

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CORMORANT LAKE MAP SHEET AREA, 63K

The area covered by the Cormorant Lake map sheet comprises about 5400 square miles in northwestern Manitoba and northeastern Saskatchewan, between 100° and 102° west longitude and 54° and 55° north latitude. Elevations in the area range from about 1150 feet above sea level near Manitowkan Lake to about 840 feet at Moose Lake. About 25 percent of the area is covered by large freshwater lakes, including Moose, Mawdesley, Atikameg, Cormorant, Rocky, Namew, Goose, Athapapuskow, Simonhouse, Cranberry Lakes, Reed, Elbow, and File lakes. The main drainage systems include the Sturgeon-Weir and Saskatchewan rivers flowing southward, the Grass River flowing eastward, and tributaries of the Churchill River, including the Kisseynew lake chain, flowing northward.

The area is almost equally divided into two physiographic regions whose relief is controlled by the underlying bedrock. The northern half of the area is in the Precambrian Shield region and is composed of granites, volcanics, and some intrusive rocks. These bedrock configurations have the characteristic broken relief of the Shield landscape, including steep slopes, ridges, rounded hills, and valleys. The Manitoba Lowland region in the south is characterized by an undulating plain, underlain by flat beds of Ordovician and Silurian limestone and dolomite. Eroded limestone escarpments occur near the contact with the Precambrian rocks and along some lake shorelines. Scattered limestone outcrops are common.

The area was glaciated with the last ice sheet moving southward over the northern part of the area, and westward over the southern part. The resultant glacial deposits are chiefly ground moraines, composed of coarse and medium textured drift and small sites of outwash sands. Following the retreat of the glaciers, the meltwaters formed glacial Lake Agassiz, which inundated most of the area and left clay sediments in scattered depressions and plains below an elevation of 1000 feet.

Other postglacial surface materials include the large regions of deltaic and alluvial sediments deposited by the Saskatchewan River, and the extensive flats and depressions where organic soils have accumulated.

The Precambrian Shield has one subdivision, the Drift Plain. The Manitoba Lowlands may be subdivided into three divisions: the Interlake Till Plain, the Upper Saskatchewan River Delta, and the Lower Saskatchewan Delta or Summerberry Land District.

The Drift Plain is a rugged region of the Precambrian Shield, characterized by rolling topography and a relative relief displacement between ridge top and valley up to 150 feet. Most of the slopes and ridges are covered with a thin mantle of sandy or loamy till, but many rock outcrops also occur. The surface drainage tends to follow the configurations of bedrock formations such as faults, folds, and fractures. Many enclosed depressions, which contain small lakes or peat bogs, occupy an estimated 20 to 30 percent of the land surface.

The Interlake Till Plain is characterized by a gently sloping topography and a surface mantle of calcareous loamy till, localized regions of lacustrine clay, some sandy beach deposits, and extensive flats of mesic fen peat or fibric bog peat. These peatlands occupy more than 50 percent of the Till Plain region.

The Upper Saskatchewan River Delta occupies a small part of the area in the vicinity of Rocky and Root lakes. The Delta, part of the Cumberland Lake Lowland, has flat-lying relief, broken only by small hills or levees. The dominant surface materials are alluvial silts or clays, and some sites are covered by a thin layer of fan peat. Shallow fertile lakes and marshes are interspersed throughout this region.

The Lower Saskatchewan Delta or Summerberry Land District is located in the southeastern part of the area, extending from Mawdesley Lake to Moose Lake. This district is similar to the Upper Delta, but has poorer drainage and more extensive expanses of fen peat overlying alluvial sediments. Interlacing stream channels provide limited surface drainage. The current flooding conditions are caused by the high water levels on Moose Lake.

The soils that have developed in the area are influenced by climate, moisture, and surface materials. In the Precambrian Drift Plain, the predominant soils on the uplands and slopes are acid Brown Luvisols or Dystric Brunisols and Podzols, which have developed under forest cover on acidic parent materials. Soils in the Interlake Plain are mainly Brunisols, Orthic Gray Luvisols, and Gleysols developed on calcareous parent materials. In the Deltas, the predominant soils are calcareous Gleysols, Regosols, Orthic Gray Luvisols, and Organic soils.

