



Miriam Lake, Torngat Mountains

THE UNKNOWN EASTERN MOUNTAINS

Breath-taking fiords, jagged peaks rising abruptly from a frigid sea, icebergs, polar bears, glaciers ... some of the most spectacular coastscapes in the world are found in this natural region - unknown to all but the Inuit.

THE LAND:

This region contains two distinct, contrasting landscapes: the George Plateau and the spectacular Torngat Mountains.

The George Plateau is a level bedrock plain cut by deep river valleys sloping gently to Ungava Bay. The effects of glaciation are ubiquitous: drumlin fields, kame terraces (ridges of water-born sediments deposited by melting glaciers), erratics and eskers that snake over the plateau.

The Torngat Mountains, among the highest, most rugged mountains in eastern North America and one of the world's most beautiful wild coastlines, provide a spectacular counterpoint to the gentle George Plateau.

VEGETATION:

Forest-tundra, characterized by open stands of black spruce and tamarack with an understory of low-lying arctic shrubs, dominates the southern part of the region. As one moves north and climbs higher, the vegetation becomes sparse, consisting mainly



Nachvak Fiord, Torngat Mountains

of lichens, mosses, sedges, grasses and hardy arctic flowers. Shrubs such as willow and alder are limited to sheltered areas. Rock deserts with little vegetation other than lichens and a few low-lying hardy forbs cover large areas.

WILDLIFE:

Typical mammals include caribou, black bear, red fox, arctic fox, snowshoe hare, wolf, and muskrat. The George River caribou herd, the world's largest, estimated at 700 000 animals, ranges through much of

Natural Region 24

the region. Polar bears patrol the coast, although they are much less common than in the past. Seabirds such as puffins, murres, razorbills and others frequent the rocky islands offshore. Whales - killer, fin, humpback, minke and blue - harbour and ringed seals and the occasional walrus frequent the coast.

STATUS OF NATIONAL PARKS:

No national park has yet been established in this region. Interest in a national park in the Torngat Mountains dates back to the early 1970s, when research identified it as a natural area of Canadian significance. Public consultations in the late 1970s concluded that, although there was strong public interest in a national park, further discussions should be put on hold until the Labrador Inuit could deal with the park proposal in the context of their land claims negotiations.

In 1992, the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Labrador Inuit Association, began a joint feasibility assessment to determine whether or not it is feasible to establish a national park in the Torngat Mountains.

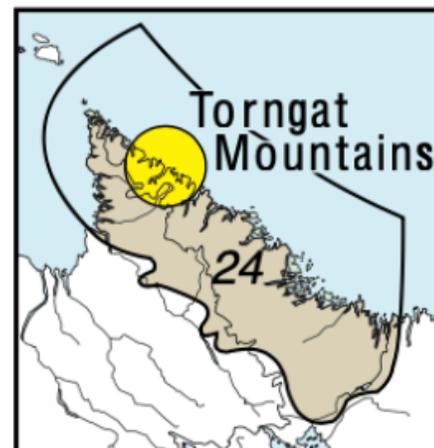
The Torngat Mountain area is one of the most dramatic landscapes in eastern North America. Fjords slash inland 30-80 kilometres. Cliffs up to 900 metres high rise abruptly from the sea. Icebergs, set adrift two years earlier in Greenland, float by. Inland, the Torngat Mountains, lonely and austere, rip the sky, their sharp peaks reaching elevations of over 1,500 metres. These mountains resemble the western ranges in their ruggedness and



Nachvak Lake

scale. Broad U-shaped glacier-carved valleys, cirque lakes, glaciers, precipitous waterfalls - all these features are found in this mountainous region.

The establishment of a new national park in this natural region will be done in partnership with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Inuit.



