

Key Site 51: Baie des Rochers, Quebec

Location: 47°57'26"N, 69°48'4"W

Size: 2 km²

Description: The Baie des Rochers lies on the north shore of the St. Lawrence upper estuary, about 15 km north of Saint-Siméon, Quebec. This bay is approximately 2.4 km². A wooded island lies in the center of the bay, and its rocky shores and mudflats are exposed at low tide.

In winter, due to wind patterns and tides, the outer portion of the bay usually freezes while the interior of the bay remains ice-free. This bay also periodically fills with wind driven pack ice.

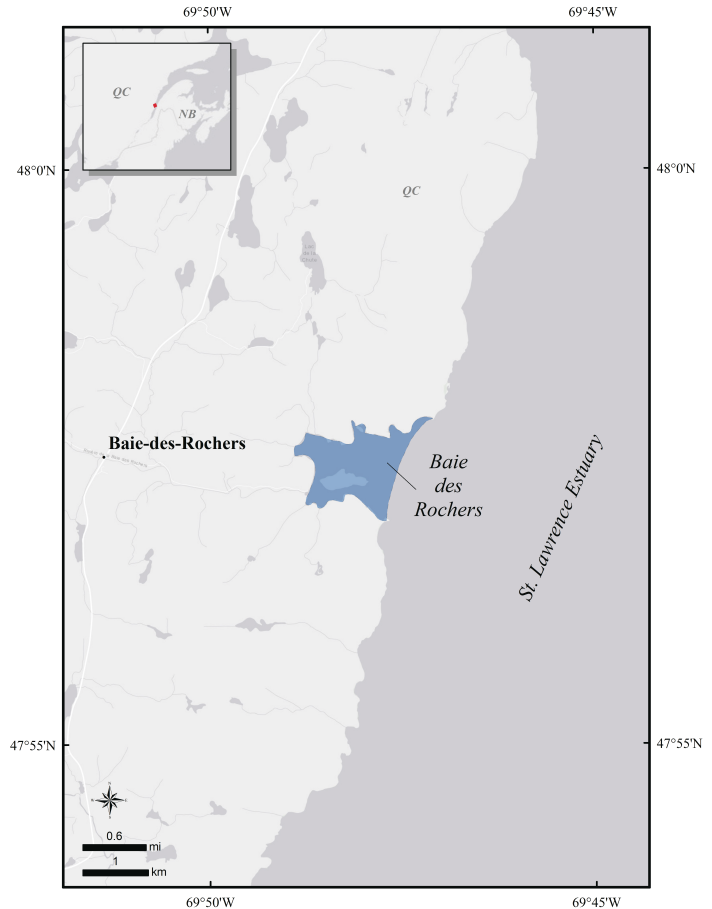
Precision and Correction of Abundance

Estimates Presented: Abundance estimates presented for this key habitat site have not been adjusted to account for incomplete detection or other biases. Abundance estimates should, therefore, be treated as minimum estimates.

Biological Value: This site is second most important wintering site for eastern Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*), which are listed as a species of special concern (Environment Canada 2013). The site supports about 10% the eastern Barrow's Goldeneye population during winter. From early December to late April, up to 600 individuals may be found in the ice-free waters of the bay (Robert et al. 2003). Shallow water, intertidal areas, and river mouths are important habitats for Barrow's Goldeneyes, where they tend to use hard-bottom habitats (Ouellet et al. 2010) and feed on *Littorina* spp. and *Gammarus oceanicus* associated with extensive stands of rockweed (Laforge 2010).

During winter, 30 to 200 Common Goldeneyes (*Bucephala clangula*) use this site (Robert et al. 2003).

In late April and early May, migrating sea ducks stage at this site, with daily counts of up to 300 Common Eiders (*Somateria mollissima*), 60 Surf Scoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*), 50 Black Scoters (*Melanitta americana*), 40 Common Goldeneyes, 80 Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*), and 600 Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) (Robert et al. 2003).



Sensitivities: Habitat deterioration or alteration of ecological processes underlying the food chain is of concern. Food resource availability and quality could be influenced by pollution. In very cold winters, landfast ice can cover most of the bay or during periods of strong southerly winds dense pack ice can restrict feeding areas available for foraging.

Potential Conflicts: Oil spills could be detrimental, particularly during winter, given the highly clustered distribution of Barrow's Goldeneyes at this site. Human disturbance associated with recreational boat traffic or hikers along coastal trails may displace birds, although much of this activity occurs in summer and fall rather than winter when use by sea ducks is greatest. There are numerous recreational facilities surrounding the bay, including a municipal park with a wharf and boat ramp (Appendix 1).

Status: The Baie des Rochers lies within the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park (federal-provincial status) and is also recognized as an Aquatic Birds Concentration Area (*Aire de concentration*

d'oiseaux aquatiques; MELCC 2018). The key site has also been identified as a Canadian Important Bird Area, mostly because of its importance to wintering Barrow's Goldeneye (IBA Canada 2021).

Literature Cited

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Barrow's Goldeneyes. Photo: Tim Bowman.