

WEST BROOK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

The West Brook Ecological Reserve was established in the early '90s to protect one of the largest and few remaining red pine stands in Newfoundland. The reserve was first established as a provisional ecological reserve in 1990 and received full ecological reserve status in 1993. Located in the Central Newfoundland Forest Ecoregion, the reserve is 14 kilometers southwest of Springdale and can be accessed by a forest resource road that leaves the Trans Canada Highway just 1.5 km east of the Springdale intersection. The West Brook Ecological Reserve consists of approximately 11 km² of land, and made up of two separate sections of 2.4 km² and 8.3 km². Both of these areas are located on the rolling terrain near the headwaters of West Brook.

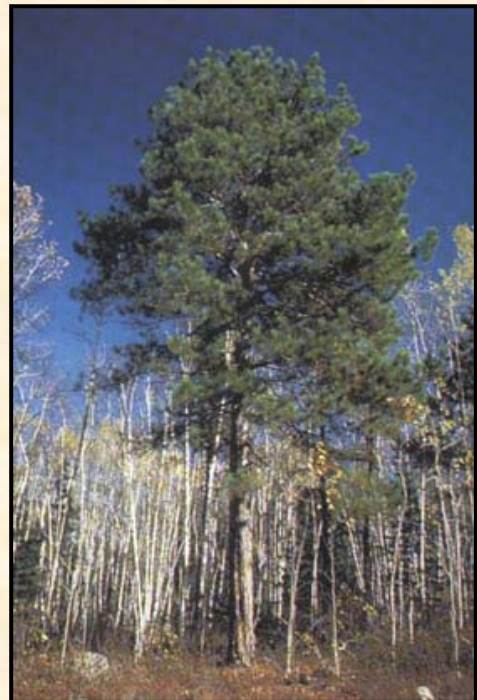


Red pine is the rarest coniferous species in Newfoundland, which is the northeastern extremity for occurrence of the species. It once covered the entire southern half of the island but now less than two dozen stands of red pine remain. Red pine began to diminish following massive forest fires in 1890, 1904, and 1906. Commercial logging also contributed to the species decline, as red pine was a good species for railway ties and other suited construction projects. Red pine performs better than other conifers on nutrient-poor, dry sites; however, natural regeneration of red pine in Newfoundland is poor because the thick layer of organic matter under the trees inhibits seed germination and growth. As well, the introduced red squirrel eats red pine seeds, allowing black spruce to take over these areas. This tree species is now in danger of being lost to Newfoundland due to sensitivity to environmental changes, slow regeneration rates, and being in its northern limit.

There are several other tree species within the reserve such as black spruce, white pine, balsam fir, larch, white birch, and trembling aspen. The reserve consists of gently rolling terrain with hills up to 150-200 meters above sea level. The climate within the reserve consists of cold winters with warm summers where most of its annual precipitation falls as snow.

Although the main purpose of this reserve is scientific research, other activities such as sight-seeing, hiking, hunting and fishing are also permitted. Hunting and fishing are only permitted during the appropriate season and with possession of valid licenses. Activities such as building fires, camping, and collecting seeds, seedlings or tree cuttings are prohibited, as are all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles. You do not need an entry permit when visiting the reserve, but a 4-wheel drive vehicle is advisable for driving the access road.

Another stand of red pine can be seen near Sandy Lake in the western part of the Island. Not far as the crow flies from West Brook Ecological Reserve, the red pine at Sandy Lake are easier to find and a shorter distance off the highway.



For more information on the silvicultural characteristics of red pine, check out the following websites: <http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/forestry/ourforest/treespecies/rpine.stm>; <http://cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/subsite/mx-212/redpine>.