

**Site Name:** **Hastings Lake Islands**

**Site Type:** **Natural Area**

**Status:** Order-in-council (OC)

**Subtype:** Conservation

**PASite ID (Map Ref #):** 551

**O.C. No. (Land Ref. Manual):** 519/95

**Site # (Parks Website):** 443

**Reserved Area:** 0.00 ha. (0.00 ac.)

**Designated Area:** 3.93 ha. (9.70 ac.)

**Total Area:** 3.93 ha. (9.70 ac.)

**Additional Protected Areas:** none

**Lat/Long Co-ordinates:** 53.4153453383 N, -112.922862263 W

**Natural Region:** Boreal

**Natural Subregion(s):** Dry Mixedwood

**2nd Natural Region:**

**2nd Natural Subregion(s):**

**IUCN Classification:** II

**Operated By:** Parks Division

**Info Phone:** 403-340-7691

**Steward(s) Aug2002:** Volunteer(s) 1

**Steward(s) Aug2003:** Volunteer(s) 1

**Steward(s) Dec2011:** yes

**Petroleum & Natural Gas Surface**

**Access Aug2002:** No Surface Access

**Day Use Site(s):** Hastings Lake Islands

**Recreation Activities:** fishing

**Access:**

**Notes:** Hastings Lake Islands Natural Area (3.9 ha), located 35 km southeast of Sherwood Park, preserves three small islands in Hastings Lake. The site was established as part of the Special Places program. The islands are a bird staging & migration stopover and an important colonial bird nesting & pelican loafing area. The larger islands support stands of mixedwood forest. Fish species in the lake include Brook Stickleback, Fathead Minnow, Spottail Shiner, Yellow Perch Hastings Lake lies in the Boreal Forest Natural Region, Dry Mixedwood Sub-region. The Dry Mixedwood Sub-region is the only Boreal Forest sub-region that does not have excellent representation within Alberta's parks and protected areas network. There are still significant shortfalls in the glacial lakebed, ground moraine, sandplain and sand dune natural history themes (Alberta Parks web site, 2012).

### The Good News!

We're usually away for the field season, so I rarely get a chance to canoe across Hastings Lake to our natural area in the summer. This summer I was home for a few days with family, and we decided to go for a paddle on the lake. Imagine my surprise when I discovered a large population of the rare aquatic plant, widgeon-grass (*Ruppia cirrhosa*) growing all around the islands of Hastings Lake Islands Natural Area and along the shore of Hastings Lake Natural Area. I had been looking for this plant for years, and it was right in my back yard.



Coiled flower stalks identify widgeon-grass (photo L. Kershaw)

This rare plant is only known from 3-4 places in the province, so it is classified as an S1 species. Long, coiled stalks carry its tiny flowers up to the surface of the water, for pollination, so when it's flowering it's unmistakable. However, for most of the year it just blends in with the other slender-leaved pondweeds and is easily overlooked. This year, we were in the right place at the right time, and we were rewarded with an exciting discovery! Hopefully, these two natural areas will provide some protection for the unusual rare species.



Searching for widgeon-grass on Hastings Lk. (L. Kershaw)

Linda Kershaw (SAPAA Newsletter Sep 2012)

Images:



Gull colony on Hastings Lake Islands NA - photo L. Kershaw



