

# Seven Ponds Nature Center's Niagara Escarpment Escape June 4 - 9, 2017



Join Seven Ponds Nature Center as we escape to the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve, (so designated by the United Nations in 1990) on the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario, Canada. The ancient, tilted coral reef that makes up this priceless, geologic gem had its beginnings 400 million years ago in a shallow sea which covered the Great Lakes region. From the gently sloping, fragile dune and wetland areas of the west side to the astounding Niagara Escarpment cliffs overlooking the deepest part of Georgian Bay, this is truly a remarkable area. Seven Ponds Nature Center will explore this truly unique area of Eastern North America, and feature spectacular waterfalls, ancient sea caves, unique geological formations, and the globally rare alvar ecosystem. This special place is world renowned for its bounty of orchids, wildflowers, ferns, and wildlife, as well as boreal species of birds. This natural history trip will be a nature lover's dream and is sure to delight photographers.

## **Sunday, June 4 - *Orientation of the Trip***

After checking into your accommodations at the Red Bay Lodge, we will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the activity room for introductions and a short orientation meeting. Participants at this time will receive their packets containing scheduled walk times and checklists. After a 6:30 p.m. dinner, we will take a short walk to the lodge's private beach for a sunset walk along the Lake Huron shore. The evening will end with a campfire talk on the geology of this unique peninsula.

## **Monday, June 5 – *Waterfalls, Sea Caves, and Historic Mansion Ruins***

An optional early morning bird walk in the beautiful wooded area surrounding the lodge will be offered at 7:00 a.m. Breakfast will be served at 8:00 a.m., after which we will leave for our day trip.

Remember to take what you will need for the day including: raingear, binoculars, and water bottle. Our exploring begins by car pooling along the southern portion of the peninsula. Our first stop at Sauble Falls starts with a short hike to the falls and along the beautiful Sauble River, after which we will drive to the east side of the peninsula, keeping our eyes peeled for birds and other wildlife along the way. Our next stop is a unique waterfall called Indian Falls. A half mile trip to the falls takes us through a lovely woods along the Indian River to the base of the 49 foot falls with interesting geologic features. Some may want to venture directly in behind the falls to get an inside out look at the falls as it spills over the escarpment. From here we journey along Georgian Bay to the fabulous Bruce Cave Conservation Area. We will eat lunch first before exploring this beautiful area. A short walk winds through botanically rich woods to a huge cave waiting to be explored. Many rare ferns are found in this area, including the walking fern. Our next stop takes us to the Spirit Rock Conservation Area and the ruins of a 17 room mansion overlooking Colpoys Bay. An interesting history of this mansion will enhance a short loop walk that starts with a magnificent view from the escarpment edge before winding through remnant apple orchards, past barn ruins, and what is left of a 100 year old rose garden. We will return to Red Bay Lodge in the afternoon to give folks a break before a 6:00 p.m. dinner. The evening will be spent nearby exploring Petril Point Nature Reserve along the Lake Huron shore. This area is a spectacular example of a Great Lake coastal meadow marsh, a globally rare ecosystem. Many wildflowers carpet the areas, and small changes in the elevation offer several distinct natural communities, from a cedar bog forest to an open coastal fen alive with birds and rare carnivorous plants.

### **Tuesday, June 6 - *To the Tip of Tobermory***

You will want to pack up all of your belongings before our 8:00 a.m. breakfast so we can be ready to start our trek to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, Tobermory. Our caravan will take us north stopping at several lakes and bays looking for birds, ferns, wildflowers, and breathtaking scenery. We will picnic lunch at Cabot Head Provincial Nature Preserve, taking in the 1886 lighthouse and a lovely walk to the bay containing the site of a shipwreck. Next on the agenda is the Bruce Alvar Nature Preserve. This is a very unique area with limestone pavement covered with a variety of lichens and mosses. Wildflowers such as the lakeside daisy, calamint, sandwort, dwarf lake iris and fringed polygala poke through the natural pavement. Another stop will be at the Crane River Preserve area, promising sightings of nodding trillium, bulblet fern, maidenhair spleenwort, slender cliffbrake and fragile fern. Upon arriving in Tobermory, we will check into the historic Princess Hotel, before walking over for a visit to the new Bruce Peninsula National Park Visitor Center. The center features informative exhibits, a movie, and a tower upon the escarpment, offering an unbelievable view from the tip of the peninsula. After dinner you may want to stroll around the charming village of Tobermory.

