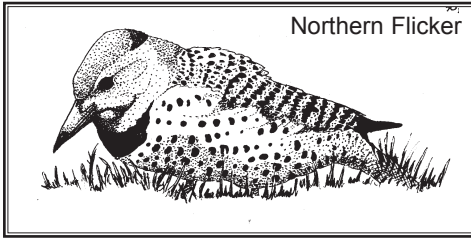


STOP 7 "Anteaters"

Sixty years ago, you would have been knee-deep in water at this location. This is the oldest portion of the Owen Point Trail. It has progressed through the early stages of succession and now contains mature Eastern Cottonwood trees.

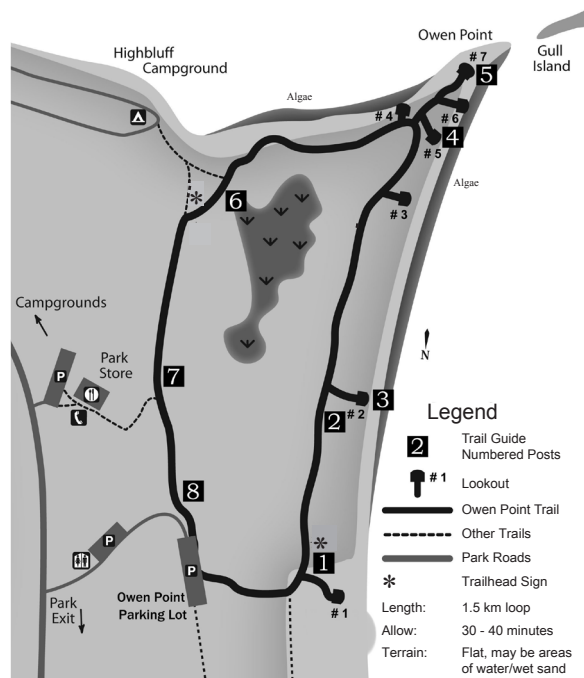
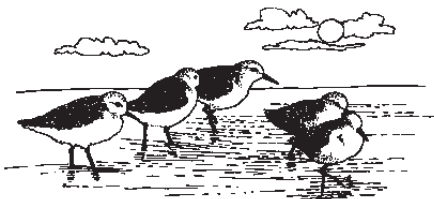
Cottonwood trees provide nesting habitat for Presqu'ile's "feathered anteater", the Northern Flicker. The Northern Flicker is a species of woodpecker that prefers eating ants and other insects off the ground rather than foraging about tree bark in search of a meal. Flickers have been recorded eating up to 5000 ants in a single feeding!



STOP 8 Conclusion

If left unmanaged, most of Presqu'ile's beach would be vegetated and resemble the Owen Point Trail. Only through active management does the beach remain appealing for recreational uses such as swimming.

Although the beach in the Owen Point Trail area is unsuitable for most traditional summer beach activities, the vegetation found in that area stabilizes the sand and provides ideal nesting habitat for many bird species. The area is also of major significance in the spring and fall to as many as thirty species of shorebirds, including Red Knots, Dunlin and Whimbrel. Without this and other feeding stops, it is unlikely that these birds could complete their incredible migrations between South America and the Arctic.



The Owen Point Trail begins at the Owen Point Trail parking lot and meanders through the natural beach area. The trail is approximately 1.5 km long and will take 30 - 40 minutes to complete. Several viewing pods provide access for bird-watching along the shoreline. Dogs are not permitted on the trail or in the beach area at any time.

For more information about Presqu'ile or its programs, contact::

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Photo: Sue Careless

An Interpretive Guide to the
Owen Point Trail

Owen Point Trail

Welcome to the Owen Point Trail. This 1.5 km trail is accessible from the Owen Point Trail parking lot and provides access to the natural beach. The trail provides visitors an opportunity to observe beach succession and a wide variety of bird life, particularly shorebirds during spring and fall migration. Numbered posts along the trail correspond with information in this guide.

The Owen Point Trail is characterized by sandy soil that supports a healthy population of Stinging Nettle. Please stay on the trail to avoid coming into contact with this plant. To prevent disturbance to bird colonies, Gull and High Bluff Islands are closed to the public between March 10 and September 10.

