

# Reindeer Island 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

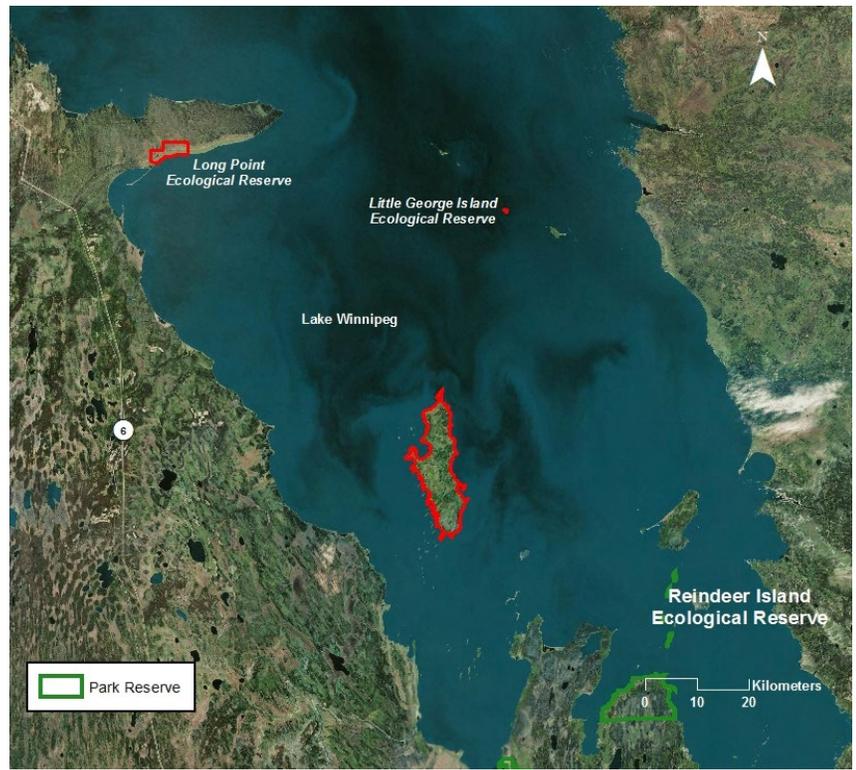
The 13,860 hectare Reindeer Island Ecological Reserve, located in north Lake Winnipeg, is approximately 270 kilometres north of Winnipeg. This site is relatively flat, sloping gently from east to west, and boasts a variety of ecosystems in a relatively small, yet isolated area.



### Outstanding Features

The Reindeer Island Ecological Reserve is unique due to the occurrence of American yew, isolated pockets of upland deciduous forest, and the absence of large mammals such as black bears and ungulates, despite their presence on the mainland. It is believed that a large wildfire in 1929, destroyed their habitat and drove off the large animals, which never returned. The presence of American yew here is significant as it is not supposed to occur beyond the southeastern corner of the province. Reindeer Island has the most northwesterly occurrence of this shrub.

Reindeer Island is the largest island in the north half of Lake Winnipeg. It is made of sandstone and limestone with a thin covering of glacial material including drumlins. There are peat plateaus in fen meadows in the north end. These permafrost associated features (peat plateaus) are unique as they are near the southern limit of permafrost in Manitoba. Such peat plateaus are often associated with permafrost much further north. The landscape is made up of beaches, hardwood, mixed wood and coniferous forest, treed muskeg, marsh and muskeg ecosystems. Peat soils dominate the landscape, but there are also some sand ridges.



Jack pine is the dominant tree species in the sand ridge communities. The mixed upland forests are made up of white spruce, balsam fir, and balsam poplar. Black spruce is the dominant tree species in the treed muskeg areas. Overall the major species found within this ecological reserve include: black spruce, Labrador tea, tamarack, white spruce, balsam fir, balsam poplar, American yew, mountain maple, mountain ash, Jack pine, ground juniper, willow, alder, paper birch, and trembling aspen.

Despite the absence of large mammals, Reindeer Island has abundant and diverse wildlife. Species of amphibians and reptile include chorus frogs, wood frogs, Dakota toads, leopard frogs, and red-sided garter snakes. A small garter snake hibernaculum has also been found on the island. Species of water fowl include lesser scaup, common goldeneye, white-winged teal, mallards, American widgeon, green-winged teal, all species of merganser that occur in Manitoba, American coots, American white pelicans, and double crested cormorants. Other birds observed include great blue heron, spruce grouse, Wilson's warbler, and broad winged hawk. Mammal species include coyote, fox, wolf, lynx, snowshoe hare and re-back vole.

The Reindeer Island Ecological Reserve will be maintained for the preservation and protection of the raised peat bogs, variety of ecosystems on an isolated island, and the presence of most northwesterly occurrence of American yew. All access to and activities in this ecological reserve 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.