

Special Places

Parks and protected areas in northern Canada are managed by the federal and the territorial governments. The federal government has several protected areas programs, the best known being the national park system managed by the Parks Canada Agency. Environment Canada, through its Canadian Wildlife Service, administers Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and National Wildlife Areas. The Government of Nunavut also has programs to protect areas of importance for natural and cultural resources and for recreation or tourism.

In order to establish new national parks, territorial parks and conservation areas in Nunavut, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (1993) requires that Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements (IIBAs) be negotiated prior to their creation. The Governments of Canada and Nunavut have had an agreement for three new national parks in 1999. The Nunavut Government is also negotiating IIBAs for its territorial parks and conservation areas that existed at the time the 1993 Agreement was ratified.

Note that some wildlife sanctuaries fall under territorial jurisdiction. The Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary is worth mentioning since it is the largest and most remote wildlife refuge on the North American continent, covering over 55 000 square kilometres. Established in 1927, it straddles the Nunavut and Northwest Territories border. This wildlife sanctuary contains a high diversity of vegetation and wildlife including calving grounds for the Beverly Caribou. As well, the Sanctuary is home to moose and muskox, barren-ground grizzly, and over 80 bird species. The Sanctuary also protects a long history of human occupation - evidenced by archaeological sites dating back as far as 6000 BC.

The five maps included in this subtopic show the federally legislated protected areas found in Nunavut. These maps are National Parks, National Historic Sites, National Wildlife Areas, Migratory Bird Sanctuaries, and Heritage Rivers.