

**CANADA 24: OAK HAMMOCK MARSH  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, MANITOBA**

***Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands***

**Effective Date of Information:** The information provided is taken from text supplied at the time of designation to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, May 1987 and updated by the Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairie and Northern Region in October 2001.

**Reference:** 24th Ramsar site designated in Canada.

**Name and Address of Compiler:** Environmental Conservation Branch, Environment Canada, Twin Atria Bldg., Room 200, 4999 - 98th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 2X3.

**Date of Ramsar Designation:** 27 May 1987.

**Geographical Coordinates:** 50°10'N., 97°06'W.

**General Location:** Situated 32 km north of Winnipeg and just east of Stonewall, Manitoba.

**Area:** 3 600 ha

**Wetland Type (Ramsar Classification System):** *Inland wetlands:* Type Sp - permanent freshwater ponds, marshes and swamps. *Man-made wetlands:* Type 6 - impoundments.

**Altitude:**

**Overview (Principal Characteristics):** The site comprises 1 400 ha of marsh and 2 200 ha of upland. The marsh is a remnant of a 47 000 ha marsh located in the former Prairie north of Winnipeg. Drainage for agricultural purposes of this larger marsh known as St. Andrews Bog began in 1897. By the early 1960s, all but 250 ha had been drained. Measures to restore a portion of the bog began in 1967 when the Governments of Manitoba and Canada embarked on a cooperative program with Ducks Unlimited Canada and wildlife conservation organizations. By 1974, 3 450 ha of marshland and marginal agricultural land had been purchased and 22 km of dykes built to trap and hold water in three separate compartments. In addition, 58 nesting islands were constructed within the three compartments. In 1984, Manitoba signed a development agreement with Ducks Unlimited Canada to construct additional dykes, creating a fourth cell, control structures, nesting islands and water supply works.

**Physical Features (Geology, Geomorphology, Hydrology, Soils, Water, Climate):**

**Ecological Features (Habitats, Vegetation):**

**Land Tenure:**

(a) **Site:** The site is owned by the Government of Manitoba.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** Private land.

**Conservation Measures Taken:** The site is protected under provincial legislation as a wildlife management area.

**Conservation Measures Proposed:** None currently.

**Current Land Use/Activities in:**

(a) **Site:** The wetland is divided into four impoundments with water control capabilities built into each major cell. Individual impoundments can be drawn down or reflooded to required levels in order to effect management objectives. The primary management objectives are to increase populations of waterfowl and other wetland wildlife through the provision of quality breeding habitat and to provide an outdoor educational experience for Manitoba residents. Uplands are managed as lure crops to control waterfowl depredation and as upland nesting cover for dabbling ducks and other ground nesting birds. Tallgrass Prairie remnants are maintained as part of the upland component.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** Agricultural crop production and grazing dominate surrounding properties.

**Threats to Integrity of:**

(a) **Site:** Urban encroachment, industrial development and over-use of the artesian water source are all potential threats to the viability of the wetlands.

(b) **Surrounding Area:** As above.

**Hydrological/Physical Values:**

**Social/Cultural Values:**

**Noteworthy Fauna:** Over 260 species of migratory birds have been recorded, with 71 confirmed and 46 suspected as breeding in the area. Waterfowl are the most numerous visitors. Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and Lesser Snow Geese *Chen caerulescens* stage at Oak Hammock in large numbers. In certain years, Canada Geese have numbered over 115 000 and Snow Geese over 200 000. Staging geese numbers usually peak in October. Eighteen species of duck are common migrants to Oak Hammock. Of these, nine have been found nesting in the area. Dabbling ducks *Anas* sp. utilize the uplands and nesting islands. Diving ducks *Aythya* sp. have been found in the emergent cover of the impoundments. Spring concentrations of migrating shorebirds have reached 30 000.

**Noteworthy Flora:**

**Current Scientific Research and Facilities:** The relationship between waterfowl production and habitat quality has been a major area of study. National facilities for the International Wetlands and Waterfowl Research Institute are located at the Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre on site.

**Current Conservation Education:** The site has had a wildlife interpretation facility for many years constructed along the western edge of the marsh. In May 1993, Ducks Unlimited Canada in cooperation with the Government of Manitoba opened the Oak

Hammock Marsh Interpretative Centre which provides expanded facilities for public education, displays and interpretive programs.

**Current Recreation and Tourism:** The Wildlife Management Area attracts thousands of visitors every year. The opening of the Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre is seen as a major regional ecotourism asset. The site has public trails, interpretative signage, a viewing tower, boardwalk, and picnic facilities.

**Management Authority:**

Wildlife Branch  
Manitoba Conservation  
P.O. Box 24  
200 Saulteaux Crescent  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3J 3W3

**Jurisdiction:** Provincial - Manitoba Department of Natural Resources.

**Selected Bibliography:**

**Reasons for Ramsar Designation:** The area is an important breeding and staging area for waterfowl and large numbers of other migratory birds.

**Status of Management Plan:** A specific management plan has not been developed. The Wildlife Management Area has an on-site marsh manager. Site management is undertaken in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre. The document *Interpretative Plan for Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretative Centre and Wildlife Management Area* was released in August 1991 to guide public education initiatives for this Ramsar site.