



# Central Boreal Uplands

Represented by: Pukaskwa National Park

18

## . AN INFINITY OF ROCK, WATER AND WOOD

A rugged wilderness of endless spruce forests and quaking bogs, of rock-rimmed lakes and tumbling rivers teeming with walleye, pike and trout, of moose and beaver and hordes of black flies. This region is synonymous with the Canadian Shield, the quintessential Canadian landscape. The combination of rock, water and dense forest makes this region tough country to walk in. But it is a land made for the canoe.



Oiseau Bay, Pukaskwa National Park



Cascade River, Pukaskwa National Park

## THE LAND:

This is a raw new land, still healing from the effects of the Ice Age. The ancient granite and gneiss of the Canadian Shield, lying exposed or covered by a thin acidic layer of grey-brown soil, give the entire region its characteristic rugged relief. The Precambrian rock is the clay from which this

landscape of rough hills was formed, but it was the glaciers that gave the land its final shape. The legacy of the glaciers can be seen everywhere - in the tortuous watersheds and the myriad of lakes, ponds and bogs; in the exposed glacier-scarred bedrock; and in the moraines and drumlins hidden under the never-ending spruce forests.

One of the few anomalies in the uniformity of this region is the Athabasca Sand Dunes. These are the most extensive sand dunes in Canada. Open shifting dunes intermix with stabilized dunes, resulting in a unique landscape characterized by an unusual assemblage of plants, many of which are restricted to this site.

## VEGETATION

White spruce, black spruce, balsam fir ...  
white spruce, black spruce, balsam fir ...

## Natural Region 18

this pattern repeats itself endlessly across the region. The forest is outstanding in its uniformity. Tamarack and jack pine, along with fast-growing



Beaver

deciduous species such as poplar and birch, are other important members of the forest cast. Along the southern edge of the region, white pine and red pine, sugar maple, black ash, eastern white cedar and other species from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest intermix in sheltered areas and depressions in which soil has accumulated. Along the northern border, the harsh climate results in an open coniferous forest with a thick mat of lichens growing between the trees.

Numberless bogs and fens support black spruce, Labrador tea, blueberries and their kin, bog rosemary, cloudberry and other acid-loving species.

### WILDLIFE:

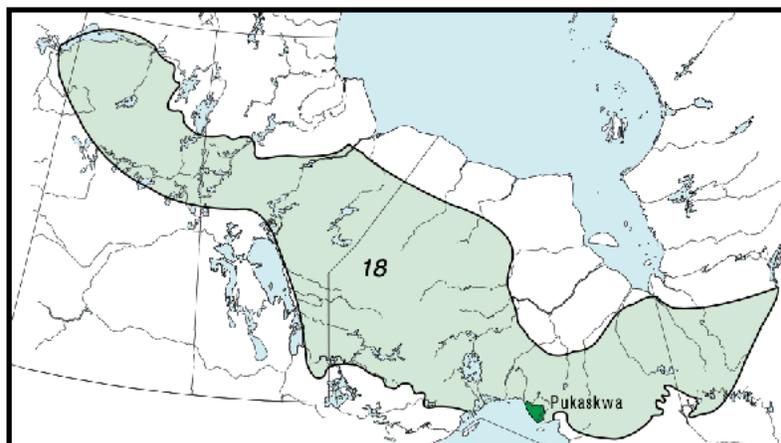
For many, the beaver is the symbol of this area. It was the desirability of its pelt that shaped the history of this region. For oth-

ers, the loon is the symbol of the boreal forest. Other typical wildlife include the moose, wolf, snowshoe hare, spruce grouse, ruffed grouse, lynx, black bear and caribou (old-growth forests providing their critical winter range). In summer, the spruce woods ring with the calls of warblers and other migratory birds.

### STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS

This region is represented by Pukaskwa National Park (1,878 km<sup>2</sup>), a rugged wilderness of rock-rimmed lakes, tumbling rivers and dense forests, bounded by the rocky headlands and sheltered cobble and sand beaches of Lake Superior. A small herd of woodland caribou, a rare species in Canada, shares the park hinterland with moose, wolf, black bear and a host of smaller creatures. Hike the challenging Coastal Trail or paddle the shore of Lake Superior to experience Pukaskwa's wild beauty.

Pukaskwa was established in 1978 pursuant to a federal-provincial agreement with the Government of Ontario. It is not yet proclaimed under that National Parks Act because outstanding claims by local First Nations are still being negotiated.





Rob Gardner

### **Major Land Uses**

- Forestry - pulp
- Recreation: fishing, paddling
- Mining: nickel, gold, uranium

