

## KAHSHE LAKE BARRENS

UTM Ref. 17TPV370640

Ryde Township, Gravenhurst  
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 4290 ha

### *Site Characteristics*

Almost the entire Kahshe Lake Barrens area consists of weakly broken Precambrian bedrock plain, with overburden non-existent or very shallow. Bedrock ridges trending in a northeast direction cover approximately 70% of the site, supporting open forests of White Pine and Red Oak, or Red Oak-White Oak mixtures. Where deeper pockets of till occur, mostly in the extreme westerly sections of the area, younger stands of Red Maple-White Birch-Aspen occur.

Between the ridges, a series of narrow linear wetlands on organic soils support a wider variety of habitats. These wetlands drain primarily to the south into the Severn River, partly through Clearwater lake. The northern third of the site drains westward through the Kahshe River system. Drainage is frequently interrupted by beaver dams.

Wetland communities present include examples of floating and submerged aquatics, graminoid poor fens on organic mats, sedge-grass meadows on wet soils, Leatherleaf shrub bogs, Alder-Winterberry-Holly shrub thickets, and treed poor fens with Black Spruce and Tamarack.

### *Flora and Fauna*

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	485 native; 68 introduced 12 A.C.P.F. with a score of 63 (High)
Birds	52 observed during breeding season
Mammals	17 including 6 from small mammal trapping
Herpetofauna	17
Butterflies	13
Dragonflies	7
Mushrooms	36

### *Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met*

1. **Diversity** - (B2) Despite the uniformity of vegetation communities within this site, it displays a strong diversity of vascular plants (highest number of species recorded within Muskoka), mammals, and herptiles.

2. **Rare Species** - (B4) Kahshe Lake Barrens provides habitat for the following rare species:

#### Wildlife

*Buteo lineatus* Red-shouldered Hawk [NR PR]  
*Cistothorus platensis* Sedge Wren [RR]

*Coccyzus americanus* Yellow-billed Cuckoo [RR]  
*Sialia sialis* Eastern Bluebird [NR]  
*Clemmys guttata* Spotted Turtle [NR PR RR] \*

Vascular Plants

*Anemone virginiana* Thimbleweed [RR]  
*Bartonia virginica* Bartonian [NR PR RR] \*\*  
*Bidens discoidea* Small Beggar-ticks [NR PR]  
*Bulbostylis capillaris* Hair Rush [PR]  
*Carex folliculata* Long Sedge [PR] \*\*  
*Carex haydenii* Hayden's Sedge [PR RR] \*\*  
*Carpinus caroliniana* Blue Beech/Hornbeam [RR]  
*Cyperus squarrosus* Umbrella Sedge [RR]  
*Desmodium canadense* Showy Tick Trefoil [RR]  
*Elatine minima* Water Wort [PR]  
*Elymus virginicus* Virginia Rye [RR]  
*Juglans cinerea* Butternut [RR]  
*Laportea canadensis* Wood Nettle [RR]  
*Panicum spretum* Eaton's Grass [PR]  
*Platanthera blephariglottis* White Fringed Orchis [PR] \*\*  
*Polygonum arifolium* Halberd-leaved Tearthumb [PR RR] \*\*  
*Polygonum careyi* Carey's Knotweed [PR]  
*Potamogeton strictifolius* Straight-leaved Pond Weed [RR]  
*Rhexia virginica* Virginia Meadow Beauty [NR PR]  
*Teucrium canadense* Germander [RR]  
*Triadenum virginicum* Marsh St. John's Wort [PR]  
*Viola adunca* Hooked-spur Violet [RR]  
*Xyris difformis* Slender Yellow-eyed Grass [PR]

\* specimen collected by Bob Whittam

\*\* specimens collected by Emerson Whiting

In addition, regionally uncommon species found within the site include 38 plant, two bird, one mammal, and two snake species.

**3. Fish and Wildlife Concentrations - (B5)** According to the Ministry of Natural Resources, this area includes several small deer yards, and spawning areas for Lake Trout in the bay of Clearwater Lake and Muskellunge at the end of Grant's Bay in Kahshe Lake.

**4. Size and Linkage - (B6)** The large size and unfragmented nature of the Kahshe Lake Barrens area provides habitat for species requiring extensive undisturbed areas. Evidence of such use included scats found within the area of a large cat, such as Lynx.

**5. Biogeographic Significance - (B7)** The Kahshe Lake Barrens area has a high ranking score for Atlantic Coastal Plain species, using a scoring system developed by Keddy and Sharp (1989). As well, the vegetation communities include strong representation of species near the northern limit of their range, such as White Oak (which is a co-dominant in some

communities), Butternut, and Blue Beech. The understory of some areas includes an unusual abundance of Downy Arrowwood and Bearberry.

### *Ownership and Disturbance*

Approximately two-thirds of the Kahshe Lake Barrens is Crown land, with the private land found around its fringes, especially along the western side. Much of the area is protected from disturbance by the difficulty of access, with little more than snowmobile trails extending into the interior. Hydro transmission corridors are located along parts of the eastern and southern borders of the area. Cottage developments have taken place on much of the shoreline of Kahshe and Clearwater Lakes, and a new cottage access road has recently been constructed along one edge of the area.

### *Sensitivity*

Since one of the prime values of the Kahshe Lake Barrens area is its size and intactness, its value would be diminished by the intrusion of roads, utility corridors, or other developments in the interior. Additional cottage or shoreline development could adversely affect the Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora, as could artificial stabilization of water levels. Many of the rare species are vulnerable to excessive disturbance, especially those associated with shorelines or with the harsh conditions on the open rock barrens.

### *Major Sources of Information*

Reid et al, 1991; Brunton, 1991; Keddy and Sharp, 1989; Bajc and Paterson, 1992 a.