Organic soils have accumulated on most poorly drained sites throughout the area. The chief soil material is peat derived from forest, sedge, and moss components. The forest and sedge peats, which are usually moderately decomposed, are Mesisols or Mesic Fibrisols, whereas moss peats, which are fibric in texture, are predominantly Fibrisols.

CLIMATE

The area lies in the moist fringe of the dry subhumid climatic zone where the mean annual precipitation is 17.5 inches, and the average actual evapotranspiration rate is 15 inches annually. About half of this precipitation falls as rain from May through August. Mean temperatures vary from 64° to 65° F in July and from -6° to -10° F in January. The frost-free period usually varies from 90 to 100 days in length.

ECOLOGY

The vegetation of the area is characteristic of the Nelson River, Manitoba Lowlands, and Northern Coniferous sections of the Boreal Forest Region. Most of the Precambrian Drift Plain is found in the Northern Coniferous Section, except the eastern part in the vicinity of Reed Lake, which is located in the Nelson River Section.

In the Nelson River Section, black spruce (*Picea mariana*) is the most common tree species, and the better-drained sites support stands of white spruce (*Picea glauca*), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*). Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) occurs on the well-drained ridges and occasionally on shallow till or dry organic soils, whereas black spruce and tamarack (*Larix laricina*) occupy muskegs or peat lands.

The Northern Coniferous Forest is the predominant forest type on the Precambrian Shield, and the chief species is black spruce, growing on uplands and in poorly drained lowlands. Jack pine and tamarack are associated species, but white birch may be successful on some sites. Stands of white spruce, balsam fir, and trembling aspen are confined to river valleys, lakeshores, and south-facing slopes.

The Manitoba Lowlands Forest Section is confined to the Interlake Till Plain. Here, the prevailing vegetation reflects the moisture regime since most of the Plain is imperfectly and poorly drained. The vegetation on the poorly drained sites is largely black spruce, tamarack, and dwarf birch (*Betula glandulosa*). Well-drained alluvium bordering streams supports stands of white spruce, trembling aspen, balsam poplar, and white birch, whereas jack pine and scrubby trembling aspen are successional species growing on the well-drained uplands.

Peat lands, which cover 30 percent of the area, vary in amount of surface water and vegetative cover. The chief peat land classes occurring in the area are fens, flat bogs, and raised bogs.

Fens, which are more common in the Lowland, are nutrient-rich peat lands with a water table at or just below the surface. The dominant peat materials are Mesisols or mesic sedge peats, and the characteristic surface vegetation consists of sedges (*Carex* spp.), marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*), and dwarf birch. Floating fens are found associated with bog lakes and sluggish streams, where a peripheral peaty mat supports growth of sedges, marsh horsetail, sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), leatherleaf (*Chamaephrus calyculata*), and cattail (*Typha latifolia*). Patterned fens are another type of fen that exhibits a surface pattern of parallel and intersecting ridges of peat. Flat fens usually have little surface relief and may occupy extensive sites occasionally drained by a sluggish stream or interrupted by scattered pools of standing water.

Flat bogs, which occupy a large proportion of the peat lands, are characterized by a level or slightly hummocky surface with a surface layer of peat moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) overlying mesic forest peat. There is some influence of mineralized water, but surface drainage is restricted. The dominant vegetation is black spruce, tamarack, Labrador-tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), and feather mosses (*Hypnum* spp. and *Hylocomium* spp.).

Raised bogs are generally slightly elevated peat plateaus or mounds of peat raised above the water table. The peats, which are acidic and low in nutrients, are composed of poorly decomposed fibric Sphagnum peat and fibric forest peat. The vegetation consists of Sphagnum mosses, Labrador-tea, occasionally lichens (*Cladonia* spp.), feather mosses, and black spruce.

