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Couchiching Conservancy



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THE CARDEN PLAIN

The Carden Plain is a special place to enjoy nature in a rural setting. There are several hundred species of birds, including breeding populations of the endangered loggerhead shrike. Butterflies are another specialty with over 80 species. The Carden Plain supports a great diversity of uncommon plants. Carden is one of the Ontario's finest birding locations in the late spring.

The Carden Plain is characterized by a large limestone plain interlaced with wetlands and woodlands. Alvar habitats exist only on shallow, relatively flat limestone. These landscapes occur in scattered locations across the Great Lakes and around the Baltic Sea. Most alvar communities are designated as "globally imperiled" and shelter a wide range of rare, specialized plants and invertebrates.

CARDEN PLAIN IMPORTANT BIRD AREA (IBA)

"The purpose of the Carden Plain IBA is to protect and conserve the ecological significance of the Carden Plain for grassland and shrubland birds, especially area-sensitive species, loggerhead shrikes, and other important natural values which rely on or are part of this habitat"

The IBA program is an initiative coordinated by BirdLife International, a partnership of member-based organizations in over 100 countries seeking to identify and conserve sites important to all bird species world-wide. Through the protection of birds and habitats, they also promote conservation of the world's biodiversity. See: www.cardenplainimportantbirdarea.com



CARDEN NATURE GUIDE: INTRODUCTION

The locations described in this flyer offer tourists, birders, and nature enthusiasts good examples of Carden's unusual flora and fauna. Choose the locations you wish to visit and spend a few hours, walk a little, or just sit and wait for nature to come to you. Please remember that most of the land beside the road is private and not open to visitors; but most of Carden's specialties can easily be seen from the quiet roadsides.

A) BRECHIN AREA: From Brechin turn east on Ramara Rd. 47 to the Dufferin Quarry. To visit Cranberry Lake turn right and follow Rohallion Rd. To visit Lake Dalrymple turn left and follow Brechin Rd.

B) CRANBERRY LAKE: On Rohallion Rd - look for horned larks and lapland longspurs in early spring. In May and June beware of turtles crossing to nest. Turn north on Cranberry Lake Rd. (This is a summer road - low clearance vehicles use caution.) Proceed past the open field and about 200 m into the treed area. Cranberry Lake is on private and crown land to the right/east. Trespass is not permitted but you can glimpse the lake from the road and see black terns.

C) TURNBULL PROPERTY: After the second turn from the west on Rohallion Rd. the first property on the north side belongs to the Turnbull family, who donated a Conservation Easement to The Couchiching Conservancy. From the fence line, look for a variety of sparrows. Trespass is not permitted but visits are arranged as part of the Carden Nature Festival.

D) OSPREY NESTS of CENTENNIAL PARK ROAD: Osprey nests sit atop Hydro poles along Centennial Park Rd. causeway. Osprey can often be seen on the nests or high over the water - once they spot a fish near the surface they plunge headfirst toward the target, thrusting talons forward the instant before striking the water.

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E) CAMERON RANCH: On CKL #6 1 km north of Centennial Pk. Rd. watch for the sign and parking lot on the north side of the road. In 2003 this 2869 acre ranch became a nature preserve characterized by gently undulating limestone bedrock set between a series of marshes, sedge meadows and forested wetlands in the lower areas. Its high quality alvar supports uncommon plants including Indian paintbrush, tufted hairgrass, early buttercup, fragrant sumac, prairie smoke, and many more. Cameron Ranch also hosts over 100 bird species. Since Cameron Ranch is a working ranch, direct access is not permitted without permission. However, you can explore it on foot by taking the marked path beside the fence to the right (east) side of the parking lot.

F) PRAIRIE SMOKE ALVAR RESERVE. Go west from Cameron Ranch on CKL #6 to Lake Dalrymple Road. Turn north a short distance to the entrance. Park and walk the trail into the reserve. Look for bobolinks in the hay field, pass through a mature forest with endangered butternut and a wide variety of species and come to a series of open alvar areas covered in a spectacular display of wildflowers, mosses and sedges. Watch for the osprey nest on an old windmill.



