

Temagami

Temagami is famous for its old-growth pine forests, deep clear lakes, and beautiful rocky campsites. Most of the old-growth in Temagami wasn't logged in the 1800's because of the rugged terrain, and because it was far from the markets. A forest reserve was created in 1901, which further slowed logging in Temagami over the next 40 years.

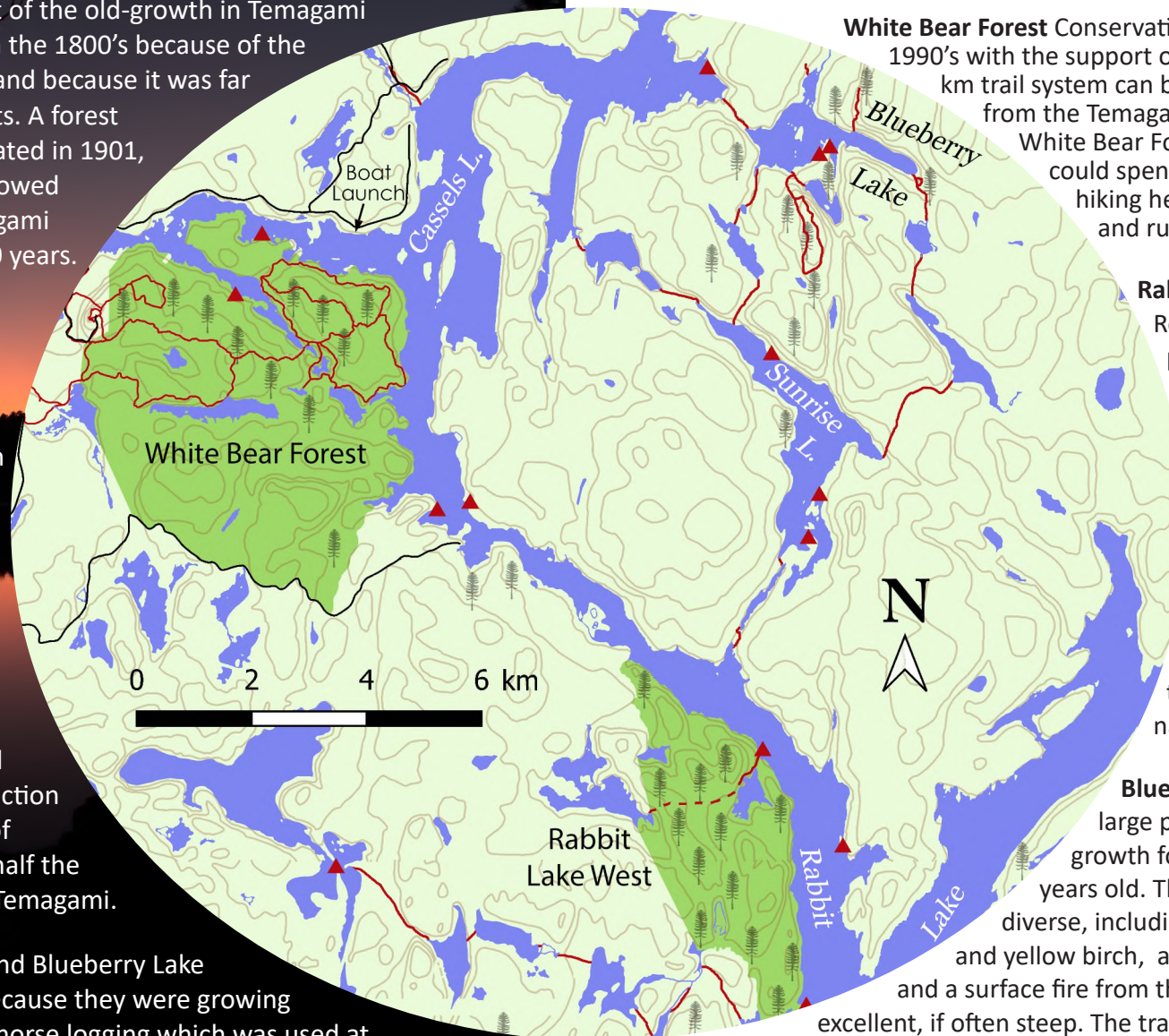
Much of Temagami's old-growth forest was logged between the 1940's and 1980's, but many scattered patches were left.

In 1989 protests on Red Squirrel Road ultimately led to the protection of the old-growth forest north of Obabika Lake, as well as about half the remaining old-growth forest in Temagami.

