

Excerpted from greatcanadianrivers.com

Do Not Disturb: The Old Growth Forests of the Main

Although the oldest trees in the Main River watershed are no more than 260 years old, the Main's woodlands are sometimes referred to as an ancient forest. The reason? The Main's boreal ecosystem has remained intact since it was established after the retreat of the glaciers thousands of years ago.



The forests of the Main have remained insulated from insects, disease, fire and wind, the natural enemies of boreal forests elsewhere in Canada. Relatively, undisturbed by the large-scale blowdowns, raging forest fires, and spruce budworm infestations that have ravaged other Newfoundland woodlands, the balsam fir and black spruce of the Main have been left to live out their natural cycles of birth, growth, death and decay.

A Close-Knit Forest Family: The lack of disturbance to the Main watershed has resulted in a highly diverse, multi-generational forest "family" rarely seen in modern environments. Balsam fir lives to 3 times their normal life span. Trees of many different sizes and diameters grow side by side, interspersed with fallen trunks and decomposing logs. Very old trees, still standing, and branches that have fallen to the forest floor are often covered with mosses and lichens. Woodland caribou are drawn to "old man's beard," a lichen that grows on the trees of the Main. Decomposing fallen logs often become "nurse logs," acting as a seed bed for young trees.

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