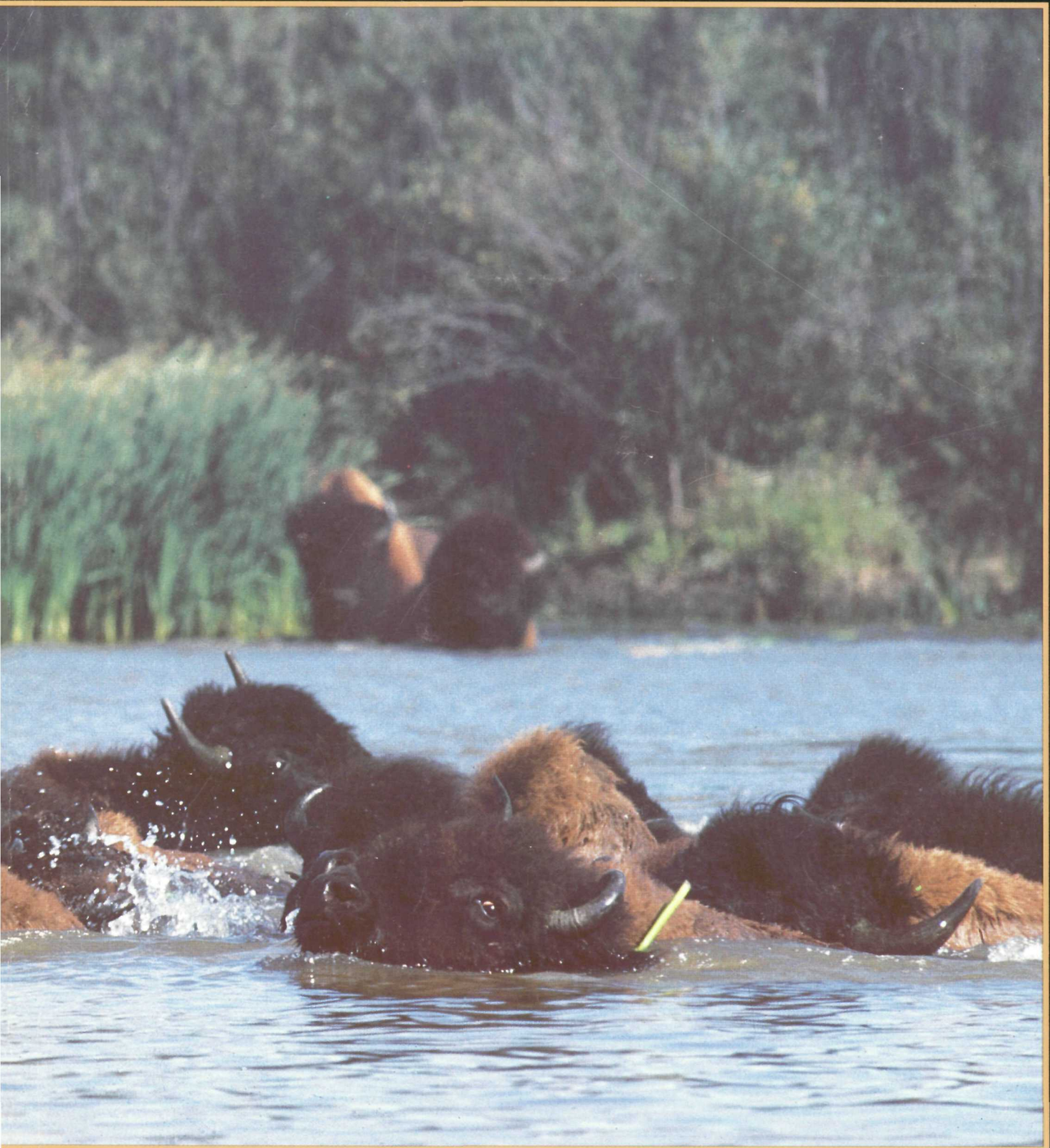


# BOREALIS

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## Completing the National Parks System

## NATIONAL PARK DREAMS

Article compiled by Max Finkelstein

Since Canada's national parks system was created in 1885, Canada has rapidly changed from a nation of wilderness to a post industrial country, complete with a litany of environmental problems. In that same short period, our society has witnessed the near extinction of natural ecosystems such as tall grass prairie and species such as the whooping crane and the bison. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is among 200 Canadian conservation organizations and 350,000 individual Canadians, who as part of the Endangered Spaces Campaign, have called for the protection of 12 per cent of Canada's natural ecosystems. Almost surprisingly, the federal government was one of the first to respond to the call. The federal government's Green Plan sets a goal to protect 12 per cent of Canada and promises to complete our national park system. If successful, the federal government will protect as much land in national parks between now and the year 2000 as it has since the park system began in 1885. By then, the national park system will protect three per cent of Canada, one-quarter of the 12 per cent goal. This commitment deserves to be understood, celebrated and supported.

Canada's national parks. They are special places. They are islands of nature primordial and gateways to adventure, discovery and solitude. They celebrate and protect the infinite variety, beauty and wonder of our land. Set aside for all Canadians, and for the world, for all time, each is a sanctuary where nature evolves as it has done since the dawn of time. Each provides a haven, not only for plants and wildlife, but for the human spirit. A place to wander, to wonder, to discover yourself.

Canada's first national park was established in Banff more than 100 years ago. This was the first step in the creation of a system of national parks that now spans every province and territory. One of the largest and most magnificent in the world, Canada's national park system encompasses an area of more than 180,000 square kilometres or 1.8 per cent of Canada's land area in 34 national parks and national park reserves. These parks ascend to the highest point in Canada at Mt. Logan in Kluane National Park Reserve and descend to the depths of the ocean at Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. They stretch from the eastern shores at Terra Nova National Park to the Queen Charlotte Islands on the Pacific coast. From the most northern point in Canada at Ellesmere Island National Park Reserve to Canada's most southerly mainland tip at Point Pelee National Park, Canada's parks reach to the four corners of



All Photos: Courtesy of the Canadian Parks Service

the nation. But the work is far from finished. The goal is to complete a national parks system that truly represents the image and spirit of Canada.

When the national park system is complete, it will preserve about three per cent of Canada. Achieving the 12 per cent goal will require other governments and groups to contribute through the protection of their own systems of nature reserves.

