

Prince Albert Model Forest Association Inc.



Prince Albert Model Forest Proudly Supports New Technology That Listens to Forest Health

The partners of the Prince Albert Model Forest know a good thing when they hear it. In 1999, when they first heard about an experimental microphone with the sensitivity of human hearing, the Model Forest agreed to fund its testing. Early in its development, the Canadian Wildlife Service in Saskatoon, the Alberta Research Council and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources became involved in developing field protocols and implementation. Since then, the CZM (formerly CVX-360) omnidirectional microphone, developed by River Forks Research Corporation of Prince Albert, is being used across Canada, the United States and South America to monitor forest health through listening for birds.



With approximately 186 species of birds breeding in the western boreal forest, occupying most levels of the food web, they are an important indicator of forest health. The territorial breeding behaviour of birds makes it relatively easy to monitor dozens of species simultaneously. Highly trained avian (bird) specialists come each spring to the Prince Albert Model Forest to spend the fleeting weeks of bird breeding season, identifying calls in set locations throughout the forest. But these highly trained specialists are a rare breed. With the high-quality stereo microphone, unskilled technicians can now collect acoustic data that can later be analyzed by experts in the lab throughout the year.

These results will be compared through time, and changes in bird distribution will be mapped, providing information on bird populations as well as forest health. Birdsong recordings from the CZM microphone allow for standardized survey methods, increased sampling intensity, archival records of bird activity; survey techniques that can be replicated and reviewed by other researchers. These recordings allow for analysis of relative abundance, presence/absence and population trends of birds.

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Saskatchewan Environment, Parks Canada, forest companies and the Canadian Wildlife Service are monitoring changes in bird communities in areas where there has been a natural disturbance such as fire. These results can be compared with changes that occur following a human-caused disturbance such as logging. If the results are similar, the assumption is forest managers are doing a good job of revitalizing disturbed areas. If the results aren't similar, forest managers will be looking at how they can improve their methods to ensure healthy forests for future generations.

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- 30 -

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