

Palsa Hazel Ecological Reserve

Backgrounder

Land Designation

Ecological reserves play a key role in Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative 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 1,648 hectare Palsa Hazel Ecological Reserve, located within Grass River Provincial Park, is approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Flin Flon. The site, which is situated in the Mid Boreal Lowland subregion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region, is defined by typical fen with peat palsas and peat palsa scars.



Outstanding Features

The Palsa Hazel Ecological Reserve consists of a calcareous fen with peat palsas and peat palsa scars. It is part of a larger fen and bog complex, within a glacio-lacustrine plain, surrounded by low limestone plateaus and drumlins. The intermittent permafrost under peat landforms has created small palsas and peat plateaus which rise out of the calcareous fen. Palsas are small peat mounds with permafrost cores that rise as high as seven metres above the surrounding wetlands. They are rare this far south in Manitoba, as it is on the southern edge of the permafrost zone.

Highly mineralized springs occur in the fen and support a sedge - tamarack community. The western half of the palsa proper is covered largely by a black spruce/feather-moss bog; the eastern half is covered by a black spruce/reindeer lichen bog. Both are underlain by permafrost. Treeless Sphagnum bogs, which may or not be underlain by permafrost, as well as treeless sedge fens, that are not underlain by permafrost surround the palsa complex.



The Palsa Hazel Ecological Reserve will be maintained for the preservation and protection of palsa scars and peat palsas underlain by permafrost. Passive non-consumptive recreation on foot is permitted. Indigenous people are permitted to carry out their treaty and aboriginal rights within the ecological reserve. All other activities will 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.