

## Exploring the North Channel

March 19, 2022  
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Thanks to David Spencer, Joe McKeown, Jim Woolf and GLCC Harbor Report contributors



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## Planning

- Identify your resources
- Determine how much time you have
  - Two weeks or two months?
- Peak season is mid-July to mid-August
  - 1<sup>st</sup> weekend in August is a Canadian holiday.
- Do you want to anchor out or stay in marinas?
- Do you have a dinghy or kayaks for exploring?

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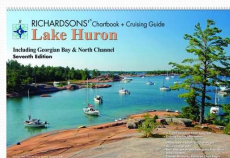
## Resource-CHS Paper Charts

- The North Channel is well covered by modern chart plotters and you will use it while underway...

...but



- CHS paper charts provide a broader perspective for planning passages and choosing anchorages

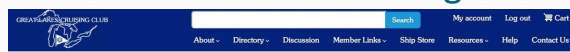


- Richardson's chartbook is also good
- Ports Lake Huron Cruising Guide

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## Resource-Great Lakes Cruising Club



North Channel | NC-0 Cruising the North Channel

### NC-0 Cruising the North Channel

View | Edit | History | Print | Purchase | Revisions

Last updated by Julie Thorndycraft

April 10, 2022

From Drummond Island, Michigan (NC-1)

To Belle Isle, Ontario (NC-83)...

190 nautical miles

#### North Channel quick reference...

Type of report overview of area

US Charts NCS 14850, 14850, 14881, 14882

Can Charts 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2250, 2251, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2286, 2286, 2299

US Customs Drummond Island

1-888-CAN-PASS; NEXUS: Sault Ste Marie, CAN 1-888-696-3887; US 1-888-523-

#### North Channel

- NC-0 Cruising the North Channel
- West End of the North Channel
- South Shore-Cochran to Goose Bay
- North Shore-Thessalon to Spanish Islands
- Keweenaw to Little Current to Berren Islands
- Benjamins and Nearby Islands
- Bay of Islands Area
- East End of North Channel

#### Harbor Reports



GLCC Harbor Reports are invaluable

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## Resource-Little Current Cruisers' Net

- The Little Current Cruisers' Net is on VHF channel 71 at 9 AM – in 2020 and 2021, it was also on Zoom
- Roy Eaton has been awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers by the Governor General of Canada.
- He was also awarded an Honorary Lifetime Membership in the Great Lakes Cruising Club for his service to North Channel boaters



- Roy Eaton has an entire GLCC School webinar on North Channel Ports and the Little Current Cruisers' Net on April 14, 2022.

"Boaters Helping Boaters"

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## Wind, Weather and Water

- Understand wind forecasts for anchorage selection
  - Wind is usually light (5 – 15 kts) NW / W / SW
  - **TIP:** Add 5 kts to the stated forecast
- Water temperature 70-80F mid summer
- The North Channel is lovely mid August to mid Sept but plan a few weather days in your schedule A
- Access online information via Windy, Environment Canada

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## Anchoring

- Plan that you may encounter at least one summer storm with gusts of 30-45 knots
- Storms frequently bring erratic wind shifts
- Practice med-mooring (taking a line to shore with your dinghy)

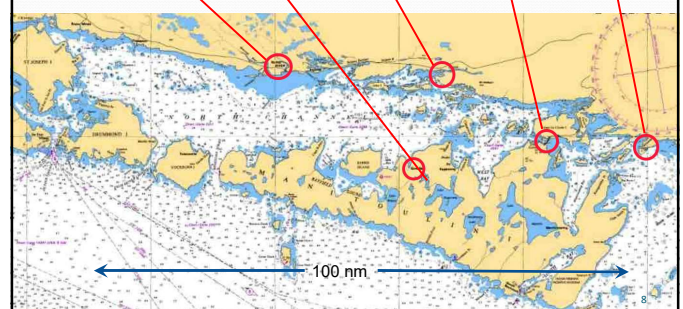


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## Provisioning

Blind River      Spanish      Little Current      Killarney  
Gore Bay



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## The Far West

- ✓ Meldrum Bay
- ✓ Bayfield Sound
- ✓ Turnbull Island
- ✓ Vidal Bay

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## Meldrum Bay

- Very small town with no services
- Westernmost settlement on Manitoulin Island
- Canada Border Services Agency reporting centre

