



SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HOT AND WARM SPRINGS



HOT AND WARM SPRINGS

What are hot and warm springs?

Hot or warm springs are a type of thermal spring in which geothermally heated ground water emerges to the Earth's surface. Hot and warm springs have unique ecosystems. The water temperature, air temperature, humidity and water chemistry all differ from the surrounding area, resulting in a climate that supports species or communities usually found in more southern ecosystems. Species such as calcium-tolerant plants or warm-water bacteria are uniquely adapted to these environments. Further, salty spring deposits, created by hot or warm springs, are often used by wildlife as mineral licks.



HOT AND WARM SPRINGS

Hot and warm springs in the NWT

There are many well-known examples of these unique habitats in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Hot springs in the Nahanni National Park Reserve support the Nahanni aster (*Symphotrichum nahanniense*), an endemic plant species found nowhere else in the world. Studies at Rabbitkettle Hot Springs have recorded several plant species only found in hot spring environments. The warm spring Roche-qui-trempe-à-l'eau, near Wrigley, supports a salt-tolerant plant community. In the Sahtu region, Tuitye Hot Springs provides unusual plant habitat and is heavily used as a mineral lick by wildlife. At Lymnaea Springs, a unique snail (possibly a sub-species of *Lymnaea bulmoides*) is abundant and active year round. The Godlin (Ekwi) Hot Springs are believed to have the highest dissolved mineral content of any hot spring in Canada.

How can we protect hot and warm springs?

Practice “**Leave No Trace**” principles in the backcountry.

If you think you see an unmapped hot or warm spring, take a picture of it, take its co-ordinates and send it to Environment and Natural Resources at nwtsoer@gov.nt.ca to help us develop and maintain a comprehensive database on hot and warm springs in the NWT.

To minimize impacts on hot and warm springs and associated conservation features, developers are asked to observe the following recommended best practices:

- If you are conducting land use activities, make sure you obtain current information and surveys for hot and warm springs in your area of interest. As well, identify any impacts of your proposed activities, and determine appropriate mitigation measures to minimize impacts on hot and warm springs, including the hydrological and hydrogeological processes feeding them.
- Monitor and adapt your land use activities and mitigation efforts to make sure there are minimal impacts on hot and warm springs.
- If you are conducting land use activities within the vicinity of known hot or warm springs, make sure you do a general biophysical survey, including a rare plant survey.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the Conservation Network Planning **webpage** for other information sheets, reports and most recent maps.

Email Conservation Network Planning at conservationplanning@gov.nt.ca

