



Grasslands
National Park

EXPERIENCE GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK

VISITOR GUIDE



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada

WELCOME

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: www.pc.gc.ca/grasslands
Email: pc.infopnprairies-grasslandspinfo.pc@canada.ca

VISITOR CENTRE

West Block 1-306-298-2257
East Block 1-306-476-2018 (May–October)

Grasslands National Park
P.O. Box 150
Val Marie, Sask. S0N 2T0

EMERGENCY SERVICES

(Limited cell coverage)
911: Police, Fire, Ambulance

Parks Canada Dispatch: 1-877-852-3100

RCMP – West Block 1-306-625-6400 Ponteix 24 hrs.
RCMP – East Block 1-306-642-7110 Assiniboia 24 hrs.

PARK PURPOSE:

Grasslands National Park (GNP) is Canada's only national park that presents and protects the Prairie Grasslands Natural Region. The park represents one of the finest intact parcels of North American mixed grass prairie habitat in existence.

ENJOY THE ESSENCE OF GRASSLANDS!

We invite you to experience the essence of Grasslands! Immerse yourself in the solitude, view iconic prairie wildlife, identify an ancient tipi ring, smell the scent of sage, soak in a multi-hued sunset, sleep under the brilliant night sky and just simply be mesmerized by this natural prairie world and all of its glory - Enjoy!

EXPLORE TWO UNIQUE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS:

West Block – Connect with national treasures and see some of the rarest wildlife in Canada as you explore the West Block's Frenchman River Valley. Catch a glimpse of a Short-horned Lizard, take notice of the majestic Plains Bison and enjoy the comical antics of the Black-tailed Prairie Dogs.

East Block – Explore the breathtaking badlands through epic hiking or drive the new Badlands Parkway and witness some of Saskatchewan's finest scenery!



YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS HERE...

Check out the top 5 must do's

1) Take the meandering 11 kilometer scenic Badlands Parkway and be amazed by spectacular geological formations.



2) Go on an adventure and take the Ecotour Scenic Drive to view some of the rarest wildlife in Canada.



3) For an extraordinary viewscape, check out the Red Chairs at the Borderlands Lookout!



4) Join an Interpreter to get a deeper look at what makes this place so special.



5) Watch the night sky come alive from the best seats in the house – your tent, tipi or oTENTik.



HOW TO HAVE A SAFE ADVENTURE!

Grasslands National Park is a prairie wilderness environment with few services. Be prepared! Your safety depends on awareness of the lack of water and shade, wild animals such as bison and rattlesnakes, prairie wildfires and storms, and being able to find your way.

PRIOR TO ENTERING THE PARK, OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING FOR AN ENJOYABLE VISIT:

- Bring 2-3 litres of water/person/day – potable water is available at the Frenchman Valley and Rock Creek Campgrounds
- Carry a first aid kit and cell phone, coverage is limited
- Roads may become impassable when wet

PRAIRIE DOG VISITS

- Keep pets away from Prairie Dog towns – for their safety and yours
- Fleas from wild rodents such as prairie dogs may transmit diseases such as sylvatic plague
- Tuck pants into socks and use insect repellent with DEET
- Beware of Black Widow spiders and fleas, especially in prairie dog burrows
- Don't handle dead wildlife! If possible, report to park staff



FINDING YOUR WAY

- Tell someone your plans and place the backcountry camping permit on the dashboard of your vehicle.
- Inquire with staff at the Visitor centre for up to date information and navigation tools (e.g. maps, compass, GPS and batteries)
- Pause frequently to be aware of your surroundings
- If lost or disoriented, stay put, stay calm and remain visible
- Find shelter if the weather turns bad or if night falls



WEATHER AND WILDFIRES

- Be prepared for sudden weather changes such as strong winds and electrical storms. Lightning frequently ignites grass fires – avoid high ground and barbed wire fences
- Report sightings of smoke or flames by calling 911 or Parks Canada Dispatch – 1-877-852-3100
- Grass fires travel quickly, be prepared to evacuate
- If fire traps you, head for low vegetation areas (e.g. gravel roads, prairie dog colonies) or burned areas

BISON

- Remember that bison are wild animals. Your best protection is to maintain a safe distance of 100 metres or more (length of a football field). Getting too close is wildlife harassment at the least, and life threatening at the most
- If encountering bison during your drive, stay in your vehicle, drive slow and do not honk
- Use caution when cycling, horseback riding or hiking (especially with pets)
- Remember that bison are more aggressive during calving (May) and rutting (mid-July–August)



WATCH FOR THESE SIGNS OF BISON AGGRESSION:

