DWIGHT CONIFER PEAT FOREST UTM Ref. 17TPA577216

Franklin Township, Lake of Bays Area: 115 ha
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Site Characteristics

This site, formerly referred to as Dwight Bog, is contained in a depression underlain by swamp and organic deposits. The peat in this area is up to 100 cm deep (Bajc & Henry, 1991).

The vegetation of the site is typical of northern peatland communities. The terrain is a gently sloping surface with a hummock-hollow topography within a continuous cover of Sphagnum mosses, a ground cover of ericaceous shrubs and herbs and open canopy of Black Spruce and some Tamarack. Associations vary from transitional poor conifer swamp (peat forest) and intermediate conifer swamp (peat forest) to herb-rich mixed conifer-broadleaf swamp and broadleaf swamp forest.

Two intermittent streams supporting Winterberry - Mountain Holly - Northern Wild Raisin thicket swamps run through the middle of the site. One stream drains westward from Wilson Lake, located to the east. The other stream drains from a series of small beaver controlled ponds which begin in the Trembling Aspen successional forested hills to the north. The elevation is 100 metres higher than the peat forest. The southern area is a sandy plain supporting deciduous and Balsam Fir conifer forests.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular plants	93 native; 0 introduced
Birds	17 observed during breeding season
Mammals	6
Herpetofauna	6
Butterflies	3
Dragonflies	1
Mushrooms	27

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Hydrology** - (A3) The area is classified as a provincially significant wetland (MNR, 1992) and as such it serves as a storage and recharge area as well as contributing to the enhancement of water quality.

2. **Representation** - (B1) The area contributes to the full range of biotic representation in Muskoka by including community types of limited distribution in other Heritage Areas. Two such community types are represented. The largest is the homogenous Black Spruce peat forest (cooler/organic/mesic) with few sedges, ferns and sparse herb understory. The peat is

relatively dry compared to most swamp forests. A second community of limited representation is the Balsam Fir conifer forest (cooler/sand/wet-mesic).

3. **Quality and Disturbance** - (B3) The area contains peat and swamp forest vegetation communities of high quality showing little recent disturbance. The survey of vascular flora in the area showed no introduced species.

4. **Rare Species** - (B4) The Dwight Peat Forest provides habitat for the following rare species:

Wildlife
Hesperia leonardus Leonardus Skipper [PR]
Dendragapus canadersis Spruce Grouse [RR]
Vascular plants
Corallorhiza trifida Early coralroot [RR]

In addition, one bird and three plants were recorded as regionally uncommon.

5. **Biogeographic Significance** - (B7) The area supports species and vegetation community types with boreal affinities. Mature, closed canopy Black Spruce peat forests are uncommon this far south. Species with boreal distributions include Wintergreen, Labrador Tea, American Mountain Ash, Velvetleaf Blueberry and Round-leaved Orchis. The presence of Spruce Grouse is significant since it is approaching its southern limit for distribution.

Ownership and Disturbance

The area is privately owned. A campground is situated in the adjacent lands to the south. The entire area is largely undisturbed except for a survey cut running through the forest. Some campers and hunters may venture into the area, but its dense growth and wet surface discourage heavy use.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of this site is related to the wetland function and the significant features associated with this ecosystem. The Provincial Wetland Policy should also protect other significant values of this area.

Major Sources of Information

Bajc & Henry, 1991; Bergsma, et al., 1993; Reid, et al., 1992.