



GEORGIAN BAY ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

Climate

Georgian Bay Islands National Park has a moderated climate because of its location on the Great Lakes basin. There are marked temperature extremes, but no extended wet or dry spells. Annual precipitation amounts to about 900 mm. The climate is influenced by a number of air masses, including the Pacific, Arctic, Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic.

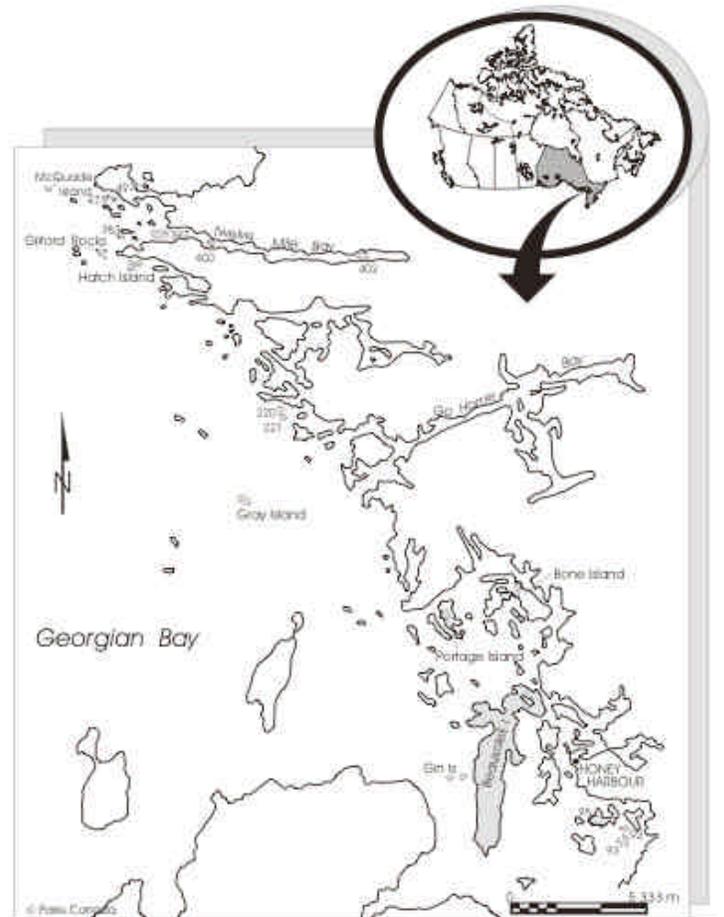
Geology

Eastern Georgian Bay is part of the southwestern edge of the Canadian Shield, an expanse of granitic bedrock that stretches from the Yukon to Labrador. The park area, like all of Ontario, was heavily glaciated and the scouring effects of the ice sheets are evident in the rounded tops of granite that rise out of the water to become the islands of Georgian Bay. There are also many sheltered coves, rocky points, and both sand and cobble beaches. Soils have been slow to develop on the open rock faces, steadily being eroded away by wind and water. Their shallowness does not allow trees to acquire particularly good anchorage. However, a lush deciduous forest, growing on a base of sandy soil and sedimentary rock, covers the southern portion of Beausoleil Island.

Location

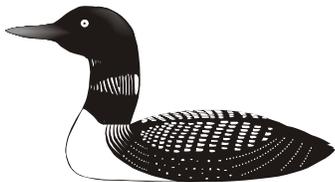
Georgian Bay Islands National Park is situated in the world's largest freshwater archipelago, known as the "Thirty Thousand Islands", along Georgian Bay's eastern shoreline. The park consists of 63 islands (or parts of islands) with a total area of approximately 13.5 km². Its largest holding is Beausoleil Island and a mainland base is located in Honey Harbour, about 150 km north of Toronto off of Highway 400. A new park administration office opened in Midland in 2004.

Georgian Bay Islands National Park was formally established in 1929. Its properties span two of Canada's natural regions: the Mixedwood Plains and the Boreal Shield.



Vegetation

The park's plant life reflects a broad transition zone between northern and southern forest communities. The forest cover is a mix of more southerly deciduous species, like ash and maple, and more northerly species like hemlock and spruce. Rich hardwood forests at the southern end of Beausoleil Island are a sharp contrast to the northern park islands, where barren rock outcrops are topped with windswept white pines. It was these pines that inspired many Group of Seven paintings. Hardy grasses, lichens, and shrubs can be found in the depressions of these rock outcrops, while the moister, richer soils of the mixedwood forests allow more mosses, ferns and wildflowers to grow.



Wildlife

The islands of Georgian Bay are renowned for their diversity of reptiles and amphibians. With 33 species it has more of these “cold-blooded” creatures than any other national park in Canada. The park's population of reclusive Massasauga rattlesnakes, a threatened species, is of particular concern. Visitors are advised to leave this venomous snake alone but report any sightings to park staff. Many bird species are also found in the park, both along the shorelines and in the forests. Fortunate park visitors will catch a glimpse of the great blue heron, a magnificent bird found in this area.

History

The park tells a 5,500 year-old story of human life in this area. There are 14 known archaeological sites, thousands of artifacts some of which are older than the Egyptian pyramids and several cultural landscapes as well as associated archival records and oral histories.

Activities

The park is composed of 63 islands and so access to the park is exclusively by boat. The park has 11 campgrounds located on the largest island in the park, Beausoleil. Cedar Spring, the largest campground, offers showers, flush toilets and a popular beach area. There are docks located across Beausoleil Island and on Bone Island with day and overnight docking available. The park is an ideal location to enjoy hiking, bird watching, swimming and canoeing or kayaking. Winter activities are dependent upon safe ice conditions (usually from mid-January to early March). Park interpreters offer programs and guided hikes throughout the summer and special events are hosted regularly throughout the season. It is recommended that boaters have the appropriate nautical charts for Georgian Bay before embarking on any excursions to the islands. Visitors without a boat can access Georgian Bay Islands National Park via the park's passenger vessel, the *DayTripper*.

For more information please contact:

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