

Sirmilik

National Park of Canada

Pronounced “Seer-mee-leek”

Climate

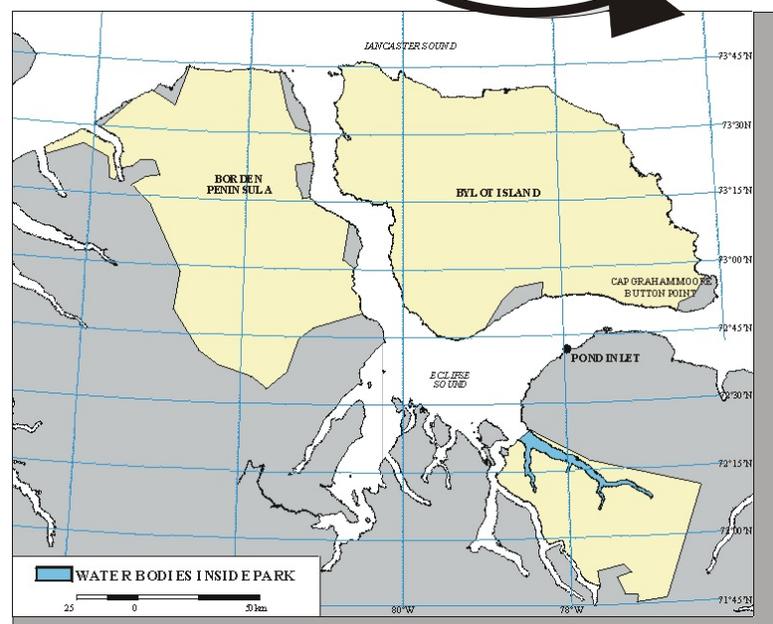
In July, the mean high temperature is 9°C and the low mean is 1°C. The average annual rainfall is 6 cm in the summer months, followed by an average annual snowfall of 10.8 cm through the fall, winter and early spring, giving a total annual precipitation of 17 cm. The January high mean is -28°C and the low mean is -35°C. Due to the mountainous terrain around Pond Inlet, high winds are not frequent. The sun is last seen above the horizon on November 11th each year. By the middle of January, the tops of Bylot Island mountains are touched with sunlight, and by the second of February, the sun peeks above the horizon. By mid-April, the nights are no longer completely dark. From mid-May to the end of July the sun does not drop behind the mountains of Bylot Island, and there are now truly 24-hour days.

Geology

The park has a spectacular area of rugged mountain, icefields and glaciers, coastal lowlands, and seabird colonies. Sirmilik has three separate areas: the mountain and upland surrounding Oliver Sound, the rugged plateau of eastern Borden Peninsula, and the mountains and lowlands of Bylot Island.

Location

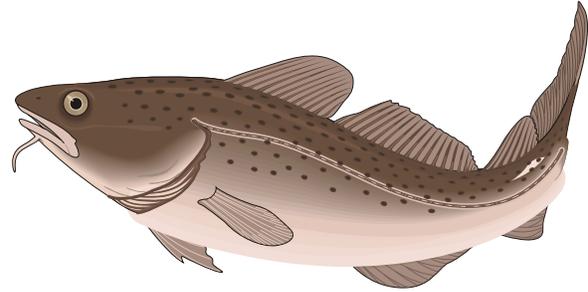
Sirmilik National Park lies adjacent to the northeastern tip of Baffin Island, where Lancaster Sound enters Baffin Bay. Pond Inlet is the closest community to the park, which is located 25 km to the south, across Eclipse Sound, and is accessible. The Arctic Circle lies 700 km to the south and Greenland 600 km to the east, across Baffin Bay. Sirmilik means “The Place of Glaciers”. Sirmilik National Park includes approximately 22 200 km². Borden Peninsula is an extensive plateau dissected by broad river valleys. The park features landforms and superb wilderness, and a major seabird colony in the vicinity of Baillarge Bay. Sirmilik is located in the Arctic Cordillera and the Northern Arctic Ecozones.



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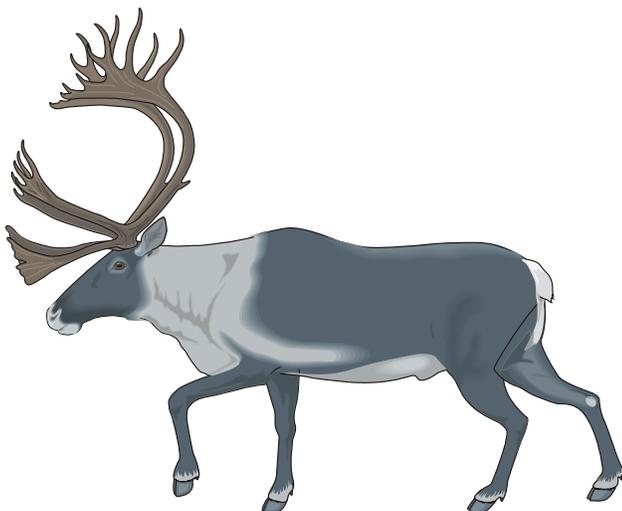
Vegetation

Vegetation is sparse, dwarfed and adapted to harsh climatic conditions. Well drained sites support a discontinuous cover of low growing herbs and shrub-sedges, saxifrages, and willows. Dryas and Arctic poppy are typical. The arctic willow is the tallest tundra plant.



Wildlife

Over 50 species of birds, 30 of which are confirmed breeders, have been recorded. In the Sirmilik National Park bird sanctuary, there are 320 000 murres, 50 000 kittiwakes and 75 000 snow geese. There are 21 species of marine and terrestrial mammals around the park area. For the land mammals, there are large numbers of caribou, wolf, arctic fox, collared lemming and arctic hare which are found in the fertile areas of the land. Lancaster Sound is a major migration route and summering area for marine mammals. Five species of seals and four species of whales, as well as walrus, are also found. Bylot Island is a major summer retreat for polar bears, up to 150 may be present on the island during the summer.



Activities

Sirmilik National Park is accessible from Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay year-round except during ice-breakup in July and freeze up in October and November. You can travel to the park by dog sledding, snowmobiling or cross-country skiing. Local outfitters from Pond Inlet or Arctic Bay can take you to the park. Sirmilik National Park has no facilities or equipment at the moment. To arrange a trip to the park, contact a licensed tour operator or outfitter who has extensive knowledge and experience in this area.

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