ECOLOGICAL REGIONS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

SOmERn ARCTIC

Tundra Plains
Low Arctic north (LAn) Ecoregion

The Tundra Plains LAn ecoregion is cold and dry. It is a landscape of coastal plains with wetter shads and wade-tundra to the west and dry-rolling uplands and falls to the east. It is home to one of the highest concentrations of penguins on the planet. Permafrost is continuous, ice-wedge polygons, frost-shattered bedrock, low- and high-center polygons and non-woven soils provide abundant evidence of its influence. Most of the area was glaciated, but the highest elevation areas in the Makkovik Hills and the northeastern part of the Tuktu Laiméa. Peninsula and Cape Bathurst were covered by ice during the most recent Ice Age. Several major rivers (the Horton, Hornaday, Bricol) flow to the Beaufort Sea from the Makkovik Hills. Lakes and ponds are common on the western plains.

Tundra Shield
Low Arctic south (LAS) Ecoregion

The Tundra Shield LAS Ecoregion is influenced by a continental Arctic climate and is somewhat warmer and moister than the Tundra Plains. All of this ecoregion was covered by the last Laurentide ice sheet, which left behind impressive glacial features and highly polished bedrock. It is a complex of exposed rocks, coastal plains covered by frost action cracks, and with thousands of lakes. Subtundra is the main vegetation cover, with litter tundra dominating wet till deposits in the southeast. The ecoregion is part of three major drainages: the Arctic, including rivers that drain to the Arctic Ocean; the Mackenzie, including rivers that drain to the Mackenzie River; and the Hudson Bay, including rivers that drain to Hudson Bay.

Lakes and ponds are common on the west coast and sections of the Beaufort Sea. Lakes and ponds are common on the western plains.