Palsa bogs, which are a raised bog type with a peat dome overlying a permafrost core, are scattered in peat lands throughout the Precambrian Plain.

Other wetlands that are more important to waterfowl include wet meadows, marshes, shallow lakes, and streams. Wet meadows are periodically wet sites associated with alluvial soils, and exhibiting a shallow surface layer of organic material overlying mineral soils. The characteristic vegetation includes blue joint grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), northern reed grass (*Calamagrostis inexpectans*), awned sedge (*Carex atherodes*), and willows (*Salix* spp.). Wet meadows occupy extensive regions in the vicinities of Root Lake, Mawdesley Lake, and Little Frog Creek.

Mashes, which are seasonally flooded sites subject to water level fluctuations, occupy depressions, shallow lake basins, or stream edges. Usually marshes may be recognized by discontinuous sites of standing water flooding a substrate of mineral or mixed mineral and organic soils. The vegetation consists of stands of emergents, such as hard-stem bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*), reed (*Phragmites communis*), spangletop (*Scrophularia festucacea*), awned sedge, cattail, and water horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). Marshes occur more frequently on the Saskatchewan Deltas and on the Interlake Till Plain.

Lakes in the area may be classified by mean depths and shoreline material into deep lakes, shallow lakes, and bog lakes. The lakes are mainly freshwater, but waters in the Manitoba Lowland have higher dissolved solids and generally are more alkaline than similar waters in the Precambrian Plain.

Deep, freshwater lakes are more common on the Shield, but several lakes, such as Atikameg and Cormorant, occur on the limestone. These lakes are generally characterized by mean depths of more than 10 feet and by shorelines of rock or mineral soils. Shallow lakes have a till or sandy shoreline, although some stretches of shoreline may be peaty. Shallow, peat-fringed or bog lakes usually support a peripheral floating mat, stained waters, and organic bottom sediments.

The more productive shallow lakes in the Manitoba Lowlands contain good growths of aquatic plants, such as northern water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum exaltatum*), Canada waterweed (*Anacharis canadensis*), clasping leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton richardsonii*), sago pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*), sheathed pondweed (*Potamogeton vaginatus*), and muskratgrass (*Chara* spp.). Bog lakes and less productive lakes on the Shield characteristically support plants such as spatterdock (*Nuphar variegatum*), water-lily (*Nymphaea tetragona*), narrow leaved bur-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*), floating leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), variable leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton gramineus*), flat stemmed pondweed (*Potamogeton zosteriformis*), and aquatic moss (*Drepanocladus* spp.).

LAND CAPABILITY FOR WATERFOWL

The Upper and Lower Saskatchewan deltas have the most productive waterfowl breeding sites in the area. Here, Class 2 and 3 habitats consist of wet meadow – marsh shorelines of Root, Bignell, and Mawdesley lakes, and the well-interspersed complex of potholes, streams, marshes, and meadows in the Little Frog Creek vicinity.

On the Interlake Till Plain, shallow lakes rated Class 3, which have moderately good potential for production, are found on the clay sediment near Atik. Other moderately productive sites, rated Class 4, include the Goose River, some shallow lakes near the Precambrian contact zone, scattered bog lakes, and fen-pothole complexes.

Waterfowl production habitat on the Precambrian Drift Plain is limited to a few bog lakes and scattered stretches of stream edge habitat associated with adjoining meadows or floating fens. Moderately productive Class 4 habitat is found on the Grass River, and Woosley, Barry, Fay, and Holly creeks.

The chief limiting factors in the area affecting waterfowl production potential are adverse topography, poor interspersion of shallow waters, the occurrence of bedrock near the surface, and low fertility. Many lakes have less than optimum waterfowl habitat because of excessive water depths, poor shoreline edge, and low water fertility resulting in sparse growths of aquatic food plants. Waterfowl breeding potential on the deltas is influenced to some extent by flooding of nest sites. Bogs and fens are usually poor habitats, because the waterfowl production is limited by low fertility and poor interspersion of open waters. Stream habitats usually have limitations of rapid or insufficient water flows, poor shoreline edge, which inhibits the development of a marsh fringe, and low water fertility.

