

Pelican Islands

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

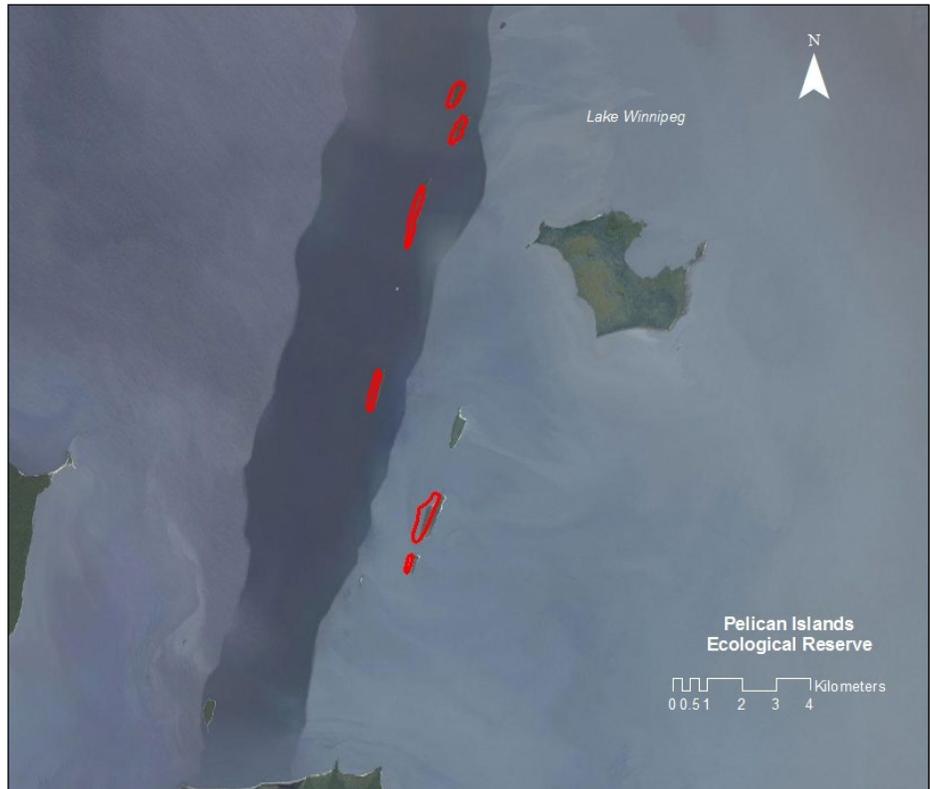
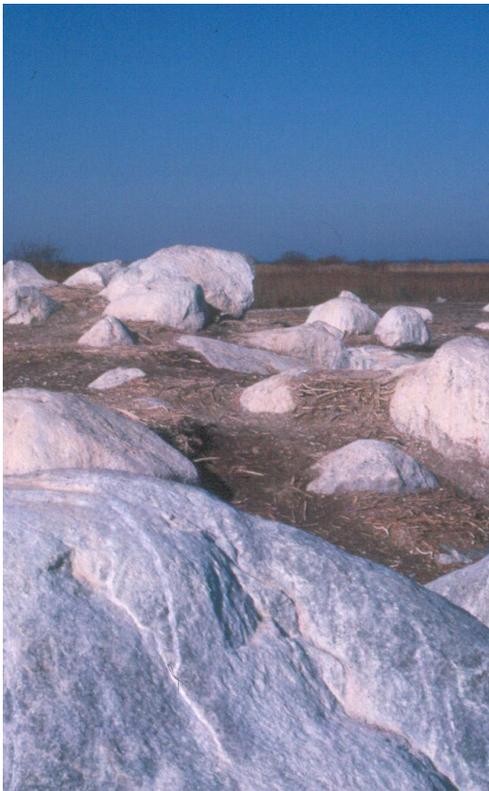
Pelican Islands Ecological Reserve is comprised of six small islands located west of Commissioner Island on Lake Winnipeg about 225 km north of Winnipeg. The islands total 130 ha in area and are named, from south to north, Nut Island, Sandhill Island, Gull Island, Johns Island and Twin Islands.



Outstanding Features

Pelican Islands Ecological Reserve is home to various shore birds including the endangered piping plover as well as the largest colonies of American white pelicans and common terns located on Lake Winnipeg. The American white pelican is a species formerly considered at risk in Canada. It was removed from the list in large part due to the healthy state of Manitoba's populations. Fishermen familiar with the islands have reported that pelicans have shifted their preferred nesting sites from island to island in the group over the course of the past couple of decades. Other noteworthy colonial nesting bird species have been observed on the islands including herring gulls, ring-billed gulls, and double-crested cormorants. Numerous bald eagles have also been observed on the islands.

Topography of the islands is generally flat, with little relief. Gull Island has the greatest relief, less than 3 m above the high water mark. Sandhill Island and the other islands are all significantly lower. The islands are largely sandy, but many have significant vegetative cover with some patches of trees and shrubs in addition to expanses of grasses and herbs. The birds' breeding season normally begins in May and extends into mid-August depending on ice conditions and water levels.



The Ecological Reserves Act specifies that ecological reserves are set aside in the interests of the people of Manitoba to enhance the overall well being of present and future generations of Manitobans. Ecological reserves may be used for research, education, and nature study but they are not set aside as recreational, resource harvest, or multiple use areas.

The rights of Indigenous people to access this area for hunting, trapping, fishing and other traditional pursuits will continue to be respected.

Pelican Islands Ecological Reserve is categorized as an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area management category 1a - 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, exploring for or harvesting peat, and any other activities that may significantly or adversely affect habitat.