Manitoba Lowlands

Not represented

14

Long Point

A WILDERNESS OF WATER

A diversity of landscapes and life - checkerboard wheat fields growing on gently rolling plains, river valleys burnished copper in fall with bur oak, buttery-green rolling meadows, sweeping sand beaches, broad shallow lakes and some of the most productive fresh-water marshes in North America.

THE LAND:

This region is more than one-half covered by water - huge, shallow lakes, potholes, ponds and vast cattail marshes. These are the legacy of an immense glacial lake, Lake Agasiz, that once covered most of the area. Today, ridges of sand and gravel marking ancient beaches and shorelines separate the lakes and meander gracefully across the land. Underlain by flat beds of sedimentary rock, the uniform topography of this region is a product of the last glaciation - scoured by ice and smoothed by the deposition of sediments from ancient glacial meltwater lakes.

VEGETATION:

This region supports a diversity of vegetation, from spruce forest to prairie. The northern two-thirds of the region is a wilderness of spruce: white spruce mixed with birch and aspen on the better drained sites; black spruce mixed with tamarack on the wetter sites. A groveland dominated by burr-oak and aspen mixed with open prairie forms a broad transition to the true tall-grass prairie of the southern extremities of the region. A small remnant of tall-grass prairie, one of the few left in existence, is located in the city of Winnipeg and managed as the Living Prairie Museum. Vast areas of the region are covered by cattail marshes.

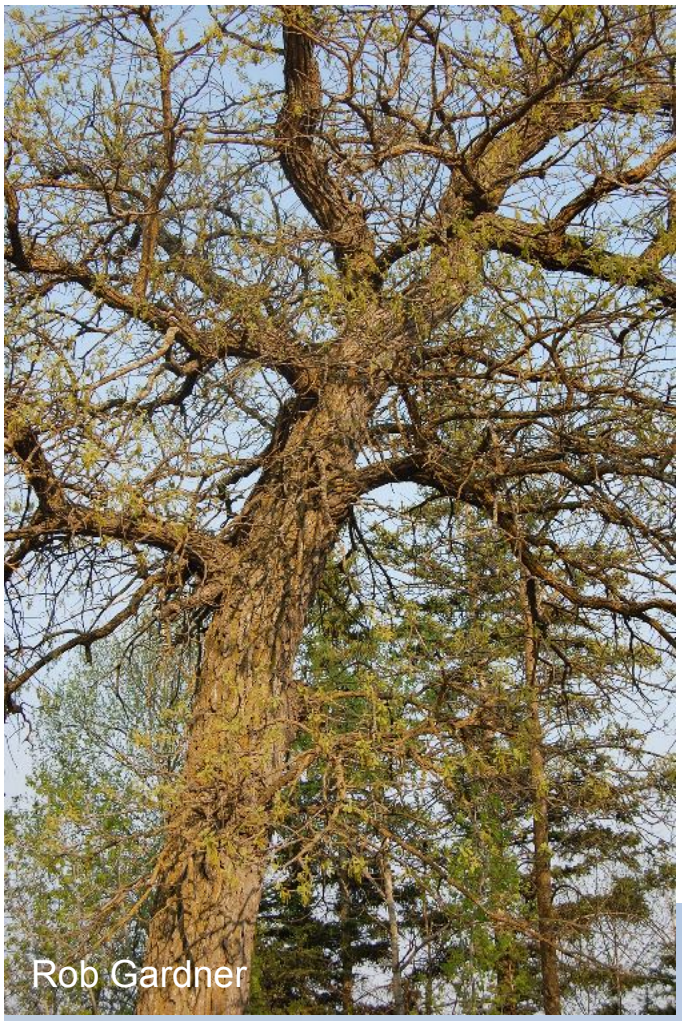
WILDLIFE:

The spruce forests are inhabited by moose, black bear and sharp-tailed grouse, while the burr-oak groves and prairies are frequented by wildlife more typical of the prairies - white-tailed deer, coyote, and Franklin's and thirteen-lined ground squirrels. Bison, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk and wolf thrived here in the recent past.