G) LITTLE BLUESTEM ALVAR RESERVE. Continue north on Lake Dalrymple Road to #258 and turn into the parking lot of the Carden Recreation Centre. Walk the path leading from the far right of the parking lot and through the gate. Explore the 645 acre reserve complete with mature limestone forest and alvar plateau. As its name suggests, there is plenty of the prairie grass little bluestem, along with many alvar flowers on the plateau. The trail is not marked, explore with caution.

H) ALVAR ROAD: Extends between Lake Dalrymple Rd. and CKL #35; this gravel road can be difficult for cars in very wet periods (especially between Wylie Rd. and Rd. 35). The road cuts through a forested section and requires quiet listening and walking to fully appreciate the surroundings. Stop frequently, taking care not to block traffic, and look for birds such as hermit thrush, magnolia warbler, white-throated sparrow, and indigo bunting. A wide variety of butterflies and dragonflies are all around.

I) Wolf Run Alvar: Acquired in 2010, this 303 acre Carden property is a mix of wetlands, alvar and forest is located in the northern portion of the Township. Aside from offering excellent alvar, it is also strategically located near Queen Elizabeth II Park, the beginning of an ecological link to the Cameron Ranch properties to the south. This reserve is owned by The Couchiching Conservancy.

Wolf Run Alvar contains several types of globally rare grassland and shrubland alvars. Already several Species At Risk have been found on the property including butternut and ribbon snakes. Walking on the property is permitted; no marked trails, proceed with caution. Access is from west end of Wolf Run Road and then walking south along unopened road allowance.

J) North Bear Alvar: Located just north of Alvar Road North Bear Alvar provides habitat for species at risk including milk snake and common nighthawk; endangered butternut trees have been found on the property. At 787 acres in size, North Bear Alvar supports several different types of globally rare alvar habitat. Walking on the property is permitted; no marked trails, proceed with caution.

K) CURLS ROAD: Located about half way between McNamee Rd. and Alvar Rd. off CKL Rd. 35. Turn east and drive very slowly. This is one of the best birding roads in the area but is not well known and therefore not heavily traveled. Watch for eastern loggerhead shrike, eastern bluebird, upland sandpiper, field and vesper sparrows, and common nighthawk. The adjacent open fields offer alvar flora including balsam ragwort, harebell, prairie smoke, Indian paintbrush and hairy beardtongue.

L) RAVEN LAKE: South Mountain Road runs north off Blanchards Rd. approx 2 km east of the village of Victoria Road. Follow the road to the end at Raven Lake. This is a shallow lake mined for a few years for its limey marl. Look for black terns and other waterfowl, and listen for sandhill cranes.

M) WINDMILL RANCH: Located along the west side of Wylie Road is Windmill Ranch, a 1600 acre property purchased by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Parks in 2005. Due to cattle on the property access is by permission only. But the roadside provides close-up views of such alvar plants as prairie smoke and bergamot, as well as great grassland and shrubland birding. There is also a new walking trail beside Sedge Wren Marsh, look for the trailhead sign on the side of Wylie Road just south of the marsh.

N) SEDGE WREN MARSH: About 2 km north of McNamee Rd. on Wylie Road is a large wetland. (park off the road and walk to the bridge) This is a reliable location for sedge wrens, alder flycatcher, and swamp Sparrow. At dusk or dawn listen and look for yellow rail, sora, common snipe, American bittern, common nighthawk and whip-poor-will.

O) WYLIE ROAD AND BOX 10: Wylie Road from MacNamee Rd. to Alvar Rd. is one of the best summer birding roads in southern Ontario. Look for upland sandpiper, eastern kingbird, eastern bluebird, and many more. Around Bluebird Box 10 look for loggerhead shrike from a roadside birding blind or the nearby parking area.

