

## SCARCLIFFE BAY

UTM Ref. 17TPV167954

Monck Township, Muskoka Lakes  
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 11 ha

### *Site Characteristics*

This site is situated south of Port Carling along the shores of the creek flowing between Brandy Lake and Scarcliffe Bay of Lake Muskoka. Some of the best examples of silty and clayey glaciolacustrine plains in the District of Muskoka are found in this general area in low-lying sites surrounding present day lakes (Bajc, 1992). A distinctive riparian community dominated by Water Willow (*Decodon verticillatus*), with Buttonbush and Silky Dogwood subdominants, and Silver Maple - American Elm late successional lowland forest may be partly influenced by the clay soils.

The creek tends to be flooded in the spring with the flow reduced to almost nothing by midsummer. A beaver dam present about half-way along the length of the creek helps to maintain flooded conditions. The swamp, marsh and lowland forest communities are enclosed by sloping hillsides with mixed forests dominated by White Pine, Red Oak, Eastern Hemlock and White Birch.

### *Flora and Fauna*

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular plants	135 native; 11 introduced
Birds	36 observed during breeding season
Mammals	6
Herpetofauna	4
Fish	5

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

1. **Representation** - (B1) There are three vegetation community types in this site with limited representation in other Heritage Areas. The most significant is the Shrub-rich (Water Willow) shallow emergent marsh (warmer/clay/very wet) which dominates the thicket swamp and lines both banks of the creek. A second unique community is a White Pine-Black Ash-Oak-Red Maple bottom land forest (normal/sand/wet-mesic). This community type is transitional between swamp and lowland forest and contains a number of regionally uncommon flora. A third community type represented is a disturbed Poison Ivy shrub thicket (warmer/sand/very dry) between Hwy 118 and the creek. The extent and quality of this community is notable.

2. **Biogeographic Significance** - (B7) Many of the plant species dominating this riparian complex are indicators of southern regions. The list includes Poison Ivy, Silky Dogwood, Buttonbush, Silver Maple, False Nettle, White Oak and Water Willow. The representation of

southern aquatic associations was important in the recommendation of this site for candidate regional ANSI status (Brunton, 1991 b).

3. **Scenic Landscapes - (C7)** The area was nominated as a scenic site due to the extensive Water Willow community along the creek which turns a brilliant red in the autumn, and is easily visible from the Highway.

#### *Ownership and Disturbance*

This site is privately owned. It's location adjacent to the Highway 118 corridor and in the heart of cottage country makes it susceptible to disturbance. The creek is buffered by upland forest on all but the northern side. The northern boundary follows the highway, with a narrow buffer area to the creek. Spring runoff with salt and sand would have the greatest impact on the wetland, since all runoff will flow directly into the system. Fishing for Northern Pike is popular at the entrance to the creek at Brandy Lake, while Smelt and Bullfrog harvesting is locally significant.

Introduced species of plants are most abundant on the northern shore. Despite the disturbances, this area is of relatively good quality, indicated by the presence of bullfrogs and numerous fish species. Most of the wetland is undisturbed. The beaver dam may be artificially maintained.

#### *Sensitivity*

The sensitivity of this site is related to the function and ecology of the wetland. Suitable policies related to wetland protection should be followed. This includes protection of a vegetated buffer area on the slopes enclosing the wetland. Improper water level management may have deleterious consequences for the ecology of some species.

#### *Major Sources of Information*

Bajc, 1992; Bergsma et al, 1993; Brunton, 1991b; OMNR, Bracebridge Area office, fisheries data.