

# PEI's Natural Environments



## Wetland

Wetlands in PEI, including bogs, marshes, and swamps, are crucial habitats for uncommon species like the northern pitcher plant and red-winged blackbirds. They support migrating waterfowl, such as Mallard ducks and Canada Geese. Wetlands filter runoff, protecting streams from silt and chemicals, and safeguard coastlines from storm surges. Additionally, they store carbon through peat formation from sphagnum peat moss.



## Forest

Forests in PEI belong to the Acadian-Wabanaki region, featuring tree species like balsam fir, red maple, and white spruce, as well as less common ones like eastern hemlock and white ash. These forests support diverse wildlife, including the endangered little brown bat and common species like red foxes and snowshoe hares. Whenever settlers arrived, PEI was 98% forested, but since then nearly 90% has been converted to farmland. While forest cover has increased, less than 1% is considered old growth, with almost three-quarters of the forest being under 60 years old (2020).



## Coastal

PEI features diverse coastal habitats, including dunes, cliffs, and beaches. Sand dunes, stabilized by marram grass, protect inland areas and support various species but can be eroded by human activity and storms. The red sandstone cliffs and clay banks host threatened bank swallows, while sandy beaches are home to endangered piping plovers and provide food for many shorebirds.



## Freshwater

Freshwater habitats in PEI, including streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes, support various fish species like brook trout, stickleback, and Atlantic salmon. Fish thrive in well-flowing waters with rocky bottoms and temperatures between 11-18°C. Freshwater ecosystems also host beavers, muskrats, river otters, and invertebrates, such as mayfly larvae, which indicate water quality. Invertebrates serve as crucial food sources for fish, which, in turn, support larger predators like otters.



## Saltwater

PEI, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, hosts diverse marine life, including crustaceans (Atlantic rock crab, American lobster), molluscs (blue mussels, American oysters), and fish (striped bass, Atlantic halibut). Less common species, such as seals, sharks, and whales, can also be found in its waters. Many of our fish species including Atlantic salmon and brook trout, spend part of their lives in the ocean and use freshwater streams and rivers for breeding.