

PINE ISLANDS

UTM Ref. 17TNV770981

Freeman/Gibson Townships, Georgian Bay
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: approx. 50 ha

Site Characteristics

This site is situated approximately five kilometres off the shore of the Georgian Bay mainland. It consists of six large and many small, barren granite islands. During periods of high water levels, the smaller islands may be shoals at or below the water surface.

The barren rock of the islands results in rapid run-off of rainfall and wave splash so that the area remains quite dry overall. This rugged habitat supports few species of plants and animals. The vegetation is characterized by pioneering herbaceous species growing in thin coarse soils in narrow rock crevices. Several shallow basins have allowed a layer of soil to accumulate, which holds moisture and supports more robust plant species such as Winterberry. Small stands of White Pine are present on some of the Pine Islands. The provincially and regionally rare Black-crowned Night Heron plus Herring Gulls are reported as breeding on the islands.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	10 native; 0 introduced 1 A.C.P.F. with a score of 6 (Insignificant)
Birds	4 observed during breeding season; two records from a National Parks Survey
Herpetofauna	2

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Representation** - (B1) The Pine Islands represent an Offshore Island Open Rock Barrens habitat unique to the District of Muskoka. It falls into the warmer/sand/arid position on the environmental matrix.
2. **Quality and Disturbance** - (B3) The remoteness of these islands has kept them free from human disturbances. No introduced plant species were recorded from these islands. The islands provide quality habitat for both the Black-crowned Night Heron and the Herring Gull.
3. **Rare Species** - (B4) The Pine Islands area provides habitat for the following rare species:

Wildlife

Nycticorax nycticorax Black-crowned Night Heron [PR RR]

Vascular Plants

Polygonum careyi Carey's Knotweed [PR]

In addition one species of turtle was recorded as regionally uncommon.

Ownership and Disturbance

Three islands are owned by the Canadian Parks service. Land ownership on the other islands has not been determined. Due to the remoteness of the islands, no human disturbance is evident.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of this site is related to the unique representation of the rugged, barren habitat which supports the only known colony of Black-crowned Night Herons in Muskoka. The pioneering plant communities are important components of the island ecology and are easily disturbed. These islands should be left undisturbed, as any form of development would compromise the significant values present. The three islands which are part of the Georgian Bay Islands National Park (GBINP) have been recommended by Geomatics for designation as an Environmentally Sensitive Site.

Major Sources of Information

Bajc, & Paterson, 1992 b; Geomatics International, 1992.