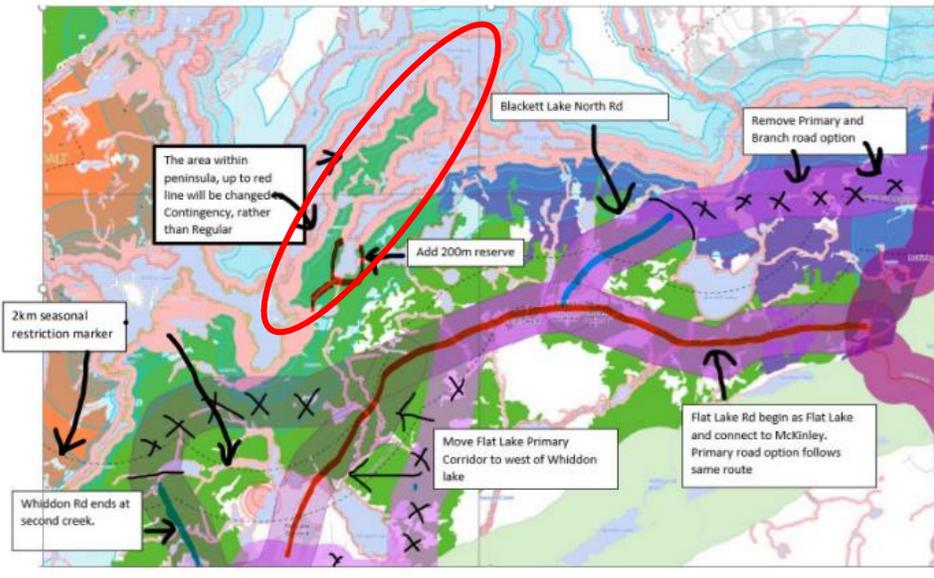


On May 31, 2022 the Local Citizens Committee (LCC) was provided with an update on road corridors and logging within the Dalton Area. The map provided below is a visual summary of these details. The map indicates that south end of Reef Lake will be given a 200 m buffer. However, the peninsula that separates Moonshine from Reef Lake would be available for logging on a contingency basis.

2023 FMP update for the LCC – May 31 2022

1) Area of Concern update and Road corridor updates to Dalton Area



“Harvest area within the peninsula of Reef Lake will be changing from Regular Harvest to Contingency area. The AOC prescription identifies that consultation with RBT operators is required if contingency area is brought into the FMP for regular harvest.”

“Vern Fish identified that he would not support this peninsula being harvested due to its importance to bird habitat.”

Quote from May 31, 2022 LCC minutes.

Summary & Comments

A recent Big River trip has shown that this area has high wilderness values. The preliminary bird survey indicates that the area provides critical habitat for a diverse boreal bird population and the endangered woodland caribou. This habitat includes both old growth coniferous and deciduous forests and appears support to caribou. According to the CLUPA 2616 guidelines, the *“operating and annual plans will contain specific guidelines for the protection of tourism values and fish and wildlife habitat.”* The Caribou Insurance Policy states that areas should be deferred from logging until a range-level assessment determines the necessary habitat and population size has been met. The Friends of Wabakimi have already recommended that the D’Alton Block, which includes the Big River, be considered for Conservation Reserve or other protected status.

The Reef Peninsula connects large blocks of bird habitat and provides a buffer to a wilderness paddling route. Logging this strip will create a large linear disturbed area and fragment the existing old growth habitat that currently harbors a diverse array of boreal birds and caribou. Even with a 200 meter buffer, this disturbance has the potential to impact the habitat and wilderness values of the Big River route.

“To maintain the habitat and the wilderness values of this potential conservation reserve, the Friends of Wabakimi strongly recommend that the Reef Lake Peninsula NOT be considered for logging.”

This motion was approved by the Board of Directors of the Friends of Wabakimi at their June 26, 2022 meeting.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paddlers Heading to Wabakimi to Survey Birds and Highlight Need to Expand the Park Thunder Bay, ON. This May, a group of paddlers and naturalists will brave brisk spring waters to paddle an area just east of Wabakimi Provincial Park.

The group is asking the Government of Ontario to expand protected areas adjacent to the wilderness park located northwest of Lake Nipigon. The park contains a vast and interconnected network of more than 2,000 kilometres of lakes and rivers. The expansion would include a virtually roadless tract of boreal forest, that holds great potential for tourism operators in the area, as well as habitat for threatened boreal caribou. During this week-long trip, the group will assess the status of several portages, campsites and canoe routes, while completing surveys for Ontario's third Breeding Bird Atlas (Atlas-3).

Birds are great environmental indicators, meaning their presence can tell us a lot about the quality of the air, water, and land they inhabit. Community science projects such as Atlas-3 provide data necessary to assess the status of birds by mapping the distribution and relative abundance of the approximately 300 breeding birds in Ontario. Comparing this data to previous projects Atlas-1 (1981–1985) and Atlas-2 (2001–2005) can provide insight into which species may need more conservation attention and help identify important breeding locations.

The greatest threat to breeding birds in Canada is habitat loss. The Government of Canada took an encouraging step in 2021 when it committed to protecting 25% of lands and waters by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Further, in April 2021, the Province of Ontario committed to expanding Ontario's protected areas network. Currently, less than 11% of Ontario is protected so to achieve these goals, we must explore every opportunity.

