
Not just for the birds: geological heritage and geotourism possibilities in the Cape Shore region

ANDREW KERR

*Geological Survey of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of
Natural Resources, PO Box 8700, St. John's, Newfoundland
A1B 4J6, Canada*

The Cape Shore region, encompassing several communities between Placentia and Branch, along Route 100, is one of the most scenic regions of eastern Newfoundland, and maintains strong cultural links to its Irish roots. The huge seabird colony at Cape St. Mary's forms its premier attraction, and many visitors pass through the area from late June to mid-August. The region is also blessed with some spectacular geology, and wonderful coastal exposures, including some of the highest sea cliffs on the island. Its geographic location means that it is one of the foggiest places in the Province, especially during the summer months. However, unlike the birds, the rocks can (usually) be seen in such conditions!

Assets of geological interest include stratified sedimentary rocks of late Precambrian and Cambrian age exposed in towering cliffs, some folds that you can actually walk around on, more mafic dykes than most people can count, and a fossil locality that might be significant on a global scale. It also contains some of the finest sand beaches in Newfoundland. This presentation gives a general overview of possible sites that might have geotourism potential in the region, but these need linking in some way to other facets of this environment. The idea of a multi-stage hiking trail along the coast from St. Bride's to Branch is perhaps a concept that should be considered. Much of this coastline is scenically spectacular and barren, and such trails already exist in some areas; although the interior is boggy and damp, the coastal strip is generally well-drained and good for hiking. Such a trail would also traverse a wide range of environments within the southern hyperoceanic barrens ecoregion. Cape St. Mary's is a special place in many ways, and justly renowned for its close encounters with seabirds, but it is but one of many attractions along 70 km of spectacular coastline.