

Manitoba's Blue Mosaic



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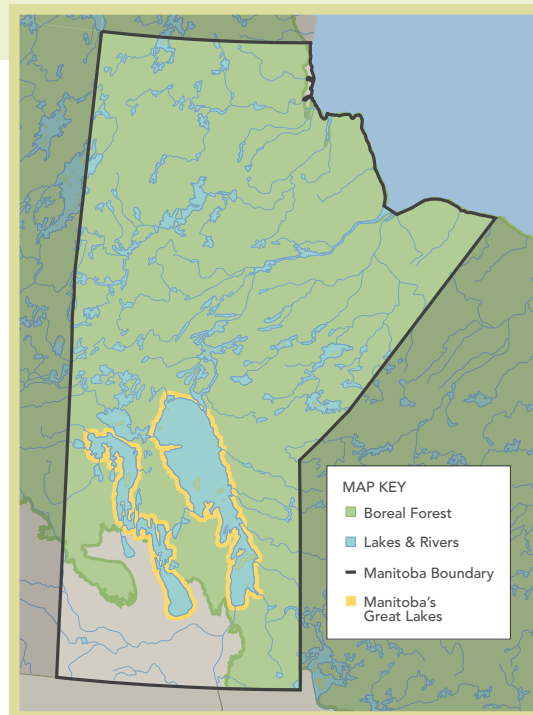
MANITOBA'S GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes of Manitoba live up to their name in every sense of the word. Distinguished from the Great Lakes of North America, Manitoba's Great Lakes—Winnipeg, Winnipegosis, and Manitoba—respectively represent the 3rd, 7th, and 9th largest lakes that are wholly within Canada and are among the top 35 largest lakes in the world overall.

Their shorelines feature some of the lengthiest and most productive inland shoreline wetland systems anywhere in Canada. In addition to providing fish and wildlife habitat, they serve to protect the shoreline from erosion and serve as a last line of defense to these lake systems by filtering terrestrial runoff and associated pesticides, metals, fertilizers, and domestic and industrial sewage. Adding to the region's uniqueness, rare hypersaline (salty) springs and pools, particularly around the northern and western shores of Lake Winnipegosis, support entire ecosystems usually characteristic of marine environments.

The shores of Great Lakes of Manitoba are home to more than 20 First Nations and numerous Métis and non-Aboriginal communities. Many people of these communities rely on the health of these lakes to support their lives and livelihoods through tourism and commercial and/or subsistence fishing.

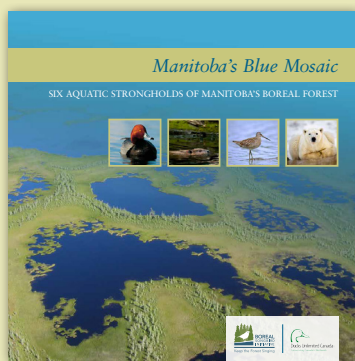
Manitoba's Great Lakes are vitally important for colonially breeding waterbirds. A 2012 survey documented more than 200,000 birds nesting at 131 sites. There were more than 80,000 Double-crested Cormorants found nesting at 47 colonies; more than 80,000 Ring-billed Gulls at 67 colonies;



25,000 American White Pelicans at 20 colonies; 16,000 Common Terns at 31 colonies; 8,000 Herring Gulls at 90 colonies; and over 6,000 Caspian Terns at 14 colonies.

In addition to the lakes themselves, the extensive coastal wetlands provide irreplaceable habitat and sustenance for a variety of plants, fish, and wildlife. The Gull Lake Wetlands adjacent to Lake Winnipeg, for example, contain 28 different rare species of orchids. As many as 19 sites within or along the lake coastlines have been designated as Important Bird Areas—the highest such cluster of any lake region within Canada. Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl regularly stage in the lakes during migration, with notably high concentrations of

post-breeding Redheads in Lake Winnipegosis. Shallow protected marshy areas are important nesting areas for thousands of Western Grebes and Franklin's Gulls. Large quantities of fish thrive in the Great Lakes, including commercial staples such as walleye, lake whitefish, northern pike, and sauger. In fact, fish caught in Manitoba's Great Lakes comprise the vast majority of its \$30 million annual fishing industry.



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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