“This trip is a great demonstration of combining efforts and resources for a common goal of protecting natural spaces and species,” said Kristen Setala, Community Science Intern for Ontario Nature, who will be joining the expedition. She is based in Thunder Bay and will be conducting breeding bird surveys across northern Ontario this summer.

Most of the paddlers are members of the Friends of Wabakimi (FOW), an Ontario non-profit. Vern Fish, President of FOW, said, “*We are excited to partner with Ontario Nature to promote greater habitat protection for this important area. This area has many historic canoe routes with stellar wilderness values.*”

This bird survey trip is one of many happening across the province. Atlas-3, which runs from 2021 to 2025, is an opportunity for expert and beginner birders alike to participate in collecting valuable information about breeding birds in Ontario. Last year alone, more than 1,000 volunteers participated. For canoe-savvy birders, Wabakimi Provincial Park is a wonderful place to help increase coverage over the expansive northern region while contributing to the cause of permanently protecting more significant environments.

“*Civilization is a massive experiment. Wilderness areas and other protected areas are the controls in that experiment. Habitat loss is leading to the decline of many species, including birds. All we can protect in the next few years will help to ensure that birds and other will wildlife thrive... or even survive,*” said biologist Bruce Hyer who twice received the Ontario Nature's esteemed Conservation Award for his role in the creation of Wabakimi Park.

of Big River Birds

This is the list of birds that were documented on the recent Big River trip. There is a total of 62 species. Please note the species where we had **confirmed breeding evidence** and the species of **Special Concern**.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Golden-crowned Kinglet	White-throated Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow	Song Sparrow	Swamp Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco	Winter Wren	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper	Black-capped Chickadee	Boreal Chickadee
Pileated Woodpecker	American Three-toed Woodpecker	Black-backed Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Flicker	Hermit Thrush
Swainson's Thrush	Veery	American Robin
Common Grackle	Purple Finch	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Jay	Ruffed Grouse	Bufflehead
Hooded Merganser	Common Merganser	Common Goldeneye
Common Loon	Gull species (Probably Herring Gull)	Blue-headed Vireo
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Northern Waterthrush	Tennessee Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler	Nashville Warbler	Magnolia Warbler
Northern Parula	Ovenbird	Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Bay-breasted Warbler Common
Yellowthroat	American Redstart	Wilson's Warbler
Western Palm Warbler	Broad-winged Hawk	Spotted Sandpiper
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Northern Waterthrush	Osprey
Black-throated Green Warbler		

Canada Jay

Confirmed breeding evidence: adult feeding juveniles.

Common Raven

Confirmed breeding evidence: heard juveniles in a nest with adults nearby.

Tree Swallow

Confirmed breeding evidence: witnessed two swallows copulating in one event and heard nestlings calling from tree cavity where adults were entering.

Bald Eagle

Saw two adults, a probable pair, and an old stick nest

Red-tailed Hawk

Confirmed breeding evidence: witnessed two birds doing a courtship display

Least Flycatcher

Confirmed breeding evidence: nest building

Special Concern

Common Nighthawk

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Canada Warbler

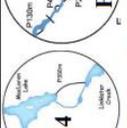
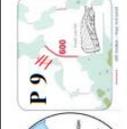
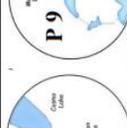


Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed American Woodpecker or Pileated Woodpecker borings.

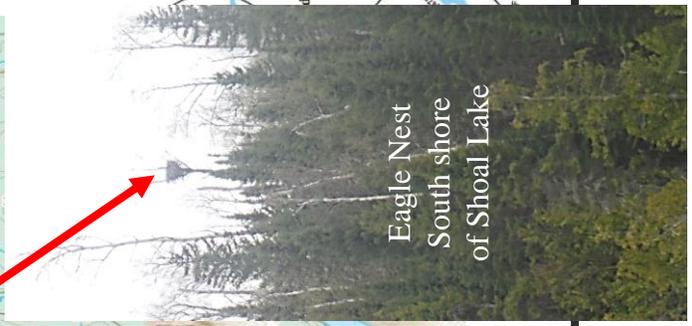
Big River Route Map #2

Notes

1. D'Alton Lake is about 6 miles long. The cabin is active but campsite 6, 7 & 9 have grown over and #10 is small and may be a cultural site. Camps 3, 4, 5, and 8 are functional sites. Did not visit #1 & #2.
2. There is an historic portage into the Whitesands River that was not explored.
3. Portage from D'Alton to Cosmos (P5C) has not been cleared and is not open!
4. P 5B is open and provides access to Ruxton but is long, rough hike.
5. P 5A has four segments: The first (left) was runnable, second (right) and third (right) were good and the fourth (left) was also good. "The Fence" is long peninsula that almost cuts Moonshine Lake in half.
6. Cabin on Moonshine is being restored but was not functional. Campsite #1 was great but #2 was for emergency use only.
7. P8 is listed at 300 meters by Bruce Hyer. No other details or map.
8. There was only one 600 m portage out of Moonshine P9. The short portage to the west had not been cleared. Camp #1 and #2 was for emergency use only.



Caribou droppings
South end of D'Alton Lake



Eagle Nest
South shore
of Shoal Lake

Wilderness Values

