

**CANADA 12: QUEEN MAUD GULF MIGRATORY BIRD
SANCTUARY,
NUNAVUT TERRITORY**

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Effective Date of Information: The information provided is taken from the List of Canadian Wetlands Designated as of International Importance, May 1982 updated by the Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairie and Northern Region in October 2001.

Reference: 12th Ramsar site designated in Canada.

Name and Address of Compiler: Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Suite 301, 5204 50th Avenue, Yellowknife, N.W.T., X1A 1E2.

Date of Ramsar Designation: 24 May 1982.

Geographical Coordinates: 67°00'N., 102°00'W.

General Location: Situated on the south coast of Queen Maud Gulf, Nunavut Territory.

Area: 6 278 200 ha.

Wetland Type (Ramsar Classification System): Marine and coastal wetlands: Type A - marine waters; Type D - rocky marine shores; Type F - estuarine waters; Type G - intertidal mud, sand, and salt flats; Type H - intertidal marshes. Inland wetlands: Type M - permanent rivers and streams; Type L - inland deltas; Type O - permanent freshwater lakes; Type Sp - permanent freshwater ponds, marshes, and swamps; Type U - peatlands.

Altitude: Range is from sea level to 100 m.

Overview (Principal Characteristics): This is the world's second largest Ramsar site (as of October 2001).

Physical Features (Geology, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Soils, Water, Climate): A mixture of coastal marine deposits with rocky outcrops dominate the landscape.

Ecological Features (Habitats, Vegetation): The Sanctuary contains a wide range of wetland habitats including permanent shallow waters in open sea and bays, intertidal zones, tidal estuaries, deltas, lowland rivers and fresh oligotrophic lakes. The vegetation is marsh tundra and consists of well vegetated hummocky tussocks, many of which flood during the spring. Mosses *Aulacomnium turigidum*, *Drepanocladus revolvens*, *Meesea triataria* and *Tetraplodon urceolatus* occur on the wet ground between hummocks. The hummocks support cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum* and sedge *Carex chordorrhiza*. Emergent species include sedge *Carex stans* and mare's tail *Hippuris vulgaris*. Land cover mapping (ground truthing of satellite images) was completed for the entire sanctuary in the late 1990s.

Land Tenure:

(a) Site: Most of the sanctuary is federal Crown Land. Title to small portions is held in fee simple by the Inuit of Nunavut under the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement*. These include sites near the Inglis and Murchison rivers.

(b) Surrounding Area: A mix of federal Crown land and Inuit-owned land.

Conservation Measures Taken: Established as a sanctuary in 1961 and protected under the Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations which stem from the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* of 1917. Under Article 9 of the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement*, the sanctuary remains subject to the regulations of the *Act*.

Conservation Measures Proposed: The boundaries of the sanctuary are under review and may change.

Current Land Use/Activities in:

(a) Site: The area is subject to co-management agreements under the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement*. Hunting, trapping and fishing by the local Inuit of the communities of Cambridge Bay, Umingmaktok and Bathurst Inlet continue on this land. A habitat survey of the sanctuary was recently completed. There are regular surveys of Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* and Ross' Goose *Chen rossii* populations. A long-term research site was established at Karrak Lake in the early 1990s. Land use permits are issued by the Canadian Wildlife Service under the Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations and by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada under the Territorial Land Use Regulations for the area. Screening of projects under the Nunavut Impact Review Board is undertaken with certificates issued by the Nunavut Planning Commission. Permission is required to gain access to Inuit-owned land.

(b) Surrounding Area: Territorial Land Use Regulations apply to federal Crown land. Hunting, fishing and trapping by local Inuit continue.

Threats to Integrity of:

(a) Site: The sanctuary borders a proposed shipping route for a lead/zinc mine in Coronation Gulf. Development of the mine and a port site are currently not proceeding due to the depressed world market for base metals.

(b) Surrounding Area: None at present.

Hydrological/Physical Values:

Social/Cultural Values: Inuit hunters from Cambridge Bay travel to the northern, coastal parts of the Sanctuary by boat during the open water season.

Noteworthy Fauna: Some 46 species of bird and six species of mammal have been recorded in the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is one of the few nesting areas with both the Atlantic and Pacific Brant *Brant bernicla brota* and *Brant bernicla nigricans*. Almost the entire population of Ross' Goose *Chen rossii* nest here. Its population has increased ten-fold in 35 years to at least 125 000 in 1981. Lesser Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* has recently moved westward into the area, with over 500 000 nesting geese in the late 1990s. There are at least

two nesting groups of Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*, known as the tall grass prairie and short grass prairie populations. The latter is further west than the former at all times of the year.

Noteworthy Flora:

Current Scientific Research and Facilities: The numbers and distribution of waterfowl are recorded annually as part of a long-term research study based at Karrak Lake. Research has included a study of the breeding biology of Ross' Goose and King Eiders.

Current Conservation Education:

Current Recreation and Tourism:

Management Authority:

Canadian Wildlife Service
Environmental Conservation Branch
Environment Canada
P.O. Box 1714
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Jurisdiction: Federal - Environment Canada; Private - Nunavut Inuit.

Selected Bibliography:

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- Kerbes, R.H. 1975. The nesting population of Lesser Snow Geese in the eastern Canadian Arctic: a photographic inventory of June 1973. Report Series, No. 35. Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. 47 p.
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- Ryder, J.P. 1967. The breeding biology of Ross' Goose in the Perry River region, Northwest Territories. Report Series, No. 3. Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. 56 p.
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Reasons for Ramsar Designation: The Sanctuary contains the largest variety of geese of any nesting area in North America. The Sanctuary is one of the few nesting areas for both the Atlantic and Pacific Brant *Brant bernicla brota* and *Brant bernicla nigricans*. Almost the entire population of Ross' Goose *Chen rossii* nest here.

Status of Management Plan: As part of the *Nunavut Land Claim Agreement*, a management plan for this area is required within five years of the declaration of the new Nunavut Territory in 1999.