

POTATO ISLAND

UTM Ref. 17TNV980606

Baxter Township, Georgian Bay
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 241 ha

Site Characteristics

Most of the Potato Island natural area consists of extensive shoreline wetlands along the Severn Sound area of Georgian Bay. In the shallow waters around the island and along the shore, a wide band of well-developed wetland communities occur. Typically, at the land's edge there is a fringe of Meadowsweet and Sweet Gale, followed by a shoreline band of Canada Bluejoint, Tussock Sedge, and other herbs, with large stands of Cattails and Bulrushes in the open water. In the large bay to the northwest, a mix of aquatic vegetation is dominated by Spatterdock, Pickerel-weed and Wild Rice.

Potato Island itself and the small areas of upland included within this site have variable depths of soil over exposed Precambrian rocks. Much of the upland has been disturbed in the past.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	171 native; 19 introduced 1 A.C.P.F. with score of 4 (Insignificant)
Birds	36 observed during breeding season
Mammals	4
Herpetofauna	9
Butterflies	7

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

1. **Rare Species** - (B4) The Potato Island area provides habitat for the following rare species:

Wildlife

<i>Elaphe vulpina gloydi</i>	Eastern Fox Snake [PR RR] *
<i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher [RR]
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian Tern [NR PR]

Vascular Plants

<i>Astragalus canadensis</i>	Milk Vetch [RR] *
<i>Calamintha arkansana</i>	Low Calamint [RR] *
<i>Cardamine concatenata</i>	Cut-leaved Toothwort [RR] *
<i>Carex blanda</i>	Woodland Sedge [RR]
<i>Carex cephalophora</i>	Head-like Sedge [RR]
<i>Carex crawei</i>	Crawe's Sedge [RR] *
<i>Carex garberi</i>	Garber's Sedge [RR]
<i>Collinsia parviflora</i>	Blue-eyed Mary [PR RR] *

Floerkea proserpinacoides False Mermaid [RR] *
Gentianopsis virgata Smaller Fringed Gentian [RR] *
Juglans cinerea Butternut [RR] *
Lemna trisulca Star Duckweed [RR]
Linum medium Yellow Flax [NR PR]
Lobelia kalmii Brook Lobelia [RR]
Ranunculus fascicularis Early Buttercup [RR] *
Scirpus fluviatilis River Bulrush [RR] *
Scirpus smithii Smith's Bulrush [NR PR RR] *
Selaginella apoda Meadow Spike Moss [RR] *
Triosteum aurantiacum Feverwort [RR]
 * reported by Goltz (1992)

In addition, regionally uncommon species found within the area include 15 vascular plants, two birds, one frog and one turtle. Least Bittern, a nationally, provincially, and regionally rare species, were known historically to nest within the area, but their present status is uncertain. Other rare birds including Yellow-crowned Night Heron and Yellow-headed Blackbirds have been seen within the area but no breeding evidence confirmed (Goltz, 1992).

2. Fish and Wildlife Concentrations - (B5) Shoreline areas within this area provide nursery habitat for Muskellunge (O.M.N.R., Parry Sound Area). The shallow waters and marshlands are an important staging area for migratory ducks in spring, most notably Canvasback, Greater Scaup, and Ringneck Ducks (Goltz, 1992).

Ownership and Disturbance

The upland parts of the area are privately owned, while the offshore waters are Crown lands. Considerable disturbance has taken place in the uplands, including Potato Island which has a causeway, two cabins, and areas of planted non-native trees. The wetland areas are affected by the wake and noise disturbances of heavy boat traffic further offshore.

Sensitivity

Further cottage developments along the immediate shoreline of the wetland areas, together with dredging and vegetation removal, could seriously affect the values of this site.

Major Sources of Information

Geomatics International, 1992; Goltz, 1992.