Coyote

The extensive marshes of this region are critical nesting and staging areas for a myriad of birds, especially waterfowl. Delta Marsh, North America's largest fresh-water marsh, remains in a relatively undisturbed state. Winter denning sites for thousands of garter snakes are found along the limestone outcrops on the west side of Lake Winnipeg.

Only tiny remnants of tall grass prairie remain, for this land is also ideal for wheat and cereal crops.
Where they still survive, like here at Oak Hammock Marsh, the tall grasses can indeed tickle the bellies of horses, as settlers claimed. This ragged appearance in late May will transform rapidly as the weather warms. These grasses thrive in the heat of summer. Half a dozen species range from knee to shoulder high. When the site receives enough grazing, dozens of species of wildflowers fill in the spaces.



The twisted branches of the Burr Oak suggest a struggle, but this prairie tree thrives in the narrow band between dry grassland and wet boreal forest.

Major Land Uses
Commercial fishing
Farming, especially forage crops

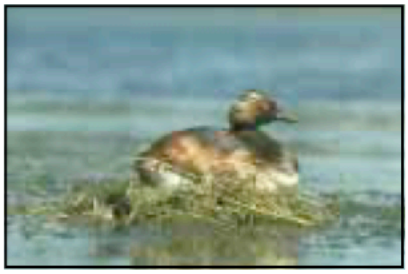
Main Communities
Winnipeg

Aboriginal Peoples
Metis, Ojibway, Cree,

Parks and Natural Areas
Oak Hammock Marsh
Living Prairie Museum

Further Information

Natural Region 14


Eared Grebe

The shallow lakes covering much of this region support an abundance and diversity of fish species, as well as a thriving commercial and sport fishing industry. Over 70 species have been recorded, with pike, whitefish, sauger and walleye the most important commercial species.

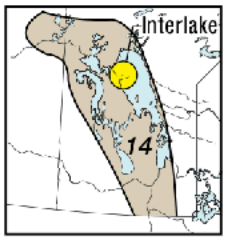
STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

In 1994 Canada and Manitoba announced the commencement of the Manitoba Lowlands national park feasibility study - an investigation to determine the best option or combination of options for a national park to represent the Manitoba Lowlands natural region. The study focussed on three areas in Manitoba's Interlake - Long Point, Little Limestone Lake and Hecla-Grindstone.

In early 1996 the governments announced the results of initial investigations and consultations, and initiated a second-round of public consultations. As a result of the initial work, a possible combination of three, and perhaps four, distinct examples of the region is being presented for public discussion - the park will in all likelihood consist of two or more geographically discrete components.

The combination includes the Long Point component - the core area of the proposed park - providing a land bridge connecting two of the world's outstanding freshwater lakes, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Winnipegosis. A mix of upland and lowland topography and associated wetlands, vegetation and habitats make this area particularly representative of the region. The overlap of the ranges of moose, elk, woodland caribou and deer is significant. The Limestone Bay component contains caves carved by centuries of water erosion of the limestone bedrock, and a portion of Limestone Bay is important as spawning habitat for walleye. A third area focusing on Black Island, Deer Island and an assortment of small islands in Lake Winnipeg within Hecla Provincial Park displays unique features not occurring elsewhere in the proposed park, including the northernmost occurrence of red pine in Canada. Hecla Island itself would remain as a provincial park. A number of islands in Lake Winnipegosis are possible additions as a fourth component of the park because of their vast array of waterfowl and shorebird colonies, some of the greatest concentrations and diversities of inland colonial nesting bird species anywhere in Canada.

By using a combination of sites, features that would not have otherwise been present in a single-unit national park could be included. Each component brings unique and important characteristics to the mix and together they provide a good representation of the Manitoba Lowlands.



If at the conclusion of consultations the governments of Canada and Manitoba agree that a national park is feasible, negotiation of a federal-provincial agreement to establish the park will be the next step.

The following table summarizes the status of system planning for each step towards establishing a new national park in this natural region.