P) IBA DISPLAY: On McNamee Rd. at near the junction of CKL #6 the Carden IBA display has become a local landmark. Get out, stretch your legs, and take a closer look.

Q) BLUEBIRD RANCH: Acquisition of this 206 acre property located beside the IBA sign was completed in 2011 and is owned by The Couchiching Conservancy. It links directly to Windmill Ranch to the north creating a large area of protected land. The grassland area of the property provides excellent habitat for birds at risk such as meadowlarks, bobolinks, and bluebirds. Loggerhead shrike, another endangered species, the Henslow's Sparrow, have been observed on the property.

Due to cattle ranching, there is no public access to the property however there is excellent roadside viewing.

R) JUNIPER TRAIL: From the IBA Display go 1 km south on CKL Rd. #6 to Juniper Trail on the right. This road has been formed by clearing the thin top soil from the limestone pavement. It is bumpy ride and better to walk. The trail is lined with Bluebird Boxes. There are many bluebirds, tree swallows and other grassland species.

S) KIRKFIELD LIFT LOCK: At the junction of CKL #6 and Talbot River Rd. Built in 1907, it is the second largest in the world and it is well worth inspection. Take the stairs to the top of the lift lock and, while observing the operation, scan the sky for hawks, osprey and turkey vultures.

T) PROSPECT MARSH NATURE RESERVE: A 200 acre property donated to Couchiching Conservancy. Drive through Kirkfield west on CKL Rd. #48 and turn south (left) on Prospect Road. Look for a sign and parking lot on the east side. A short walk takes you to brooding ponds for waterfowl. In the marsh look for rails, least bittern and American bittern.

U) ELDON ROADS: Many of the rural roads south and east of Prospect Marsh offer extensive grassland and wetland habitats. Drive slowly looking for open fields with a few hawthorns and cattle.

* Those wishing to join a guided tour of the Windmill Ranch or Cameron Ranch please contact: The Couchiching Conservancy 705-326-1620

