

Marsh

# Boreal Wetlands

- \* 85 per cent of Canada's wetlands are located in the boreal forest.
- \* Canada's boreal forest is water dominated. More than two-thirds is covered by wetlands.

## What are Boreal Wetlands?

- \* Seasonally or permanently water-saturated or flooded areas
- \* Plants and trees adapted to wet conditions
- \* Areas can be covered with trees, shrubs, grass, sedge or moss
- \* Highly connected moving water and nutrients over long distances, making them vulnerable to development that blocks their natural flow

***"Land that is saturated with water long enough to promote wetland or aquatic processes as indicated by poorly drained soils, hydrophytic vegetation and various kinds of biological activity which are adapted to a wet environment."***

*(official definition: Canadian Wetland Classification System)*

## Types of Boreal Wetlands

### *Organic wetlands (bogs, fens)*

- \* Deep organic deposits (>40cm) slowly build up due to limited amounts of oxygen
- \* Referred to as *peatlands* and are sometimes called *muskeg*
- \* Vegetation: open (no woody vegetation), shrubby or treed (stunted trees)
- \* Most common wetlands in Canada's boreal forest

### *Mineral wetlands (swamps, marshes, open water)*

- \* Shallow organic deposits (<40cm)
- \* Contain nutrient-rich soils and water
- \* Vegetation: ranges from open water to trees



Fen



Bog



Swamp



Open Water



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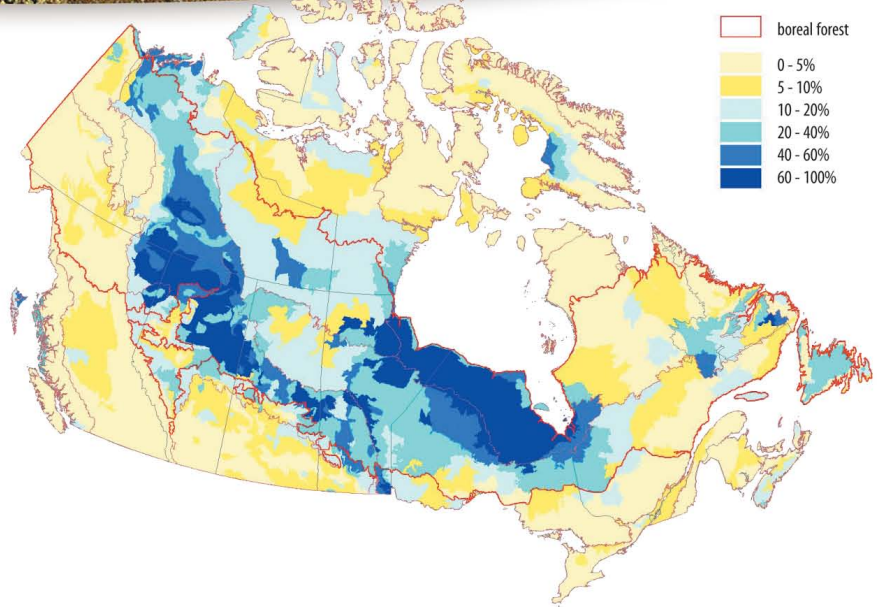
## BOREAL WETLANDS

### Water Movement

- \* Organic and mineral wetlands are often interconnected
- \* Water flow fluctuates
- \* Water may flow laterally across the landscape, at or below the surface
- \* Water tables may rise and fall seasonally or after precipitation
- \* Infrastructure such as roads may block the movement of water, causing water to dam and potential damage

### Environmental & Social Benefits

- \* Vital habitat to thousands of species of Canadian wildlife, such as ducks, songbirds, beaver and the endangered woodland caribou
- \* Store large amounts of carbon and help moderate climate change
- \* Minimize soil erosion
- \* Filter, store and transport large amounts of water and nutrients
- \* Act like sponges
  - \* Absorb precipitation and run-off to help prevent flooding
  - \* Release water during droughts
- \* Important locations for hunting, fishing and other cultural activities
- \* Offer tremendous learning opportunities for people of all ages



Lesser Scaup



Moose



Fishing



### Resources

- \* Ducks Unlimited Canada in the Boreal Forest – [borealforest.ca](http://borealforest.ca)
- \* Ducks Unlimited Canada Natural Values Fact Sheet Series – [ducks.ca/learn-about-wetlands/what-wetland](http://ducks.ca/learn-about-wetlands/what-wetland)
- \* North American Wetlands Conservation Council: WetlandNetwork – [wetlandnetwork.ca](http://wetlandnetwork.ca)



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