

# Lake St. George Caves Ecological Reserve

## Backgrounder

### Land Designation

Ecological reserves play a key role in Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative by protecting unique, rare and representative examples of plants, animals, geological features and ecosystems. They are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within Manitoba's network of protected areas.

### Landscape Description

The 130 hectare Lake St. George Caves Ecological Reserve is located 90 kilometres northwest of the Peguis First Nation to the west of Lake Winnipeg. Situated on the edge of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region in the Mid-Boreal Lowland sub-region, this site is relatively flat with boreal forest growing on limestone.



### Outstanding Features

The Lake St. George Caves Ecological Reserve consists of eight limestone caves, one of which is the largest known bat hibernaculum in the province. The caves themselves are outstanding features in Ordovician Limestone with many unique geological features including calcite crystals, geodes, goethite, "flowstone drapery" and "soda straws".

Species of bats found here include hoary bats, keen's bats and little brown bats. The largest cave within this ecological reserve provides habitat for an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 bats. Due to the concentration of bats here it is a place of ongoing research.

In 1989, the forest within the ecological reserve burnt and is now made up of regenerating Jack pine. Prior to the forest fire plant species found here included: paper birch, Jack pine, trembling aspen, Saskatoon, chokecherry, spreading dogbane, columbine, bergamot, dewberry, harebell, hazelnut and ground cherry.



The Lake St. George Caves Ecological Reserve will be maintained for the preservation and protection of several caves. Passive recreation on foot is permitted with limited access to the bat caves. Indigenous peoples are permitted to carry out their treaty and aboriginal rights within the ecological reserve. All other activities within this ecological reserve will require prior ministerial approval.

This area is categorized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a protected area under the management category Ia – a protected area managed for strict nature protection available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring. These protected lands are free from logging, mining, hydroelectric development, oil and gas development, and any other activities that could harm habitat.