
BWBSvk

58 557 ha
0.4 %
100 - 600 m

St. Elias Mtns.; Alsek Ranges

Lower Tatshenshini R. below
confluence with O'Connor R.; middle
Alsek R. below Range Cr.

Montane climate with strong
gradients; dominantly interior type
but with coastal influence. Relatively
wet (very snowy), very windy,
subject to cold air ponding, chinooks,
and outflow winds.

Melanic, Sombric, and Dystric
Brunisols

Mormoders

Act, Sw, Ep, (At)

Sw - Red swamp currant - Step moss

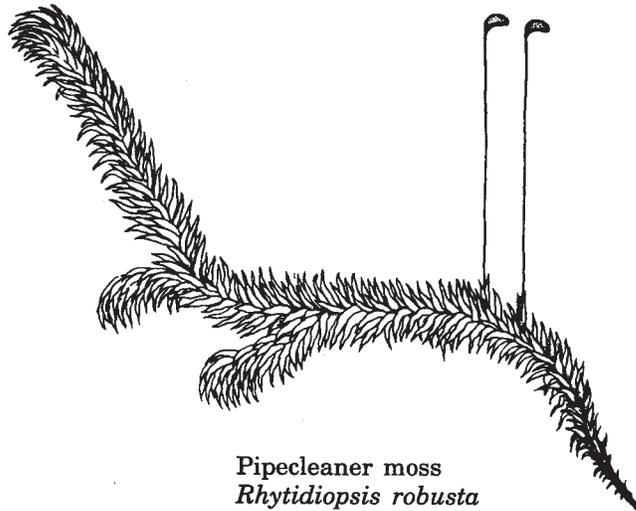
The **BWBSdk** is drier and cooler than other BWBS Subzones and has notably less precipitation during the growing season, making it less productive for tree growth and agriculture. Distinguishing species for the Subzone include soopolallie and bastard toad-flax, both of which are common on zonal sites. The **BWBSdk1** occurs within mountainous terrain and experiences many of the peculiarities of mountain climates (temperature inversions, chinook winds, local rainshadow, pronounced aspect differences). In general, it is drier and warmer in winter with less snow, and drier and slightly cooler during the growing season than the **BWBSdk2**. Climatic climax ecosystems appear to be dominantly white spruce forests. Subalpine fir is more common and black spruce is less common than in the BWBSdk2. Tamarack is virtually absent. The BWBSdk2 occupies the flat to gently rolling landscape of the Liard Plain and Dease Plateau. It has a more continental climate with colder winters (colder soils) than the BWBSdk1, but also receives more precipitation because it is out of the rainshadow of the mountains. Zonal ecosystems are usually mixed conifer and deciduous stands; black spruce communities on organic soils are abundant and most bogs have permafrost. Tamarack and leatherleaf are two typical wetland species.

The **BWBSvk** is an unusual boreal Subzone that occurs in British Columbia only in the western part (Alek Ranges) of the Tatshenshini Alek area, also known as the Haines Triangle. This far northwestern corner of British Columbia lies between the Coast Mountains to the east and the higher, wetter, more heavily glaciated Icefield and Fairweather ranges to the west. The valley of the lower Alek River provides the only low-elevation breach in the windward front of the massive St. Elias Mountains, so weather spawned in the North Pacific is funnelled up the Alek and Tatshenshini rivers. The climate of the BWBSvk appears to be a dominantly interior but transitional type, with strong gradients. It is drier than that of the coastal belt (which occurs further west in Alaska), but wetter and considerably snowier than that of the BWBSdk in the Tatshenshini Basin to the east. Heavy snowpacks and strong winds are key environmental features.

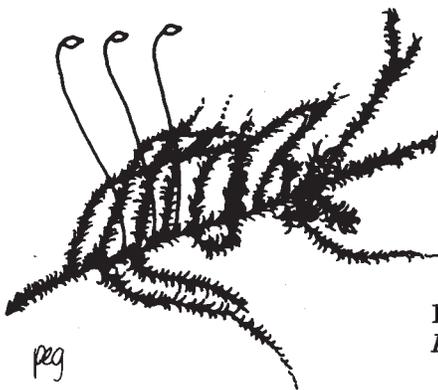
Reconnaissance-level sampling indicates that zonal forests in the BWBSvk are a mixedwood type, with white spruce, black cottonwood, and paper birch the most abundant tree species. The open stands have a well-developed understory of shrubs (willows, Sitka alder, mountain alder, soopolallie, highbush-cranberry, and red swamp currant) and herbs. Soils are Brunisols developed in loess (aeolian deposits), and, interestingly, they show no evidence of fire. Trembling aspen is uncommon, and lodgepole pine and subalpine fir are absent, as are western hemlock, Sitka spruce, and red alder. Notable is the abundance of black cottonwood. It forms extensive stands (with very minor white spruce), over an alder understory on many of the recent fluvial landforms. Very recent sandy-gravelly river deposits develop a characteristic cover dominated by yellow mountain-avens, rock mosses, and coral lichens. Newly exposed glacial till tends to be covered by shrub thickets of Sitka alder and willows rather than by trees. Wetlands are uncommon, and are mostly riparian backswamps and marshes.



Knight's plume
Ptilium crista-castrensis



Pipecleaner moss
Rhytidiopsis robusta



Lanky moss
Rhytidiadelphus loreus