



Northwest Territories' Boreal Forest:

- is approximately 950,000 km² (235 million acres) in size – more than three times the size of the United Kingdom.¹
- comprises 17% of Canada's Boreal Forest.
- is home to more than 25 aboriginal communities.²
- is home to the [Gyr Falcon](#), the Northwest Territories' official bird, and the Tamarack (Larch), the official tree.
- stores 40 billion tonnes of carbon in its soils, peat and forests – equivalent to around 200 years' worth of Canada's GHG emissions in CO₂ equivalent at 2014 levels.³
- contains the Mackenzie River Basin, which comprises 20% of Canada's landmass and is the 2nd-largest primary watershed in North America. It includes the Mackenzie River, Canada's longest river and the fifth-longest in the world, and is home to several of Canada's largest lakes including Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake (7th-largest in the world). The Mackenzie River supports large-scale anadromous fish migrations, including those of Arctic cisco that travel from the Mackenzie Delta at the Arctic Ocean several thousand kilometers upriver to the Liard River.⁴
- is the breeding ground for 150 to 500 million birds of more than 200 bird species, including [White-winged Scoter](#), [Whooping Crane](#), [Short-billed Dowitcher](#), [Blackpoll Warbler](#) and [Rusty Blackbird](#).
- supports over 6,000, or 17%, of Canada's threatened boreal Woodland caribou and 100,000 Barren ground caribou, as well as large populations of wolves, bear and other wildlife.^{5,6}
- features 834,000 km² (206 million acres) of intact forest, peatland and wetland habitat free from industrial development, making up 87% of the province's boreal region.⁷

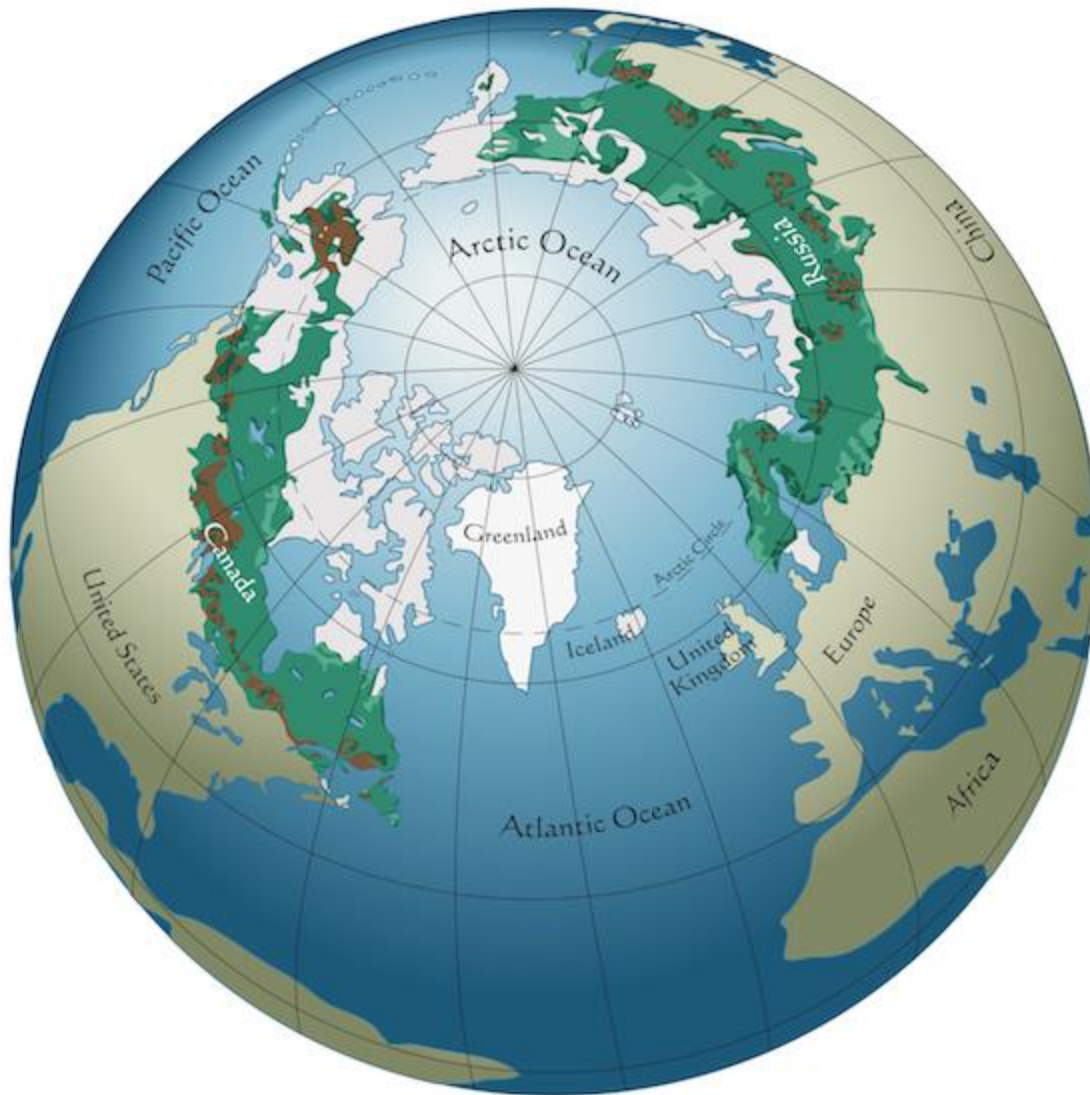
30 fascinating facts about the boreal forest



Welcome to almost 30 percent of the world's forest cover.

