

Swamps

Swamps are often a transition between upland forest and other wetland types. They are normally associated with river floodplains, lakes, and ponds. Swamps are typically dominated by tall trees and shrubs, with densities greater than 60%. They can occur in either mineral or organic soil.

Identifying Characteristics

- Usually found adjacent to rivers, lakes, and ponds
- Stagnant or slow-flowing water
- Fluctuating water levels; sometimes dry for years before being flooded again
- Saturated soils are rich in nutrients and decomposed woody material
- Trees and shrubs are dominant vegetation
- Trees and shrubs are generally tall due to high nutrient content
- Ground is often hummocky with small pools of water present

Benefits and Functions

- Moderate floods by slowing water flow
- Fertile soils support a diversity of trees, shrubs, and other plants
- Snags, standing dead trees, provide homes for cavity-nesting species like goldeneye, American kestrel, and northern flicker
- Recycle nutrients from decaying plant matter
- Vegetation protects shoreline areas from erosion and sedimentation



Thicket swamp near Nisutlin River

Types of Swamps

- **Thicket swamps** are characterized by tall shrubs, like willow
- **Coniferous swamps** are dominated by white or black spruce
- **Hardwood swamps** feature balsam poplar and white birch



Willows

Willows are found in very moist soil and like to be seasonally flooded. There are many different willow species in the Yukon. They are a primary food source for moose and provide nesting habitat for a number of bird species. Traditionally, humans have harvested willows for medicine and craft-making.



Hardwood swamp complex, Peel River



Coniferous swamp, near Liard River

Yellow warbler on willow branch
— J. Jantunen



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada's Wetlands



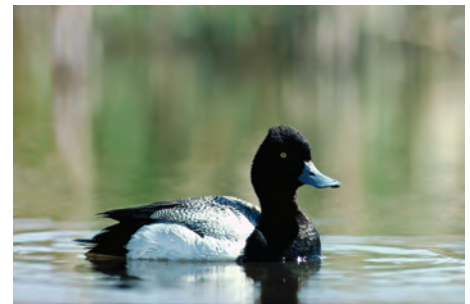
Yukon Wetlands Swamps



Swamps are bursting with bugs like mosquitoes, beetles, and caddisflies. Little Brown Bats, common to the Yukon, can't resist this bounty of food and often make their homes close to water in places like hollow logs and trees. Most feeding activity occurs within two meters of the

water's surface and bats will snatch the insects either from the air or from the water. Bats are a migratory species that arrive in the Yukon in June, some going as far north as Dawson City.

Swamps provide important riparian habitat for a variety of waterfowl and other wildlife species.



Top: Lesser scaup, male



Middle: Little brown bat
—J. Talerico

Bottom: Milbert's tortoiseshell
—J. Jantunen



moose — Yukon Government