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Tourism North Bay's new logo has a story behind it: There's an invisible line that you cross as you approach North Bay from a southern direction. Crossing this line can expand your horizons, improve your worldview – even change your life. You'll find a launchpad to adventure, culture and a lifestyle that every human secretly craves. It's the home of truly northern experiences since 1884. And we're proud to share it with the world. Welcome to North Bay, The Gateway of the North.

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Perfect timing for 'It Happened Downtown' audio tours

An innovative story-telling project aims to inspire with a unique walking tour featuring local stories narrated by community members through the Driftscape App.

The 'It Happened Downtown' project, led by Jaymie Lathem, of Creative Industries and funded by area partners, will be ready to share mid-May.

Coming out of a year of pandemic isolation, Lathem said the timing is perfect for providing "amazing, heartwarming" tales of adventure, love and perseverance that can be enjoyed while outside for a healthy socially-distanced stroll about town.

"It allows people to walk outside and reconnect and explore their community in a safe way," she said, describing a wide-variety stories told by people they may know of or heard about.

Even though it's not in-person, she said, it will bring people together in way that may inspire them to see the world in a more positive light in the midst of pandemic uncertainties.

"The project took on a life of its own once we started talking to people," Lathem explained. "It brings out the interesting parts of the community and shares how special North Bay is."

Through the Driftscape App, for example, you can visit the War Memorial at the Cenotaph Park and hear how Harry "No Chute" Dennison survived a record

26,000-foot fall to Earth during the Second World War, as told by his grandson.

You can also listen to Olympic freestyle skier Steve Omishel share why growing up in North Bay made him fall in love with sports.

One story is about how love bloomed over time on a city bus, another describes how the Capitol Centre once booked a hard-core punk band by mistake.

Some have a historic note, like Paul Larsh talking about the day he watched the Barry Building explode from his law office next door in 1974.

With the App, the downtown and waterfront area will 'come alive' as geocaching and smartphone technology activates stories as listeners walk by various locations.

The project was a collaborative effort led by Creative Industries, with partners Tourism North Bay and Downtown North Bay, with collaborators including The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound and Yes Employment. Funding was provided by Digital Main Street through the Government of Ontario.



Download the App at
www.driftscape.com



Bird-watching paradise in city parks, trails

By Kevan Cowcill

Spring has arrived in North Bay and the trickle of birds showing during an early thaw will turn to a flood in May. Of the 500+ species of birds in Ontario, over 300 of them have been seen here.

Since North Bay has lakes on both its east and west boundaries, many of the migrating birds are funnelled along the lake edges into the city. As a result, our parks and wooded bike paths have a wide variety of species, especially during migration season.

One of the best spots to see a large number of birds in a small area is Laurier Woods Conservation Area in the heart of the city.

Birds moving northward through this extensive forest and wetland complex are drawn to this perfect resting stopover offering a wide variety of habitat.

In the open marshes, Pied-billed Grebes call and nest; in the cattail marshes, Virginia Rails and Soras are heard late at night. During the day, Belted Kingfishers can be seen diving into the water for minnows; early morning walkers may see Green Herons perched on a snag, or an American Bittern stalking through the cattails. Swallows, including the endangered Barn Swallow, can also be seen flying over the ponds catching insects.

The tall shrubs and stunted deciduous trees along the marsh pathways provide eye-level views of Grey Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, and the beautiful Common Yellowthroat. Old beaver ponds often have Wood Ducks, Lesser Scaup, and Hooded and Common Mergansers along with more common species like Mallards and Canada Geese.

Laurier Woods also hosts 20-24 warbler species during migration with most of those species staying to breed. Transient species like Palm Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Blackpoll

Warbler are often found feeding with other birds as they move through the area on their way further north.

On the uplands surrounding the beaver ponds, mixed flocks of American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and Magnolia Warbler forage in the low shrubs and small trees. It isn't unusual to look at one warbler through your binoculars and see several other bird species, including vireos and flycatchers, in the same field of view.

All habitats are easily accessible on well-maintained trails. Every Saturday in May, the Nipissing Naturalists Club usually has guided walks at 9 a.m. with at least one person in the group being able to identify birds by song to help find the more secretive species. This year COVID restrictions may cancel the group walks, but the trails will still be open.

EDUCATION CENTRE TRAILS

The Education Centre Trails on the escarpment can be accessed across the pond from the Nipissing University and Canadore College Education Complex, or from the Trans-Canada Highway entrance at Duchesnay Falls.

