

# Manitoba's Blue Mosaic



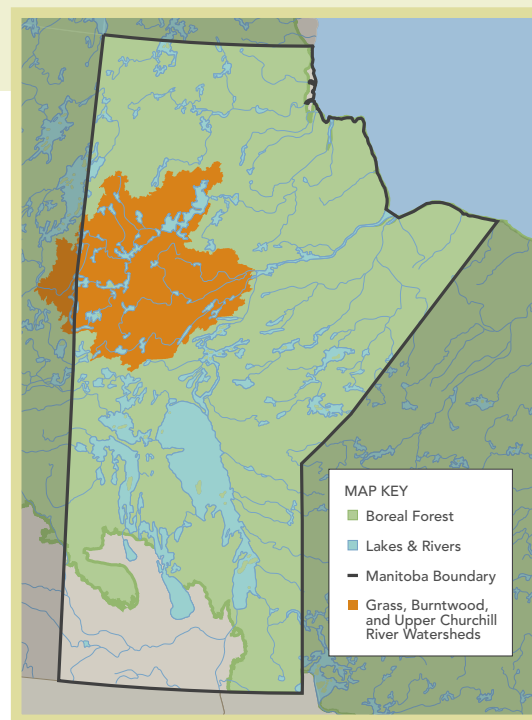
## GRASS, BURNTWOOD, AND UPPER CHURCHILL RIVER WATERSHEDS

The Grass, Burntwood, and Upper Churchill River watersheds feature a varied landscape of rolling ridges and hills.

They were formed by glacial deposits interspersed with permafrost peatlands in the north and flatter, poorly drained bogs, fens, and marshes more characteristic of the Manitoba Lowlands in the south. These landforms make the region a true mosaic of big and small lakes studded with rocky islands, flowing rivers and streams, cool black spruce-dominated peatlands, dry jack pine, white spruce, and aspen-dominated ridges and rocky hills, expansive water saturated fens with sedges and alder, and other habitats.

Woodland caribou thrive in this region, which contains several very large blocks of intact habitat. Female caribou can find forested islands in lakes and black spruce habitat islands in open peatland bogs for calving, where they are safe from predators. And throughout the year, both male and female woodland caribou are better able to evade predators and find sufficient food within the region's large remaining undisturbed and mature forests and peatlands. They are critical to the species' long-term survival. River otters, wolverine, and timber wolves are among many other mammals that also frequent the area.

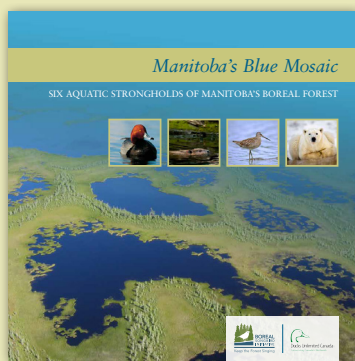
The region's many lakes support thriving populations of fish, including northern pike, walleye, whitefish, lake trout, and in some areas the threatened lake sturgeon. Fish populations in turn support significant colonial waterbird nesting colonies, including hundreds of Common Terns



and Herring Gulls and thousands of Ring-billed Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants. Bald Eagles and Common Loons also nest throughout the region, feeding their young on the abundant fish. Many waterfowl species breed here, including widespread Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck and Green-winged Teal. Wetlands support the threatened Yellow Rail as well as long-legged shorebirds like Solitary Sandpiper and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs as well as special songbirds like the LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrow. Manitoba's official bird, the Great Gray Owl, hunts the forest edges throughout the region and threatened Common Nighthawks occur in drier upland areas. The

area abounds with the songs of boreal songbirds including Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Tennessee Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Swainson's Thrushes, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

These watersheds are home to a diversity of people, with multiple First Nations and numerous Métis and non-Aboriginal communities. Manitoba Museum archeological data show that the region has been inhabited for at least 7,000 years, when the people of the region sustained themselves strictly from hunting, fishing and collecting plant resources. Today, many of the First Nations and Métis inhabitants continue to practice traditional activities on the lakes and rivers that are integral to their lives.



This fact sheet was derived from a subsection in *Manitoba's Blue Mosaic: Six Aquatic Strongholds of Manitoba's Boreal Forest*, a comprehensive report summarizing the vast aquatic values of Manitoba's boreal forest. For more information and literature cited, please refer to the full report.

Wells, J., D. Childs, C. Smith, S.M. Siegers, and P. Badiou. 2014. *Manitoba's Blue Mosaic: Six Aquatic Strongholds of Manitoba's Boreal Forest*. Boreal Songbird Initiative, Seattle, Washington, and Ducks Unlimited Canada, Stonewall, Manitoba.

The report is also viewable online at:  
<http://borealbirds.org/sites/default/files/pubs/mb-report.pdf>

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