Photo: Daniel DeWeese

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## Vidal Bay

- Large and little used anchorage on Manitoulin's north shore
- Protection from all winds can be found
- Heavy woods right to the shoreline

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## Vidal Bay

- ✓ Little Used
- ✓ Easy entrance
- ✓ Attractive wooded cliffs
- X So-so shore access and hiking opportunities

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## Bayfield Sound

At Anchor by Battery Bluff

Photo – Julie Thorndycraft



Battery Bluff at Cook Bay


Photo – Jim Wooll

- ✓ Rarely Cruised
- ✓ Attractive expansive views
- ✓ Crystal clear water



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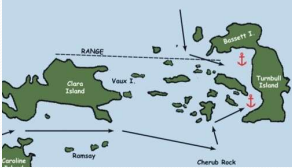
## Turnbull Island



- Outstanding anchorage
- Entry from north or south – GLCC reports are excellent
- Several distinct anchorages

Sanford Island Beach



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## Turnbull Island




- Site of 2019 GLCC Wilderness Rally
- Vulnerable to strong west wind



Photo – Stephanie Carrico

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## Turnbull Island



- ✓ Great Scenery
- ✓ Islands for dinghy and kayak exploration
- ✓ Good shore access
- X Exposed to strong west wind
- X Concentration required for entry

Photo – Julie Thorndycraft



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## The Middle West

- ✓ Beardrop Harbour
- ✓ Eagle Island
- Armour Island
- John Harbour
- Clapperton Harbour

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## Beardrop Harbour

- One of the best anchorages in the North Channel

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## Beardrop Harbour

Photos: Julie Thorndycraft

- ✓ Exceptional scenery
- ✓ Large enough for lots of boats
- ✓ Very good dinghy and kayak exploring
- X Somewhat exposed to west wind
- X Well used

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## Eagle Island

- Wide open entry from the east to this large anchorage

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## Eagle Island

- Very good protection except in a strong NE wind
- Nice view of the distant McBean Mountain Range




Photo: Julie Thorndycraft

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## North of Little Current


- ✓ Hotham Island
- ✓ The Benjamins
- ✓ Croker Island
- ✓ Fox Harbour
- ✓ Louisa Island
- Amedroz
- Sturgeon Cove



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## Hotham Island


- Popular, scenic area with many separate anchorages
- One of the top destinations in The North Channel



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## Hotham - West

- The West Anchorage (aka Retirement Cove)



These rocks require attention, especially in high water years

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## Hotham - South

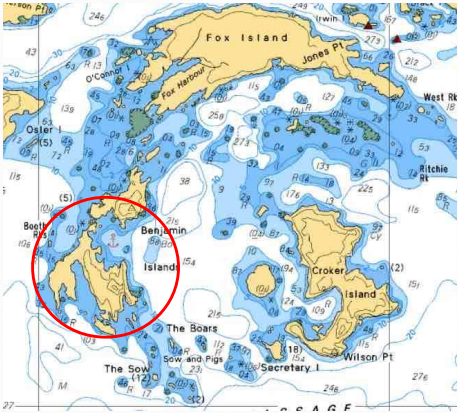
- The South Anchorage (aka Ray's Bay)



Cottage owners Norm and Elaine are very friendly to cruising boaters

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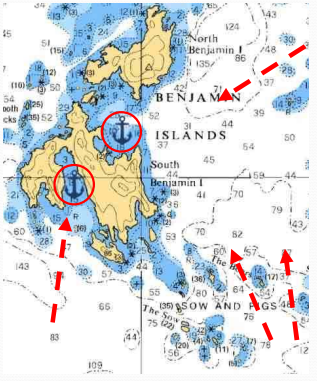
## The Benjamins



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## The Benjamins

- Two main anchorages
- Approach waters are very deep but there are hazards if approaching from the north
- Southern approach through the "Sow and Pigs" is preferred
- Looks daunting on the chart but there is lots of room



