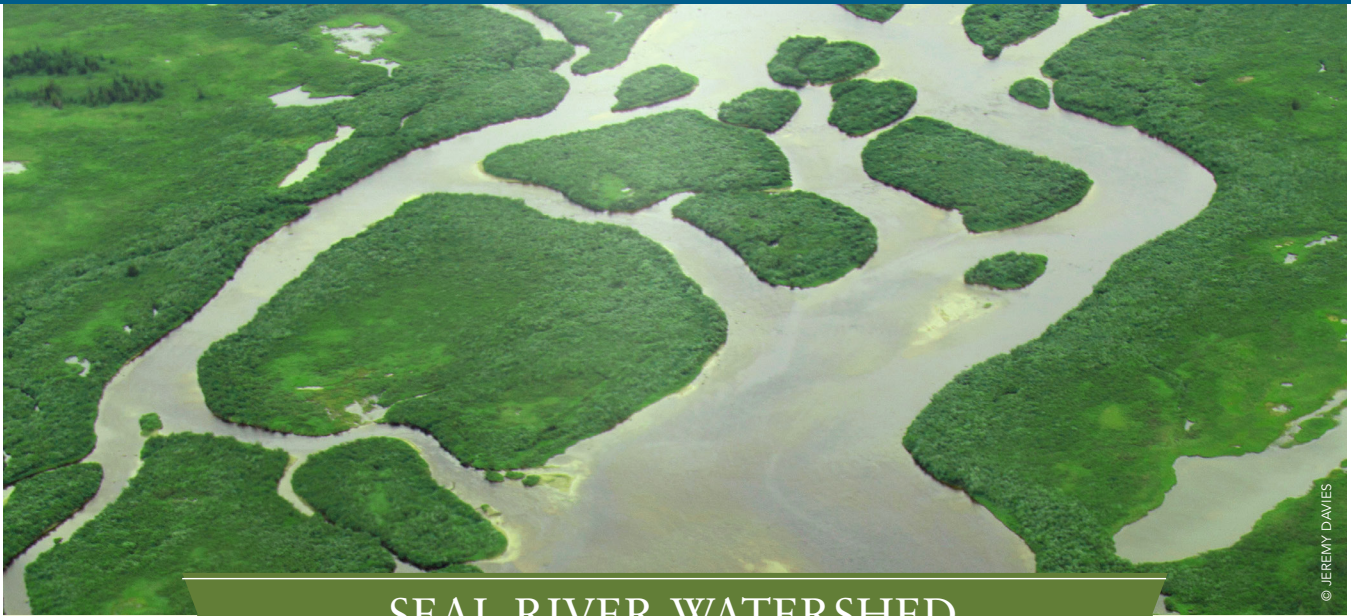


Manitoba's Blue Mosaic



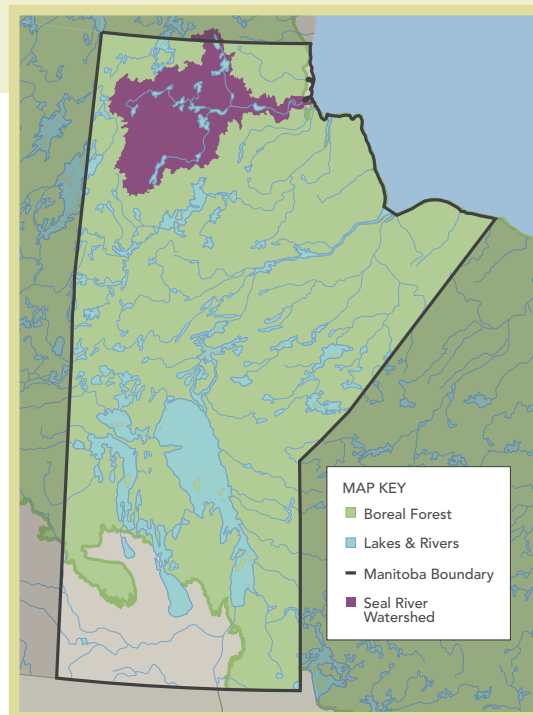
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SEAL RIVER WATERSHED

Of the four major rivers that flow through Manitoba's boreal forest and empty out into Hudson Bay, the Seal River is one of only two that are wholly untouched by modern-day development.

Within the traditional lands of the Sayisi Dene First Nation, the watershed offers a unique and diverse range of terrains and habitats that transition from upland barren lands to boreal forest to coastal tundra. The upper parts of its watershed are brimming with hundreds of uniquely shaped lakes that were carved out following the last ice age, which are mostly surrounded by vast and often brilliantly colorful expanses of tundra. The northern tree line is first entered further downstream, where small stands of black spruce are introduced shortly following a series of magnificent sand-crowned eskers. A series of powerful rapids navigate through yet another expanse of tundra and heath before eventually spilling into a long and scenic estuary at Hudson Bay.

The combination of its varied topography and the absence of industrial development have left the Seal River watershed with an incredible variety of wildlife. More than 30 types of rare plants scarcely seen elsewhere in Manitoba thrive in the lush environment. It provides the wintering grounds for the 400,000-strong Qamanirjuaq barren-ground caribou herd,



which migrate down from Nunavut each year. The northern portion of the watershed remains one of the only places where grizzly bear, which had disappeared from Manitoba by 1923, are slowly making a return. Further downstream, the Seal River's estuary comprises the calving and feeding grounds for more than 3,000 beluga whales—the largest concentration in the world. The estuary has also been named an Important Bird Area for its role in supporting thousands of waterfowl, shorebirds, and seabirds, including large concentrations of Black Scoters, American Black Ducks, and Pectoral Sandpipers. Spring waterfowl surveys of the Seal River

Estuary and adjacent Knife River Delta conducted in 2013 documented significant concentrations of spring breeding waterfowl indicating the regional importance of this area to ducks and geese. Some of its most unusual creatures are the harbour seals for which the river originally earned its name and which regularly travel inland as far as 200 kilometres (124 miles) from the coast.



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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