

Blenkinsop Lake Environment & Habitat

Blenkinsop Lake is habitat for birds, other animals, and native vegetation. At one time, the lake was much larger and surrounded by a sphagnum bog of low, fragrant plants. Now, it is influenced by a watercourse outlet and dominated by deciduous forest and riparian vegetation over a deep, peaty base. With these changes have come a change in habitat.

Riparian areas are located beside creeks, lakes, and wetlands and are distinguished by their vegetation. These areas of transition from watercourse to upland have a direct influence on the health of the aquatic environment. In themselves, riparian areas are noted for their high biodiversity (varieties and combinations of plants and animals) and are considered highly vulnerable to alteration.

The lake and its riparian vegetation attracts overwintering and migrating waterfowl. Other birds come to nest here, including the provincially rare and secretive Green Heron. Some of the other significant nesting species are Pied-billed Grebes, Wood Ducks, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks. The "hedgerow" vegetation along the trails provide important habitat for butterflies and moths, while birds and bats are attracted to the many wildlife trees. Otters and other animals may be seen near the water. Fish life is limited by the excess nutrients and shallow water in the lake, however cut-throat trout and other fish may be found.



- WILLOWS-DOGWOOD** - The north end of the lake is populated by a dense community of willows and red-osier dogwood in which water pools and flows year round. The willows and stinging nettle provide important habitat for butterfly species; in particular the Satyr Anglewing and the Red Admiral. On the western and southern portions of the lakeshore, red alder joins the shrub layer to form a dense riparian zone.
- ASPEN-DOGWOOD** - At the north end of the bridge there is a small plant community of trembling aspen with an understorey of red-osier dogwood. This is an area of low peaty soils which is seasonally flooded.
- INTRODUCED BIRCH & RED ALDER FOREST** - The deciduous forest south of the lake is the least evolved part of the bog that once dominated this landscape. The understorey is dominated by false lily-of-the-valley, skunk cabbage, and lady fern.
- WILLOWS-INDIAN-PLUM** - The majority of the trail south of the lake is dominated by willow species, Indian plum, and red-osier-dogwood. The southern end of the path has a black cottonwood overstorey with some trembling aspen. Garry oak, pine, and various ornamentals are found closer to the outer perimeter of the trail. Green Herons have nested in this area and are on the province's blue list of indigenous species considered to be vulnerable and sensitive to human activities.
- BLACKBERRY** - An invasive exotic plant that grows along the trail and attracts sparrows and California quail.
- WETLANDS** - The lake shoreline is dominated by shrubby willows, dogwood, and hard hack. The adjacent shallow water is dominated by duckweed, cattails and buttercups. Almost the entire lakeshore is surrounded by a 5 to 10 metre wide zone of non-native yellow water lilies. The deeper water supports a submergent vegetation zone that is also 5 to 10 metres wide. Small fish favour this area, especially where the piles meet the south shore.

Did You Know?



The Green Heron is one of few birds known to use tools when hunting. Watch for them to use berries and grass to entice fish to the surface.
D. Fraser Photo.



The Lorquin's Admiral feeds on Willow, Cottonwood & Aspen leaves. Females have a wingspan of up to 7cm.
Royal BC Museum Photo.



The Eight-Spotted Skimmer. Some Dragonflies can fly at speeds up to 54km/hr and stop in an instant.
Royal BC Museum Photo.



The Pied-billed Grebe, a small, solitary species that nests on Blenkinsop Lake, often swims with only its head and neck above water.
D. Fraser Photo.

Nature Checklist



Purple Martin
(Progne subis)
An endangered bird that can be seen foraging here for dragonflies over the water.



Cooper's Hawk
(Accipiter cooperii)
A bird of prey that nests here. Look for the bands of brown and white on its tail.



Black-headed Grosbeak
(Pheucticus melanocephalus)
A migratory bird that is uncommon in Victoria but is known to breed here.



Anise Swallowtail
(Papilio zelicaon)
Feeds on plants in the parsley family.



Red Alder
(Alnus rubra)
A pioneer species that thrives in moist sites where it improves soil by fixing nitrogen.



Pacific Willow
(Salix lucida ssp. lasiandra)
One of the largest native willows and the most common willow around Blenkinsop Lake.



False Lily of the Valley
(Maianthemum dilatatum)
The Haida heated the leaves and applied it to promote healing of cuts.



Black Twinberry
(Lonicera involucrata)
Look for yellow twin-flowers or black twin-berries in a contrasting red cape.



Black Hawthorn
(Crataegus douglasii)
Watch out for the 3cm long thorns.

Photos courtesy of David Fraser, Frank Boas, Bill Mackie, Bill Merilees and the Royal BC Museum.