

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE RIDING MOUNTAIN MAP SHEET AREA, 62K

The area covered by the Riding Mountain map sheet comprises about 5900 square miles in southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. Elevations range from 1400 feet along the Assiniboine floodplain to 2200 feet on Riding Mountain.

The main watershed in the area is the Assiniboine River with its tributaries, the Qu'Appelle, Oak, and Minnedosa rivers and Cutarm, Silver, Birdtail, and Arrow creeks. Large lakes, such as Clear, Proven, and Whitewater, are restricted to the northeastern part of the area and some lie within Riding Mountain National Park.

The surface deposits in the area have been grouped according to soils and topographic patterns into several land districts. The Newdale till plain is located east of the Assiniboine River and lies below the 2000-foot contour. This land district comprises gently undulating to moderately sloping and broken ground moraine with recessional moraines and esker hills in some places in the Foxwarren and Arrow River vicinities. The average relief between knoll and depression is 10 to 25 feet, but some hills are 50 feet high. Topographic patterns vary from ridge and swale to hummocky and knob and kettle terrain. The soils vary from Black to Dark Gray loams or clay loams developed on moderately to highly calcareous boulder till, which is saline in the Shoal Lake and Diamond Lake vicinities.

The Riding Mountain end moraine is located along the slopes of Riding Mountain and is characterized by irregular hilly topography with moderate to steep slopes from 25 to over 50 feet high. Many small lakes and peaty swamps occupy the depressions. The associated soils are Gray Luvisols and are sandy loam to clay loam in texture; they were developed on boulder till or on thin lake deposits overlying the till.

The Riding Mountain plateau is largely within the boundaries of Riding Mountain National Park. This plateau, which rises above a steeply sloping escarpment in the northeast, consists of undulating ground moraine and large tracts of stagnant ice moraine, characterized by knob and kettle topography. On some parts of the plateau, the relief varies from 10 to 75 feet between knolls and depressions. Many shallow lakes and streams, such as the Minnedosa and Vermilion rivers and Heron, Gunn, Birdtail, and Jackfish creeks, dissect the plateau. The surface deposits overlying the shale beds are mainly composed of sandy loam to clay loam textured glacial till. Small tracts of outwash sands, kames, and beach ridges are found along the Birdtail River and in the vicinities of Bob Hill, Whitewater, and Audi Lakes. The soils are dominantly Gray Luvisols, and some Black and Dark Gray Chernozems occur in the west. Shallow peat deposits occur in some enclosed depressions and in old stream channels.

The Oxbow till plain, on the west side of the Assiniboine River, is a ground moraine with hummocky, linear-ridged to irregular topographic features that vary in relief from 10 to 25 feet. The parklike landscape has many depressions and intermittent stream channels. Black loamy soils have developed on moderately calcareous and mixed boulder till, which may be saline or alkaline.

Outwash soils are coarse-textured or deltaic deposits that are generally formed along rivers or occupy old glacial channels. The topography is level to gently sloping, except where sand dunes have formed. A large outwash plain is found at the confluence of the Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine rivers.

Small tracts of coarse-to medium-textured lacustrine or deltaic deposits occur west of Rivers and north of Proven and Bottle lakes, and thin deposits are located in the rolling Seech and Horod vicinities. The topography is generally smooth, but it varies from gently sloping to hilly.

Other landforms include fairly small tracts of alluvium, eroded slopes along the rivers and streams, and peat deposits in the vicinities of Proven and Bottle lakes.

Land use in the area includes wheat farming and mixed grain production on the Newdale till plain and mixed crop and cattle ranching along Riding Mountain and on the Oxbow till plain. In recent years, farming practices have shifted to wheat production and a considerable acreage of less productive land has been cleared and drained.

CLIMATE

The area is in the dry subhumid moisture zone and may be subdivided into three climatic subregions. These include the dry fringe, which chiefly incorporates the Oxbow till plain, the moist fringe, which is located on Riding Mountain, and the transitional fringe, which comprises the rest of the area. The annual precipitation averages 16 inches, except on Riding Mountain where it is about 20 inches; about 11 to 15 inches of this total falls as rain. The mean potential evapotranspiration is 20 to 22 inches, with an average annual water deficiency of 3 to 5 inches. The mean temperature for January is 0° to -2°F and the mean temperature for July, 64° F to 68° F. Occasional summer droughts occur, especially in the western part of the area.