Areas of old-growth forest around Blueberry Lake escaped logging in the 1940s because they were growing on hills that were too steep for horse logging which was used at the time. Today these are among the most significant tracts of unprotected old-growth forest in Temagami, and also the closest to town.

The Blueberry-Sunrise Lake Loop

A canoe trip of only a few days leads you through three old-growth forests east of the town of Temagami: White Bear Forest, Blueberry Lake, and Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve.



White Bear Forest Conservation Reserve was protected in the 1990's with the support of the local community. The 17 km trail system can be accessed by canoe, or by foot from the Temagami firetower. The oldest trees in White Bear Forest are over 400 years old. You could spend a few hours or a few days hiking here. The trails are often steep and rugged.

Rabbit Lake West Conservation Reserve also protects old-growth pine forests with trees around 300 years old, but trail access is poor. The portage to Bolton Lake offers a short walk through old-growth forest, but is only rarely maintained. Old-growth forest can be seen along the shores of Rabbit Lake. Unprotected old-growth forest is found on the shore to the north, in the Rabbit-Cassels narrows.

Blueberry Lake is surrounded by large pockets of unprotected old-growth forest that reach around 300-years old. These forests are wonderfully diverse, including white and red pine, cedar and yellow birch, an open forest of pure red pine, and a surface fire from the 1990's. Trail access is excellent, if often steep. The trailheads can only be reached by canoe, via a roughly two-hour paddle from Cassels Lake. Nearby Sunrise Lake is surrounded by a narrow strip of old-growth forest, while most of the forest behind was logged. It is beautiful nonetheless.

Planning Your Trip

Visiting by car / foot

Visiting the old-growth forests east of the Town of Temagami is relatively easy. If you don't have a canoe or are pressed for time consider staying at one of the local lodges and hike in White Bear Forest. You can walk, bike or drive to the trailhead at the Temagami Fire Tower and hike the White Bear Trail in under two hours, or access the entire trail network from this starting point, and hike an entire day. You can also hire a boat to drop you at one of the boat access trailheads, or arrange a tour from a local guide.

Visiting by canoe

The best access point to begin your canoe trip is a boat launch off Fox Run Rd., just east of Temagami. There is plenty of free parking, a boat ramp, and public docks. The boat launch is located at 47.067, -79.733, and is immediately across from White Bear Forest. You can reach campsites in White Bear Forest in half an hour,

allow at least two hours paddle/portage to reach campsites on Blueberry Lake, and longer to reach Rabbit and Sunrise Lakes.

The easiest portage between Blueberry and Sunrise Lakes is via Tucker Lake and a small unnamed pond. Watch your footing; in typical Temagami style this is a rugged portage with some treacherous

footing particularly near Blueberry Lake. The longer route through Telford Lake follows a logging road from Chick to Sunrise, and may require some scouting to be sure you're following the correct route. Amap, compass, and GPS (or phone with a GPS app) should always be carried in Temagami.

How long do I need?

Seasoned canoeists could complete the entire Blueberry-Sunrise Loop in a single day. However, if you did that you wouldn't see much of the forest! Three days is a good length of trip to hike some trails in both Blueberry Lake and White Bear Forest, and you could easily fill a fourth day hiking more of the extensive trail systems in these forests.

Can I reserve campsites?

No. On busy weekends in the summer this could be a problem, so plan accordingly. There are two good campsites on Blueberry Lake, and one on Cassels Lake near the portage to Blueberry. There are several good sites on Sunrise Lake.

I want to do a longer trip, where should I go?

Use Hap Wilson's Temagami guide books, as well as Ottertooth.com, and canoe maps, to plan a longer trip. A slightly longer route could incorporate Lorraine and Rabbit Lakes. A more ambitious route might include the Matabitchuan River and McDonald Creek. But always plan to spend time loitering and enjoying the forest.

Where can I learn more?

