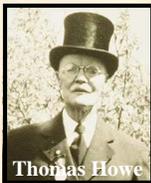


THOMAS HOWE DEMONSTRATION FOREST

Thomas Howe Demonstration Forest (THDF) is an area where people can learn about the ecosystem of the boreal forest, and the various management techniques that are used within it. The entrance is approximately 1 km east of Gander on the Trans Canada Highway. When Thomas Howe Demonstration Forest was originally formed, it encompassed 54 km² around Gander International Airport. Currently it covers a significantly smaller area comprised of trails and infrastructure, on the south side of the Trans Canada Highway.



The Canadian Forest Service initiated the idea of a demonstration forest, and convinced the governments of Newfoundland and Canada to allocate 5200 ha near the Gander airport to the cause. In 1992 the Thomas Howe Demonstration Forest was officially opened, named for the first Chief Woods Ranger in the colony of Newfoundland.

During its formation, THDF had a forester on staff and enough funds to implement forest management practices, build trails and infrastructure, and conduct research. In 2001, however, Transport Canada transferred airport ownership to Gander International Airport Authority Inc., and as a result, the area of THDF was reduced considerably to the vicinity of the trails and infrastructure. It is currently leased by the Airport Authority to the Town of Gander and run by a board of volunteers of the Thomas Howe Forest Foundation.



Set in the Northcentral Subregion of the Central Newfoundland Forest Ecoregion, THDF is a typical boreal forest with pure stands of black spruce on upland sites, stands of balsam fir, mixed stands of black spruce, balsam fir and white birch, and wetlands. Although not common, you will see scattered white pine trees, and the stumps of large white pine from years previous. Trails pass through examples of management techniques such as precommercial thinning, succession cutting, clear-cutting, strip harvesting and planting. Songbirds are common along the trails, and other wildlife such as hares and moose might be sighted.

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd. owned the rights to timber on part of the original 5200 ha. In the initial stages, a staff member represented CBPPL on the board of Thomas Howe Forest Foundation, and the company contributed funds and equipment to the organization. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd. will not harvest within the boundaries of THDF although the Foundation may, to illustrate silvicultural practices.



Thomas Howe Demonstration Forest is a great place to learn about the forest ecosystem and forest management techniques, where all forest values – water, soil, timber, wildlife, recreation, and spirituality – are taken into consideration. Three self-guiding, groomed trails intersect, enabling visitors to walk anywhere from 0.4 km to 2 km. A day-use area, THDF has picnic tables, restrooms, an information kiosk, and a platform with a panoramic view of Gander Lake. Guided tours for groups can be arranged by calling 709-256-4693. In the future, the Thomas Howe Forest Foundation plans to improve the present trail system and expand educational opportunities.

Photos provided by the Thomas Howe Forest Foundation.