**The National Parks Vision Matures**

By 1970, the park system was 85 years old and 19 national parks had been established in Canada. But there was no overall vision or long-term goal for national parks. Rather, the parks were a collection of special places, created, in some cases, by heroic individual efforts or political opportunism. Parks had been set aside for a variety of reasons — to protect scenic areas for tourism, to provide regional recreation areas, to preserve critical wildlife habitat or to stimulate flagging economies. But what was missing was an ecological rationale for protecting examples of Canada's spectacular natural environments.

**The Natural Region Concept**

In 1971, the National Parks System Plan was devised to provide a framework for national parks. Its fundamental principle was to

protect outstanding representative samples of each of Canada's natural landscapes. Ecologists studied the Canadian landscape and divided the nation into 39 distinct national park natural regions, based on physiography and vegetation. It was this step that allowed park planners to set goals to represent each natural region in the national parks system.

A parallel marine park system plan followed, dividing Canada's coastal waters into 29 distinct marine natural regions.

**Creating a New National Park**

Identifying, selecting and establishing new national parks and marine parks can be a long and complex process. Each situation is unique and requires creativity, patience and diplomacy.

In natural regions without national parks, studies are carried out to identify the areas that have national park potential. To qualify, the area must have a good representation of the wildlife, vegetation, geology and landforms that characterize the natural region. As well, the area should be unscathed by the effects of modern development.

**"To protect for all time,  
representative natural areas of  
Canadian significance in a system  
of national parks and to  
encourage public understanding,  
appreciation and enjoyment of  
this natural heritage so as to  
leave it unimpaired for future  
generations."**

*Canadian Parks Service Policy, 1979.*

*The calving grounds of the Bluenose Caribou Herd, one of the largest in Canada, are within the area proposed as a national park.*

Once a number of representative natural areas have been identified, their respective attributes are weighed and one is selected as a potential national park. As well as natural and cultural features, factors such as the area's mineral and energy resource potential, pending land claims, incompatible land uses and the potential for understanding and enjoyment are also taken into account.

Next, a park feasibility study is done. This complex and time-consuming step involves consultations with local communities and other concerned parties. Alternative land

uses are evaluated against the benefits of a national park. Possible boundaries are proposed, with the aim of including complete ecological units, important wildlife habitats and the highest degree of bio-physical diversity. Local support must be strong for the establishment process to continue.



Once support for the proposal is demonstrated, a federal-provincial agreement setting out the terms and conditions for the transfer of land to the federal government is negotiated. Where lands are subject to a comprehensive land claim by aboriginal people, a new park can be established as part of a claim settlement. This was the means for establishing Northern Yukon National Park in 1984, the first national park in Canada to be negotiated through a native land claim settlement.

To conclude the creation of a new national park, the National Parks Act must be amended to formally include the new national park. In an area covered by an unresolved land claim, a national park reserve is established. In such cases, the National Parks Act and Regulations apply, but traditional hunting, fishing and trapping may continue and final boundaries remain open to negotiation. Several long-established national parks, such as Auyuittuq and Pacific Rim, are actually national park reserves.

#### National Parks Status Report

With 21 of 39 terrestrial natural regions protected in 34 national parks (several regions have more than one national park), the National Parks System is 54 per cent complete. Gaps in the system are concentrated in the Northwest Territories, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and Labrador.

The marine national park system is just beginning. Currently, only two of 29 marine natural regions are represented in Fathom Five and the marine component of Pacific Rim. The recently negotiated marine park in the Saguenay Fjord will represent a third marine region when it is established. When South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas National Marine Park Reserve is established in 1993, it will represent two more marine regions, making the system 17 per cent complete.

Much of the work has been done for the unrepresented terrestrial natural regions. And new national parks are at various stages of creation in most of the unprotected natural regions. Areas of interest have been identified in 14 of the 18 regions without national parks.

By the end of 1992, areas of interest will have been identified for the remaining five regions including: Strait of Georgia Lowlands, Whale River, Ungava Tundra Plateau, Southampton Plain and the Western High Arctic region (see natural regions map). By the end of 1993, potential park sites will have been selected in all unrepresented natural regions.

National park feasibility studies are already under way in four regions including: Churchill, Bluenose, Wager Bay and East Arm of Great Slave Lake. Feasibility studies are about to begin for the Mealy Mountains and Torngat Mountains proposals in Labrador. And negotiations for park agreements are being carried out for the Banks Island and Northern Baffin proposals.

In November 1991, a national park covering part of the Old Crow Flats received approval in principle through the Council for Yukon Indians land claim settlement. Although this natural region is already partly represented by Northern Yukon National Park, the addition of Old Crow Flats will complete representation of the natural region's biological, geological and cultural characteristics.

#### Where Might the Next National Parks Be?

We are pleased to present a review of active national park proposals. In addition, the editors of *Borealis* have attempted to provide projected establishment dates and a code representing the status of each proposal: green for on track, yellow for experiencing some delays and red for proposals that are stalled.

### Completing the National Parks System

# New National Park Candidates

## ① Churchill

*Projected establishment date: 1996*

*Status condition: Green*

*Region: 27 Hudson Bay Lowlands*

This park proposal is relatively new and work has advanced quickly. Studies and public consultations have been under way to determine the feasibility of establishing a national park in the Churchill/York Factory area since late 1989. A working group, consisting of local representatives and Canadian Parks Service and Manitoba Department of Natural Resources officials, co-ordinated the assessment work. There has also been considerable involvement of Churchill residents in technical committees, set up to examine specific aspects of the proposal.

#### Features of Proposed Park:

The proposed park area includes most of the natural features typical of the Hudson-James Lowlands Natural Region — flat expanses of tundra, eskers and permafrost. In addition, the area has many outstanding features. The world's largest known polar bear denning site is found here. This may be the most accessible area in the world where polar bears can be seen.

Hundreds of thousands of geese and shorebirds nest along the Hudson Bay coast or gather here during migration. A rich legacy of archeological sites and historical resources such as York Factory, for hundreds



*Harsh Hudson Bay winds thwart the advance of the boreal forest toward the coast.*

of years the centre of the Hudson Bay Company's fur empire, add to the area's significance. The region already attracts visitors from around the world, who come to view polar bears and birds, to soak up the rich history and to experience the northern environment.

#### What Happens Next:

The community council of Churchill must soon decide whether it supports pro-

ceeding to the stage of formal federal-provincial negotiations. A study is currently under way to document traditional land use by native people in the proposed park area. It is designed to ensure that native communities that might be affected by the proposed park understand all the ramifications of the creation of a national park. Many issues have been raised through the public consultations over the past two years. Others might be



## The Green Plan and National Parks

Canada's Green Plan states that our national goal is to set aside 12 per cent of Canada as protected space. National parks are the oldest and best-known means Canada has for preserving and protecting large tracts of wild lands. The Green Plan sets forth specific goals for national parks that, when met, will move Canada closer to the 12 per cent target:

- establish at least five new national parks by 1996.
- conclude agreements for the remaining 13 national parks required to complete the terrestrial national parks system by the year 2000.
- establish three new marine parks by 1996 and an additional three by 2000.

