

## Protected Areas

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Canada is a diverse land of exceptional natural beauty and richness. Protected areas are composed of land, freshwater and marine areas set aside through legislation to protect ecosystem components and functions. Other protected areas provide refuge to endangered species of plants and animals. They also serve as natural gauges against which human land uses and changes to ecosystems can be measured. In addition to conserving land and sea for future generations, protected areas also play an important role in the social and economic development of the country.

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### Why are protected areas important?

Protected areas are an important tool for the conservation of nature. They provide economic benefits to nearby communities and to Canada as a whole, they act as places of education, and they promote recreation and the health and well-being of the population. Examples of the benefits of protected areas are outlined below.

### Conservation of Nature

Protected areas conserve habitats for wildlife, including endangered species. They help in maintaining ecological integrity and serve as benchmarks against which to measure and assess ecological changes. Other protected areas safeguard unique features, such as fossil beds, seamounts, native petroglyphs, rare plants and animals, and areas of outstanding beauty. They provide migration corridors, helping species adapt to a changing environment.

### Economy

Protected areas are important to the economy. Tourism activity generated in and around parks is an important source of revenue for nearby communities. Protected areas also help ensure productive forests and oceans, act as a genetic resource base for many pharmaceuticals and provide important pest and disease control, to name

but a few of their economic benefits. Conserving game species and fish habitats for hunting and commercial and recreational fishing is another example of the economic values of protected areas.

## **Recreation, Education and Well-being of the Population**

Recreational opportunities in protected areas include hiking, skiing, swimming and canoeing, which help to improve the physical fitness of the population. Protected areas also preserve clean air and water for the health and well-being of people. Interpretive programs in parks teach visitors about nature and history of the environment and provide valuable experiential learning opportunities for children and students.

This protected areas module consists of two maps. The first one describes the history of protected area establishment in Canada and highlights significant facts about select protected areas. The second map identifies the various government jurisdictions that administer Canada's protected areas.

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## **Definitions of underlined terms**

**Ecosystem** : 1) A functional system which includes the organisms of a natural community together with their environment; ecosystems can be viewed as encompassing large and small areas.  
2) An integrated and stable association of living and non-living resources functioning within a defined physical location. The term may be applied to a unit as large as the entire ecosphere. More often, it is applied to some smaller division. (Source: Government of Canada Climate Change Site, Glossary of Climate Change Terms)

**Habitat**: The place or type of site where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows.

**Petroglyphs**: Design, motif or pattern engraved on stone. A petroglyph can result from an incision or a setting-out.

**Seamounts**: A submerged and isolated elevation on the deep-sea floor, representing volcanic eruption. A seamount is an elevation of the sea floor, either flat topped (called guyot) or peaked (called seapeak). Seamounts stand over 500 fathoms (some 1000 m) above the surrounding sea floor. Their slopes are comparatively steep and they display relatively small circular or elliptic summit areas. Their summits lie in depths of between 200 m and 2500 m, though the majority of them lie between 1000 and 2000 m.