### **Main Communities**

- La Ronge
- Sudbury
- North Bay

### **Aboriginal Peoples**

Robinson-Superior Treaty  
Treaties 5, 9, & 10  
Dene, Cree, Ojibway

### **Parks and Natural Areas**

Pukaskwa National Park

### **Further Information**



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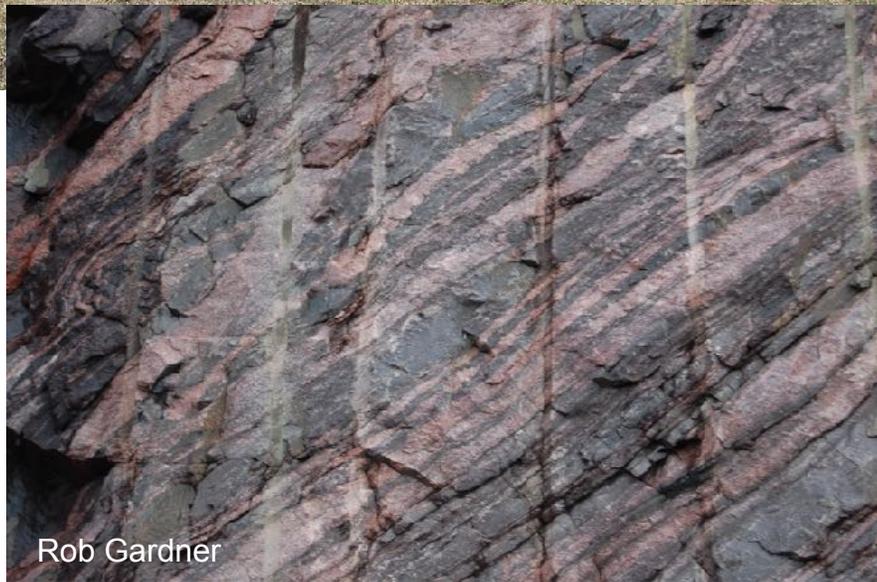


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The forest growing between the innumerable ponds and bogs quickly dries out. Forest fires are a natural part of this ecosystem, but their frequency is increasing due to climate change.



When driving the Trans Canada Highway east from Winnipeg, and not far from Falcon Lake, the fertile fields suddenly end as the granitic Canadian Shield erupts from below.



The Canadian Shield covers much of central Canada. Its crystalline rocks, mainly granite and gneiss, have been rounded by a BILLION years of weathering. Finally, in just the last million years, glaciers have carried away most of the accumulated soil, leaving only a thin covering of organic material.

In this fresh outcrop, the layers are not sedimentary. Dark and light minerals have grouped together under unimaginable pressure. This metamorphic banding is typical of gneiss (pronounced “nice”). The vertical lines are drill holes about 2 cm in diameter which were filled with dynamite to blast a path for the highway.



Rob Gardner

Lake Superior and the Canadian Shield seem inseparable. For 500 km, the traveller passes along this dramatic partnership.



Rob Gardner

While aboriginal people and early fur traders travelled by canoe through the endless network of rivers and lakes, the advent of the bush aircraft brought relatively quick and easy access to the northwoods. This period of transition is described by Halvor Ausland in his website ( <https://www.jkcc.com/> ) ( <https://www.jkcc.com/lefty/> ). Many archival photos and audio recordings bring that period back to life.



Uncounted lakes, separated by quagmires of mossy muskeg prevented commercial development. Two non-traditional vehicles - the small bush plane and the Nodwell tracked vehicle - allowed industry to explore the challenging environment of the Boreal Forest.





Rob Gardner



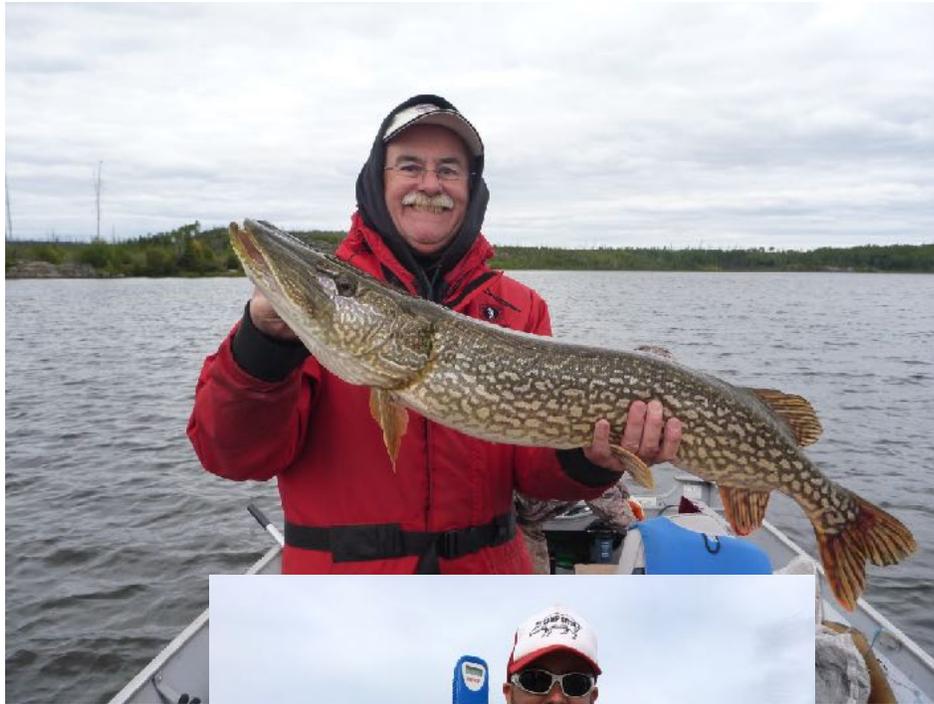
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Vast boreal forests supply numerous pulp and paper operations, as well as sawmills.



Rob Gardner

These skeletal railway cars, with their distinctive diagonal ribs, carry lumber exclusively.



Three generations of happy fishermen on Shadd Lake in northern Saskatchewan

Photos by Bruce McLeod