Major Land Uses

Traditional harvesting
Caribou herds

Main Communities

Nain
Saglek Radar Station

Aboriginal Peoples

Inuttitut

Parks and Natural Areas

Torngat Mountains National Park

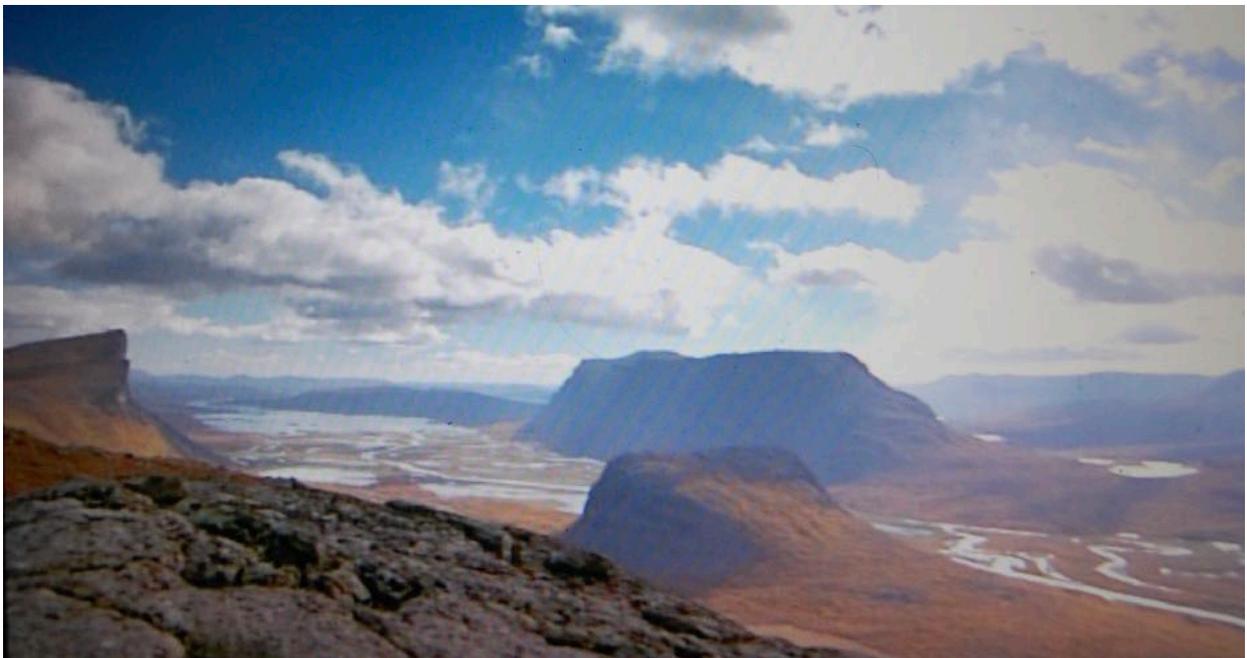
Further Information

[John Bubb's Memories of Saglek](#)





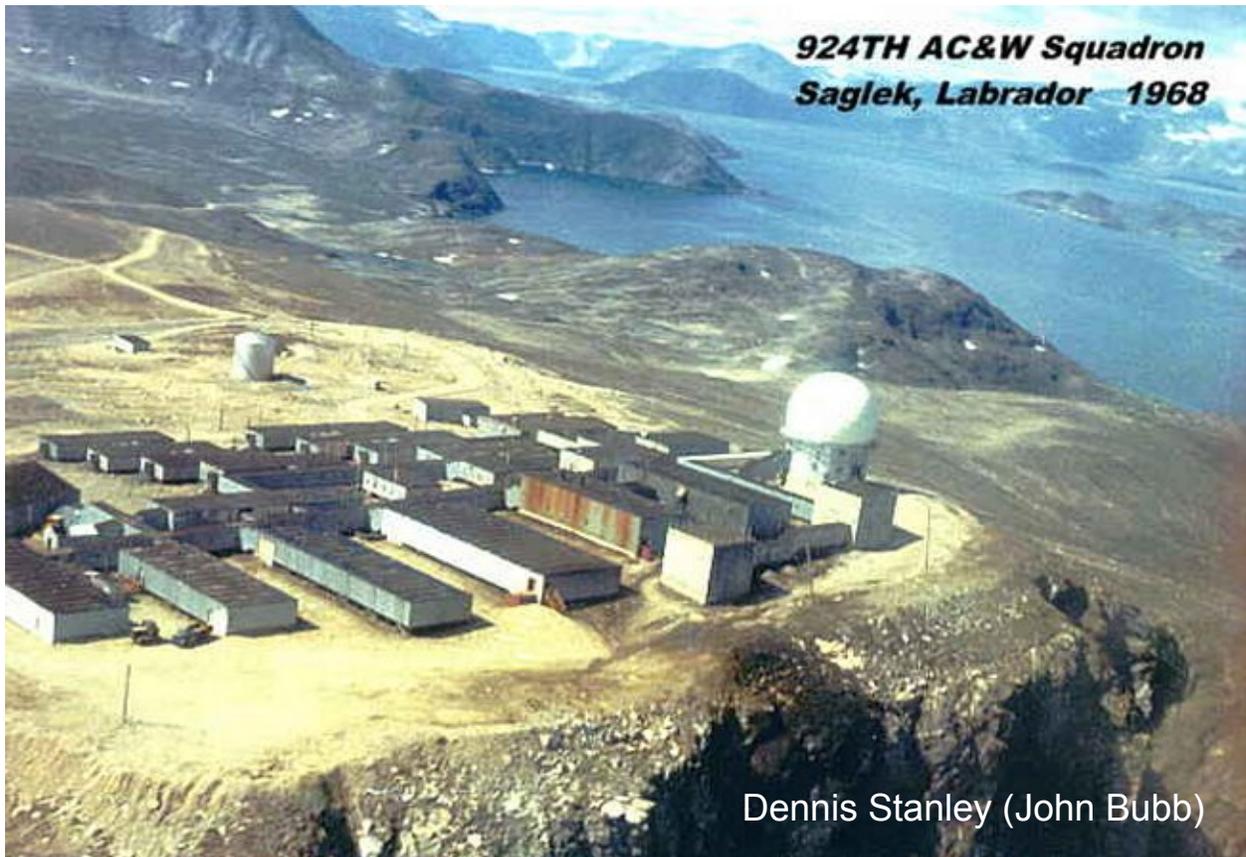
Dog sleds, igloos and other aspects of Inuit culture are returning to the north. Government officials slaughtered sled dogs in the 1950s to keep Inuit people closer to the settlements and more dependent on southern support.





Large herds of caribou migrate east from Ungava, Quebec, in the spring, then return when cold weather covers the lush vegetation. (Note the well-camouflaged caribou in the lower photo.)





Northern warning system radar installations look eastward across the North Atlantic for enemy incursions. These stations provide a substantial level of employment for local residents. Polar bears are seen regularly, mostly along the shoreline below.







Tornjat National Park includes awe-inspiring mountains and vast icecaps.

