



The Boreal Forest

A GLOBAL TREASURE UNDER THREAT

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Canada's Boreal Forest is the largest unspoiled forest and wetland ecosystem remaining on earth. It provides critical habitat for countless species of birds, fish, and wildlife; is a major reservoir of North America's fresh water; and shields us from global warming by storing vast quantities of carbon. At 1.4 billion acres, the Canadian Boreal Forest stretches from interior Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean, accounting for 25% of the earth's remaining intact forests.

Why It Matters

An Ecological Treasure that Provides a Home for Billions of Birds, and Countless Wildlife and Fish

Canada's Boreal Forest provides critical habitat for large populations of wildlife including wolves, grizzly bear, lynx, and moose, and is home to unique and endangered species like the Woodland Caribou and the Whooping Crane. Its vast lakes and rivers offer up abundant fish and its trees and wetlands provide vital breeding grounds for billions of songbirds and waterfowl. Nearly 50% of North America's bird species depend on the Boreal for their survival.



Life Support for the Planet

The Boreal Forest provides ecological services that are essential to the global environment: it purifies the water we drink; produces oxygen; and moderates our climate. A recent study puts the value of the Boreal ecosystem services at roughly 2.5 times greater than the net market value of all oil and gas extraction, forestry, hydro-electric power and mining in Canada's Boreal. (Pembina Institute)



Shields Us from Global Warming

The Boreal Forest shields us from global warming by storing large quantities of carbon in its trees, underlying soils and peat. Canada's Boreal Forest stores approximately 11% of the world's terrestrial carbon. At 186 billion tons, Canada's Boreal carbon storage alone is equal to nearly 27 years of the world's car emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels.



Vital for Sustaining a Traditional Way of Life

The Boreal Forest supports about 600 First Nation and aboriginal communities. These communities are dependent on the Boreal for their food, shelter, clothing, fuel and traditional way of life. Protecting the integrity of the Boreal over the long term is key to the sustainability and well-being of these communities.

Wild Outdoor Experiences Found Nowhere Else

World-class outdoor opportunities abound in the Boreal Forest. Enthusiasts can canoe hundreds of wild northern rivers; climb some of the world's most challenging peaks; fish for the world's largest lake trout, muskies and pike in northern Canada's countless lakes; and view unmatched wildlife.



Corporate Logging, Oil & Gas, and Mining Threaten the Future of the Boreal Forest

At present, only eight percent of Canada's Boreal Forest is protected from development. Scientists warn that unless Canada sets aside protected areas of the Boreal Forest now, most of the wilderness will be lost to industrial development like logging, mining and oil drilling within the next 20 years.

World's Dirtiest Oil

Thanks largely to the Alberta Tar Sands, now the world's largest proven reserve, Canada is set to become America's largest source of oil. But this is also the world's dirtiest, most ecologically destructive oil and poses a grave threat to Canada's Boreal Forest. The Tar Sands lie beneath 25 million acres of forest, an area the size of Iceland. To extract oil, the land is bulldozed, strip mined, and fed into giant boilers. Huge amounts of natural gas and water are used to heat the sand and skim off the oil. The remaining slurry of toxic waste is dumped into vast open pits alongside the Athabasca River. This process destroys the forest and produces three times more carbon dioxide than conventional oil production. And, unsurprisingly, new concerns are surfacing that high cancer and disease rates in wildlife and humans in the area may be related to extensive water pollution from the Tar Sands.



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Largest Pipeline Project

The proposed 800-mile Mackenzie River natural gas pipeline in the Northwest Territories would open up the world's wildest river valley to development and would largely be used to fuel more Tar Sands development. The Dehcho people, who have lived in the area for thousands of years, are asking for a fair land settlement that involves significant land protection. The Canadian federal government is refusing to go along.



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Massive Old-Growth Logging

Every minute, two acres of the Boreal Forest are cut down. In some regions, forest is being lost at rates similar to those in tropical rainforests. The United States is driving this demand: Americans consume 80% of Canada's forest product exports, with much of the timber used for junk mail, catalogs, and toilet paper.



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Destructive Mining

Currently, Canada's Boreal Forest is experiencing an historic increase in mineral exploration and development. Massive open pit mining for uranium, diamonds, gold and other minerals is planned throughout the wildest, most sensitive tracts of the Boreal Forest.

The Boreal Framework Lays Out a Vision for Protecting the Boreal Forest



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1500 Scientists, Major Businesses, Conservation Groups and First Nations Agree: Protect the Boreal Forest

The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework – a plan already endorsed by international conservation groups, 25 Canadian First Nations, 1,500 international scientists and more than 75 major businesses with annual sales totaling \$30 billion – lays out a bold vision to protect the Boreal Forest. Based on science, the Framework calls for creation of new parks and refuges on at least 50 percent of the Canadian Boreal and application of strictly protective management standards. Adoption and careful implementation of this visionary plan can save the Canadian Boreal Forest.



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www.borealbirds.org

Visit www.interboreal.org or www.borealbirds.org for more information on the Boreal Forest and the Boreal Framework.