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## The Benjamins

- Beautiful smooth pink granite islands
- North anchorage has the quintessential North Channel scenery

*but*

- 20 – 30 + boats anchored here is common
- Holding is notoriously poor




Photo: Julie Thorndycraft

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## The Benjamins

- The south anchorage is preferred for better holding
- Scenic and great hiking but exposed to south wind


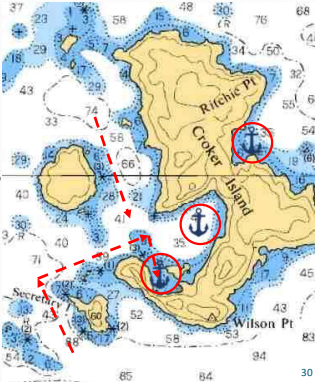


Photo: Julie Thorndycraft

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## Croker Island

- A beautiful spot across the Bay of the Benjamins
- East Cove is little used – not quite as scenic but expansive east view
- Larger bay to the north is deep but can hold lots of boats tied to shore
- Exposed to west winds



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## Fox Harbour

- One of the finest anchorages in the North Channel
- Entry is not trivial, but doable for most boaters
  - Excellent guidance in GLCC Harbor Report NC-27

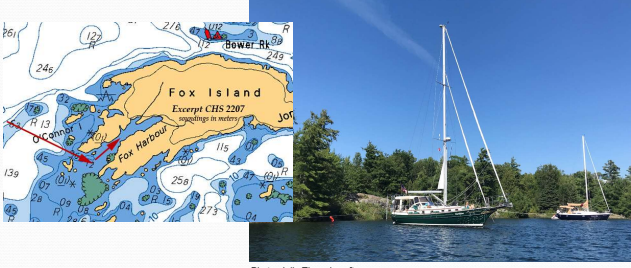
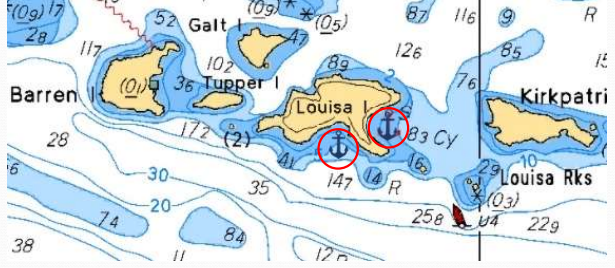


Photo: Julie Thorndycraft

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## Louisa Island

- Popular anchorage with easy access near Little Current
- Good protection from west wind
- Alternate anchorage for shelter from north winds



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## Louisa Island

- Sand beach when water levels are moderate
- Beautiful flat rocks for dinghy landing and shore picnics




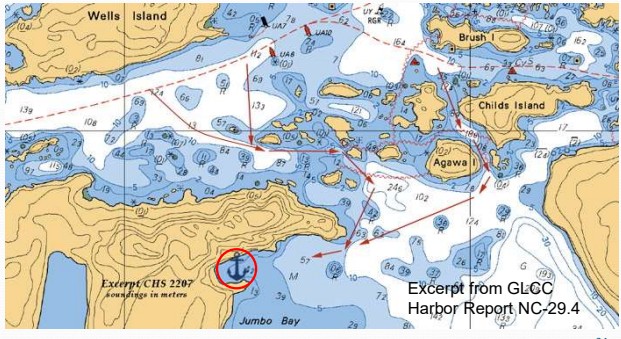
Photo: Julie Thorndycraft

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## Bay of Islands – Jumbo Bay

- Moderately tricky approach




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## Bay of Islands – Jumbo Bay

- Off the beaten path
- Can anchor in Perch Bay as shown here or anywhere in the larger bay
- Good area to explore by dinghy