The boreal forest is the world's largest land-based biome. Spreading over continents and covering many countries, the boreal plays a significant role in the planet's biodiversity and even its climate. Here are 30 facts you want to know about this incredible space.

1. The boreal forest is **named after Boreas**, the Greek god of the North wind.
2. The biome is known as boreal in Canada, but is **also known as taiga**, a Russian word. Taiga is most commonly used to refer to the biome's more barren northern locations while boreal is used for the more temperate, southern area (we're just using boreal for ease).



3. The **boreal covers** most of inland Canada and Alaska, most of Sweden, Finland and inland Norway, much of Russia, and the northern parts of Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Japan.

4. The boreal represents **29% of the world's forest cover**.

5. While typically low on biodiversity, the boreal around the globe supports a range of animals. Canada's boreal forest is home to **85** species of mammals, **130** species of fish, some **32,000** species of insects, and **300** species of birds.

6. Of the 300 bird species that call Canada's boreal forest home during the summer, **only 30 stay through the winter**.



7. The boreal is COLD. The lowest recorded temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere were recorded in the boreal (or taiga) of northeastern Russia. It can easily get **as cold as -65°F** in the northern areas during winter.
8. The zone of latitude occupied by the boreal forest has seen some of the **most dramatic temperature increases**, especially in winter and especially during the last quarter of the 20th century.
9. The warming trend **threatens to transform the boreal forest** area into grassland, parkland or temperate forest, introducing a significant shift in species of both plants and animals.
10. The boreal forest **stores enormous quantities of carbon**, possibly more than the temperate and tropical forests combined, much of it in peatland.
11. To date, only **12% of boreal forest is protected** around the globe -- and over 30% has already been designated for logging, energy and other development.
12. The Canadian boreal **emerged with the end of the last Ice Age** about 10,000 years ago, with coniferous tree species migrating north. The forest as we know it today in terms of biodiversity took shape about 5,000 years ago -- a very short time ago in geological time scale.