- Shaking their head
- Loud snorting
- Pawing
- Raising the tail
- Short charges or running toward you



QUICKSAND

- Beware of quicksand in the East Block – typically, they are identified with signs

RATTLESNAKES

- Wear over-the-ankle footwear and long pants to protect against bites
- Watch where you walk and keep children close – you may not hear the rattle
- Stay calm and slowly move away if you see or hear a rattlesnake
- Know that snakes will only strike when threatened or cornered
- Consider borrowing snake gaiters at the Visitor Centre for your personal comfort

Contact the Visitor Centre regarding snake hibernaculum restrictions



IF BITTEN:

- Stay calm and restrict movement
- Call 911 and seek medical attention immediately
- Cleanse the wound, keep limb below heart level and do not drink fluids



EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

BADLANDS PARKWAY:

Drive the Badlands Parkway in the East Block and witness some of Saskatchewan's finest scenery!

ECOTOUR SCENIC DRIVE:

Pick up a self-guided brochure from the Visitor Centre, and embark on your tour through the West Block to view rare wildlife and breathtaking landscapes.

HIKING:

Select a trail experience that's right for you – from leisurely strolls to awesome back country experiences.

GEOCACHING:

Embark on a self-guided trip to experience some of the park's most interesting cultural and natural hotspots!

KAYAKING:

Launch at the Belza Bridge and explore the Frenchman River. Don't have a kayak? Give a local outfitter a call.

HORSEBACK RIDING:

Bring your equine companion and explore the prairie landscape on horseback! Equestrian camping available in both blocks.

CYCLING:

A prairie bike ride has its challenges, and its rewards. Check with staff for recommended routes.

JUST FOR KIDS:

Pick up your Xplorers booklet at the Visitor Centre. Complete the fun activities and puzzles and earn a cool souvenir! Also, be sure to ask about our Discovery Packs, and kids programs this summer.

OUTFITTER ADVENTURES:

Many great guided outfitter experiences available in the area, including: horseback riding, kayaking, hiking, art, photography and yoga.

SEEK OUT THE RED CHAIRS:

Parks Canada started the "Red Chair Experience," placing red Adirondack chairs in scenic locations throughout the national parks and encouraging visitors to seek them out and share their experience. There are 6 Red Chair locations throughout Grasslands National Park. Be sure to #sharethechair.

Ask for an 'Activity Guide' for more information on our interpretive programs.



DID YOU KNOW? The park offers outdoor education programs for school groups and other organizations.

CHOOSE YOUR CAMPING EXPERIENCE

Camping is one of the best ways to enjoy all the park has to offer. Whether pulling a trailer, stuffing a tent into your backpack, or simply arriving to the convenience of a ready-to-use tipi or oTENTik, Grasslands has your experience covered.

FRENCHMAN VALLEY CAMPGROUND-WEST BLOCK

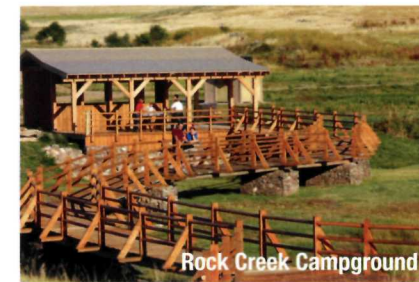
With a view of the Frenchman River, rolling hills, tipi rings and roaming bison, the perfect destination for your front country experience. 32 km SE of Val Marie.

- 20 tent/RV electric campsites (20,30,50 amp)
- 4 oTENTik units (1 accessible & 1 pet-friendly)
- Picnic tables, fire pits, vault toilets, potable water, RV sani dump, and Wi-Fi
- Coulee Centre cook shelter
- Overflow sites available

ROCK CREEK CAMPGROUND-EAST BLOCK

Amazing skies day and night, the leopard frogs' symphony at dusk, and the meadowlarks serenade at dawn. 29km SW of Wood Mountain.

- NEW Campground
- 24 tent/RV electric campsites (all 50 amp)
- 8 oTENTiks (1 accessible & 1 pet-friendly)
- Picnic tables, fire pits, vault toilet, potable water, and RV sani dump
- Summer kitchen
- Tipis
- Overflow sites available



Rock Creek Campground

DID YOU KNOW?

The location for both campgrounds were former homestead sites. You won't recognize it now, but there were once cows, corrals, sheds, hay fields and other livestock at these places. We chose these places to avoid development on native prairie.

Conditions vary year-round, but plan for fire bans in summer. Contact the Visitor Centre for details.

Keep vehicle and RV/trailer on the gravel part of your campsite.

Keep campsites clean and attend campfires at all times.

Check in 2:00pm, check out 11:00 am.

