

Whitemouth Bog Ecological Reserve

Backgrounder

Land Designation

Ecological Reserves play a key role in Manitoba's protected areas network 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

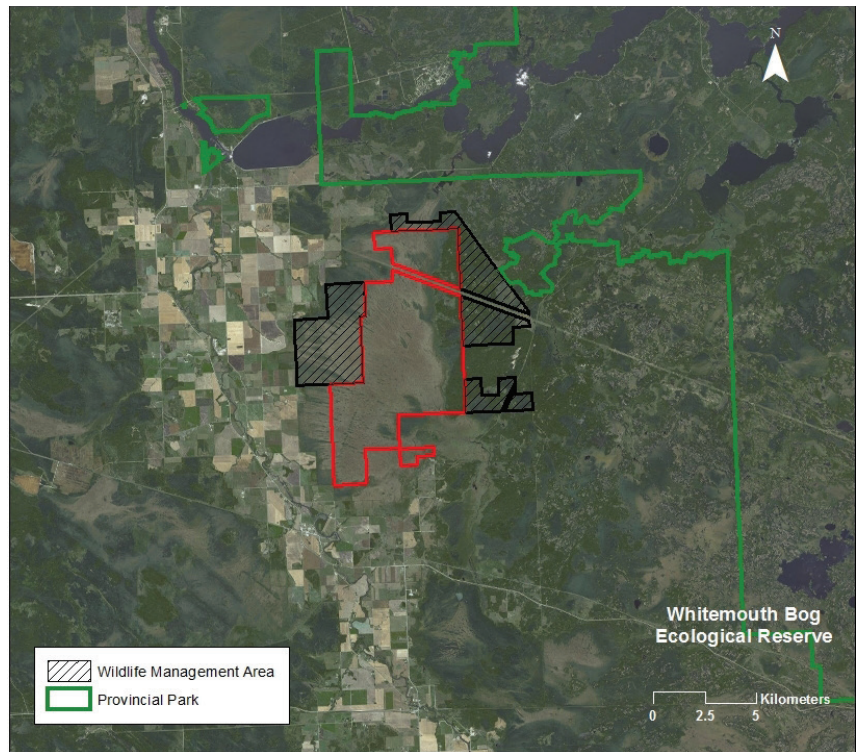
Whitemouth Bog Ecological Reserve protects a significant tract of rich peatland bog in southeastern Manitoba where most of the surrounding area is developed and privately owned land. Covering 5,020 hectares, it is the third largest ecological reserve in the province. The site lies near the community of Seven Sisters Falls and southwest of Whiteshell Provincial Park.

The Whitemouth Bog site, punctuated by bedrock outcrops in the east, marks the transition from the more rugged uplands of the Canadian Shield to its poorly drained lowlands to the west. The ecological reserve is buffered by an additional 3,010 hectares of protected land designated as the Whitemouth Bog Wildlife Management Area.

Outstanding Features

Whitemouth Bog is made up of a variety of forested and treeless wetland habitats. The relatively flat, treeless bog complex is broken up by wet shallow pools of sedge and sphagnum moss alternating with parallel ridges of black spruce and tamarack, forming an alternating pattern of ribs across the sloping landscape. The site also contains calcareous fens, one of the rarest wetland types in North America. A fen is a type of peatland characterized by a fluctuating water table. Calcareous fens are fed by groundwater rich in calcium and magnesium bicarbonate and are more mineral rich and less acidic than bogs.





Many occurrences of rare plants have been found within this ecological reserve, such as the rare rose pogonia orchid, the twig rush, and the nationally vulnerable slender-leaved sundew. Whitemouth Bog is also the only known growing location of Canada rush in Manitoba. Adding to this wealth of vegetation are seven uncommon plants: oblong-leaved sundew, lesser bladderwort, showy lady's-slipper, white beakrush, marsh St. John's-wort, yellow twayblade, and bog goldenrod.

This richly diverse habitat supports many small mammals, including the provincially vulnerable star-nosed mole, five species of shrews, and four species of voles. This abundance of small mammals has attracted great grey owls, Manitoba's provincial bird, and northern hawk owls to the area. The yellow rail, a bird listed as a Species of Special Concern under Canada's Species at Risk Act, has been observed in the Whitemouth Bog. The provincially and nationally threatened leastbittern, the smallest member of the heron family, is also found here along with Baltimore butterflies.

The Whitemouth Bog Ecological Reserve will be maintained for the preservation and protection of the wetland complex, notably the calcareous fen, and several species considered to be rare, of concern or otherwise noteworthy. Passive non-consumptive recreation on foot is permitted. All other activities require prior ministerial approval.

This protected area is categorized as an IUCN (World Conservation Union) protected area management category Ia, that is, 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 significantly and adversely affect habitat.