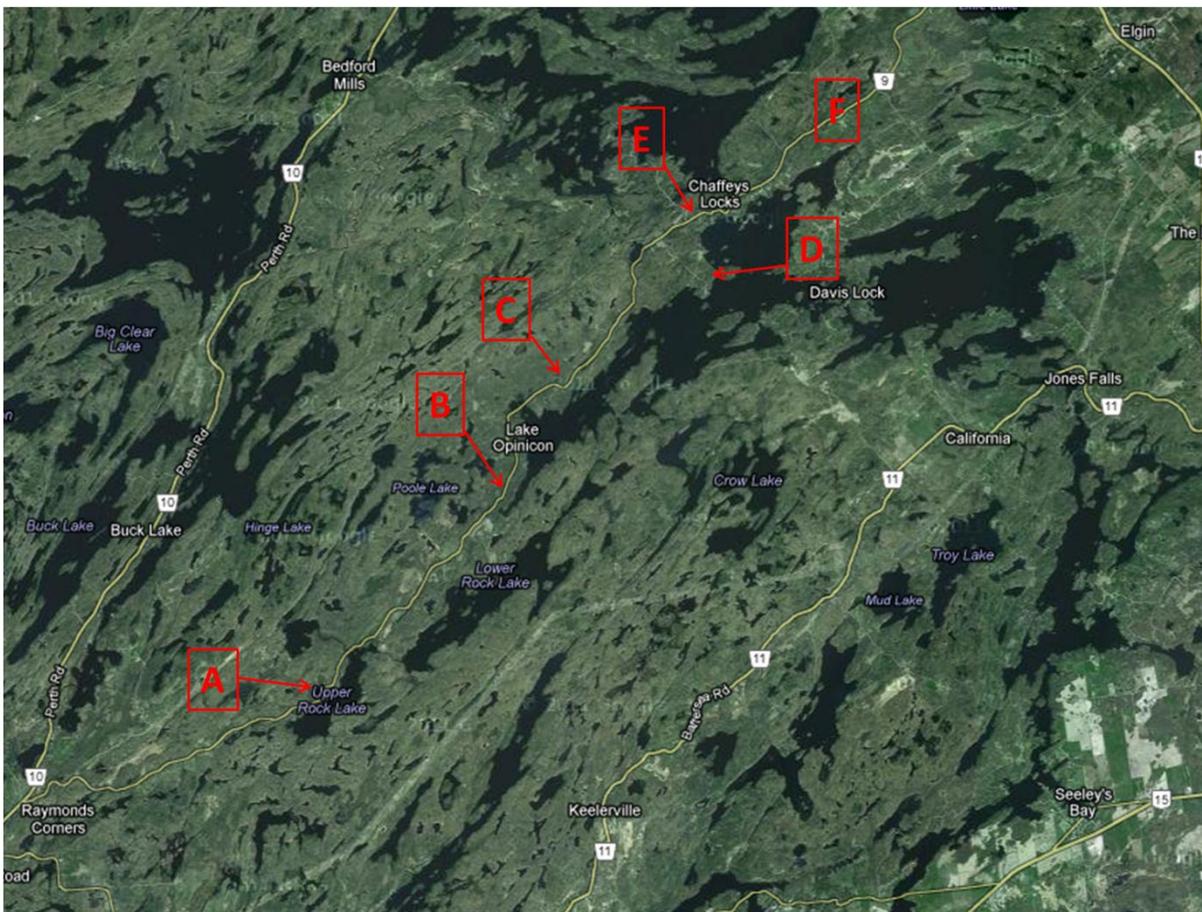


Birding Hot Spots of the Kingston Region: Opinicon Road

Opinicon Road is arguably the best spot in Ontario for finding **Cerulean Warbler**. Other much sought after species found along Opinicon Road include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Yellow-throated Vireo** and **Golden-winged Warbler**. Breeding **Prairie Warbler** and **Louisiana Waterthrush** were once easily found at certain localities near Opinicon Road, but in recent years they have become all but absent. **Trumpeter Swan**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, **Bald Eagle** and **Barred Owl** are also regularly encountered. The birding is generally good along the whole length of the road but in order to help narrow down the search, a list of the best birding stops is provided below.

Directions: To get to Opinicon Road, drive about 30 km north of Kingston on Perth Road (aka Division Street or Highway 10). Look for the right hand turn just north of Perth Road Village.



A. **Herbert's Bog**

Located on the north side of Opinicon Road, 6.5 km from Perth Road, this Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, remarkably, had hosted a pair of breeding **American Three-toed Woodpeckers** several decades ago. The bog supports a mixture of wetland birds and can sometimes be a good place to watch spring migrants moving through owing to its sparse tree cover. The bog is entirely on **private property** so birding must take place from the road.