Store food in a vehicle or RV when not in use.



Frenchman Valley Campground



oTENTik CAMPING

Share moments and create new memories in this spacious blend of a tent and an A-frame cabin equipped with beds and furniture.

- In each oTENTik: Table and seating, heater, lantern, electricity, sleeping area for up to 6 people
- On each site: Barbeque, firepit, picnic table and Adirondack chairs
- Don't forget to bring your own bedding and cooking supplies
- 2-pet friendly, and 2-wheel chair accessible units
- Check-in 3:00pm, check out 11:00am
- No smoking or cooking permitted inside the units



BACK COUNTRY CAMPING

Drop your pack following an exhilarating hike. Pitch a tent where no one has camped before – well, maybe not for a thousand years! The park is yours to explore when Back Country Camping. See map for ideas – you get to pick the location.

- No open fires at any time
- You must check in at the Visitor Centre, or kiosk upon arrival
- Staff will provide information on designated Back Country parking
- Camp out of view from roads and trails – a minimum of 1 km
- Conditions vary year-round, but plan for fire bans in the summer, which may also include camp stove restrictions
- Leave no trace of your visit

TIPI CAMPING

Go back in time and enjoy the rustic nature of a tipi camping experience.

- Vault toilet
- Sleeps 5-6 people
- Camping pad included
- Cots and lantern available to rent
- Adirondack chairs
- Shared firepit and barbeque
- Pet-friendly

West Block – Two Trees Day Use Area 13 km south of Val Marie (no potable water available)

East Block – Located in the Rock Creek Campground



HORSE USERS

- Horses, while hobbled, tethered or corralled may graze in the park. Avoid grazing Crested Wheatgrass after May 31st to avoid the spread of this non-native plant species.
- Dispose of horse manure at on-site receptacles.
- Bagged cubes, pellets and rolled or steamed oats are the preferred feed.
- Please respect private landowners around the park and remain on park owned lands.
- Caution! Extreme dry conditions and horseshoes can be a bad combination. Sparks may result from a horse clipping a rock with their shoes.
- Watch where you ride. Many prairie species, including rattlesnakes, are well camouflaged.

EQUESTRIAN CAMPING

After a day of miles of open riding, settle in for the evening while your trusted companion rests nearby.

- Horsepens
- Water trough
- Manure receptacle
- Vault toilet
- Shared fire pit
- First come, first served
- Check in at Visitor Centres or at the Frenchman Valley Coulee Centre

West Block – South of the Belza Day Use Area.

East Block – Rock Creek Campground

CAMPING RESERVATIONS:

Reservation.pc.gc.ca or 1-877-737-3783

Applies to all campgrounds, oTENTiks, tipis, and West Block back country camping.

In the event the campgrounds are full, unserviced overflow camping is available by self-registration.

For East Block Back Country camping, reserve at 1-306-476-2018

GEOLOGY AND PALAEOLOGY

The geology and palaeontology of Grasslands National Park and surrounding area tell a story of fascinating land formations and fossils. The diverse landforms are windows into geological time. Whether it is a prehistoric triceratops skull from the Badlands or an iridescent clamshell gleaming in the Frenchman River Valley, discoveries of fossilized land and sea creatures stand as testimony to the

prehistoric world 60 to 80 million years ago! The East Block is one of a handful of places around the world that reveals the Cretaceous-Paleogene Boundary – evidence bearing witness to a world changing event. The revealing landscape of the Badlands led to the first recorded find of dinosaur remains in western Canada in 1874.

WHAT IS THE CRETACEOUS-PALEOGENE BOUNDARY?

A thin, white, chalky layer in the soil, separating the age of dinosaurs from mammals. Below the line dinosaur fossils are found, above the line are mammal fossils.



Vertebrae fossil.



Inoceramus shell fossils from the last intercontinental seaway 70-80 million years ago.

DID YOU KNOW?

The East Block Badlands are one of the richest resources for dinosaur fossils in Canada.



ARCHAEOLOGY

Over 10,000 years ago the glaciers retreated and the prairie grasslands became home to a range of groups including Indigenous peoples, Métis, ranchers and farmers. Each culture understood and used the land differently, leaving behind profound evidence on how they interacted with the prairies.

Before written record (pre-contact), information is collected in two ways - through the study of archaeology and the sharing of traditional knowledge passed down by Indigenous peoples.

As much of the park and region is still in its original grassland state (minimal cultivation or development), thousands of archaeological sites are still visible on the ground's surface. These discoveries have provided us with some amazing insight on how people lived centuries ago!