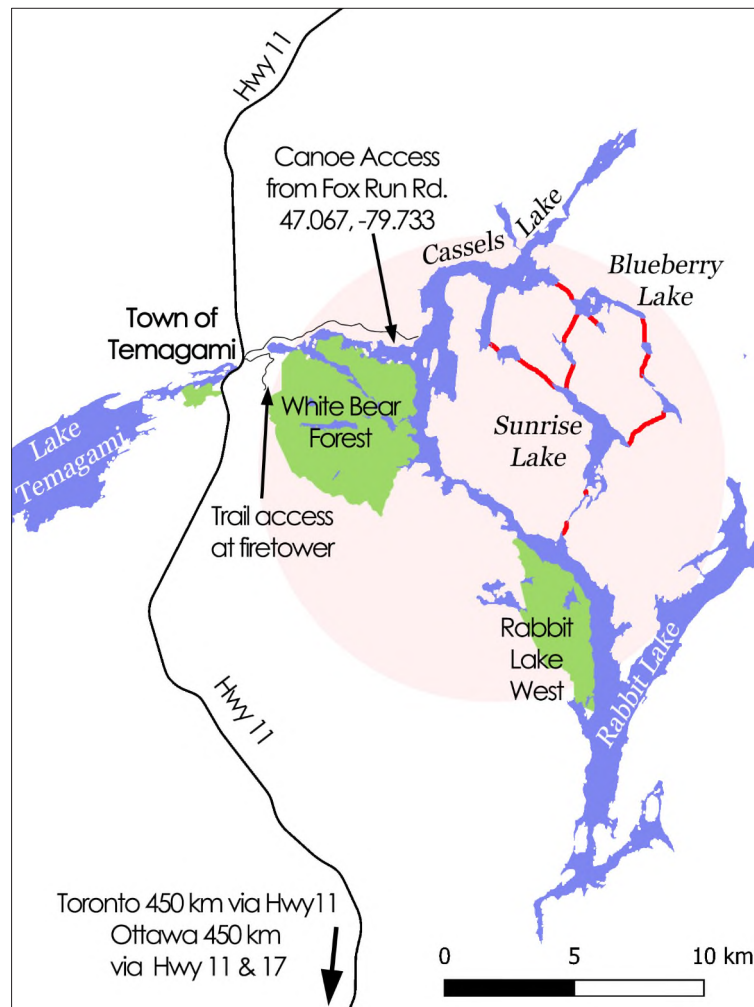
Here are some useful websites:

- Earthroots.org
- Oldgrowth.ca
- Ottertooth.com
- Ancientforest.org

An Ontario old-growth forest Facebook group organizes people interested in trail maintenance and activism to protect old-growth forests.

The book Ontario's old-growth forests (2nd edition in press) has a wealth of information about ecology, history and trails.

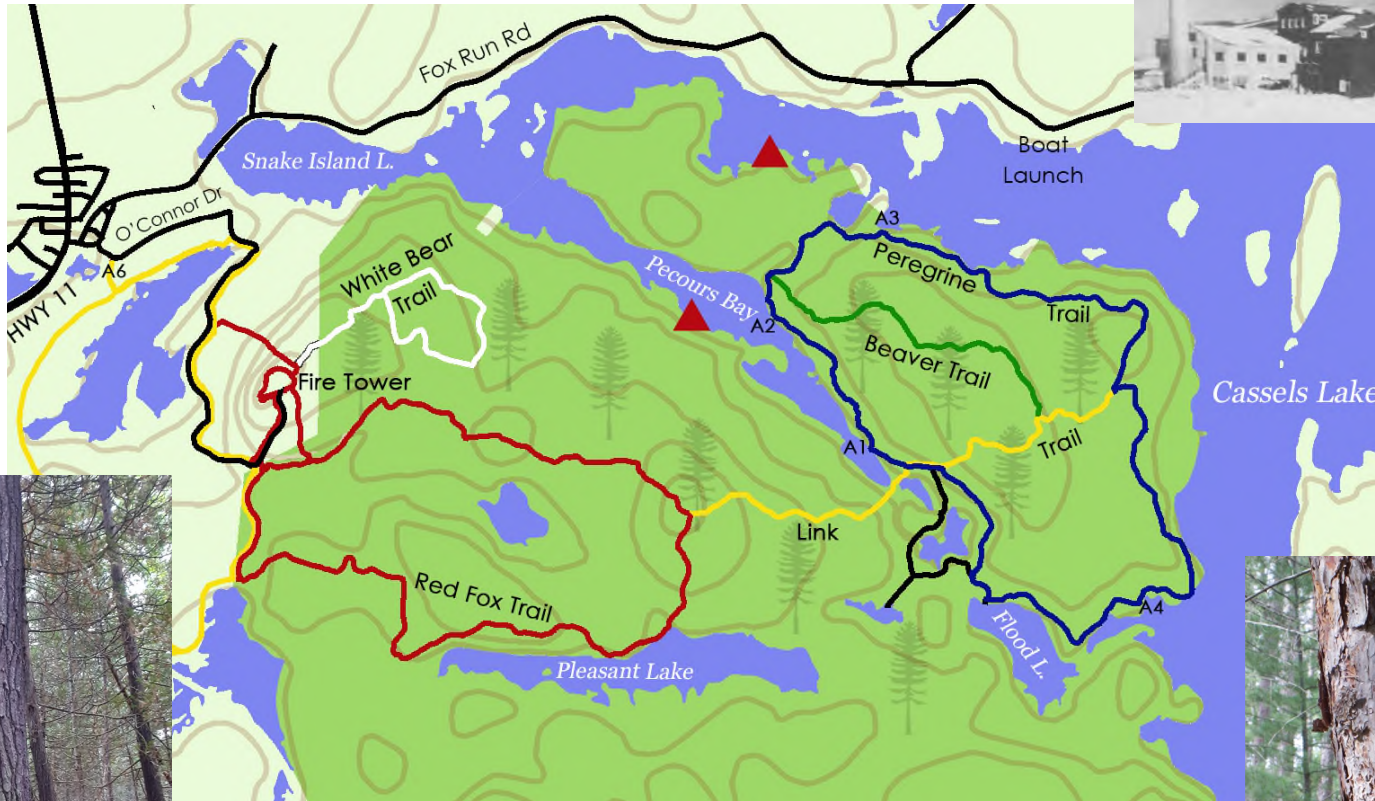
This pamphlet was produced for Earthroots by Michael Henry (2020), with support from Nadurra Wood Corp and many volunteers.