ECOLOGY

Four consecutive belts of vegetation occur in the area from the southwest to the northeast. The part of the Oxbow till plain south of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers is mixed grass prairie dominated by needle-and-thread (*Stipa comata*), June grass (*Koeleria cristata*), grama (*Bouteloua* spp.), and wheat grasses (*Agropyron* spp.). The prairie merges into a broad belt of wooded grassland, characterized by trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*), and bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). A broad-leaved forest, which includes aspen and hardwoods, occupies the lower slopes of Riding Mountain. Above the 1900-foot contour, the vegetation grades into mixed woods, which are made up of stands of trembling aspen, balsam poplar, white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), and white and black spruce (*Picea glauca* and *P. mariana*), and jackpine (*Pinus banksiana*).

Freshwater potholes on the till plains were once bordered by trembling aspen and willow (*Salix* spp.) fringes. Within these fringes, wetland vegetation can be grouped into the outer wet meadow, the shallow marsh, the deep marsh, and the open water portions. Permanent ponds usually have all four portions, but temporary ponds may contain only the first two portions.

The plants characteristic of the wet meadow portion are northern reed grass (*Calamagrostis inexpressa*), fowl-meadow grass (*Poa palustris*), redtop (*Agrostis alba*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), and willows. The shallow marsh contains sprangletop (*Scolochloa festucacea*), manna grass (*Glyceria striata*), suggrass sedge (*Carex atherodes*), spike rush (*Eleocharis* sp.), water-parnip (*Sium suave*), giant bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), common water-plantain (*Alisma triviale*), and arrowhead (*Sagittaria cuneata*). Deep marsh emergents include cattail (*Typha latifolia*), and hardstem and common great burrushes (*Scirpus acutus* and *S. validus*). Submergent plants found in the open water portion are chiefly water-milfoils (*Myriophyllum* spp.), common bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*), common coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), star duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*), seaside crowfoot (*Ranunculus cymbalaria*), and small and sago pondweeds (*Potamogeton pusillus* and *P. pectinatus*). Plants characteristic of brackish and saline wetlands are red samphire (*Salicornia rubra*), seaside arrow-grass (*Triglochin maritima*), American and red-tinged bulrushes (*Scirpus americanus* and *S. paludosus*), and horned pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*). The plant species preferred as food by waterfowl are sprangletop, giant bur-reed, arrowhead, water-milfoil, common coontail, star duckweed, and pondweeds.

Wetlands on the Riding Mountain plateau vary in productivity and include sprangletop marshes, cattail marshes, sedge meadows, swamps, beaver ponds, lakes with peaty shorelines, and lakes with mineral soil shorelines. The marshes and sedge meadows include bluejoint reed grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), sweetflag (*Acorus calamus*), horsetail (*Equisetum* sp.), and other plants mentioned above. The open waters of the lakes and beaver ponds contain floating-leaved plants and submergents, such as spatterdock (*Nuphar variegatum*), giant duckweed (*Spirodela polyrhiza*), floating-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), common coontail, bladderwort, clasping-leaf or Richardson pondweed (*Potamogeton richardsonii*), and Canada waterweed (*Anacharis canadensis*).

The area contains some of the finest waterfowl habitat in Manitoba.

Large numbers of waterfowl utilize the area; the important species in order of abundance are the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Scaup (*Aythya* sp.), Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), Canvasback (*Aythya valisneria*), American Widgeon (*Mareca americana*), and Redhead (*Aythya americana*). Dabbling ducks, the Canvasback, and the Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) are common nesters in the Rapid City vicinity, which is rated as Class 1. On the rest of the Newdale till plain and on the Oxbow till plain, dabblers are most abundant. In the end moraines, the most frequently occurring ducks are the Mallard and diving ducks, especially the Scaup and Canvasback. The most abundant species of waterfowl that breed on the Riding Mountain plateau are the Mallard, American Widgeon (*Mareca americana*), Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), Scaup, and Common Goldeneye (*B. clangula*). During favorable years, when continental waterfowl populations are high, the Class 1 and 2 lands may support as many as 200 breeding ducks per square mile.