** Cover Photo - Eastern Kingbird - David Homer



Halloween Pennant

B. Bowles



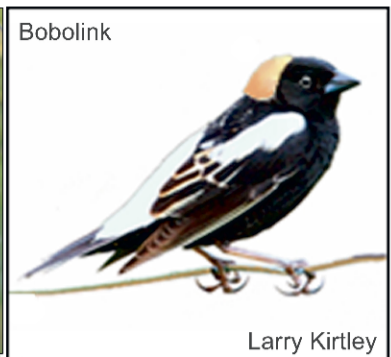
Ebony Jewelwing

B. Bowles



Common Whitetail

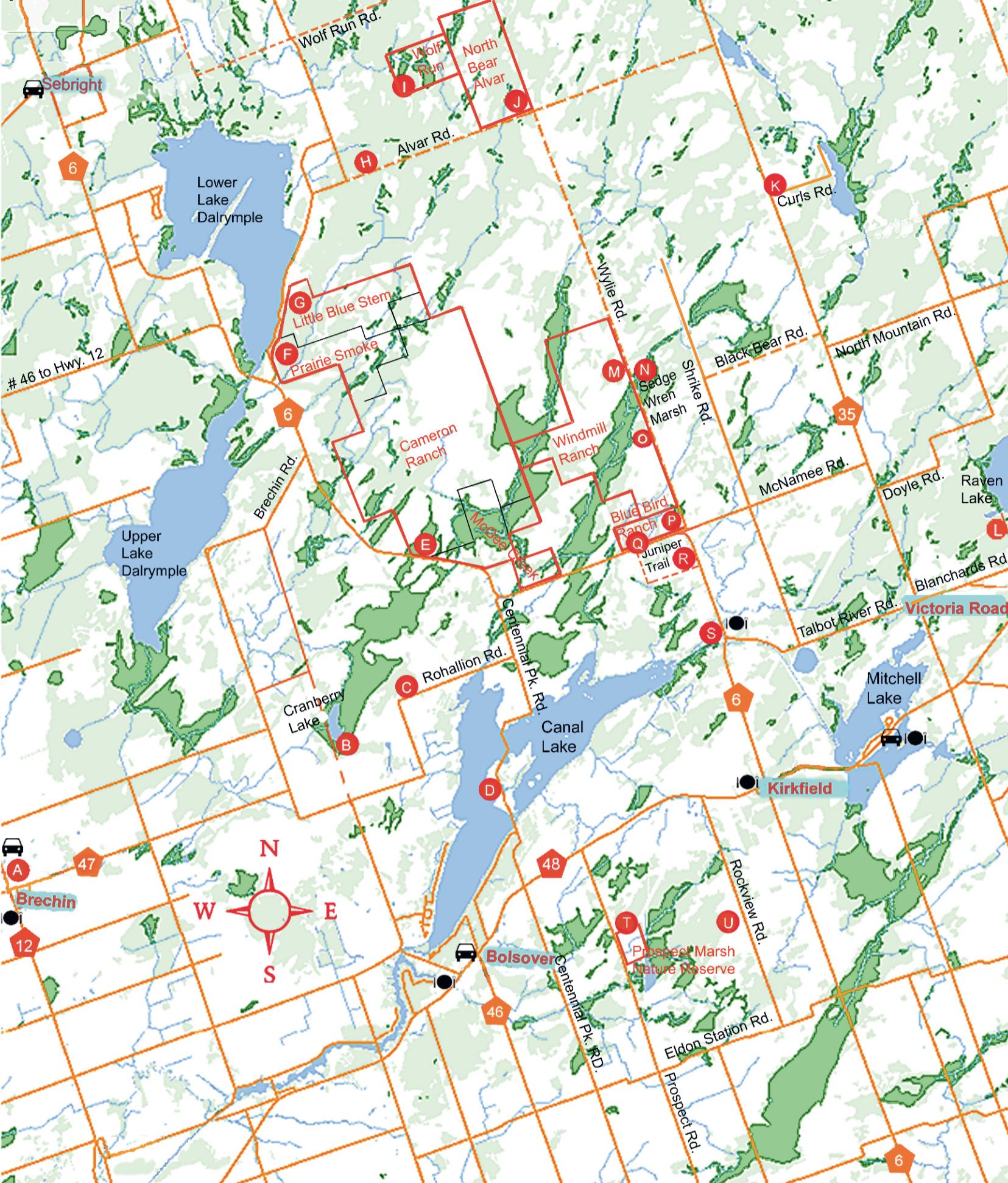
B. Bowles



Bobolink

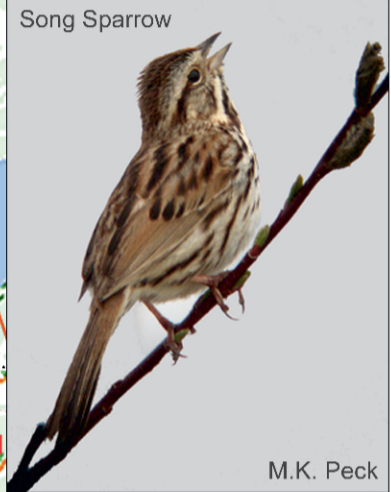
Larry Kirtley

CARDEN NATURE FESTIVAL



Tree Swallow

M.K. Peck



Song Sparrow

M.K. Peck



Kestrel

Larry Kirtley



Osprey

Larry Kirtley



Meadowlark

Larry Kirtley

Larry Kirtley



Loggerhead Shrike

Larry Kirtley



Eastern Towhee

Larry Kirtley



White Admiral

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Viceroy

B. Bowles



Piliated Woodpecker



Great Blue Heron

Larry Kirtley



Red-headed Woodpecker

M.K. Peck

Wetland		Viewing Locations		Main Road	
Woodland		Food		Seasonal Road	
Major Municipal Roads		Fuel			
Provincial Highways		Scale: 1 km. =			

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