White Bear Forest

White Bear Forest wasn't special 100 years ago, it was a typical slice of the Temagami landscape. It became special when nearly all of the old-growth pine forest around Cassels and Rabbit Lakes was logged, between about 1940 and 1980. White Bear Forest was directly across from the mill site (where the public boat launch is found today), and very close to town. It's proximity to the mill actually preserved it for a time, because D.A. Gillies, the mill owner, liked looking at the pines across the lake. In 1992 it was scheduled for logging, but it was ultimately preserved by local citizens who saw the value of the old-growth forest right next to town. Today it's one of the most accessible old-growth pine forests in Ontario.

The **White Bear Trail** is close to the road access at the Temagami fire tower. In less than two hours you can walk among impressive old-growth pines. The trail begins in younger forest near the fire tower, then enters the old growth as it descends into the valley



The public boat launch on Fox Run Rd. is at the site of the old Gilles saw mill.

Below: Watch for firescars on pine trees in White Bear Forest. The fire burns hotter on the uphill / upwind side of the tree, killing the bark. Over time the tree regrows over the scar. The cross-section is from a tree cut off the trail near Access A1. It survived a fire when it was about 60 years old, then grew for another 200 years.



The oldest trees in White Bear Forest are found near where the yellow / **Link Trail** crosses the blue / **Peregrine Trail**. A red pine aged near here was 400 years old, and only around 50 cm in diameter! Some of the scattered large white pines found along the trail likely reach similar ages. Along the slope between access A1 and A2 is a red pine forest with trees about 280 years old. The trees survived a fire when they were 60 years old, and nearly all are still marked with fire scars over 200 years later. Old trees can also be seen on the **Red Fox Trail** near Pleasant Lake, on the **Link Trail** climbing the hill west from Pecours Bay, on the **White Bear Trail**, and in other pockets in White Bear forest.



Blueberry Lake

The **Charcoal Trail** is a short and easy hike that leads to a 1996 surface fire. The fire was started by lightning and burned several hectares of white and red pine forest, killing only a handful of trees but scorching the bark on others. Look for seedlings of white pine, and rarer red pine, that sprouted after the fire.



The **Blueberry Lookout Trail** climbs a steep ridge of open red pine forest that is around 140 years old. The ridgetop is open red pine forest carpeted with lichens and blueberry bushes, offering spectacular views. Don't plan to eat a lot of blueberries though- even in peak season the plants bear little fruit (they're waiting for the next forest fire to come through).



The **Old-growth Trail** is one of the most diverse old-growth trails in Temagami. It climbs up the west side of the ridge through 270-year-old white and red pine forest. The old trees are not massive, tending to be around 60 to 70 cm in diameter, but their trunks



are thick columns with little taper, and many of them are leaning. Dead standing trees and logs are common. The ridge top is red pine forest where the trees are often marked with fire scars, left after surface fires killed the bark on one side of the tree many decades ago. The southeast end of the hilltop has an unusual old-growth poplar forest that is slowly being replaced by sugar maples. Allow 2-4 hours to hike the full trail.



The **Cedars Trail** leads you through a fern-rich old-growth cedar and yellow birch forest. Growing in a protected valley, the forest here is likely as old or older than other forests around Blueberry Lake, reaching at least 250-300 years

old. The bark of the old yellow birches develops thick plates and is painted with a diverse palette of lichens. Some of the cedars are quite large, the forest is beautiful, but the mosquitoes can be voracious in June and July.