LAND CAPABILITY FOR WATERFOWL

The waterfowl production capability of the Newdale till plain varies from Class 1 to Class 5, with Classes 2 and 3 predominating. In the knob and kettle Class 1 lands, potholes average about 30 per square mile and occupy about 40 percent of the land area. Most of the potholes cover 5 to 10 acres; about 18 per square mile, or 53 percent, are permanent and semipermanent ponds. Class 2 lands vary from average counts of 10 ponds per square mile, which occupy 40 percent of the area, to 30 ponds per square mile, which occupy 25 percent of the area. On Class 3 lands, pond counts may number as low as 10 per square mile, 4 of which are semipermanent, and potholes may occupy about 10 percent of the land class. Class 4 and 5 lands generally have fewer ponds and most of these are temporary waters. The chief limitations for waterfowl production on the Newdale till plain are poor interspersion of permanent ponds, smooth or well-drained topography, limited marsh edge, and, in some locations, salinity.

On the Riding Mountain end moraines, up to 50 percent of the land is occupied by shallow lakes of 40 to over 160 acres. Waterfowl capability varies from Class 3 to 5, with limitations of poor marsh edge or steeply sloping shorelines, steep slopes, and low water fertility. Water fertility generally results in restricted growth of food plants for waterfowl.

The waterfowl production capability of the Riding Mountain plateau varies from Class 3 to 7, with Classes 4 and 5 predominating. The western and southern parts of the plateau, which are largely stagnant ice moraines, are rated Classes 3 and 4 and contain the best waterfowl habitat. These parts of the plateau may contain 25 or more potholes, or depressions, per square mile. Most of the moderately productive lakes, which are rated Classes 3 and 4, are also found here. Waterfowl production is limited by the steeply sloping topography, poor shoreline development, low water fertility, and poor interspersion of marshes. The Class 5 and 6 ground moraine and outwash soils are limited by slope, surface drainage, low water-holding capacity, and poor interspersion of wetlands. The escarpment and kame hills are rated Class 7, with limitations due to steep, well-drained slopes, and rapid surface drainage.

Waterfowl capability on the Oxbow till plain is rated from Class 1 to 5, with Classes 2, 3, and 4 dominant. On Class 1 lands potholes average 45 per square mile and comprise about 30 percent of the area. Wetlands in this region differ from those on the Newdale till plain in their smaller size, which is generally 1 to 3 acres, and their lack of permanent water, since over 70 percent are seasonal ponds. Other limiting factors are reduced numbers of ponds in some localities and well-drained soils.

The outwash plains contain fewer than five ponds per square mile and these are all temporary. They are rated Classes 6 and 7, with severe limitations due to the smooth topography and rapid drainage through the sandy soils.

The lacustrine portions are restricted to Class 5 by the smooth topography and the lack of interspersion of permanent waters.

The streams and rivers are generally rated Class 3 to 5. Their capability for waterfowl production is restricted by steep valley slopes, excessive flooding, reduced shoreline, lack of flowing water, and low nutrients.

In the late summer and fall many ducks flock to the larger shallow lakes that serve as staging sites. Some important waterfowl migratory staging sites are located on the Newdale till plain and include Raven, Salt, and North Salt lakes and several lakes east of Russell and west of Rosburn. Other lakes used by migrating ducks are found on the end moraines; these include Gundy, Duck, Sandy, Jackfish, Bottle, and Proven lakes. In Riding Mountain National Park, Audi, Whitewater, Slater, Shoal, Baldy, MacArthur, Moose, Custer, Gunn, and Menzie lakes are used as staging sites.

Capability classification by G. D. Adams and R. C. Hutchison, Canadian Wildlife Service.

DESCRIPTION DU TERRITOIRE

DE LA FEUILLE DE RIDING MOUNTAIN-62K

Le territoire représenté sur la feuille de Riding Mountain comprend 5 900 milles carrés dans le sud-ouest du Manitoba et le sud-est de la Saskatchewan. Les altitudes vont de 1 400 pi le long de la plaine d'inondation de l'Assiniboine à 2 200 pi à Riding Mountain.

