

## NATURE RESERVES

# H.N. Crossley Nature Reserve

Living on her family's 400 hectare Sandy Bay farm on Lake Rosseau, Miriam Burgess took particular delight in studying the flowers and animals that lived in an area called Bruce Pond. Burgess especially prized the flowers that surrounded what she called "the little lakes."

In 1981, seeking to assure protection for this fen that had fascinated her for so many years, Burgess approached the Federation about making the wetland area a nature reserve. Working with the Federation, she eventually ceded title to 17 hectares to the Federation. The reserve was named in honour of Burgess's father, H.N. Crossley, who had purchased the Sandy Bar farm in 1890.

Bruce Pond is a typical "eyed" bog with a moat-like "lagg" zone of water around the edge; tree and shrub zones; an open sphagnum mat with pitcher plants, sundews, and orchids; and open water in the middle - "the donut hole." The setting for this is classic Canadian Shield with granite outcroppings and ridges shaping the elongated bog. The ground rises sharply away from the bog except at the upper end, where its tannic waters drain to an area of mostly drowned larch and beaver meadows. An abandoned beaver lodge is becoming heavily overgrown and the beaver meadows themselves are probably now most attractive to moose.

Burgess, who passed away in 1987 in her 95<sup>th</sup> year, wrote of seeing "orchids such as grass pinks, arethusa, white-fringed orchids, and many other plants which grow in bogs..." Although one can still see the provincially rare white-fringed orchid and round-leaved orchid, other plants mentioned by Mrs. Burgess have not been found in recent years.

Another uncommon species found on the property is Virginia Meadow Beauty, a plant generally found along the coastal plain of the Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia south. Plants of this affinity make their limited and peculiar appearances in Ontario in the Muskoka and Parry Sound regions.

The Muskoka Field Naturalists are the official stewards of the H.N. Crossley Nature Reserve.

Oastler Lake Provincial Park, Blackstone Harbour Provincial Park, and O'Donnell Point Provincial Nature Reserve are all nearby.

## *How to get there*

Take Hwy. 632 south from the town of Rosseau. Six kilometres south of Rosseau, take the first left onto Burgess Road. The entrance to the reserve is located approximately 3 kilometres down this road. A sign marking the reserve can be seen on the road's south side. The main trail in the reserve begins just east of the open fen area (which can be seen from the road) and leads to an observation platform that gives you a fantastic view over the reserve. Due to the sensitive nature of the fen mat, please stay on the main forest trail and refrain from walking on the mossy fen areas.