When the national park system is complete, it will preserve about three per cent of Canada. Achieving the 12 per cent goal will require other governments and groups to contribute through the protection of their own systems of nature reserves.

raised in the consultations taking place within native communities. Major issues include the continuation of snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicle use; continued hunting, trapping and harvesting of resources by local residents; co-operative management of park resources and the role of a Park Management Advisory Committee; the link between park establishment and the improvement of the region's airport and port facilities; economic benefits for local residents; and co-ordination of long-standing research programs.

If the native communities and the community of Churchill support formal park negotiations, the federal environment minister and the Manitoba minister of natural resources will be able to sign a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the negotiating process and the issues to be resolved in 1992. Negotiations for a park agreement could begin later this year. □



## 2 Banks Island

*Projected establishment date: 1995*

*Status condition: Green*

*Region: 36 Western Arctic Lowlands*

*Area: 12,500 square kilometres*

Banks Island was one of the original "six north of 60°" northern areas proposed as national parks in 1978. Initial consultations between the Canadian Parks Service and the people of Sachs Harbor were suspended in 1981, while the Inuvialuit and the federal government negotiated a final land claim agreement. Under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, signed in 1984, the Inuvialuit gained title to land on southern Banks Island. They did not select land on the northern part of the island in the proposed park area.

The Canadian Parks Service resumed local consultations at the request of the Sachs Harbor Community Corporation in 1989.

### Features of Proposed Park:

The proposed park is centred on the wide Thomsen River Valley, the most productive area in the world for musk oxen. About 9,000 of the shaggy beasts roam the dwarf willows, sedges and grasses of the valley wetlands. The lower Thomsen River, with its adjoining lakes and tundra ponds, is designated as a migratory bird sanctuary because of the large numbers of brant and lesser snow geese found here.

On the west, the Thomsen River is flanked by an Arctic version of badlands — a landscape of deep, branching ravines providing breeding habitat for peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons and rough-legged hawks. To the east, beds of sand, shale and silt, with occasional seams of coal and carbonaceous shale, contain fossil plants and trees from the end of the Age of Dinosaurs. Visitors to this proposed park will be able to view wildlife in a pristine Arctic ecosystem and to canoe Canada's most northerly navigable river.



*Top: The lush valley of the Thomsen River, the most northern navigable river in Canada.*

*Bottom: The Banks Island proposed national park supports one of the highest concentrations of musk oxen in the world.*

### What Happens Next:

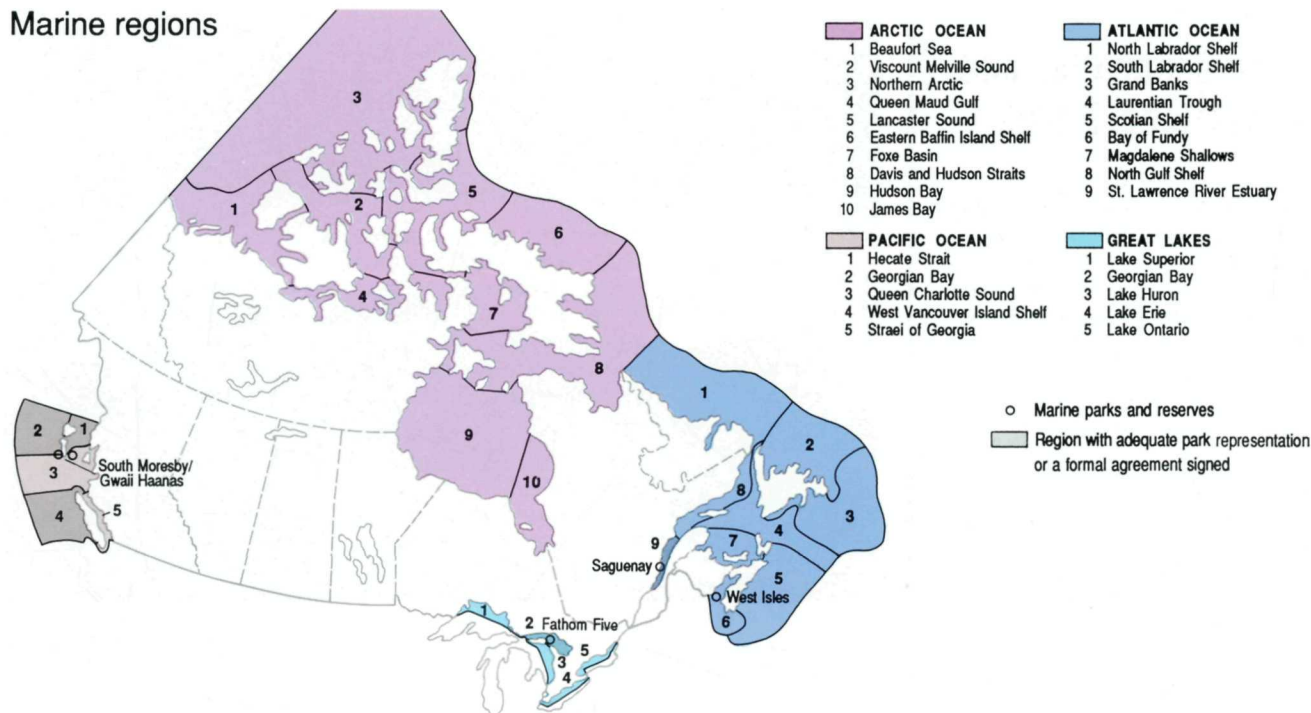
Boundaries and provisions for wildlife harvesting by the Inuvialuit of Banks Island have been the focus of recent community discussions. Local residents requested reducing the size of the park to exclude a potential polar bear sport-hunting camp near Cape McClure and to avoid lakes in the southeast, which may have commercial fishing potential.

The parks service has agreed to these changes and is continuing discussions with representatives from Sachs Harbor.