Breeding waterfowl species occur throughout the area, but are more common in the Manitoba Lowland region. Probably the most abundant species breeding on the Precambrian Plain are the Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Lesser Scaup (*Anas affinis*), and Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). The chief species breeding on the Interlake Till Plain and on the deltas include the Lesser Scaup, Mallard, American Wigeon (*Mareca americana*), Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*), Canvasback (*Anas valisneria*), Redhead (*Aythya americana*), Blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), and Sandhill Crane (*Grus americana*).

Dabbling ducks, such as the Mallard and Blue-winged Teal, are more frequently found on the Delta where they nest in meadows or along shallow streams. Canvasback and Redhead usually nest in emergent vegetation on shallow marsh-fringed lakes, whereas Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Duck prefer deeper water and often nest on the bordering floating fens. Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye are also associated with deeper waters, but these ducks usually nest in trees. Some of the fen-pothole complexes on the Interlake Till Plain are utilized by scattered nesting pairs of Canada Goose and Sandhill Crane.

Migrating flocks of ducks, such as Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Mallard, utilize various lakes and streams on the Precambrian Plain. There are a few important staging lakes, but small flocks of diving ducks congregate on shallow bays and bog lakes, especially near the mouths of inflowing streams. Here, dense beds of submerged aquatic plants, such as bur reed, attract feeding ducks.

In the Manitoba Lowland, many lakes attract flocks of migrating waterfowl. On Root Lake, there are fall flights of thousands of waterfowl, including the Mallard, Canvasback, Blue-winged Teal, and Pintail (*Anas acuta*). Mawdesley Lake and the western shoreline of Moose Lake attract many Mallard, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup, and Canvasback. Flocks of Mallard and American Wigeon also frequent the Little Frog Creek vicinity. Other lakes that attract migrating diving ducks, as well as some Mallards, include Atik, Rocky, Bignell, Cormorant, Goose, Farewell, and Blackduck lakes.

Capability classification by G. D. Adams and R. C. Hutchison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1971.

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DESCRIPTION DU TERRITOIRE DE LA FEUILLE CORMORANT LAKE 63K

Le territoire que représente la feuille de Cormorant Lake occupe une superficie approximative de 5 400 milles carrés dans le nord-ouest du Manitoba et le nord-est de la Saskatchewan, entre 100 et 102° de longitude ouest et 54 et 55 de latitude nord. L'altitude varie d'environ 1 500 pi près du lac Manitoukouane à 840 pi sur les bords du lac Moose. De grandes nappes d'eau douce comprenant les lacs Mousse, Mawdesley, Atikameg, Cormorant, Rocky, Namew, Goose, Athapapuskow, Simonhouse, Cranberry Lakes, Reed, Elbow, et File occupent environ 25% du territoire. Les principaux réseaux de drainage sont ceux des rivières Sturgeon, Weir et Saskatchewan qui coulent vers le sud, de la rivière Grass, en direction de l'est, et des affluents de la rivière Churchill, comprenant la chaîne des lacs Kisseynew, qui se dirigent vers le nord.

Le territoire comporte deux régions structurales de superficie à peu près équivalente où l'allure topographique traduit l'influence de la roche en place. La moitié nord du territoire appartient au Bouclier précambrien et se compose de granites et de roches volcaniques et intrusives basiques. Elle présente une topographie accidentée, caractéristique du Bouclier, où alternent versants escarpés, dorsales, collines arrières et vallées. La région des basses terres du Manitoba, dans le sud, est une plaine ondulée qui repose sur des îlots horizontaux de calcaires et de dolomies ordoviennes et siluriennes. Il y a des escarpements calcaires rongés par l'érosion près de la zone de contact avec les roches précambrées et sur les rives des lacs. Les affleurements calcaires sont nombreux.