B. Lindsay Lake Trail

Located about 12 km from Perth Road. The trailhead of the Lindsay Lake Trail is unmarked. It begins on the north side of Opinicon Road just east of Post Office Gate Lane. There is a brown heavy steel gate at the trailhead. This trail is on **private property** and is used extensively by researchers at Queen's University Biological Station. **No dogs** are allowed. You must **stay on the trail**. Please **do not disturb ongoing research projects**. Pay attention to the route walk because it is possible to get lost in the maze of trails north of Opinicon Road. **Hunters may be in this area during deer hunting season.**

During the first kilometre of trail look and listen for Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cerulean Warbler, **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher**, both species of **cuckoos**, Least Flycatcher and other forest birds. Ruffed Grouse and **Golden-winged Warbler** frequent the shrubby areas near the conifer plantation. In winter, **owls** sometimes roost in the plantation. **Red-headed Woodpecker** formerly breed in the silver maple-bur oak swamp a short distance from the trailhead.

C. Bonwill Tract/Skycroft Trails

These trails are best accessed on the north side of Opinicon Road, north of the Skycroft Campground, 14 km from Perth Road. The trailhead is not marked as such here either. Like the Lindsay Lake Trail, these paths are on **private property** that is used Queen's University Biological Station research crews. **No dogs** are allowed. You must **stay on the trail**. Please **do not disturb ongoing research projects**.

Along with the Lindsay Lake Trail, the Bonwill Tract trails are habitat for some of most diverse assemblages of forest birds in the Kingston Region. Of particular note along this trail are the **warblers**, including **Cerulean** and formerly **Louisiana Waterthrush**.

D. Queen's University Biological Station

Since the early 1970's QUBS has been a one of the most important sites of ornithological research in Canada. Hundreds of peer-reviewed papers about the ecology, behaviour and evolution of birds have been published over the decades and important conservation work on **Cerulean Warblers**, **Golden-winged Warblers** and **Eastern Whip-Poor-Wills** has been done here. The station is operational all year but because this is a research facility visitors are asked to contact the Operations and Research Assistant Mark Conboy (mark.conboy@queensu.ca) before visiting to ensure that no scientific studies are disturbed. Visitors are welcome.

Bird feeders are maintained all year and have attracted species such as Red-bellied Woodpecker, **Boreal Chickadee**, **Hornemann's Hoary Redpoll** and **Brewer's Blackbird**. The station offers a good vantage point for observing the large waterbird roosts in autumn when thousands of birds descend on Lake Opinicon at sunset. Lake Opinicon itself attracts unusually high numbers of **Red-necked Grebes** for a brief period in spring and rarely **Red-throated Loon** in autumn. Breeding birds include Merlin, Barred Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, **Pine Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Blackburnian Warbler**. During migration and winter up to four species of **owls** can be heard singing: **Barred**, **Great Horned**, **Northern Saw-Whet** and **Eastern Screech**. Golden Eagles are occasionally seen scavenging carrion on Lake Opinicon.

The 1.3 km long driveway to QUBS is located about 18 km from Perth Road. In addition to the facilities at the station headquarters, QUBS also manages about 3000 ha of forests, fields, wetlands and lakes, including the Lindsay Lake Trail and the Bonwill Tract Trails.

E. Chaffey's Lock

Historic Chaffey's Lock is located 19.5 km from Perth Road. The large pines at the lock station and in the forest around the village are good spots to find breeding **Pine Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Blackburnian Warbler**. During spring and autumn waterfowl migration, the open water below the lock on Opinicon Lake attracts large numbers of **ducks** and **geese** including flocks of **Ring-necked Ducks** numbering in the hundreds. **Trumpeter Swans** and some other waterfowl overwinter here. **Bald Eagles** frequent the lock in winter. Bird feeders in the village attract **raptors**, **Northern Shrike**, an occasional **Red-bellied Woodpecker** and the odd interesting songbird such as **Carolina Wren** and **Hornemann's Hoary Redpoll** in addition to other winter finches.

F. Chaffey's Lock Road

East of the village of Chaffey Lock, the road is known as Chaffey's Lock Road. The farm fields and pastures attract large mixed species flocks of **waterfowl** and **blackbirds**, as well as **Rough-legged Hawks**, **Northern Shrikes**, **Lapland Longspurs**, **Snow Buntings** and other grassland birds.

Please submit your sightings to the Kingston Field Naturalists database by email mark.conboy@queensu.ca or by sharing your checklists with us on [eBird](#) (user name Kingston FN).