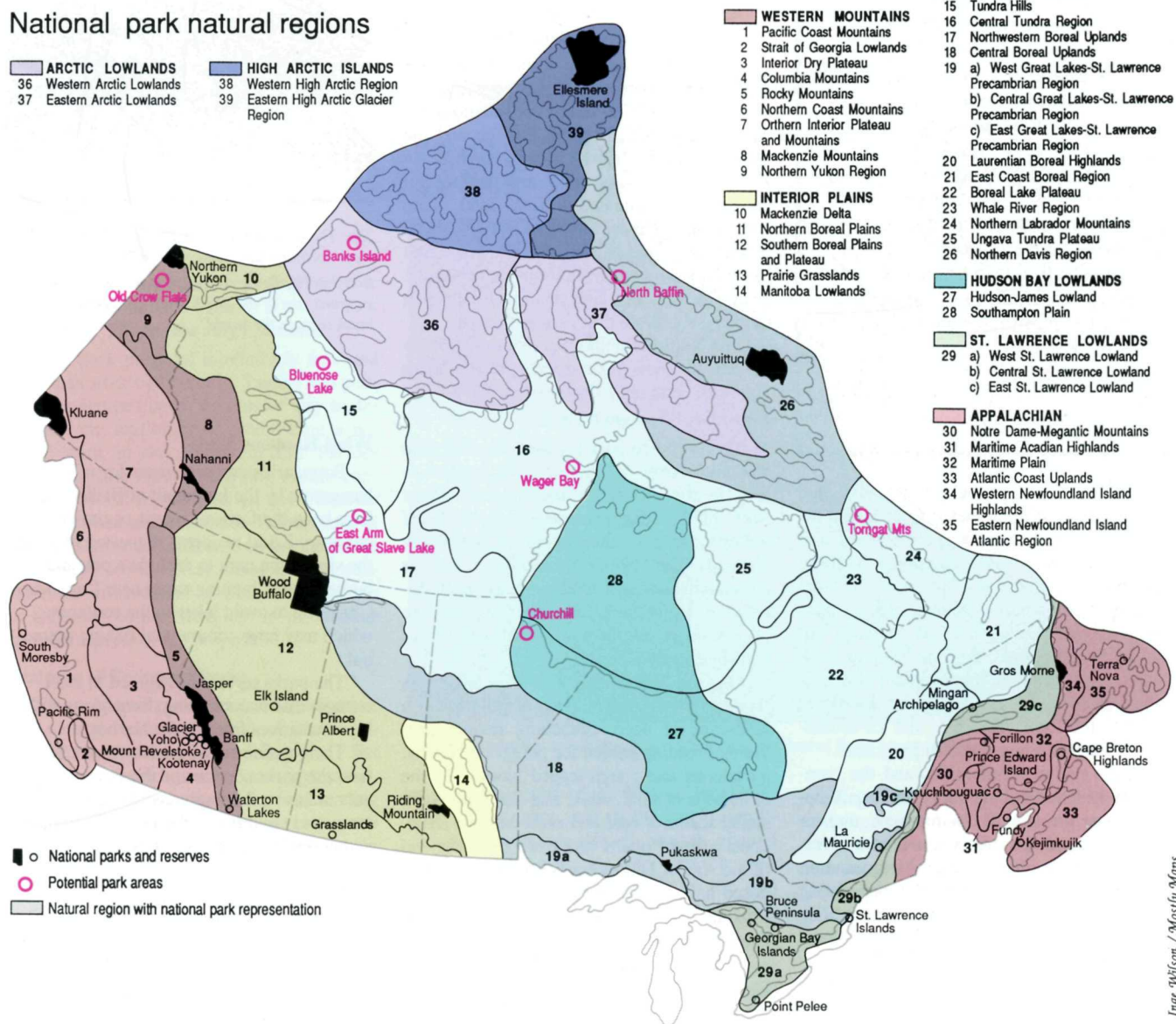
The government of the Northwest Territories, the parks service and the Inuvialuit expect to have a final agreement specifying terms and conditions of park establishment and operation by the fall of 1992. □



## Marine regions



## National park natural regions





# Borealis National Park Activist's Checklist

## WESTERN MOUNTAINS

- 1 Pacific Coast Mountains (*Pacific Rim, South Moresby/Gwaii Hannas*)
- 2 Strait of Georgia Lowlands
- 3 Interior Dry Plateau
- 4 Columbia Mountains (*Glacier, Mount Revelstoke*)
- 5 Rocky Mountains (*Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, Yoho, Waterton Lakes*)
- 6 Northern Coast Mountains (*Kluane*)
- 7 Northern Interior Plateau and Mountains
- 8 Mackenzie Mountains (*Nahanni*)
- 9 Northern Yukon Region (*Northern Yukon*)

10 Mackenzie Delta (Northern Yukon)  
11 Northern Boreal Plains (Wood Buffalo)  
12 Southern Boreal Plains and Plateau (Prince Albert, Wood Buffalo,  
13 Prairie Grasslands (Grasslands) Riding Mountain, Elk Island)  
14 Manitoba Lowlands

- 15 Tundra Hills (*Bluenose Lake Proposal*)
- 16 Central Tundra Region (*Wager Bay Proposal*)
- 17 Northwestern Boreal Uplands (*East Arm of Great Slave Lake Proposal*)
- 18 Central Boreal Uplands (*Pukashuka*)
- 19 Great Lakes - St. Lawrence (*La Mauricie, Georgian Bay Is., St. Lawrence Islands*)
- 20 Laurentian Boreal Highlands
- 21 East Coast Boreal Region
- 22 Boreal Lake Plateau
- 23 Whale River Region
- 24 Northern Labrador Mountains (*Torngat Mountains Proposal*)
- 25 Ungava Tundra Plateau
- 26 Northern Davis Region (*Auyuittaa*)

27 Hudson-James Lowlands (*Churchill Proposal*)  
28 Southampton Plain

29 St. Lawrence Lowland (Georgian Bay Islands, Point Pelee, Bruce Peninsula, Mingan Archipelago)

30 Notre Dame - Megantic Mountains (Forillon)  
31 Maritime Acadian Highlands (Fundy, Cape Breton Highlands)  
32 Maritime Plain (Kouchibouguac, P.E.I.)  
33 Atlantic Coast Uplands (Kejimikujik)  
34 Western Newfoundland Island Highlands (Gros Morne)  
35 Eastern Newfoundland Island Atlantic Region (Terra Nova)

36 Western Arctic Lowlands (Northern Banks Island Proposal)  
37 Eastern Arctic Lowlands (North Baffin Proposal)

38 Western High Arctic Region  
39 Eastern High Arctic Glacier Region (*Ellesmere Island*)

- Great Lakes/Georgian Bay (Fathom Five)
- Hecate St. & W. Queen Charlotte Is. (South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas)
- St. Lawrence River Estuary (Saguenay Fjord)
- Bay of Fundy (West Isles)
- West Vancouver Island Shelf (Pacific Rim - marine component)

[illegible]





*North Baffin: Ice and rock reign supreme in this proposed national park.*

### 3 North Baffin

**Projected establishment date:** 1995  
**Status condition:** Green  
**Region:** 37 Eastern Arctic Lowlands  
**Area:** 22,000 square kilometres

Work began on this park proposal in the late 1970s. The original proposal included a marine park, which would have protected part of Lancaster Sound and Eclipse Sound with their remarkable concentrations of seabirds and marine mammals, including the rare bowhead whale. Local concern about the future of the polar bear sport hunt has suspended work on the marine park, but there is strong local support for the terrestrial park.

