

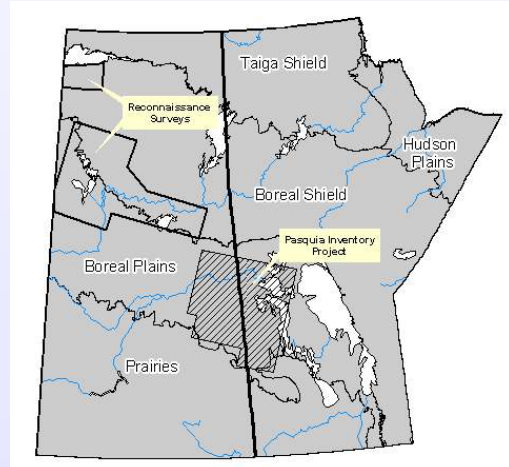


Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

BOREAL CONSERVATION IN MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DU) has a long-standing presence in Manitoba and Saskatchewan with focus primarily on prairie and parkland wetland conservation and restoration programs. Although active in the Saskatchewan River Delta for many years, DU presence in the boreal region of these two “prairie provinces” remains limited to date.

Most of Manitoba and Saskatchewan is boreal forest with areas having more than 50% of the landscape comprised of wetland including bogs, fens, beaver ponds and shoreline marshes. Although information on waterbird use and abundance is limited; mallard, green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks, goldeneye and bufflehead are considered abundant. Common loon, red-necked grebe and a number of colonial species including white pelican and gulls are common. Waterfowl species of concern, including lesser scaup and white winged scoter are present and in decline.



Land-use activities include forestry, agriculture, hydroelectric power generation, mineral exploration, aggregate extraction, hunting, trapping, tourism and traditional aboriginal activities. Most of the anthropogenic change has been in the Boreal Plain Ecozone and include agricultural expansion, forestry and hydroelectric generation. Although impacts in the Boreal Shield include forestry, hydro development and some mining this area remains largely pristine.

INVENTORY PROJECTS

In 2001 the first boreal inventory project was initiated. The **Pasquia Project** totals 6.5 million hectares and represents a diverse portion of boreal forest. Pasquia includes three escarpments (Duck Mountains, Porcupine and Pasquia Hills), extensive peatlands, freshwater coastal marshes and the extensive wetlands of Saskatchewan River Delta.

Project components include high-tech satellite habitat mapping, extensive water sampling to determine regional water chemistry profile, baseline wetland productivity and a comprehensive inventory of waterbirds. In addition, initial work is ongoing with First Nations to determine traditional knowledge of wetlands in this portion of the boreal forest. Project Partners include Manitoba Conservation, Louisiana Pacific Canada Ltd, Saskatchewan Environment, Tembec Inc, SaskPower, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Ducks Unlimited Inc., North American Waterfowl Management Plan, U.S. Forest Service, and PEW Charitable Trust.

A second inventory project is planned for central Saskatchewan to capture Ecoregions not mapped by existing Western Boreal projects. The intent of this work is to advance our understanding of wetlands in this portion of boreal Saskatchewan and to enhance existing land-use planning and future protected areas programs.

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RECONNAISSANCE SURVEYS

Reconnaissance surveys are conducted to collect preliminary information on waterbird abundance and wetland systems where comprehensive inventory projects have not been established. Surveys are designed to confirm initial information on waterfowl and wetlands and provide information that may strengthen land use designations including establishing protected areas. Reconnaissance surveys to date have been in Saskatchewan and include a corridor along the Churchill River east of Buffalo Narrows (2002) and Lake Athabasca south (2003). Additional reconnaissance is planned in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

WATERSHED-BASED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Watershed-based forest planning that integrates effective best management practices to protect water and wetland values is key to achieving Ecosystem Based Management. Most of the Boreal Plain Ecozone has been allocated to commercial forestry. The forest industry assumes significant responsibility for forest management under policies and guidelines of the provincial government. DU will work with the forest industry, governments and stakeholders to advance watershed based conservation planning and has initiated discussions with Louisiana Pacific Canada in Manitoba to undertake a multi-stakeholder pilot project.

PROTECTED AREAS

Saskatchewan and Manitoba have committed to establishing a network of protected areas and have expressed interest in establishing sites that incorporate wetland systems. DU is establishing a working relationship with government, industry and other stakeholders to assist in and influence the establishment of protected areas where boreal wetland habitats are significant. This will be accomplished by sharing information collected through inventory projects, reconnaissance surveys and by working on land-use planning and protected area programs

RESEARCH

Fundamental to boreal wetland conservation is increasing our understanding of wetland ecology and associated values. In 2003, DU in partnership with the Sustainable Forest Management Network, Louisiana Pacific Canada, Manitoba Conservation and the Canadian Wildlife Service initiated a riparian bird research project in the Duck Mountains. This project is designed to collect baseline data for riparian bird communities including habitat preferences and factors that influence the presence or absence of bird species in a given riparian community. In 2004/2005 this study will aim to compare wetland bird communities in areas where riparian habitats have been disturbed naturally (e.g. fire) and through timber harvest. This information will enhance our understanding of riparian bird communities, the influence disturbance on these systems and will be used to strengthen best management practices around water.