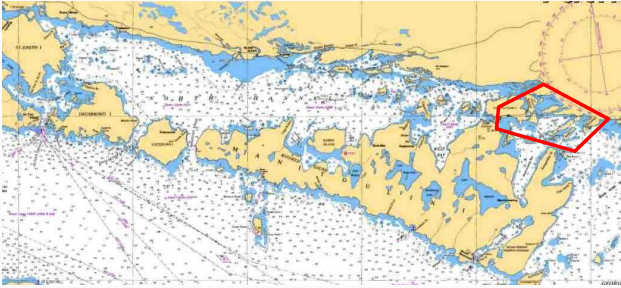


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## East of Little Current

✓ Heywood Island	□ Frazer Bay
□ McGregor Bay	□ Snug Harbour
□ Baie Fine	□ Covered Portage Cove

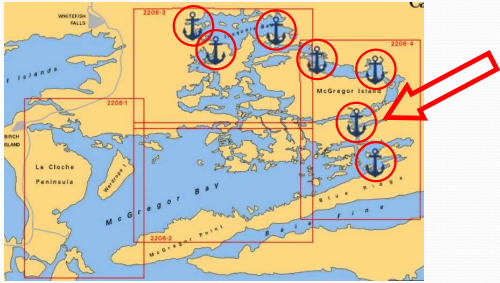


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## McGregor Bay

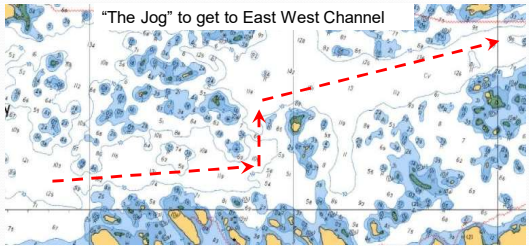
- McGregor Bay is an enormous, complex area
  - Numerous island cottages
  - A maze of islands and channels



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## McGregor Bay

- Although well charted, there are no buoys or designated routes making navigation challenging
- Cruising guides like the GLCC Harbor Reports are recommended companions to CHS chart 2206



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## McGregor Bay

- Head north into a deep channel with no cottages past the Hobbit house

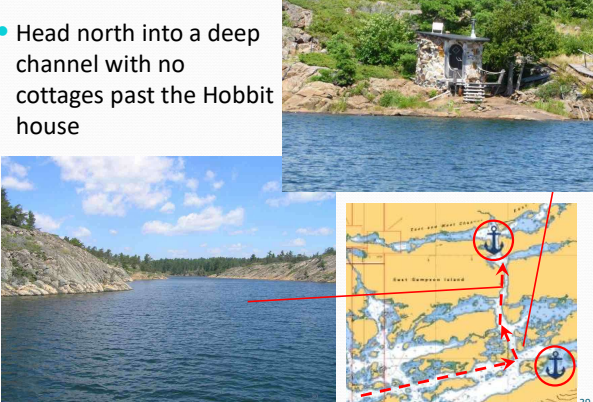


Photo: Jim Woolf

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## McGregor Bay



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### Baie Fine - Entrance

...and leave the Green Buoy EH5 to port, rock cliff to starboard

Leave the Red Buoy EH2 to starboard...

FRAZER POINT

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### Baie Fine - Entrance

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### Baie Fine – The Pool

- The Pool is easily among of the top five anchorages in the North Channel
- The narrows to The Pool is deep and clear and the approach is not difficult

CRATER LAKES WILDERNESS AREA

LOGARITHMIC SPEED SCALE / ÉCHELLE LOGARITHMIQUE

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### Baie Fine – The Pool

- The bottom is weedy so ensure you are well set and allow time to cut weeds off your rode when departing

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### Baie Fine – The Pool

- It's worth the easy 30 minute hike to Topaz Lake




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### Baie Fine - Marianne Cove

- Most boats tie to the south or west shore (but the east shore is best if you can get it)








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### The view from Casson Peak

- Looking towards the entrance of Baie Fine
- The view north towards McGregor Bay