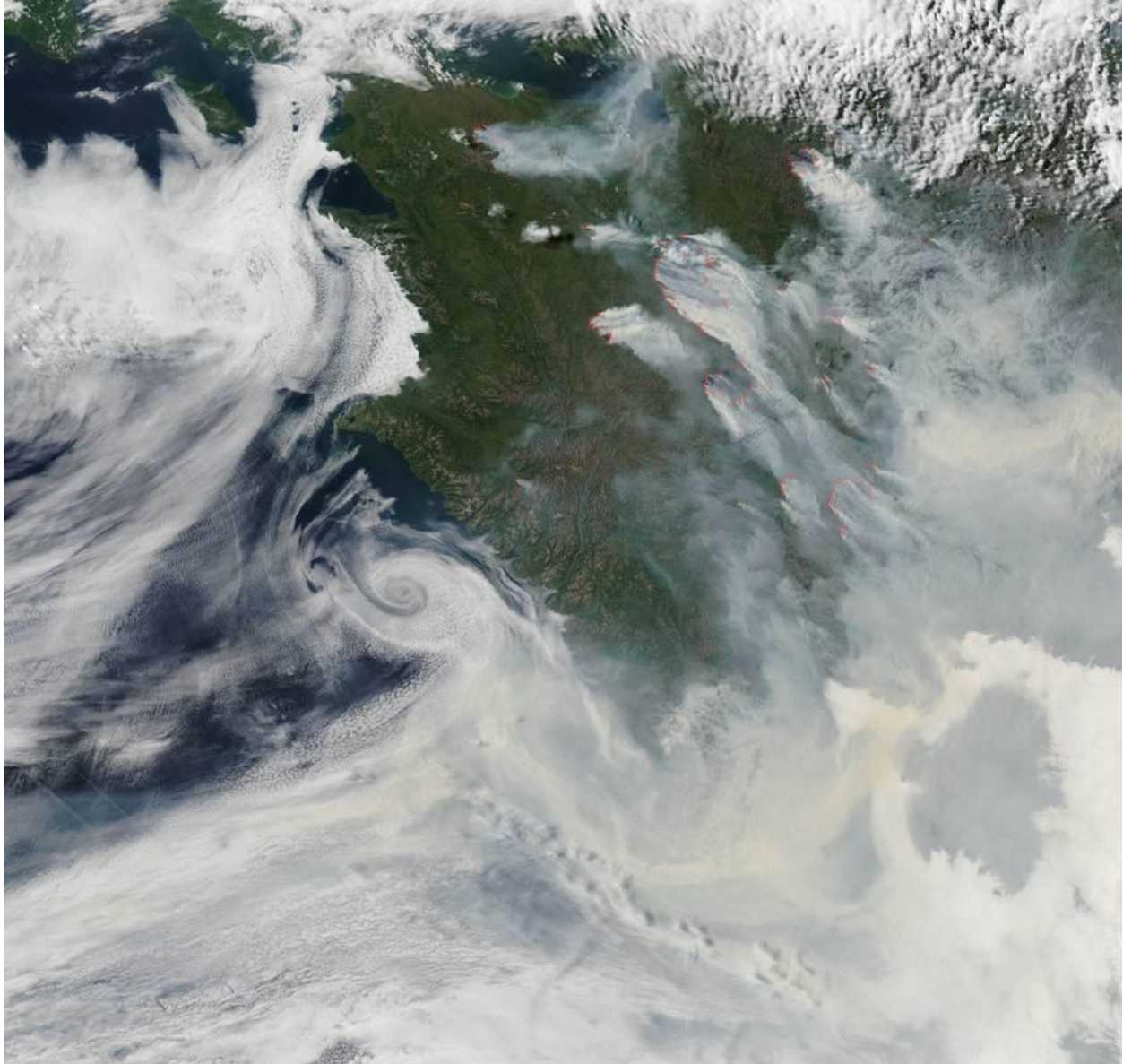


13. **Threatened and endangered wildlife** within the Canadian boreal forest includes such iconic species as the woodland caribou, grizzly bear, and wolverine. Habitat loss from logging is a primary reason for the decline of these species.

14. Many animal and plant **species inhabit both Asia's and North America's boreal forest**, thanks to the Bering land bridge that once connected the two continents.

15. While some of the iconic animals living in boreal forests are very familiar, including wolves, bears, Arctic fox and muskox, it might be surprising to remember that the **Siberian Tiger** also calls the Taiga home.

16. The **great gray owl**, North America's largest owl, is a year-round resident of Canada's boreal. What would a cold, coniferous forest be without a big, grey owl?



Fires in Eastern Siberia (NASA Goddard Space Flight Center/Flickr)/Public Domain

17. **Wildfires** are an important part of the reproductive cycle for some species. Depending on the area, large fires occur in a cycle repeating anywhere from 70 to 200 years.

18. The trees of the boreal forest tend to have **shallow roots**, due to the thin soils.

19. The **soils** of the boreal forest are often acidic, due to falling pine needles, and low on nutrients since the cold temperatures do not allow much foliage to rot and turn into dirt.

20. There is **little rainfall** in the boreal biome. Precipitation comes in the form of fog and snow, with a little rain during the summer months.



21. Outbreaks **forest-destroying plagues** have come in the form of spruce-bark beetles, aspen-leaf miners, larch sawflies, spruce budworms, and spruce coneworms -- all of which have been worsening in recent years due in large part to the warming of the average temperature.
22. There are **two major types of boreal forest** -- the closed canopy forest in the South which has the longest, warmest growing season of the biome, and the high boreal forest with farther-spaced trees and lichen groundcover.
23. **Logging** has played its role on the boreal forest, with large swaths of Siberia's taiga harvested for lumber after the fall of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile in Canada, logging companies are under constraints, yet many still practice clearcutting, a strategy that in some cases is harsh on the forest ecosystem.
24. Most companies harvesting timber in Canada are **certified by third parties**, such as the Forest Stewardship Council or Sustainable Forestry Initiative. You will often see "FSC" or "SFI" certified on products made from sustainably harvested wood.
25. In 2010, [an historic agreement](#) among 20 major timber companies and 9 environmental groups brought about a plan to **protect 170 million acres of boreal forest** in Canada. It was named the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement.

26. Canada still has **91% of the forest cover** that existed at the beginning of European settlement. Conversely, only 5% of the boreal in Scandinavia remains.

27. The **largest area of wetlands** in any ecosystem of the world is found in the Canadian boreal region, containing more lakes and rivers than any similarly sized landmass on earth!



28. The word "boreal" might be most familiar because of the phenomenon **aurora borealis**, or Northern Lights, which is a natural light display seen in high latitudes.

29. The aurora borealis was **named after the Roman goddess** of dawn, Aurora, and the Greek name for the north wind, Boreas, by Pierre Gassendi in 1621. However, the Cree call this phenomenon the "Dance of the Spirits".

30. While the aurora borealis can cause changes in temperature and wind inside and near the aurora, none of these disturbances reach down to where the weather takes place and so it **does not impact any of the boreal**, or taiga, over which it occurs.