

Cooking Lake- Blackfoot

Provincial Recreation Area

Summer Trails



Forget how close you are to the city!

The 97 square kilometre Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area contains forests, pastures and wetlands in glacial moraine (knob and kettle) terrain. It is a multiple use area that supports a variety of activities including agriculture, wildlife management, natural gas extraction and outdoor recreation. Summer recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. Active wildlife management programs in the area have created a wide range of habitats that support numerous wildlife species; as a result, there are excellent wildlife viewing opportunities along the area's trail systems.

Two pairs of nesting trumpeter swans now reside in the area. The trumpeter swan is the largest and rarest swan in the world. In Alberta, it is listed as a vulnerable species. If you come across the swans or their nesting sites, please do not disturb them. Trumpeter swans are a protected species in Canada and it is illegal to kill them.

Heritage Interpretive Centre



Recreational Use

- Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.
- Although Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is a “day use only” site, overnight use by organized youth groups is permitted; reservations for such use may be made by calling the recreation area office.
- Garbage receptacles are not provided along trails or in backcountry areas; please pack out all garbage.
- Open fires are permitted only in firepits and stoves provided; for cooking, portable stoves are recommended.
- Staging areas are equipped with a shelter, cistern and hand pump, and privies; potable water is not provided in the backcountry, with the exception of the large water tanks at Lost Lake, Meadow & Running Dog shelters.
- Avoid fields where cattle are grazing.
- Leave all gates as you find them.
- Do not approach, harass or attempt to feed wildlife or livestock.
- Keep your pet on a leash at all times.
- Be aware that hunting occurs in Cooking Lake-Blackfoot during regular hunting seasons; Aboriginal hunting may occur in the area year-round.
- Hunters wishing to carry or discharge a firearm in the recreation area must obtain a Firearms Discharge Permit from the recreation area office; if no one is available, please leave a phone number so that we can contact you to arrange for a permit to be issued.
- Discharging firearms is not permitted within 400 metres of staging areas (boundaries are identified by bright orange-yellow signs), or within 200 metres of backcountry shelters.
- To prevent travel problems and conflicts with other users, please respect all cautionary & trail closure signs.
- If you encounter a steel animal trap, do not remove or tamper with it; a registered trap line is used to manage problem wildlife, especially beaver (beavers breed rapidly, cause extensive damage to trails and other facilities, and are responsible for flooding nearby farms and residential lands).



Trail Information



Mountain biking

- Mountain biking is permitted on all hiking trails, roads, and Central Alleyway.
- Mountain biking is not permitted on equestrian trails.

Hiking

- There are almost 85 km of hiking trails originating from four staging areas.
- Low areas may contain water during spring runoff and wet weather.
- There are several shelters, privies and a few bus-stop shelters located along the trails.



Horseback riding

- There are more than 85 km of equestrian trails and laneways in Cooking Lake-Blackfoot; horseback riding is also permitted on most of the resource roads in the eastern half of the area; some of the trails are narrow roads across open pastures; riding is also permitted in designated pastures; signs at pasture gates indicate which pastures are available for riding (“open”/”closed”).
- Shelters, privies and a few bus-stop shelters are situated along trails.
- Equestrian trails are accessible from Waskehegan, Central and Blackfoot staging areas; these areas are equipped with loading ramps and hitching posts; there is no equestrian access from Islet Lake Staging Area.
- Equestrian trails that originate from Blackfoot Staging Area are closed to equestrian use from November 1 until March 31 so that they can be track-set for skiing.

Waskehegan Staging Area

Blackfoot (25.5 km) - this is the longest equestrian trail in the recreation area; connects Waskehegan and Blackfoot staging areas.

Cutoff (0.5 km) - connecting trail between Blackfoot and Waskehegan trails; continues into Elk Island National Park; equestrian use is not permitted north of Elk Island boundary fence.

Detour (2.1 km) - shortens Wanisan loop, following ungulate fence on the inside.

Don's Way (3.7 km) - runs along boundary fence from Spruce Hollow to Wanisan junction; used in winter for the mini-Birkie.

Flattail (0.1 km) - named for the beavers that live in the area (and sometimes drop trees along the trail).

Grouse (1.2 km) - named for one of the area's bird species.

Hare (0.8 km) - watch for snowshoe hares along this connector between Siksika and Lost Lake trails.

J.J. (0.9 km) - begins at gate in northwest corner of recreation area near Range Road 210; connects onto Blackfoot Trail.

Lakeside (1.0 km) - follows Wanisan Lake's east shore outside the ungulate fence.

Lost Lake (14.9 km) - connects Islet and Waskehegan staging areas; longest hiking trail in the recreation area.

Meadow (0.8 km) - short connector with views of grazing fields; white-tailed deer and moose are sometimes seen along this route.

Neon Lake (1.6 km) - easy trail that circles the western edge of Neon Lake.