Steps in the Park Establishment Process	Status
Representative Natural Areas Identified:	done
Potential Park Area Selected:	done
Park Feasibility Assessed:	ongoing
Park Agreement Signed:	0
Scheduled under the National Parks Act :	0

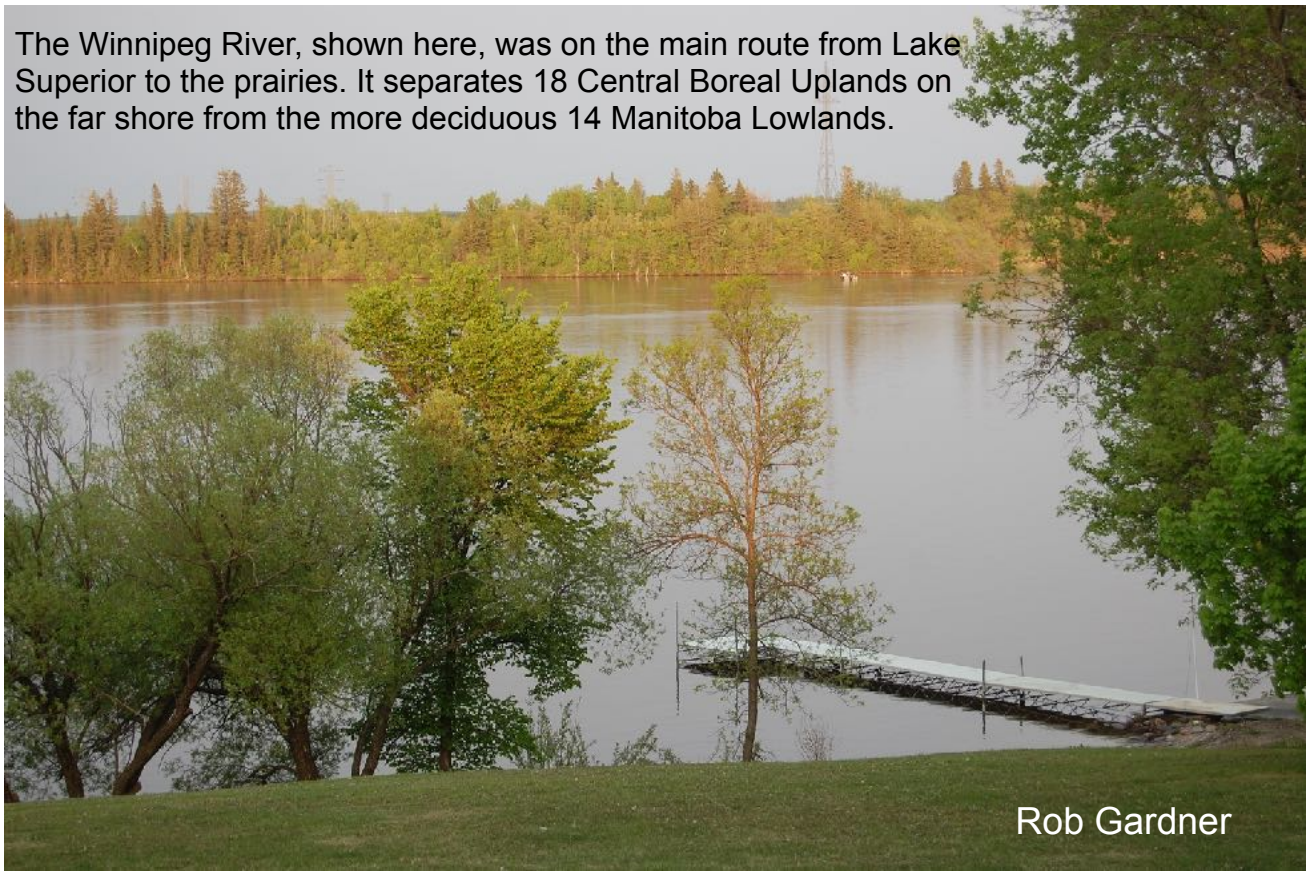

Rob Gardner


Rob Gardner

Transportation has changed over the past 150 years! The all-wood and oxen-powered Red River Carts carried Metis people east across the prairie every spring, searching for buffalo, then back to the Red River to harvest their crops in Fall. You can get the whole story at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site.

Rob Gardner

This restful trail shows the sandy soil, good for growing aspen and birch, and a host of shrubs.



The Winnipeg River, shown here, was on the main route from Lake Superior to the prairies. It separates 18 Central Boreal Uplands on the far shore from the more deciduous 14 Manitoba Lowlands.

Rob Gardner