

BALA BOG

UTM Ref. 17TPV053893

Medora Township, Muskoka Lakes
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 425 ha

Site Characteristics

This site is situated within the Muskoka watershed system in the Georgian Bay physiographic area. The dominant landscape is that of an extensive wetland with deep organic deposits supporting poor fen, swamp and marsh associations, which discharge slowly in three directions - to the south via a small stream to Gaunt Bay; to the west into the Haggart Creek System; and to the north into the Medora Creek drainage system. The surrounding upland areas are largely White Pine-Red Oak barrens on shallow, coarse glacial till on a broken bedrock plain, with frequent exposures of gneissic bedrock at the surface.

The largest open beaver pond in the site contains a floating leatherleaf shrub mat as an island within the pond. The shoreline is surrounded by a dense Speckled Alder-Holly-Winterberry thicket swamp association. A second beaver pond is gradually being filled in by a floating sphagnum mat with Virginia Chain Fern, Sweet Gale, Holly and scattered Tamarack. In the more consolidated areas the successional sequence moves to a tall shrub thicket and finally to a Black Spruce and Tamarack dominated conifer swamp. The beaver pond system draining south consists of a series of open graminoid marshes dominated by *Carex utriculata*, Sweet Gale and other sedges.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	318 native ; 47 introduced 5 A.C.P.F. with a score of 23 (Low)
Birds	47 observed during breeding season
Mammals	8
Herpetofauna	11
Butterflies	24
Dragonflies	6
Mushrooms	34

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Hydrology** - (A3) The wetlands contribute to regional hydrological systems through the storage of ground water and the gradual release into tributary streams to the north, south and west.

2. **Diversity** - (B2) The total number of native plant species related to the size of the area is higher than expected for Muskoka as shown in Figure 1. The area also supports a high diversity of butterflies.

3. **Quality and Disturbance** - (B3) The wetland communities within this site provide quality examples of the successional sequence from open graminoid marsh to ericaceous shrub poor fen and conifer swamp forest. While 12.9% of the plants were introduced, these species were largely found along the boundary of the area. The interior wetland area has little disturbance and remains high quality.

4. **Rare Species** - (B4) The Bala Bog area provides habitat for the following rare species:

Wildlife

Polygonia faunus Green Comma [RR]

Erynnis lucilius Columbine Dusky Wing [PR]

Vascular Plants

Acalypha virginica Three-seeded Mercury [RR]

Anemone virginiana Thimbleweed [RR]

Bartonia paniculata Screwstem [NR PR RR] *

Epilobium palustre Marsh Willow-Herb [RR]

Listera australis Southern Twayblade [NR PR]

Platanthera blephariglottis White Fringed Orchis [PR]

Scrophularia lanceolata Figwort [RR]

* Collected by Goltz, 1975

In addition, four species of vascular plants, one bird, two snakes and one butterfly were recorded as regionally uncommon.

5. **Fish and Wildlife Concentrations** - (B5) A small colony of Great Blue Herons is active in one of the beaver ponds in the site.

Ownership and Disturbance

The area is privately owned with less than 1% Crown land located along the western boundary. The area is buffered by the difficulty in gaining vehicle access across the railway lines to the north and south. Planting of introduced conifers has occurred in small patches on former farmlands along the southern edge. A cranberry marsh is located on the eastern edge of the area. There has been little disturbance to the interior of the site.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of this site is related to the hydrological functioning of the wetland ecology. Suitable policies related to wetland protection should be followed. The surrounding rock barrens are sensitive to disturbances which would affect the shallow overburden and stability of the groundcover.

Major Sources of Information

Kor & Miller, 1987; Reid, et al., 1991.