The forests here are extensive, and the birds are not concentrated into one spot like they are in Laurier Woods. However, birds that favour older forest ecosystems can be found here. These include the Wood Thrush (an endangered species), the brilliant crimson and black-winged Scarlet Tanager, and the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Their melodic songs can be heard from quite a distance. Other birds with songs that carry are Ovenbird, Veery, and Hermit Thrush; despite their muted earth-tone colours, they are readily seen with a bit of patience.



Vast recreational tourism opportunities are within a short distance of North Bay, such as the Voyageur Multi-Use Trail System (VMUTS) near Mattawa. There are more than 300-kilometres of trails for ATVs, 4x4s, UTVs and trail bikes between the ancient Algonquin Highlands and Laurentian Mountains, bordered by the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers. The trails, suitable for beginners to the more advance, are arrayed from the Trail Head in clearly marked loops of various lengths and levels of difficulty. See the website at www.vmut.ca to purchase permits that provide the financing to offset the cost of development and maintenance.

The mature forests also hold warbler species that favour deeper woods, such as the Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Canada Warbler (a species of concern). Orange-crowned Warbler, Northern Parula and Tennessee Warbler are less common but can be easily located when singing.

For the more adventurous, a night hike may turn up Great Horned Owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and Barred Owls, especially in early spring. This is bear country so practice bear safety.

CRANBERRY TRAIL

Cranberry Trail is a 2.5 km one-way route that ends at a rocky point overlooking Lake Nipissing. The trail can be accessed by driving to the trailhead in Callander, or if time permits, by cycling the 12-km Kate Pace Way from North Bay to the dirt road that leads to the trailhead. Cranberry Trail does run through wet habitats such as vegetated ponds, red maple and black ash forests, and alder, snowberry and chokeberry shrub habitats, so bring insect repellent and appropriate clothing.

There are benches and interpretive signs as well as a two-story observation platform overlooking a large marsh. Trumpeter Swans, Northern Harriers, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles may be seen from the viewing platform.

Northern Waterthrush and Wilson's Warbler are commonly heard in wetter sections, while Great Crested Flycatchers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are usually seen and heard in the small sections of dry upland forest.



SUNSET PARK

There aren't that many species to find here compared to the other sites. However, the park juts out into Lake Nipissing and is a good place to use a spotting scope during spring and fall migration to look for Red-necked, Eared, and Horned Grebes. Juvenile scoter species may also be spotted on the lake. For a few days, migrating longspurs and shorebirds will feed in the park area before resuming their journey to the Arctic.

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Variety of ‘themed’ cycling routes to be offered

Cycling tourists and local residents will have multiple “themed” routes designed and packaged for their pleasure and adventure this summer.

Discovery Routes Trails Organization has the first template ready to go with several more in the hopper for when the COVID-19 pandemic ‘stay at home’ restrictions are lifted.

Called Farmstand 40, the inaugural themed route is an agri-tourism experience covering almost 40 kilometres of rural roadway in Powassan and Chisholm.

This route is described as a challenging and engaging ride through scenic farmland featuring rolling hills, waterways and lush forested areas.

“Quiet roadways with both paved and hard-pack gravel sections lead you to a variety of farm gate stands offering produce, meat, baked goods, maple syrup, preserves and artisanal crafts,” states the marketing materials to be made available to cyclists.

Other routes under construction include: Ghost Gravel along the Old Nipissing Road between Magnetawan and Commanda; Voyageur Cycling Route featuring stories of the ancient water highway between North Bay and Mattawa; North Bay offering an urban arts and culture medley of paths; and one in West Nipissing with a francophone culture motif.

“In the face of an ailing tourism sector impacted by the global pandemic, the goal of the Discover Our Northern Routes campaign is to develop the region as a destination for world-class trails tourism by increasing awareness of the region’s engaging trail experiences,” says Jennifer McCourt, executive director, Discovery Routes.

The campaign, McCourt added, is directed at domestic tourists eager to discover a new experience in their own backyard and attract visitors from outside the region when public health authorities advise that it is safe to do so.

“Working with local storytellers and tour guides, the stories and local experiences will be packaged to blend culinary, local agriculture, history, nature and culture.”

Trail experience itineraries will be featured at www.discoveryroutes.ca with details including interactive maps, elevation map, trail and route conditions, points of interest, suggested equipment and skill level, amenities, rider testimonials, images to support each individual experience, links to affiliates and partners.

Discovery Routes, a local charity supporting a thriving volunteer trails community, also produces an Adventure Trails Map detailing hundreds of kilometers of the area’s best trails for hiking, cycling and paddling.



Tourism North Bay is proud to work cooperatively with the following organizations to promote the city and its tourism sector on a recovery plan:

City of North Bay, North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, Discovery Routes, Downtown North Bay, Creative Industries, Northeastern Ontario Tourism, Destination Northern Ontario, and Destination Ontario.