Le territoire a subi la glaciation et le dernier inlandise est descendu vers le sud à travers le nord du territoire avant de bifurquer vers l'ouest et de traverser la partie méridionale. La plupart des matériaux glaciaires abandonnés sont des moraines de fond composées de débris de texture moyenne et grossière; il y a de petites quantités de sables d'épandage. Après le retrait du glacier, les eaux de fusion ont formé le lac glaciaire Agassiz qui a submergé la moindre partie du territoire et déposé de l'argile dans les dépressions et les plaines, en-dessous de 1 000 pi.

Parmi les autres formations meubles d'origine postglaciaire, se trouvent les vastes régions de matériaux deltaïques et d'alluvions déposés par la rivière Saskatchewan et, les sols organiques accumulés dans les dépressions et sur d'immenses terrains plats.

Le Bouclier précambrien ne comporte qu'une seule subdivision: la plaine de matériaux glaciaires. Les basses terres du Manitoba comptent trois subdivisions: la plaine de till d'Interlake, le hau-delta de la rivière Saskatchewan et le bas-delta de la rivière Saskatchewan ou district de Summerberry Land.

La plaine de matériaux glaciaires est une région accidentée du Bouclier précambrien qui caractérise une topographie vallonnée et des dénivellations pouvant atteindre jusqu'à 150 pi entre le sommet des dorsales et le fond des vallées. La plupart des versants et des sommets sont recouverts d'une mince couche de till sabloû ou loameux mais les affleurements rocheux sont fréquents. Le réseau de drainage superficiel a tendance à suivre les déformations du bâti géologique telles que failles, plis et fractures. Les dépressions fermées, qui renferment de petits lacs ou des tourbières, représentent 20 à 30% de la superficie totale des terres.

La plaine de till d'Interlake est en pente douce; elle porte un placage de till loameux calcaire et, par endroits, renferme des dépôts d'argile lacustre, des matériaux de plage sabloû et des terrains plats recouverts de tourbe mésique ou de tourbe tubrique. Ces terrains organiques occupent plus de 50% de la région appartenant à la plaine de till.

Le hau-delta de la rivière Saskatchewan n'occupe qu'une faible portion du territoire, à proximité des lacs Rocky et Root. Le delta, qui fait partie des basses terres du lac Cumberland, possède une topographie plane que des collines ou des bourelles de faibles dimensions interrompent par endroits. Les principaux types de formations meubles sont des argiles ou des limons alluviaux; certains sites sont recouverts d'une mince couche de tourbe de "fen". La région est parsemée de lacs et de marécages peu profonds et fertiles.

Le bas-delta de la Saskatchewan ou district de Summerberry Land est situé dans le sud-est du territoire, du lac Mawdesley au lac Moose. Ce district ressemble à la région du hau-delta mais les conditions de drainage y sont moins bonnes et les sédiments alluviaux sont masqués par de plus vastes étendues de tourbe superficielle.

Un réseau de drainage en treillis assure un drainage médiocre. Les fréquentes inondations sont dues au niveau élevé des eaux dans le lac Moose.

Les sols du territoire subissent l'influence du climat, des conditions d'humidité et des formations meubles présentes. Dans la plaine de matériaux glaciaires de la région du Bouclier, les sols prédominants sur les hautes terres et les versants sont les luvisols bruns ou les brunisolys dystriques acides et des podzols développés sous un couvert forestier, sur des roches mères acides. La plupart des sols de la plaine d'Interlake sont des brunisolys, des luvisols gris orthiques et des gleysoirs, développés sur des roches mères calcaires. Dans les régions du delta prédominent les gleysoirs, les régosols, les luvisols gris orthiques et les sols organiques calcaires.

Des sols organiques se sont développés dans la plupart des endroits mal drainés à travers tout le territoire. Ces sols sont surtout constitués de tourbe provenant de la décomposition de débris ligneux, de carex et de mousses. Les tourbes forestières et les tourbes de carex, en général modérément décomposées, donnent des mésisolys ou des fibrisols mésiques; les tourbes de mousses à une texture fibrique, donnent surtout des fibrisols.

CLIMAT

Le territoire appartient à la bordure humide de la zone clim