

NATURE RESERVES

Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve

The largest nature reserve in the Federation nature reserve system, the Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve (AWSNR) encompasses 470 hectares (1163 acres) of central Ontario woodland and wetland. The reserve straddles the contact between the granitic rocks of the Canadian Shield and the limestone of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence forest.

The property exhibits a great diversity of community types due to its topographic variability, as well as its position on the edge of two major geologic formations. The granitic Shield areas have rolling topography, punctuated by pockets of open marsh, beaver meadow and cedar and alder swamp. These wetland areas are fed by Corben Creek, which runs through the southeastern areas of the reserve. In the north and western limestone sections, the level topography is blanketed with sugar maple and ironwood, with areas of old field regeneration and pine plantation. The northern areas of the reserve were once a refuge for Rudolph Altberg, the former landowner of the northern section of the Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve. On the side of a granite boulder overlooking the pond is a beautifully engraved metal plaque in commemoration of Mr. Altberg's generous donation of the 101 hectare northern portion of the property to the Federation in 1983.

The Altberg Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Reserve provides habitat for numerous species that depend on large tracts of contiguous natural cover. Red-shouldered Hawks are frequently seen on the property and have been known to nest on the reserve. In the summer, the forest and forest edges reverberate with the songs of breeding birds such as the Hermit Thrush, Veery, Least Flycatcher, Ovenbird, and a wealth of other warblers: Black-and-white, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated green, Black-throated blue, and Chestnutsided warbler. Golden-winged Warblers, Field Sparrows and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds frequent more open habitats. Signs of deer, moose, beaver, and other mammals await the observant naturalist. Moccasin Flower, Showy Lady's Slipper, and Northern Beech Fern are amongst the many interesting plants.

The Kawartha Field Naturalists (KFN) are the stewards of the reserve. They are actively involved in monitoring amphibians, forest vegetation and birds on the property.

To the east of the reserve lie the extensive conifer plantations of the City of Kawartha Lakes Agreement Forest (Somerville Tract), which include a popular cross-country skiing area. Nearby is Balsam Lake Provincial Park, 10 km west of Coboconk. Indian Point Provincial Park is undeveloped parkland immediately adjacent to Balsam Lake. Silent Lake and Petroglyphs Provincial Parks are not far away.

How to get there

From the south, take Hwy. 35/115 north from Hwy. 401 to Lindsay and continue north past Fenelon Falls and Coboconk to Norland. At Norland, turn east on City Rd. 45 and continue for approximately 10 km. The property is on the south side of the road just past Woodcock Line and a cleared farm area.

A limestone outcrop along the road is very near the western edge of the property. East of the limestone outcrop and intervening forest, you will find a gravel driveway, hydro pole, and a gate that mark the entrance to the property. The reserve has a parking lot accessible with permission from Ontario Nature or the KFN. There is a nature reserve sign by the entrance, identifying the property as an Ontario Nature nature reserve. An overgrown road leads eastwards on the property through a regenerating field towards the pond and the Altberg plaque.