The current proposal, encompassing more than 22,000 square kilometres and including almost all of Bylot Island and several large watersheds on northern Baffin Island, will provide spectacular representation of two of Canada's Arctic natural regions. Lands for the new park will be withdrawn in the spring of 1992. Formal establishment could take place within three years.

#### **Features of Proposed Park:**

The proposed national park includes some of the most spectacular wilderness landscapes in Canada — sea cliffs of more than 300 metres, some of the world's most spectacular fjords, flowing glaciers and broad river valleys. The area has been home to native people for thousands of years and numerous Dorset and Thule archeological sites are scattered throughout the region. Visitors will experience a land almost untouched by the modern world.

#### **What Happens Next:**

A formal agreement must be concluded with the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the local communities of Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet before this new park can be formally established. □

### 4 Wager Bay

**Projected establishment date:** 1996  
**Status condition:** Green  
**Region:** 16 Central Tundra Region  
**Area:** 24,000 square kilometres

Wager Bay, on the west shore of Hudson Bay, was identified in the 1970s as one of the original "Six North of 60°" areas with the potential to become a national park.

In 1980, initial consultation on the park proposal was suspended after the Inuit of Keewatin opposed the proposal, in part because land claim negotiations were not properly addressed.

#### **Features of Proposed Park:**

Within the proposed park area are many features typical of the Central Tundra natural region. This is combined with a rugged coastline and a harsh maritime climate. Wager Bay itself is a large inland sea that features eight-metre tides, reversing falls and two polynas (waters that remain open all winter), important for marine wildlife.

A diversity of habitats, ranging from rock deserts to marine areas, support such species as wolf, caribou, polar bear, beluga whale, arctic char, peregrine falcon and gyrfalcon.

Tent rings and old meat caches found in the area are evidence that the region has long been a favored hunting ground for the Pre Dorset, Dorset and Thule people. Inuit lived in the Wager Bay area until 10 years ago and families still travel to the area regularly to hunt caribou and polar bear and to fish for char.

Visitors to Wager Bay will find a rugged and challenging environment. A naturalists' lodge is open in the summer and provides

opportunities to experience the tundra and its wildlife. The high polar bear population near Wager Bay is a constraint for outdoor recreation pursuits such as hiking, sea kayaking and canoeing.

#### **What Happens Next:**

The boundary of the proposed park has been selected to include the watersheds of Wager Bay, Ford and Brown Lakes and the waters of the bay itself. This should preserve the area from outside influences for as long as possible. A major concern is that shipping through the bay could cause irreparable damage if a shipwreck or oil spill occurred.

During the 1980s, research was conducted into the area's natural and mineral resources. Although mineral potential within the proposed park is considered low to moderate, the federal government has agreed that if the park were established, a corridor through the park would allow transport of ore from mines outside the park to the coast. If access were requested, public consultation and an environmental impact assessment would be required. Mineral studies in the west part of the region, boundary studies and archeological research were carried out through the summer of 1991.

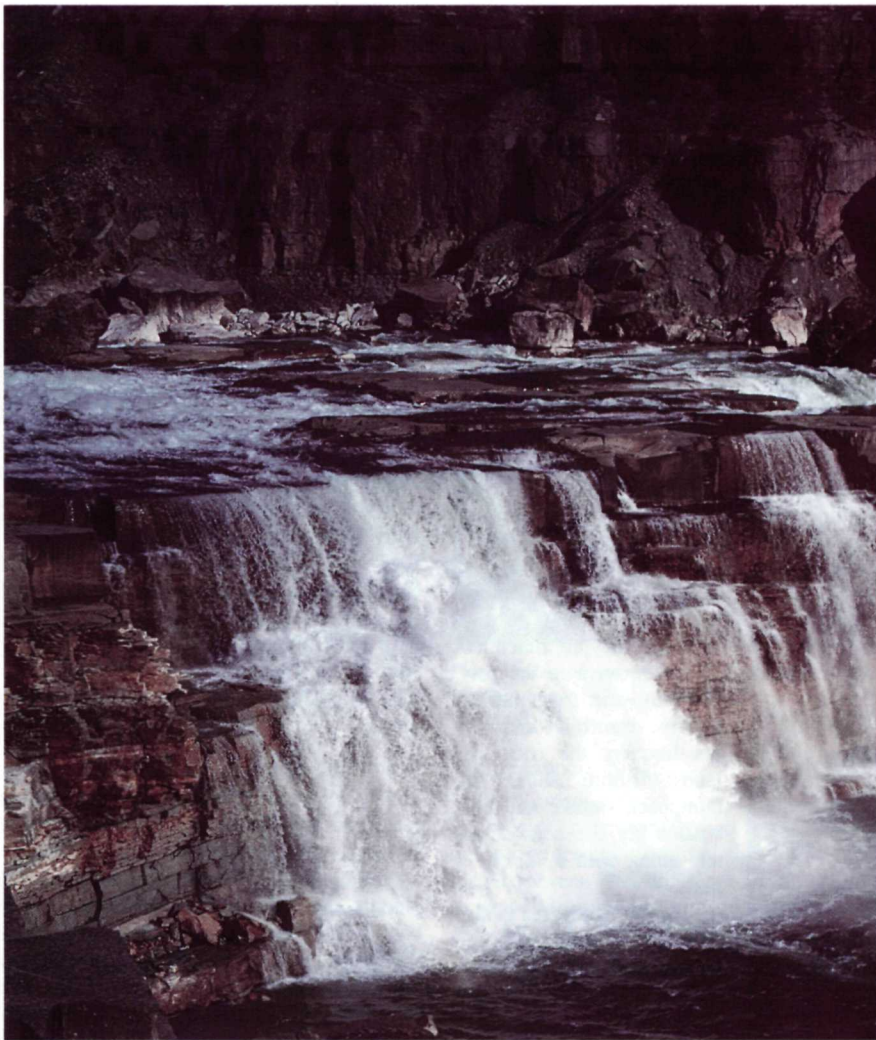


*Inukshuks, guideposts left by hunters since ancient times, are found along Wager Bay, their significance lost to modern-day explorers.*

The Inuit have agreed to consider possible exchanges of some of these lands for those outside the park during the consultation process.

In the spring of 1991, the Repulse Bay Hunters and Trappers Association and the Keewatin Inuit Association showed interest in the national park proposal. Public consultation will begin in the fall of 1992. □





*La Roncière Falls on the Hornaday River. The Hornaday and Croker rivers have cut deep valleys and gorges comparable to the canyons of the southwest United States.*

## 5 Bluenose Lake

**Projected establishment date:** 1997  
**Status condition:** Green  
**Region:** 15 Tundra Hills  
**Area:** 26,000 square kilometres

In 1989, the Inuvialuit of Paulatuk, a small Inuit community in the western Arctic, wrote to the environment minister to request that a national park be established to protect the calving grounds of the Bluenose caribou herd. Studies and inventories of the archeology, mineral and energy resources and natural features of the area are now under way.

### Features of Proposed Park:

This area is typical of the Tundra Hills natural region. The scenery is dominated by the deeply eroded Melville Hills and Bluenose Lake, the largest lake north of Great Bear Lake. Several rivers have cut spectacular gorges through the sedimentary bedrock. Some are comparable to canyons in the southwest United States.

Large numbers of raptors nest on the vertical canyon walls. In addition to including the entire calving grounds of the Bluenose Caribou Herd (about 250,000 animals),

musk ox, wolf and grizzly bear are also common in the region. Tent rings, food caches, burial sites and other archeological remains testify to the human use and occupation of this area for several thousand years.

This area is truly remote and the number of visitors will be low for the foreseeable future. Here is the world of the Pleistocene, or as close as one can get to it today — a world that remains in a primeval state. The untouched nature of this area is its greatest attraction. Popular activities in the park will be hiking and wildlife viewing.

### What Happens Next:

Some local residents in the villages of Paulatuk and Coppermine were unwilling to support the park because of the possibility of mining in the area. Completing the mineral and energy resources inventory and starting an economic impact study are important steps to ensure local residents understand all the implications of creating a new national park. □



*East Arm of Great Slave Lake.*

## 6 East Arm of Great Slave Lake

**Projected establishment date:** 2000  
**Status condition:** Red  
**Region:** Northwestern Boreal Uplands  
**Area:** 3,500 square kilometres

The national park potential of lands and waters in the vicinity of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake was first recognized in the 1960s. In 1970, the federal government reserved an area for park purposes by withdrawing it under the Territorial Lands Act. Further discussions were suspended because of concerns voiced by the Snowdrift Dene Band about the possible effects of the proposed park on their traditional lifestyle.

In 1984, work on the park proposal was reactivated for consideration as part of the Dene/Metis land claim. With the collapse of the land claims talks in 1990, however, progress on this proposal halted. Dene from the nearby community of Snowdrift remain split on whether to support the proposal.

### Features of Proposed Park:

Straddling the treeline, this area supports a remarkable diversity of vegetation and wildlife. The vegetation ranges from boreal forest to open tundra. Wildlife such as barren-ground caribou, wolves, bald eagles and peregrine falcons make their home within this diverse ecoregion for at least part of the year. The magnificent scenery, wildlife and relatively easy access to the area could make the East Arm a potential mecca for visitors. Compared to many other northern national parks, East Arm is just a short trip from Yellowknife by float plane or boat.

### What Happens Next:

Local Dene residents have only been willing to discuss the park proposal within the broader context of their land claim. It is not yet clear whether there will be other possibilities to advance the proposal since negotiations have stalled. The most important task for the Canadian Parks Service is to find a way to bring the key parties together to continue discussion.

Important issues that must be considered for a national park include: co-operative management for the park; security of trapping and fishing rights for local native people; level and types of park development and the location of the park boundaries. □



## 7 Torngat Mountains

**Projected establishment date:** 2000

**Status condition:** Green

**Region:** 24 Northern Labrador Mts.

**Area:** 9,000 square kilometres

The idea of establishing national parks in Labrador was first broached by federal and provincial officials in the early 1970s. After fieldwork and discussions with residents in several Labrador communities, the Canadian Parks Service proposed the Torngat Mountains area as a possible new national park. But during consultations, it became clear that native land claim issues needed attention before the park creation process could continue. In 1979, the park feasibility study was suspended, pending negotiation of the Labrador Inuit Association's comprehensive land claim.

Now, more than a decade later, the park creation process is again under way, thanks in part to the start of the Labrador Inuit Association land claim negotiations, as well as the positive climate created by the Green

Plan. A feasibility study involving the Canadian Parks Service, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Environment and Lands and the Labrador Inuit Association, could begin soon.

### Features of Proposed Park:

The Torngats are among the highest, most rugged mountains in eastern North America and the area is considered one of the world's most beautiful wilderness coastlines. Fjords cut inland 30 to 80 kilometres. Cliffs abruptly rise up to 900 metres over the sea. Icebergs set adrift two years earlier in Greenland can be seen floating by. Inland, the Torngat Mountains resemble the western ranges in their ruggedness and scale. Broad U-shaped glacier-carved valleys, cirque lakes, glaciers and precipitous waterfalls abound.

The area has wildlife to match its striking scenery. The George River caribou herd, estimated at several hundred thousand animals, ranges through much of the area. Polar bears patrol the coast, although they are much less common today than they were in the past. Seabirds such as puffins, murres, razorbills and others frequent the rocky islands offshore. Killer, fin, humpback, minke and blue whales ply the coastal waters along with a variety of seals.

The Torngats area is also rich in archaeological and historic sites. Ancient campsites of the Maritime Archaic Indian people, dating back eight millennium are found here along with the remains of Dorset villages and fine artwork. Relics of early European settlers and traders who visited the area over the past 500 years can also be found here.

Visitors to this area will be able to enjoy many outdoor recreational opportunities — from climbing and wilderness backpacking to sea kayaking.

What Happens Next: The feasibility study is expected to begin soon and will involve a detailed assessment of the natural resources of the area, alternative land uses and potential boundaries for the park. A public consultation program was also set up to identify issues and measure the extent of public support for the park.