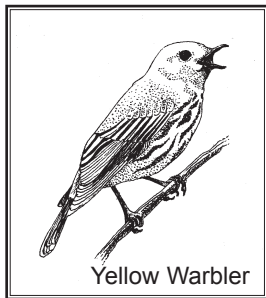
STOP 1 Worlds Apart

Presqu'île's sand beach is divided into two distinct sections. Beaches 1, 2 and 3 to the north are actively managed. In the summer, they are raked daily to ensure that the algae and other debris is removed and that the beach does not become vegetated. The vegetated beach to the south was maintained until the early 1990's. At that time, raking was stopped and the beach was allowed to regenerate naturally.

The resulting natural beach is the home of Sandbar Willow, Dogwood shrubs, Eastern Cottonwood trees, Horsetails and dune plants. This densely vegetated area provides habitat for a variety of bird species.

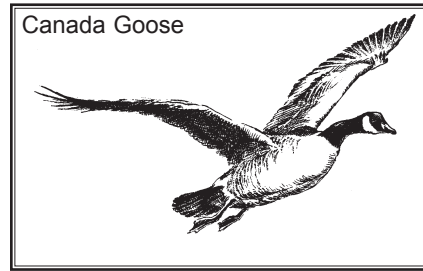
STOP 2 Happy Campers

This section of the trail with its thick willow growth is the preferred breeding location of Yellow Warblers. These small birds can be identified by their bright yellow plumage. The males can often be heard defending their territory with their rapid, high-pitched song. As beach succession continues and the willows are replaced by Cottonwood trees, the Yellow



Warblers will no longer be attracted to this area.

STOP 3 Living on the Edge

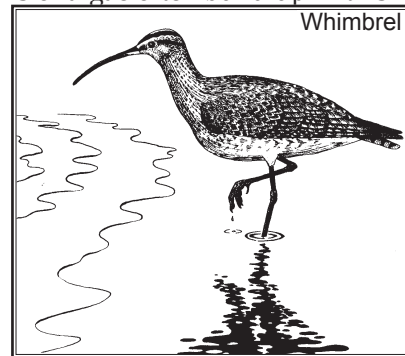


becoming overgrown and from losing sight of the shoreline. This area is ideal habitat for Canada Geese, which forage on the new growth. They prefer this low ground cover as they can watch for potential predators such as Red Foxes. In June and July, parents and goslings will form groups of over 100 birds that graze on the vegetation near the shoreline.

STOP 4 Algae: A Second Look

Since raking was stopped on the natural beach, large accumulations of algae often build up in this area. Although unpleasant to some humans, these algae deposits are important to the survival of many shorebird species.

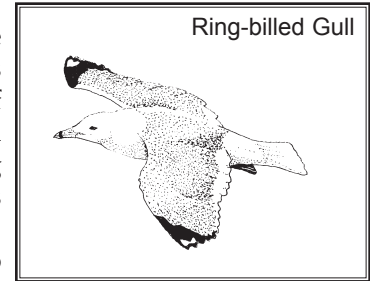
W r i g g l i n g through the algae are many aquatic invertebrates, such as midge larvae, also known as bloodworms. Bloodworms are an important food item for migrating shorebirds at Presqu'île. For these birds, Presqu'île is a service station on the intercontinental migration highway between the Arctic and South America. Without the large invertebrate-infested algae mats, many of these shorebird species would be unable to refuel and would possibly die of starvation during their migration.



Presqu'île's beach can expand lakeward up to two metres each year. The viewing stations are moved regularly in order to prevent them from

STOP 5 The Islands

Located south of the trail are two islands that are the home of over 250,000 colonial waterbirds, including gulls, terns, herons and cormorants. The closest island to Owen Point is known as Gull Island and is appropriately named since it is the location of over 20,000 Ring-billed Gull nests along with a lesser number of Herring Gull, Caspian Tern and Common Tern nests. High Bluff Island is the partially forested island located beyond Gull Island and is the nesting grounds for Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-herons, Great Egrets and more gulls. Taken together the two islands are the most diverse waterbird nesting colony on the Great Lakes.



STOP 6 Showing Off

Various bird species, including Marsh Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, Virginia Rails and Red-winged Blackbirds nest in the Owen Point marsh. As its name implies, the Red-winged Blackbird is a black bird with bright red shoulder patches known as epaulettes.

The males display these epaulettes aggressively to demonstrate ownership of a breeding territory. Males also compete for a territory by issuing their distinct "conk-a-ree" call. Subordinate males will cover their epaulettes to avoid conflicts with dominant males.

