

Brunel Township, Lake of Bays
Status: Recommend Heritage Site

Area: 179 ha

Site Characteristics

This forested site is situated close to the shore of Lake of Bays just south of Dreamhaven Lake on till and bedrock outcrops. The landscape rises from District Road 9 by 60 to 70 metres onto a gently undulating upland dominated by nature rich mixed woods composed of Eastern Hemlock - Sugar Maple - Beech - Yellow Birch with minor components of Black Cherry, Basswood, Large-tooth Aspen and White Pine.

Numerous small seepage streams run through the site and downslope toward Lake of Bays, supporting deciduous Sugar Maple - Beech - White Ash with Wild Leek, Christmas, Ostrich and Lady Ferns, Rattlesnake Plantain and Spotted Jewelweed along the streams.

Depressions in the upland tend to be seasonally flooded and are occupied by Black Ash Swamp forest or cool rich bottomland Eastern Hemlock - Beech - Large tooth Aspen forest with boreal understory of Hobblebush, Yellow Clintonia, Redberry Wintergreen, Goldthread, Dwarf Raspberry, Wood Sorrel and Wood Ferns.

There were a total of 121 vascular plant species recorded from the site with two considered regionally uncommon. Seven common mammals, including Moose, White-tail Deer and Black Bear, and five amphibians were also recorded. Since the inventory did not begin until August, 1992, these numbers are likely less than expected. Birds were not recorded outside of the breeding season.

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Quality** - (B3) The areas contains at least two types of very mature upland forest in good condition and of a significant size. The maximum diameter breast height measurements for tree specimens on this site yielded the largest measurements for White Pine, Basswood and Large-tooth Aspen recorded from 1992 sites. These was a tie with Tasso Creek for the largest specimen of Eastern Hemlock, and measurements taken from Yellow Birch and Sugar Maple, while not the largest, were nonetheless significant.

Ownership, Disturbance and Sensitivity

These woods have been legally protected by an association of private landowners, since the early 1980's, from any form of development or large-scale alteration of the natural features. For a long time before this, it had been maintained in a natural state by a single landowner.

Logging is occurring within areas west of the site. A cross-country ski trail winds through the site with little visible impact. The rest of the site is in good to excellent condition with very mature sections of forest unaltered.

The sensitivity of this site is related to the mature upland forest communities which are of limited occurrence within Muskoka. Stewardship activities with the Westermain Wood Association to support the ongoing ecologically based forest management in association with MNR should be continued.