### **Wednesday, June 7 - *Flower Pot Island Trip***

After breakfast we will leave the hotel to board our boat at Bruce Anchors Cruises at 9:25 a.m. for a trip through the Five Fathoms Marine Park where we will observe two of the many shipwrecks through the boat's glass-bottom. Journeying on to Flowerpot Island, we will disembark onto the island for lunch and a few hours to discover the lighthouse, spectacular geological sea stacks, known as "flowerpots", and numerous wildflowers, orchids (calypso among others), and ferns on a hike around the island. This hike is 1.7 miles long with a high point of 145 feet. There are sets of stairs in

the sea cave area. We will be picked up in the afternoon at 3:15 p.m. and return to Tobermory at 3:45 p.m., with time to relax or explore the town before dinner. (*Note: In the event of stormy weather, we will postpone the trip until Thursday and hike the Cyprus Lake area on Wednesday.*) After dinner, we will drive to a lovely secluded beach for some rock hunting and to try our hand at calling in barred owls in a nearby woods.

### **Thursday, June 8 - *Hiking the Bruce Trail***

We will caravan to the Cyprus Lake/Bruce Trail area for a morning of exploring. The Georgian Bay Trail traverses .6 of a mile to the spectacular cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment, overlooking the "sweetwater sea". We then follow the Bruce Trail north, following the cliff line and enjoying many outstanding vistas. The trail turns inland over a cobble beach before returning us to the picnic area on the Marl Lake Trail. This entire hike is less than two miles long, but is moderately strenuous and hiking boots are recommended to prevent turned ankles. It is up and down over rocks and roots, and then follows an old cobbled beach area with softball size rocks, making it a bit difficult to walk. The beauty of the trail and a leisurely pace makes it worth the trouble. We will picnic lunch before visiting Dorcus Bay Nature Preserve, which offers exceptional birding and wildflowers, including dwarf lake iris, orchids, and many boreal species. This preserve contains a mix of natural communities including fen, alvar, deep woods, and dunes. For a change of pace this evening, we will dine at the Lighthouse Restaurant, just a short walk from our hotel.

### **Friday, June 9 - *Making Our Way Home***

After breakfast the day is yours to return directly home or to explore along the way. There are several spots at which you may want to stop. We will include a list in your packet.

### **Trip Leaders**

The Seven Ponds Niagara Escarpment Escape will be led by Naturalists Carrie Spencer and Nancy Kautz. Carrie Spencer received her B.S. degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University. Nancy Kautz received her B.S. degree in Environmental Science from Oakland University. Nancy and Carrie have led many trips to the North Country including the Bruce Peninsula, and love sharing this magical place with everyone.

### **Accommodations**

Two nights will be spent at the Red Bay Lodge, nestled in 400 acres of old forest with access to a private beach on Lake Huron. Charming, rustic lodge or cabins will be our home away from home. The lodge has a large indoor heated swimming pool. Three nights of the trip will be spent in the historic Princess Hotel in Tobermory which overlooks Little Tub Harbor. This quaint hotel was well known at the turn of the century as guests arrived on steamers. This landmark has been completely renovated to combine tradition with modern facilities. With the hotel in close proximity to the village, participants have the opportunity to tour the town or explore the unique shops on their "time off".

## **Meals**

All meals are included from dinner on Sunday through breakfast on Friday. Breakfast and dinner will be served in the dining room. Lunches will be brown bag lunches to take on our adventures each day. Anyone with food restrictions please let us know so we can make arrangements to suit your needs.

## **Transportation**

Transportation to the Bruce Peninsula is the participant's responsibility. Seven Ponds will help arrange rides for those who do not wish to drive or would like to carpool. During the trip some participants will be asked to drive to day trip destinations.

## **Equipment**

One suitcase per person should suffice, plus one day bag for carrying your lunch, field guides, rain gear, and other items on hikes. The Bruce Trail overlooking the Bay is very rugged with large stones to walk over, so hiking boots are recommended, at least on the days that we will be hiking that area. The peninsula can be very warm or take a sudden turn for colder temperatures, so layered clothing is recommended. Additional equipment to consider includes: hiking sticks, binoculars, camera, hat, sunglasses, water bottle, notebook, hand lens, insect spray.

## **Trip Fee**

The fee for this trip is \$ 950.00 US funds (\$920.00 for Seven Ponds Members) (single supplement \$290.00). To sign up for the trip please send your name, address, phone number and a \$200.00 deposit to Seven Ponds Nature Center, 3854 Crawford Road, Dryden, Michigan 48428. Full payment is due May 8, 2017.

## **Cancellation Policy**

In the event of cancellation, refunds will be made according to the following schedule. If a cancellation occurs by April 10, a full refund including deposit will be made. If cancellation occurs between April 10 and May 8, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the trip will be refunded. If cancellation occurs after May 8, we will only be able to provide a refund for the portion of the trip fee which is recoverable by Seven Ponds.

**For more information, please contact Carrie Spencer or Nancy Kautz at 810.796.3200 or [spnc@sevenponds.org](mailto:spnc@sevenponds.org)**