La rivière Assiniboine et ses tributaires, les rivières Qu'Appelle, Oak et Minnedosa ainsi que les ruisseaux Cutarm, Silver, Birdtail et Arrow constituent le principal système de drainage du territoire. De grands lacs, tels que les lacs Clear, Proven et Whitewater sont confinés dans le quartier nord-est, et certains à l'intérieur du parc national de Riding Mountain.

Les dépôts de surface du territoire se groupent d'après les sols et les divers modèles du terrain. La plaine de till de Newdale est située à l'est de la rivière Assiniboine à une altitude inférieure à 2 000 pi. Ce dépôt est constitué d'une moraine de fond bosselée, légèrement ondulée ou en pente modérée, de moraines de retrait et d'eskers en certains endroits aux environs des rivières Arrow et Foxwarren. La dénivellation entre les buttes et les dépressions est de 10 à 25 pi et parfois de 50. Les modèles topographiques comprennent des crêtes et des bas-fonds ainsi que des bosses et des creux. Les sols sont des loams ou des loams argileux appartenant aux sols chernozémiques noirs et gris foncé. Ils se sont développés sur till calcaire et de nature saline dans le voisinage des lacs Shoal et Diamond.

La moraine frontale de Riding Mountain se situe le long des pentes de cette montagne, une topographie irrégulière avec des pentes modérées à abruptes, de 25 à 50 pi de hauteur le caractérise. Nombre de petits lacs et de marécages tourbeux occupent les dépressions. Les sols associés sont des luvisols gris à texture de loam sableux ou argileux, issus de till ou de minces dépôts lacustres recouvrant le till.

Le plateau du mont Riding est presque entièrement compris dans les limites du Parc national du mont Riding. Dominant un escarpement abrupt sur le versant nord-est, il est formé de moraine de fond ondulée et de vastes étendues de moraine de glace stagnante caractérisées par un paysage de bosses et de creux. À certains endroits les dénivellations entre les bosses et les creux peuvent aller de 10 à 75 pi. Le plateau est sillonné de nombreux lacs et cours d'eau comme la Minnedosa et la Vermilion et les ruisseaux Heron, Gunn, Birdtail et Jackfish. Les dépôts de surface qui recouvrent la couche de schiste argileux se composent surtout de till glaciaire allant du loam sableux au loam argileux. On trouve aussi de petites étendues de sables glaciaires, de kames et de bancs de plages le long de la Birdtail et aux environs des lacs Bob Hill, Whitewater et Audi. Les sols appartiennent surtout aux luvisols gris, et on trouve quelques chernozems noirs et gris foncé dans l'ouest du territoire. Certaines dépressions et le lit d'un cours d'eau contiennent de minces dépôts bourbeux.

La plaine de till d'Oxbow, située à l'ouest de la rivière Assiniboine, est une moraine de fond bosselée, présentant des crêtes régulières à irrégulières et des dénivellations de 10 à 25 pi. De nombreuses dépressions et des chenaux de ruisseaux intermittents caractérisent le paysage. Les sols loams chernozémiques noirs développés sur till modéré sont calcaires, peuvent être salins ou alcalins.

Les sols de délavage sont des dépôts grossiers ou deltaïques, généralement formés le long des rivières dans les anciens chenaux glaciaires. La topographie est d'unie à légèrement en pente, sauf aux endroits où des dunes se sont formées. Une grande plaine constituée de dépôts grossiers proglaciaires est située au confluent des rivières Qu'Appelle et Assiniboine.

On trouve des dépôts lacustres ou deltaïques de texture grossière à moyenne, à l'ouest des rivières et au nord des lacs Proven et Bottle. De minces dépôts s'observent aussi dans le voisinage de Seech et Horod. La topographie en général plane, varie de légèrement ondulée à montueuse.

D'autres modèles de terrains comprennent de petites étendues d'alluvion, de pentes érodées le long des rivières ainsi que des ruisseaux et des dépôts de tourbe dans les voisinages des lacs Proven et Bottle.

