

Bird and Biodiversity Exhibitions at Lac Saint Pierre Biosphere Reserve

Location	Lac Saint Pierre Biosphere Reserve, Sorel, Québec, Canada
Rio Tinto company	QIT Fer et Titane
Partner organisations	Corporation Soreloise du Patrimoine Regional (CSPR), Nature Canada, UQCN
Key people	Marc Mineau (CSPR); JacquesThivierge (QIT)
Habitats	Lakes, grassland, marshes and inundated plains
Birds	Waterbirds and passerine migrants
Outcomes	Wildlife exhibitions



Lac Saint Pierre is a vital stopover for migratory waterbirds, such as Northern Pintail

The Lac Saint Pierre Biosphere Reserve is a living laboratory of sustainability, balancing the needs of 85,000 people with the biodiversity of the lake system, which includes no less than four IBAs. Environmental education exhibitions were the outcome of this collaboration between QIT Fer et Titane and local conservation and nature groups.

Project background and history

The town of Sorel is situated at the gateway to Lac Saint Pierre in Quebec, one of the planet's biosphere reserves recognised under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Reserve. It is also a Ramsar site. The ecosystem can be described as mainly lacustrine systems and freshwater wetlands, harbouring several habitat types including aquatic grassbeds, marshlands, lakes, swamps, periodically flooded meadows and agricultural lands. This diversity makes Lac Saint-Pierre a unique ecosystem, important for migratory birds, especially waterbirds. As a result, the lake area includes four IBAs of international importance. Its wetlands are particularly rich, making the area a vital stop along avian migration routes, resulting in a bird list of no less than 288 species for the reserve as a whole.

About 85,000 people live in the biosphere reserve, mostly in urban areas. Their main activities are agriculture, hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation activities, tourism resorts, boating and commercial navigation, as well as trade and industry. This comparatively high population density makes the biosphere reserve an outdoor laboratory in sustainable development and sound ecological living. One of the main challenges of managing the biosphere reserve is maintaining fish stocks.

With such important biodiversity co-habiting with a large human population, environmental education is at the forefront of everyone's agenda in the Saint Pierre lake area. One of the local NGOs, the Corporation Soreloise du Patrimoine Regional (CSPR) promotes the heritage of the area through its interpretation centre (partly funded by QIT Fer et Titane). The Rio Tinto-BirdLife partnership facilitated exhibitions on avian wildlife for the centre.

Project details

Two exhibitions were created, under the supervision of CSPR's general manager Marc Mineau, by local ornithologist Anne-Marie Dulude and Benoît Limoges of UQCN, the BirdLife Partner in Québec. Both displays were held in the QIT Fer et Titane conference room at CSPR. The first exhibition, entitled *Sous les ailes de l'archipel* (Under the wings of the archipelago), aimed to raise awareness of the natural heritage of the lake region. The first exhibition consisted of bird artwork with an explanation of the biodiversity and conservation importance of the local area. Indicator bird species were highlighted to demonstrate how birds can be used to track environmental change, and virtual birdwatching tours of different habitat types revealed the diversity of habitats for wildlife in the biosphere reserve. The second exhibition focused on the four IBAs found within the biosphere reserve, showcasing the IBA concept, demonstrating its effectiveness in identifying sites and focusing resources for priority bird conservation. It also revealed the irreplaceable value of Lac Saint Pierre as a crucial migratory stop-over point for birds along the Atlantic Flyway of the Americas.

QIT has always maintained close ties with its neighbouring community, and has been actively engaged in environmental projects since the early 1990s. The wildlife exhibitions simultaneously fulfilled UQCN, Nature Canada and BirdLife International objectives of showcasing and promoting the IBA concept.