

# Little George Island Ecological Reserve

## Backgrounder

### Land Designation

Ecological reserves play a key role in Manitoba's protected areas network by protecting unique, rare and representative examples of plants, animals, geological features and ecosystems. They are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within Manitoba's network of protected areas.

### Landscape Description

The 15 hectare Little George Island Ecological Reserve lies in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg, about 40 kilometres due west of Poplar River First Nation. The island is generally flat with few trees. Extensive areas of willow shrubs and grassland meadows occur in some areas.

### Outstanding Features

Little George Island is special because it is a prime nesting site for colonial nesting birds, including Caspian and common terns and greater scaup, a diving duck. The birds nest in shallow depressions in the sand. Thousands of nests occur on the island each year during breeding season which normally begins in June and extends into August. Nesting birds are most vulnerable to disturbances at this time. Visitation to the island is discouraged during this sensitive period as a disturbance could cause adults to abandon nests or young.

Little George Island is the most southerly documented breeding site for Greater Scaup in Manitoba. Scaup populations have been on a steady decline since the 1980s. Contaminants, low female survival rates, and reduced recruitment due to changes in breeding habitat or food resources are thought to be the primary factors contributing to this decline. In 1999, the Caspian tern was removed from the list of species-at-risk in Canada, in large part due to the healthy state of the populations in Manitoba.





Little George Island will be maintained for the preservation and protection of the major colonies of Caspian and common Terns nests on the island, and it's southernmost documented nesting site for greater scaup. In order to maintain the natural state of this site, only passive non-consumptive visits on foot are permitted. All other activities require prior ministerial approval.

This area is categorized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a protected area under the management category Ia – a protected area managed for strict nature protection available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring. These protected lands are free from logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development, and any other activities that could harm habitat.