a warmer microclimate make this site an ideal location for the establishment of species with more southern affinities. Notable among the flora is the presence of Broad Beech Fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*), a nationally and provincially rare Carolinian species.

The site is bordered on the western and southern ends by a large, low-lying wet meadow. There are no streams flowing through the site, only areas of surface runoff and ephemeral pools. The northern end of the site has surface water present creating swamp-like conditions.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular plants	176 native; 20 introduced
Birds	22 observed during breeding season
Mammals	2
Herpetofauna	4

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Diversity (B2)** - The total number of native plant species related to the size of the area is higher than expected for Muskoka as shown in Figure 1.
2. **Rare Species** - (B4) Clipsham Woods provides habitat for the following rare species:

Vascular Plants

Chenopodium simplex Maple-leaved Goosefoot [RR]
Elymus virginicus Virginia Rye [RR]
Hydrophyllum virginianum Virginia Waterleaf [RR]
Laportea canadensis Wood Nettle [RR]
Phegopteris hexagonoptera Broad Beech Fern [NR PR RR]
Triosetum aurantiacum Feverwort [RR]

In addition, 16 species of vascular plants were identified as regionally uncommon.

3. **Wildlife Concentrations** - (B5) The area is part of a medium-sized deer yard, with the Eastern Hemlock - Canada Yew forest adjacent to an open meadow providing suitable habitat.

4. **Biogeographic Interest** - (B7) Many of the vascular plant species which occur in Clipsham's Wood are more commonly found in rich locations in southern Ontario. The best example is the small disjunct population of Broad or Southern Beech Fern which was discovered in 1983 by Goltz, Britton and Whiting (1984). This record is 125 km north of the nearest collection site in the Carolinian forest. Other species at a northern limit in Muskoka are Virginia Waterleaf, Virginia Rye, Wood Nettle, Feverwort, Carrion Flower and Large Flowered Bellwort. The uncommon Snowberry and Bur Oak have distributions in Muskoka largely associated with clay-based soils.

Ownership and Disturbance

This small woodlot is privately owned. The area has a number of localized disturbances including an old trail and dumpsite and a larger open area with introduced grasses and Mossy Stonecrop. This suggests the previous existence of an old homestead. Recent disturbances include a private road to a new home at the southern end of the site. This road is very close to the population of Broad Beech Fern. The owners are aware of the significant features of this site.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of this site is related to the presence of rare species in a rich woodlot ecosystem, particularly Broad Beech Fern. Apparently this fern does not tolerate environmental disturbances, especially those affecting soil and moisture requirements (Goltz, Britton and Whiting, 1984). Policies to keep this woodlot intact should be developed.

Major Sources of Information

Bajc and Henry, 1991; Bergsma, et al., 1993; Goltz, Britton and Whiting, 1984; OMNR, 1989 deer yard surveys; Reid, et al., 1991.