

NEIPAGE LAKE COMPLEX

UTM Ref. 17TPV112707

Wood Township, Muskoka Lakes
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 525 ha

Site Characteristics

This extensive area just north of the Severn River includes three bog lakes and their immediate watersheds, set within a complex of gneissic ridges and low wetland areas. Because of the undulating terrain but low overall relief, surface drainage is poor, and often impeded by beaver activity. Most of the area drains south into the Severn through seven permanent streams; the most northerly wetland area drains northwards into the Gibson River system.

Much of the upland area is exposed Precambrian bedrock supporting mesic to dry mixed forests of Sugar Maple, Red Oak, and White Pine, or Large-tooth Aspen and Red Maple early successional. In the more southerly sections of the site, deeper pockets of glacial drift support deciduous forests, together with smaller stands of White Pine, Red Pine and Eastern Hemlock forest.

In low-lying areas, peat deposits representing virtually all stages of peat bog development have accumulated. Neipage Lake has an extensive open spagnum mat, supporting a range of shrub and herbaceous poor fen communities that are also conspicuous at the two other main lakes and in some of the other ponds. Scattered Black Spruce and Tamarack are common throughout the area. In beaver ponds and open water areas, floating-leaved and submergent aquatic plants such as Waterlilies, Water-shield, and Bladderworts predominate.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	339 native; 22 introduced 6 A.C.P.F. with a score of 29 (Moderate)
Birds	71 observed during breeding season
Mammals	7
Herpetofauna	13
Butterflies	19

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

- 1. Hydrology - (A3)** The extensive wetlands within this complex act as headwaters for at least eight permanent streams, and act to regulate the release of surface and ground waters into the surrounding hydrological system.
- 2. Representation - (B1)** The area provides representation of an Oak-Maple-Black Cherry Open Forest (warmer/sand/dry-mesic) community which is not well represented elsewhere in Muskoka.
- 3. Diversity - (B2)** As shown in Figure 1, the Neipage Lake Complex has a diversity of native vascular plants relative to its size that is higher than the expected for Muskoka.

4. **Quality and Disturbance** - (B3) The area contains Sphagnum dominated poor fens of several types and nearly all stages of successional development, including graminoid, several types of herbaceous and shrub open treed and closed treed forest. Beaver meadow wetlands are also present at various successional stages. This sequence of wetland types provides a high quality example of wetland succession with very little human disturbance.

5. **Rare Species** - (B4) The Neipage Lake Complex provides habitat for the following rare species:

Wildlife

- Buteo lineatus* Red-shouldered Hawk [NR PR]
- Sistrurus c. catenatus* Eastern Massasauga [NR PR]
- Wallengrenia egerement* Northern Broken Dash [RR]
- Euphyes dion* Dion Skipper [PR RR]
- Hesperia leonardus* Leonardus Skipper [PR]

Vascular Plants

- Bidens discoidea* Small Beggar-Ticks [NR PR]
- Epilobium palustre* Marsh Willow-Herb [RR]
- Pedicularis canadensis* Wood Betony [RR]
- Platanthera blephariglottis* White Fringed Orchis [PR]
- Polygonum arifolium* Halberd-leaved Tearthumb [PR RR]
- Polygonum careyi* Carey's Knotweed [PR]
- Scirpus hudsonianus* Bulrush [RR]
- Utricularia geminiscapa* Hidden-fruited Bladderwort [PR RR]
- Xyris difformis* Slender Yellow-eyed Grass [PR]

In addition, regionally uncommon species found within the area include 23 species of plants, four birds, and three herptiles. The nationally and provincially rare Caspian Tern was also seen within the area, but almost certainly did not breed there.

Ownership and Disturbance

The Neipage Lake Complex area is approximately 95% Crown land. Except for several snowmobile trails across the area, there is little evidence of human activity away from the railway line and Severn River. The area apparently was burned in the last century, but the vegetation is well recovered by now. Moderate cottage development has occurred along the Severn River, just outside the area's boundary.

Sensitivity

Because the bog lakes within this area are unlikely to attract cottage development, threats to the future integrity of the Complex are unlikely. Road construction and intensive logging within the area should be avoided, in order to prevent fragmentation of the natural communities and sediment impacts to the wetlands.

Major Sources of Information - Kamstra, 1992; MacDonald, 1986; Bajc and Paterson, 1992.