Running Dog (3.0 km) - equestrian trail that runs along Running Dog Lake's north shore; Running Dog backcountry shelter is located on the west shore of the lake at the mid-way point of this trail.

Siksika (4.6 km) - remote trail in hilly terrain; numerous beaver ponds; moose are sometimes seen along this route.

Spruce Hollow (2.4 km) - passes through stands of spruce untouched by the forest fires that occurred in the area in the early 1900s.

Swan (0.7 km) - named for the swans that live in the area during summer months; trumpeter swans nest on Running Dog Lake near this trail.

Wanisan (4.5 km) - part of this trail runs near Wanisan Lake's east shore; the main portion of the trail is located outside the ungulate fence and is not regularly maintained.

Waskehegan (1.3 km) - connects forests north and south of grazing fields; equestrian use permitted north of junction with Central Alleyway.

Winter (South 2.4 km; North 1.3 km) - excellent wildlife viewing; south portion is for hiking and mountain biking; north portion is for equestrian use.



Central Staging Area

Beaver Loop (2.6 km) - active beaver colonies are numerous along this easy trail.

Central Alleyway (16.8 km) - this trail is the main alleyway connecting Waskehegan and Central staging areas; it is accessible from either end; mule deer are occasionally seen in the area.

Roundup (5.1 km) - this “equestrian use only” trail links trails in Central area to those in the Blackfoot sector. The northern section is shared with cycling as a connector.

Tie-In (1.1 km) - this easy route connects Beaver Loop and Roundup trails.

Wapiti (6.6 km) - passes through one of the best areas for elk viewing.



Blackfoot Staging Area

Most trails in the Blackfoot Lake sector are multi-use; signs are provided to identify use restrictions.

Buck Run (2.3 km) - good wildlife viewing along this trail, especially for white-tailed deer.

Elkhorn (1.6 km) - the large 6-point elk antler this trail is named for can be viewed at the Waskehegan Administration office.

Faraway (5.2 km) - the equestrian portion of this trail is located in the northeast corner between the Blackfoot Staging Area access road and Blackfoot Trail junction, southeast of Elkhorn Trail; horse use is not permitted west of the entrance/Blackfoot Staging Area access road.

Heron Hollow (2.1 km) - short connector across Norris Creek to Elk Island boundary; blue heron colony in vicinity.

Morningside (1.3 km) - follows former gas transmission line; provides access to loops of varying length.

Muskrat (1.1 km) - longer loops can be made using this trail and equestrian trails in the Blackfoot sector.

Norris Ridge (2.1 km) - generally follows Norris Creek to north boundary of recreation area.

Outlet (0.5 km) - provides access to ungulate fence from northeast loop of Blackfoot Trail.

Springs (2.4 km) - provides access to the southeastern boundary of Elk Island National Park and the northwest corner of the Blackfoot sector; moose are sometimes seen in this sector.

Well Site (1.0 km) - access to the ungulate fence from abandoned well site.

Whitetail (3.1 km) - watch for the blue heron colony on Blackfoot Lake; be on the lookout for white-tailed deer along this route.



Islet Lake Staging Area

Highline (2.4 km) - mainly follows ridge crests; excellent bird watching.

Middle (1.3 km) - allows several loops of varying lengths to be made in the Islet Lake area.

Moose Link (2.5 km) - Islet Lake trails can be accessed from Central Staging Area using this trail; named for unusual moose antlers found along the route (antlers are on display at the Heritage Interpretive Centre).

Porcupine (0.8 km) - named for the frequent porcupine sightings in the general vicinity.

Push Lake (1.9 km) - this hilly trail accesses the west side of Elk Push Lake; dividing ridge between Islet and Elk Push lakes; excellent bird watching.





Safety

Travel on recreation trails can be hazardous. Weather can change quickly; many of the trails are remote and are not patrolled on a regular basis; it is important that you be prepared by carrying the following in your pack or saddlebag:

- First aid kit
- Rain gear
- An extra sweater or warm jacket & socks
- Extra food
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Lighter or matches
- Pocket knife

- Whistle
- Map & compass
- Hoof pick & leather sticker (equestrian users)
- If possible, a cell phone

To obtain assistance in an emergency, use the pay phone at the Heritage Interpretive Centre to contact site staff (922-3293); use 922-3287 for area emergency pager or call 911 to reach police or other emergency help; be prepared to give a detailed description of the incident and your location.



Additional Information

Cooking Lake-Blackfoot

Provincial Recreation Area

P.O. Box 57104 Eastgate Post Office

Sherwood Park, AB T8A 5L7

Information line: 780-922-4676

Fax: 780-922-5554

Emergencies only: 780-922-3287 (pager),
or call 911

Visit the Parks & Protected Areas Web site at

www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks

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Alberta
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT