

# BOATSWAIN BAY BIODIVERSITY RESERVE

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The proposed Boatswain Bay biodiversity reserve is located in the southeast James Bay region, 30 km north of Waskaganish. It lies within the territory of the Baie-James Municipality, to which the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement applies, and covers an area of 108.7 km<sup>2</sup>.

The area is in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands. It comprises habitats typical of the natural region of the James Bay Coastal Plain.

The protected area belongs to the James Bay and Hudson Bay watershed. Two-thirds of the land is covered by oligotrophic, minerotrophic peat bogs. The higher land, covered by mineral deposits, is home to low-density stands of black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and dry heaths.

Due to its funnel shape and the diversity of its littoral habitats, James Bay is especially favourable for flocks of migratory birds. Boatswain Bay, along with Hannah Bay and Akimiski Island, is one of the most important ornithological sites. In fact, it is a migration stop for many aquatic birds during Spring and Fall, the most abundant being the following: Lesser Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), Brant (*Branta bernicla*), American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*) and various species of scoter and duck. Shorebirds are frequently found in coastal wetlands. Between the months of August and October, more than 10 000 shorebirds stop over in Boatswain Bay, in particular the White-Rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) and the Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*). Moreover, Boatswain Bay is one of the few nesting sites in Québec for the Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*).

Considering its ornithological importance, the Canadian government has established, in 1941, a migratory bird sanctuary in the area.



Boatswain bay (1)



White-Rumped Sandpiper (2)

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The proposed biodiversity reserve is home to a threatened plant species, Macoun's Fringed Gentian (*Gentianopsis procera* subsp. *macounii* var. *macounii*), a herbaceous plant of limited distribution found in fresh and brackish water environments. The reserve is also home to Whiteberry (*Elaeagnus commutata*), a shrub likely to be designated as a threatened or vulnerable species.

### Conservation Objectives

Biodiversity reserve status would allow the pursuit of the following conservation objectives:

- the conservation of a natural environment representative of the regional ecological conditions;
- the protection of migratory bird habitats;
- the preservation of biodiversity in aquatic and peat-based ecosystems;
- the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural heritage.

The objectives implementation and site management will be based upon a partnership between the ministère de l'Environnement and the local stakeholders.

### Activity Regulation

From now on, the territory of Boatswain Bay biodiversity reserve is excluded from all forms of forestry operations, mining exploration and operations as well as energy production.

The practices and rights in effect regarding fishing, hunting and trapping are maintained, as well as the regulation pertaining to migratory bird sanctuaries.

### Next Events...

According to the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, adopted by the Government in December of 2002, public hearings on the proposed biodiversity reserves shall be held to allow the population, organizations and enterprises to comment on the conservation plan to be adopted, and that, before the final deposit of the conservation plan. These hearings shall be held in compliance with the provisions of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement.



Boatswain bay (3)



Snow Goose (4)



Macoun's Fringed Gentian (5)



Canada Goose (4)

Photos :

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