

NATURE RESERVES

Baptist Harbour Nature Reserve

Baptist Harbour Nature Reserve, acquired by the Federation in 2000, is an important ecological area on the Bruce Peninsula. Located on the shores of Lake Huron, this nature reserve is 6.5 hectares (16 acres) in size and boasts stunning and diverse scenery - from an open jack pine forest to globally significant limestone barrens (alvars).

The alvars in the nature reserve can be easily recognized with their pitted surfaces and gently sloping dolostone bedrock, dotted by standing pools of water. The pitting of rock, a karst feature known as pit karren is abundant, and, as a result, the alvars have been compared to a lunar landscape. The alvar microclimate varies widely, with searing summer temperatures and freezing, wind-blown winters. An ancient stand of dwarfed and twisted cedar trees, some as old as 400 years, survives in this harsh environment, along with a number of lichens and mosses.

In addition to little bluestem grass and hairgrass, Baptist Harbour supports a variety of rare plants, such as dwarf lake iris, hill's thistle, northern dropseed and ram's head lady's-slipper, harebells and fringed gentian. The site has had very few disturbances from exotic species, and thus has remained in excellent condition. Land snails, leaf hoppers and other invertebrates are common in the alvars of Baptist Harbour. The site is also home to the provincially threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake. Many birds, such as terns and gulls, make their nest along the shoreline.

The area is rich geologically, with many unique geological landforms and excellent examples of post-glacial beach ridges and unusual glacial scour features. Just off the shore, the water is clean and clear, and contains abundant reefs and shelter for fish species.

Access:

Baptist Harbour nature reserve is located on the Lake Huron shore of the northern Bruce Peninsula. The protection of the nature reserve is enhanced by its unique location, jutting out into Lake Huron. It is inaccessible by land as it is bordered by private property; as a result, the only access is by water, making visitation very difficult.