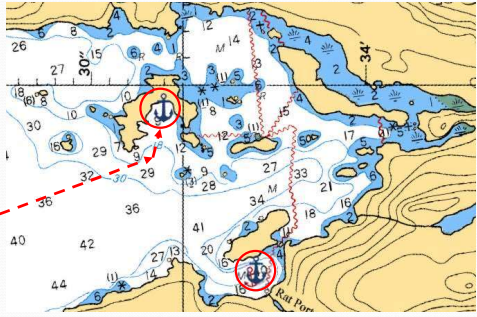





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### Frazer Bay

- Frazer Bay anchorages offer excellent scenery and great protection from stormy east or northeast wind




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## Frazer Bay

- Horseshoe shaped Gord Blake Island provides a secure and attractive place to anchor

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## Snug Harbour

- A perfectly protected anchorage off the Lansdowne
- Favour the west point when entering; it's approx 8 ft.
- Quite deep throughout except small area at the west shore
- Lots of scope!



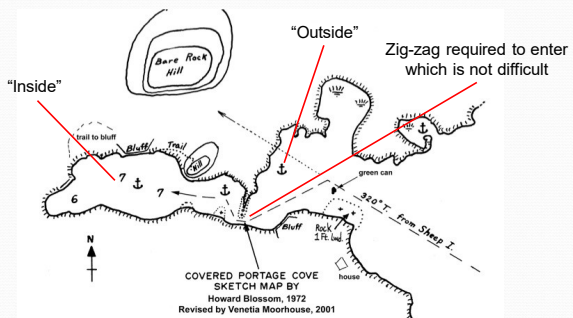
Hiking along Frazer Bay's fossil shore




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## Covered Portage Cove


- Anchor "inside" or "outside"



Zig-zag required to enter which is not difficult

COVERED PORTAGE COVE  
SKETCH MAP BY  
Howard Blossom, 1972  
Revised by Venetia Moorhouse, 2001

Excerpt from GLCC Harbor Report GB-53



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## Covered Portage Cove



- ✓ Perfect scenery
- ✓ Great shelter
- ✓ Short hike to spectacular view
- ✓ 2nm to Killarney
- X Heavily used



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## Five Most Popular Anchorages

- ❑ Baie Fine – The Pool
- ❑ Fox Harbour
- ❑ Covered Portage Cove
- ❑ The Benjamins
- ❑ Heywood



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## Five Most Scenic Anchorages

- Baie Fine – The Pool
- Covered Portage Cove
- The Benjamins
- Beardrop Harbour
- McGregor Bay

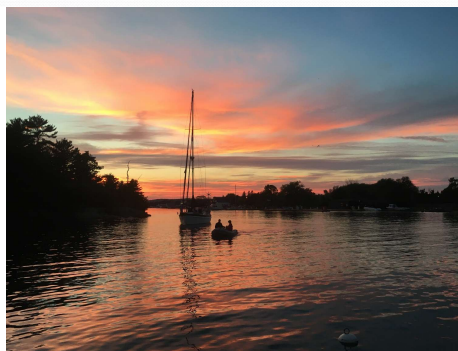


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## Hardest locations to Anchor

- Snug Harbour
- Benjamins
- Baie Finn – The Pool
- Beardrop
- Moiles Harbour

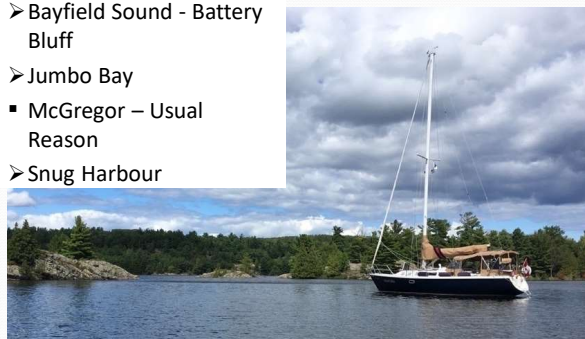


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## Five Hidden Gems

- Armour Island
- Bayfield Sound - Battery Bluff
- Jumbo Bay
- McGregor – Usual Reason
- Snug Harbour



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## Our Personal Top Six

- Turnbull Island
- Beardrop Harbour
- McGregor Bay
- Covered Portage
- Marianne Cove
- Fox Harbour



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s/v Gaviidae  
Blueberry Island  
North Channel

## Questions?



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