### What Happens Next:

If a park agreement is reached before the land claim is concluded, a national park reserve would be created. □

## 8 Vuntut/Old Crow Flats

**Projected establishment date:** 1992

**Status condition:** Green: park to be announced soon

**Region:** 9 Northern Yukon

**Area:** 4,600 square kilometres

Public consultations on the feasibility of creating a national park in Yukon's Old Crow Flats began in 1978. At that time, the Canadian Parks Service was studying an area in the northwestern Yukon, extending from the Porcupine River (the Old Crow Flats area) north to the Beaufort Sea. In 1984, Northern Yukon National Park was established north of the Porcupine River watershed as part of the land-claim settlement with the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic.

The Vuntut Gwich'in (people of Old Crow), faced with limits on the amount of land they could select in the Old Crow Flats, have long supported the idea of a national park in the northwest portion of the flats as long as traditional harvesting rights remain intact.

### Features of Proposed Park:

The Old Crow Flats is an amazingly flat plain rimmed by mountains. Thousands of lakes dot the landscape — a jigsaw water-maze that, in combination with a mild climate, creates one of the richest waterfowl habitats in North America. Much of the Old Crow Flats is designated as a RAMSAR site, a wetland of international importance. The area also supports vast numbers of muskrat, as well as large populations of moose and grizzly bear. The flats contain a portion of the Porcupine Caribou Herd migration route. The caribou also use the flats as a wintering range.

The area escaped glaciation in the Pleistocene and modern times and therefore has a rich and varied paleontological and archeological record, stretching back nearly 40,000 years. The undisturbed fossil beds offer a rare opportunity to look at climatic and environmental changes between the glacial epochs of the Pleistocene and the modern times. Visitors to Old Crow Flats will have a unique opportunity to view waterfowl and wildlife and learn first-hand about the world of the Pleistocene age.

### Issues and Next Steps:

The Vuntut Gwich'in want to protect all of Old Crow Flats from exploitation of its non-renewable resources. Since the early 1970s, there has been a moratorium on oil and gas exploration in and around Old Crow Flats. As part of the land claim agreement, the government and Vuntut Gwich'in have agreed to protect the renewable resources of Old Crow Flats.

In April 1990, the Council of Yukon Indians and the Governments of Canada and the Yukon signed an umbrella final agreement that sets out terms for the negotiation of Yukon First Nation Final Agreements with each of the 14 Indian Bands in the Yukon.

## Canada's National Parks

NATIONAL PARK	ESTABLISH DATE	AREA SQ KMS	NATURAL REGION
1 Banff	1885/87	6,641	5
2 Glacier	1886	1,349	4
3 Yoho	1886	1,313	5
4 Waterton Lakes	1895	505	5
5 Jasper	1907	10,878	5
6 Elk Island	1913	194	12
7 Mount Revelstoke	1914	260	
8 St. Lawrence Highlands	1914	6	19b
9 Point Pelee	1918	16	29a
10 Kootenay	1920	1,406	5
11 Wood Buffalo	1922	44,807	11, 12
12 Prince Albert	1927	3,875	12
13 Georgian Bay Islands	1929	25	29a
14 Riding Mountain	1929	2,976	12
15 Cape Breton Highlands	1936	951	
16 Prince Edward Island	1937	26	
17 Fundy	1948	206	31
18 Terra Nova	1957	399	35
19 Kouchibouguac	1969	239	32
20 Forillon	1970	240	30
21 La Mauricie	1970	544	19b
22 Pacific Rim Res.	1970	500	1
23 Gros Morne	1973	1,943	34
24 Kejimikujik	1974	384	33
25 Auyittuq Res.	1976	19,600	26
26 Kluane Res.	1976	22,015	6
27 Nahanni	1976	4,766	8
28 Pukaskwa	1978	1,878	18
29 Grasslands	1981	907	13
30 Mingan Archipelago Res.	1984	151	29c
31 Northern Yukon	1984	10,168	9, 10
32 Bruce Peninsula	1987	154	29a
33 Ellesmere	1988	37,775	39
34 S. Moresby/Gwaii Haanas R.	1988	1,470	1
<b>NATIONAL MARINE PARKS</b>		178,620	
35 Fathom Five (NMP)	1987	113	
36 S. Moresby/Gwaii H. (NMP)	1988	?	
37 Saquenay (NMP)	1990	800	



The final ratification of the agreement depended on the finalization of at least four of the band agreements. In November 1991, the fourth band agreement was negotiated. Upon its ratification, a national park will be created in Old Crow Flats as part of the Vuntut Gwich'in Final Agreement.

In addition to settling native claims, this unique process has yielded two additional benefits. The federal government has agreed to buy out all existing oil and gas leases in the Old Crow Flats. And secondly, the government has agreed to protect the ecological integrity of the Old Crow Flats. A special management regime will be imposed over the entire Old Crow Flats watershed including the national park, the Indian settlement lands and the rest of the watershed. Uniquely, lands under three different jurisdictions will be managed as one ecological unit. □

## Marine Park Proposals

### 9 West Isles

**Projected establishment date: 2000**

**Status condition: Green**

**Region: Bay of Fundy**

In 1975, when the concept of a Canadian national marine parks system was being developed, the CPS embarked on a study of the Bay of Fundy Marine Region to identify areas for marine parks. Four areas were identified. Further study determined that the West Isles had the highest potential as a national marine park. In 1983, the governments of Canada and New Brunswick selected the West Isles area as the first proposed Canadian marine national park.

#### Features of Proposed Park:

The West Isles area, encompassing more than 40 islands between Deer Island and Campobello Island, lies at the mouth of Passamaquoddy Bay in the southern Bay of Fundy. Powered by the twice-daily tides of the Bay of Fundy, the waters surge through narrow channels and swirl to form whirlpools such as the Old Sow, the second-largest in the world. The turbulent waters create upwellings of nutrient-rich waters, attracting a rich diversity of marine life.

This is one of the few areas in the world where visitors can watch an entire marine food chain. Vast schools of herring flash in the water like silver spoons, feeding on euphausiids, copepods and other tiny invertebrates. The surface is dotted by hundreds of thousands of northern phalaropes, dipping their probe-like bills into the soup of copepods (small aquatic crustaceans). Finback, minke and humpback whales surface and dive, herding the schools of herring into tight masses before lunging with huge maws open like living weirs, while the occasional bluefin tuna hurls itself clear of the water, showing off.



*Great depths of water close to shore, the vast inflow of fresh water, incoming marine currents and the constant mixing of waters produces a proliferation of marine life from plankton to whales at Saguenay Marine Park.*

#### What Happens Next:

The Canadian Parks Service and the New Brunswick government agreed to review and update the feasibility studies that were completed between 1983-85. A special 1991 study to gauge local attitudes toward the proposed park showed there was enough support to move to the formal public consultation phase. □

### 10 Saguenay Marine Park

**Projected establishment date: agreement signed in 1990**

**Region: St. Lawrence River Estuary**

In 1981, a study commissioned by the Canadian Parks Service to identify areas representative of the St. Lawrence Estuary selected the mouth of the Saguenay River as the best site for a new marine park. When corpses of beluga whales began appearing on the shore, it sparked a national public outcry to protect the survivors. The dying whales also prompted studies on the feasibility of establishing a marine park in the region. The beluga whales were victims of up-stream pollution and so rife with toxins that they, themselves, were considered toxic wastes. In April 1990, a Canada-Quebec agreement was signed, providing for the creation of a marine park at the confluence of the Saguenay and St. Lawrence rivers.

#### Features of Proposed Park:

The marine environment at the confluence of the Saguenay and St. Lawrence rivers features biological resources that are unique and representative of this marine region. The Saguenay River is a true fjord, with depths of more than 300 metres and sheer cliffs plunging into dark waters. A sill less than 25 metres deep at the river's mouth

separates the black waters of the Saguenay from the emerald waters of the St. Lawrence waters. In the Saguenay, a layer of warm fresh water literally slides over deeper, denser and much colder salt water.

Easily observed marine mammals, a spectacular region steeped in the history of native cultures and French settlement, and a spectacular, unspoiled coast already support a thriving tourist industry. Visitors discover a rare blend of marine life — arctic species such as the beluga and Greenland seal, boreal species such as the minke and finback whales and grey seal and deep-water species such as the blue whale.

This diversity of life congregates at the mouth of the Saguenay because of the mixing of nutrient-rich Atlantic waters from the depths of the estuary and the freshwater influence of the Saguenay. This is a contaminated marine environment, polluted from upstream sources. However, the diversity of sea life testifies to its resiliency and adaptability. The challenge is to keep these unique marine ecosystems alive.

#### What Happens Next:

The Canadian Parks Service is currently working with the federal Department of Justice and the Quebec government on complementary legislation for a joint federal-provincial marine park. □



## 11 South Moresby/ Gwaii Haanas National Marine Park Reserve

**Projected establishment date: agreement signed in 1988**

**Status condition: Green**

**Area: 3,000 square kilometres**

In the mid-1980s, South Moresby became the focus of a movement to preserve the magnificent rain forests of British Columbia's west coast. While public debate raged over the protection of these forests, the surrounding sea was just a backdrop to the unfolding drama that eventually led to the creation of South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. The need to include the marine environments of Hecate Strait on the east coast and of the open Pacific Ocean on the west coast was soon recognized. The Queen Charlottes are islands, and the sea, it was realized, must be protected to preserve the ecological integrity of South Moresby.

### Features of Proposed Park:

The proposed South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas National Marine Park Reserve will protect an area of more than 3,000 square kilometres on the east and west coasts of Moresby Island, enveloping the national

park reserve. The two coasts are as different as the habitats they abut. The waters of the sheltered east coast are generally calm, relatively warm and shallow. The unprotected west coast is pounded by the unrestrained power of the Pacific Ocean. Within a few kilometres of the western shoreline, the ocean floor plummets to 2,000 metres, descending to the depths of the Queen Charlotte Fault.

The cold waters around the southern Charlottes abound with salmon, herring, halibut, rockfish, crabs, starfish, sea urchins and octopi. The intertidal area, rich and varied in habitat and species, is most spectacular at Burnaby Narrows — one of the most biologically diverse sites on the West Coast of North America.

More than 700,000 seabirds, made up of 50 species, nest in the South Moresby area. This represents one-quarter of all nesting seabirds in British Columbia. The sea mammal population of the archipelago includes thousands of migrating grey whales and 10 other species of whale — including sei, humpback, finback, minke and the orca or killer whale. Two Steller sea lion haulouts are found in the proposed national marine park reserve — one is the largest breeding colony on the West Coast of Canada.

South Moresby's marine regions are a mecca for sea kayakers and boaters, who come to view the rich marine life in a pristine coastal environment.

### What Happens Next:

When the national marine park reserve in South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas is established in 1993, it will protect the marine environment from sea-bed mining, oil and gas exploration and development. The park designation will help preserve fish stocks with the co-operation of the Canadian Parks Service, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Haida and commercial fishermen. The Canadian Coast Guard will continue to assist in providing safe marine transport in the South Moresby area and will work closely with the Canadian Parks Service on search-and-rescue missions and in responding to environmental disasters such as oil spills.

Although the marine environment of South Moresby/Gwaii Haanas is still pristine, it is threatened. Oil spills, ships' garbage and overfishing will continue to affect the rich marine ecosystems of the region.

### Life After the National Park System

For the rest of the century, national park planners will face a challenge like never before. To fulfil the Green Plan goal to complete the national parks system by the year 2000, the Canadian Parks Service will have to protect as much land in 10 years as they have in the history of Canada's national parks system. But that doesn't mean that there will be nothing left to do in the 21st century. Once examples of each of Canada's natural ecosystems have been protected, attention will likely focus on two main areas.

One will be to improve the ecological integrity of existing national parks. A variety of innovative approaches, such as agreements to mitigate the effects of land uses outside national parks that impact on park lands, can be used to do this. As well, modification of existing park boundaries to protect critical habitats and to better represent each natural region within the parks will be an important part of ensuring the long-term ecological integrity of parks.

The other task that will receive increasing attention is the completion of the national marine parks system. The system was only created in 1986. By the year 2000, at least eight of the system's 29 marine natural regions will be represented by marine parks or marine add-ons to coastal national parks.

In a rapidly shrinking world with growing population, increasing demands and competition for natural resources and global environmental crises, the challenges in creating and maintaining national parks are great. Clearly, the Canadian Parks Service will not undertake these tasks alone. Completing our national parks systems will only come about with the co-operation and partnership of other government agencies. It is a historic commitment and a significant challenge and perhaps it is a reflection of a new relationship between humans and the natural ecosystems upon which we depend. □

*Max Finkelstein works for the Canadian Parks Service in Ottawa.*

*Also see Kevin McNamee in "Overcoming Decades of Indifference" on page 55.*

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