



Reindeer Island • Created in 1976, Reindeer Island was Manitoba's first ecological reserve. Outstanding features include isolated pockets of mature upland deciduous forest, raised bogs and the occurrence of ground juniper and American yew.

The Ecological Reserves Program

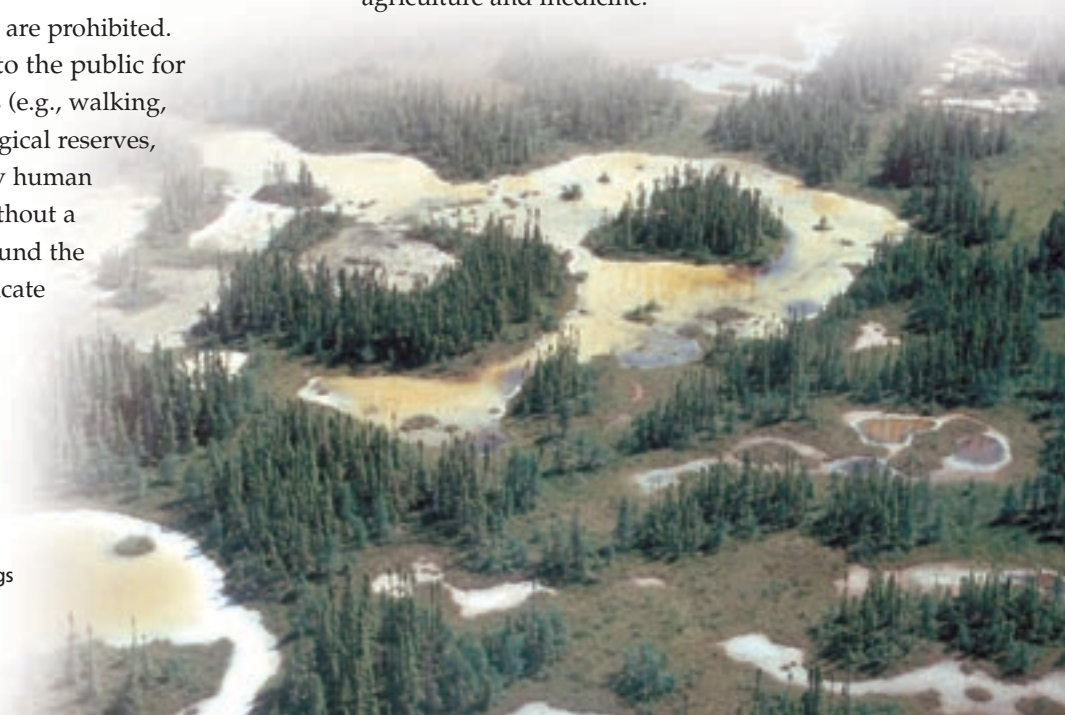
Ecological reserves play a critical role in protecting our natural heritage. They are created to preserve unique and rare examples of plants, animals and geological features. Our goal is to protect examples of each of the province's 1000 plus habitat types, from arctic tundra to spruce bogs and from river-bottom forests to mixed-grass prairie. If we do not safeguard these places, there is a possibility that some will disappear forever.

Manitoba's Ecological Reserves Program began in the 1970s, as governments across Canada sought to protect outstanding or unique natural areas. Manitoba's first ecological reserve, Reindeer Island, a 13,860-hectare island

in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg, was created in 1976. Manitoba has created a total of 16 ecological reserves protecting 60,425-hectares and an additional 20 sites have been nominated to become ecological reserves (see map). The creation of these sites was made possible by working co-operatively with government agencies, First Nations, the public, environmental organizations and industry representatives. Manitoba's ecological reserves protect endangered plants, colonial bird-nesting sites, bat caves, mature forests, beach ridges and other natural areas that could have been destroyed without legal protection.

Legal protection for Manitoba's ecological reserves is afforded by *The Ecological Reserves Act*. Ecological reserves are Manitoba's most protected areas, and the act governs what activities are allowed in the reserves. Consumptive resource uses such as timber harvesting, mining, hunting, trapping, grazing, camping, lighting fires, road and trail building, removal of materials, plants and animals and the operation of motorized vehicles, are prohibited. Most ecological reserves are open to the public for non-destructive, observational uses (e.g., walking, wildlife viewing), but in some ecological reserves, where the land is easily impacted by human presence, access is not permitted without a Ministerial Permit. Signs posted around the perimeter of ecological reserves indicate the restrictions in place for the area.

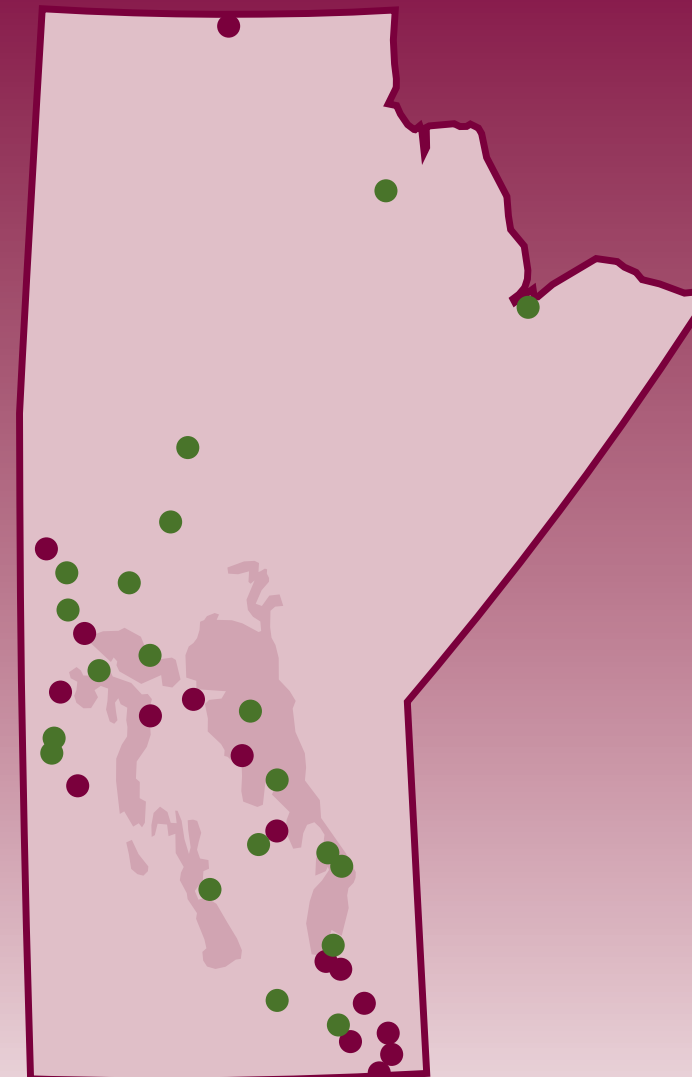
Palsa Hazel • Palsa Hazel Ecological Reserve was established to protect relict permafrost features in Grass River Provincial Park. Palsas, peat mounds 1.5 to 6 m in height and up to 100 m in diameter with a frozen peat core, are the outstanding feature of this site. Bogs and fens ring the palsas. Wooded areas contain mainly black spruce along with moss and lichen.



Purpose of Ecological Reserves

While ecological reserves provide opportunities for people to enjoy the educational and aesthetic benefits of natural areas, they are not created for outdoor recreation and should not be confused with parks or other recreational areas. The creation of ecological reserves is an integral part of society's efforts to maintain biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the complex web of life including all species from microscopic bacteria to plants and animals. Ecological reserves afford us opportunities to study the biodiversity of the province. They provide benchmarks against which environmental changes can be measured, particularly where species are growing at the limits of their range. Ecological reserves are also genetic data banks which may hold the key to new discoveries in forestry, ecology, agriculture and medicine.

Ecological Reserves



Key
 ● current ecological reserves
 ● nominated sites

A Network of Protected Areas

Ecological reserves play a key role in the province's Protected Areas Initiative. The province is assembling a network of protected areas encompassing land, freshwater and marine sites that conserve ecosystems and maintain the biodiversity found within the province. Along with ecological reserves, Manitoba's network of protected areas includes federal parks and portions of provincial parks, wildlife management areas and provincial forests.

The establishment of new protected areas, such as ecological reserves, takes into consideration the need for ecologically meaningful boundaries such as watersheds,

landforms, animal ranges and other environmental features. These types of boundaries are important for the preservation of ecological integrity and natural processes so ecosystems can function over the long-term. Sites must also retain connections with their surrounding landscape. Activities on land adjacent to protected areas must be monitored to ensure that they do not negatively impact the ecosystem being protected. These are challenges in the face of rapidly disappearing natural areas. It is essential we all work together to set aside land in the interests of the people of Manitoba, to enhance the overall well-being of present and future generations of Manitobans.

Kaweenakumik Islands • Nestled in the area between Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Winnipeg is Kaweenakumik Lake. Kaweenakumik Islands Ecological Reserve protects a series of islands used by colonial nesting birds, such as the American white pelicans pictured here. Although none have been spotted recently, trails suggest caribou also make use of the islands.



Ecological Reserves

Outstanding examples of Manitoba's unique sites and landscapes



"Showy lady's slipper from Cowan Bog Ecological Reserve."

Lake Winnipegosis Salt Flats • Lake Winnipegosis Salt Flats Ecological Reserve protects a saline flat nestled between an open freshwater lake and a spruce forest. The area is home to a variety of salt tolerant plants such as red samphire, nuttall's salt-meadow grass, prairie bulrush, and seaside plantain.



For More Information

Mailing Address:

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Manitoba Conservation**
200 Saulteaux Crescent Winnipeg, MB R3J 3W3

Telephone Numbers:

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Toll-free: 1-800-214-6497 ext. 4148
Fax: (204) 945-0012**

Visit our Web site to see the latest information on Manitoba's Ecological Reserves Program at: www.manitobaparks.com • Email: pai@gov.mb.ca

How to Become Involved!

All Manitobans are invited to become involved in helping to designate ecological reserves. Tell us about areas you believe have significant or unusual natural features, plants or wildlife. Ecological Reserves Nomination Forms are available online or can be obtained by contacting the Co-ordinator of the Ecological Reserves Program at the address given on the back of the brochure.

Your site nomination will be reviewed by the Ecological Reserves Advisory Committee. This committee, appointed under *The Ecological Reserves Act*, provides advice to the Minister of Conservation about the establishment of ecological reserves and their stewardship. Throughout the review process, the Parks and Natural Areas Branch of Manitoba Conservation works with the advisory committee and assists with the preparation of site nominations. Once an ecological reserve is given full-designated status, the branch is then responsible for its stewardship.



Baralzon Lake • Baralzon Lake Ecological Reserve, located at the northernmost edge of the province, protects low arctic tundra. The terrain is hummocky to rolling and features winding ridges of sand and gravel, called eskers. A variety of low arctic plants live here including dwarf birch, alpine bearberry and purple mountain heather.

treaty rights to ensure conservation of the feature, while accommodating traditional use to the greatest extent possible. By working together we can ensure Manitoba's outstanding landscapes and ecosystems maintain their natural and cultural value for future generations.

Lake St. George Caves • Little brown bats frequent the limestone caves of Lake St. George Caves Ecological Reserve. One cave is the largest known bat hibernaculum in the province, providing habitat for 5,000 to 10,000 bats each winter. The caves also contain unique geological features including calcite crystals, geodes, geothite, flowstone drapery, and soda straws.

Brokenhead River • Brokenhead River Ecological Reserve protects a mature river bottom forest. As the distance from the river increases Manitoba maple, elm, ash, and bur oaks begin to mix with balsam fir and white spruce. Canoeists may catch a glimpse of beaver, mink or red fox at the river's edge.

In March 1998, a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* on the identification, establishment and management of new protected areas was signed with Manitoba First Nations organizations. The MOU requires consultation with affected First Nations communities before new protected areas are established and outlines the principles guiding the consultation process. Cultural, spiritual, and ecological values are important to First Nations people, and will be considered when identifying and designating protected areas.

The government of Manitoba is working with First Nations to ensure areas designated as protected areas will not infringe upon any existing treaty rights of First Nation peoples, rights under the *Manitoba Natural Resources Transfer Agreement* or rights yet to be confirmed. The right of First Nations peoples to access protected areas for hunting, trapping, fishing and other traditional pursuits will be respected.

The Ecological Reserves Act prohibits sport hunting and the removal of plants or other materials from ecological reserves. However, traditional land use by First Nations is generally permitted. Where the feature being protected could be placed at risk by traditional use, the government will consult meaningfully with First Nations wishing to exercise

First Nations & Traditional Land Use in Ecological Reserves

The Government of Manitoba recognizes that conserving the natural world for future generations is a common interest of both the government and First Nations peoples in this province. First Nations peoples have accumulated knowledge of plants, animals and environment by living on the land for many generations. This indigenous knowledge contributes to the selection and management of ecological reserves and other protected areas.