On cultive le blé et autres céréales sur la plaine de Newdale. La culture mixte et l'élevage des bestiaux se pratique le long de Riding Mountain et dans la plaine d'Oxbow. Au cours des dernières années, les méthodes de culture ont changé pour la production du blé et des éterides de terres moins productrices ont été défrichées et drainées.

CLIMAT

Le territoire situé dans la zone sèche subhumide peut se diviser en trois sous-régions climatiques: la lisière sèche couvrant surtout la plaine d'Oxbow, la lisière humide, située sur Riding Mountain et la lisière de transition qui comprend le reste de la région. La précipitation annuelle moyenne de 16 po s'élève à 20 environ à Riding Mountain; environ 11 à 15 po tombe en pluie. Le potentiel moyen d'évapotranspiration est de 20 à 22 po avec une carence annuelle moyenne de 3 à 5 po d'eau. La température de janvier s'établit en moyenne de 0 à -2°F et la moyenne de juillet de 64 à 68. Des périodes occasionnelles de sécheresse surviennent particulièrement dans la partie ouest du territoire.

ÉCOLOGIE

Quatre zones de végétation originaire se succèdent de l'angle sud-ouest à l'angle nord-est du territoire. La partie de la plaine d'Oxbow au sud des rivières Assiniboine et Qu'Appelle est une prairie ou dominante stipe (*Stipa comata*), pâture des prés (*Koeleria cristata*), bouteloue (*Bouteloua* spp.) et agropyre (*Agropyron* spp.). La prairie se perd en une large ceinture de prés boisés que caractérisent des bosquets de peuplier faux-tremble (*Populus tremuloides*), de peuplier baumier (*Populus balsamifera*) et de chêne à gros fruits (*Quercus macrocarpa*). Une forêt ininterrompue de feuillus, comprenant des peupliers et des bois durs, couvre les basses pentes de Riding Mountain. Au-dessus de 1 900 pi, la végétation passe graduellement aux essences mixtes: peuplier faux-tremble, peuplier baumier, bouleau à papier (*Betula papyrifera*), épinière blanche, épinière noire (*Picea glauca* et *P. mariana*) et pin gris (*Pinus banksiana*).

A l'origine, le peuplier faux-tremble et le saule (*Salix* spp.) bordaient les cuvettes d'eau douce des plaines de till. Sur ces lisières la végétation de terre humide peut être groupée en prés humides, marais peu profonds, marais profonds et zones aquatiques libres. Les étangs permanents sont en général des quatre zones, mais les étangs temporaires peuvent ne se trouver que dans les deux premières zones.

Les plantes caractéristiques de la partie des prés humides sont le calamagrostide (*Calamagrostis inexpressa*), le pâturen des prés (*Poa palustris*), l'agrostide blanche (*Agrostis alba*), le vulpin queue de renard (*Hordeum jubatum*), le carex (*Carex* spp.), le jonc de la Baltique (*Juncus balticus*) et le saule. Les marais peu profonds contiennent: fétuque (*Scolochloa festucacea*), glycine (*Glyceria striata*), carex aérode (*Carex aethioides*), éléocharide (*Eleocharis* spp.), berle douce (*Sium suave*), rubanier (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), plantain d'eau (*Alisma triviale*) et sagittaire (*Sagittaria cuneata*). Les plantes émergentes des marais profonds comprennent le typha (*Typha latifolia*) et les scirpes (*Scirpus acutus* et *S. validus*). La végétation submerge des eaux libres se compose principalement de myriophylle (*Myriophyllum* spp.), utriculaire (*Utricularia vulgaris*), cornifle (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), lentille d'eau (*Lemna trisulca*), renoncule (*Ranunculus cymbalaria*), petit potamot et potamot pectiné (*Potamogeton pusillus* et *P. pectinatus*). Les plantes caractéristiques des terres humides saumâtres et salines sont la salicorne rouge (*Salicornia rubra*), le troscart des marais (*Triglochin maritima*), le scirpe américain, le scirpe des marais (*Scirpus americanus* et *S. paludosus*) et la zannichellie (*Zannichellia palustris*).

La sauvagine préfère les fétuques, le rubanier géant, la sagittaire, le myriophylle, la cornifle, la lentille d'eau et les potamots.