

Laurentian Boreal Highlands

Not represented

BALSAM, BOGS, BLACK FLIES AND BOREAL

This region at first appears monotonous in its simplicity. It is an elemental landscape - Precambrian bedrock scoured and softened by the work of glaciers, with a cold, damp climate giving the final brush-strokes - an uninterrupted cloak of gloomy boreal forest.



Bogs near St. Lawrence River

THE LAND

This region is most spectacular along its southern border, rising abruptly in bold headlands 300-600 metres from the St. Lawrence Estuary. Moving inland, the interior relief is rugged, undulating and deeply incised by large rivers tumbling downhill into the St. Lawrence. One of these, the Moisie, is famous among white-water wilderness adventurers.

The entire region is underlain by the Precambrian gneisses of the Canadian Shield. The Shield is shattered by two large meteorite craters: The Manicougan and the Mal-



Manitou River

baie. These have left distinctive marks on the normally impervious shield - a mountainous uplifted core at the centre of the strike and a circular depression marking the outer rim of the crater walls. (This feature of the Manicougan Crater has been flooded by hydro-electric power-generating dams and is easily visible on a map as a circle of lakes.)

VEGETATION:

This is a region of dark, damp and dense forests, spreading in uniform monotony along the St. Lawrence to the sea and northward to the tundra. The blanket of boreal forest is interrupted only by the valley of the Saguenay, where the mixed-forest of Region 19 makes a brief appearance.

But within the monotony is variety caused by fire and topography. From the air the land is a patchwork of colour - the black evergreen forest, bright green patches of deciduous trees, and pastel hues of brown and yellow marking the bogs.

A complete cross section of the boreal eco-

system exists in this region. In the southern portions, black spruce and balsam fir dominate, with stands of white birch where logging and fires have occurred. Farther inland, the forests of spruce and fir become denser, with a uniform understory of moss. Bogs blot large areas in sinuous stripes or Rorschach-shaped blotches. Along the northern edge of the region, black-spruce forests, perpetuated by fires, take over from the balsam fir. However, in undisturbed sites, the balsam fir is the climax species. White spruce grows on well-drained sites; bogs soak up excess water in poorly drained depressions.

WILDLIFE:

Caribou, moose, black bear, wolf, lynx, snowshoe hare and other mammals typical of the boreal forest are common here. Conspicuous birds include the pileated woodpecker (Canada's largest woodpecker), ruffed grouse and black duck.

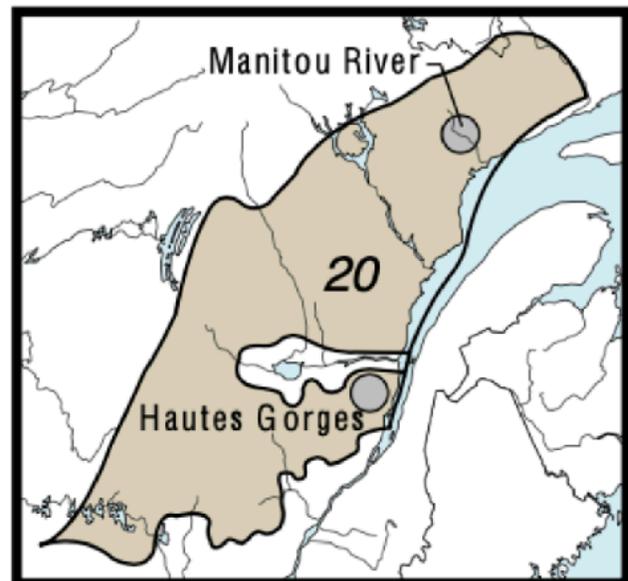


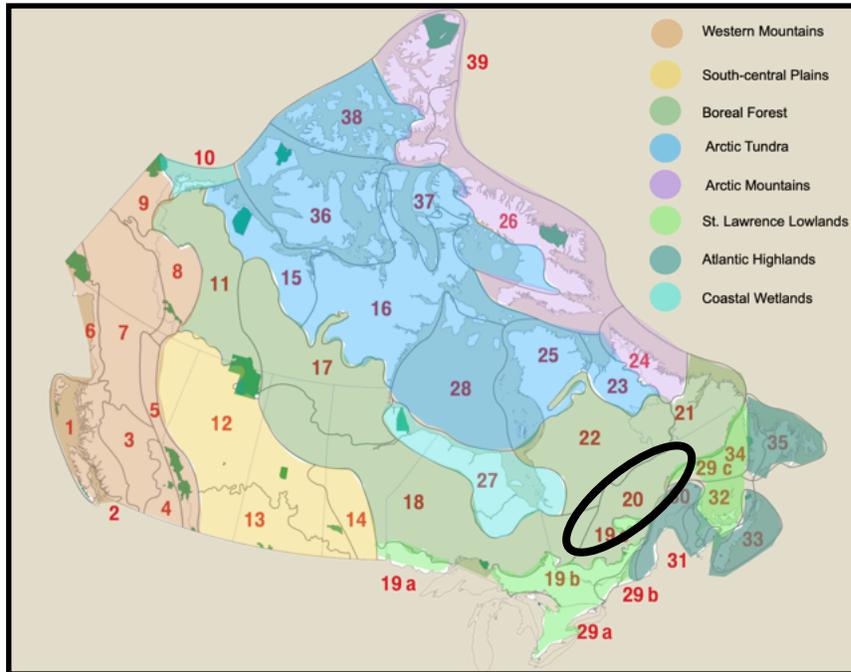
Lynx

The large rivers dropping rapidly into the Gulf of St. Lawrence provide important spawning grounds for Atlantic salmon. This region provides ideal conditions for two other creatures: the black fly and the spruce budworm. The region has plenty of cold, shallow swift-flowing streams, ideal nurseries for black flies. The spruce budworm, despite its name, prefers to feed on balsam fir, of which there are plenty in this region. The numbers of this species regularly reach epidemic proportions.

STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS

No national parks exist yet in this region. Earlier studies pointed to Hautes Gorges and Manitou River areas for further study. A regional study re-examining these two areas in light of new information of the region's natural resources was recently completed, confirming the importance of both areas. Factors that could affect new park establishment include the settlement of native land claims, widespread logging, the hydroelectric power potential of this natural region's rivers and mining claims. Establishment of a national park will require the support and co-operation of the Government of Quebec and the resolution of the comprehensive land claim being negotiated with the Conseil Atikamekw, the Conseil Mamuitun and the Conseil Mamit Innuat.





Major Land Uses

Hydro power - Manicougan
 Aluminum refining (using hydro power)
 Logging

Main Communities

Sept Iles
 Baie-Comeau

Aboriginal Peoples

Algonquin
 Atikamekw
 Montagnais (Innu)

Parks and Natural Areas