Some of the findings suggest that various Indigenous groups who camped here were likely comprised of small family bands that joined larger groups to participate in communal bison hunts and festivities. They were highly accomplished hunters and gatherers and bison were central to their lives. It is also thought that they lived a nomadic lifestyle, occupying a site for a short time, most likely no longer than one season. However, it is possible that the same cultural groups may have returned to the same location annually over thousands of years. For archaeologists, this can be puzzling – are the number of tipi rings indicative of a large number of people at one time or was it the same cultural group returning over centuries?



PREHISTORIC FEATURES

Another intriguing archaeological feature found in the park is bison drive lanes. The intent of these long, linear, rock pile formations would be to funnel bison toward cliffs or other kill sites. The goal of a communal bison hunt was to pool and coordinate hunters to maneuver large numbers of bison into a situation where they could be killed and butchered, providing a significant quantity of meat at one time. One drive lane in the East Block extends for 15 kilometres!

Archaeological sites within the park are a powerful reminder that Indigenous people were the original occupants and stewards of these lands. It is believed to be a time in prairie history where life was lived out in harmony with the landscape, more closely in balance than would ever be again.

When exploring these ancient grounds, please be respectful and demonstrate the utmost care and attention. If you discover an artifact or cultural site, please do not disturb, take a GPS coordinate and share your knowledge with park staff. Also, be sure to ask about special programs to learn more about cultural heritage.

THE PRAIRIE PEOPLE

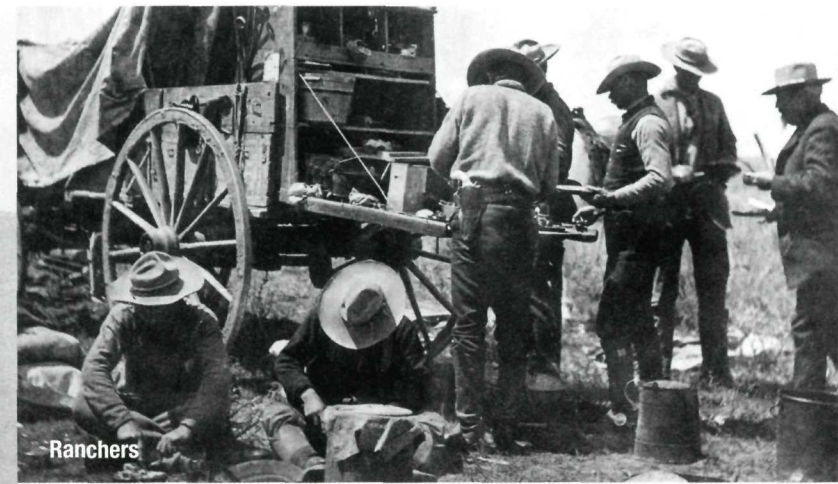
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

For centuries, the prairies were the domain of Indigenous Peoples who had linked their lives to the migrations of bison. One after the other, they came – Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Cree, Blackfoot and Sioux. They left behind bison drive lanes, arrow heads, and tipi rings for you to see.

In the late 1880's, after the Battle of Little Big Horn against the American Cavalry, Sitting Bull and 4000 Lakota Sioux sought sanctuary here. Sitting Bull camped on five different waterways in what now is the park: Breed Creek, the Frenchman River, Medicine Lodge Creek (Wetherall), Horse Creek and Rock Creek.

DID YOU KNOW? There are over 12,000 tipi rings found in the park.

Indigenous People



Ranchers

RANCHERS

By the late 1800's, cattle replaced bison creating a different way of life on the prairies. The government passed leasehold legislation to promote ranching in the west.

The rolling grasslands that stretched into the horizon was divided up into huge ranching companies such as "N-N", the "76 Ranch", and the "Turkey Track", grazing thousands of cattle on the "range". However, a succession of harsh winters, the massive die-off of cattle in 1906-07 and the Homesteaders Act in 1908 contributed to the loss of the open range. Cattle were fenced and the glory days of the open range were gone.

DID YOU KNOW?

The park has thousands of archaeological sites and is one of the largest concentrations of undisturbed pre-contact cultural resources in Canada.

The Métis are descendants of Indigenous People and European and Euro-Canadian fur traders who worked in the fur trade era (circa 1670-1850). They are their own distinct nation of people with their own inherent Indigenous rights.

HOMESTEADERS

Pioneers were enticed by government to "tame the west" and "break the land". However, poor soils, rough topography and a hot, dry climate spelled disaster. After only a few years, many homesteaders picked up and left; their signature remains on the prairie to this day. The ranchers and homesteaders, who stayed, combined ranching and farming with western hospitality to create our local prairie communities.

DID YOU KNOW?

Will James, legendary artist and novelist lived life as a cowboy right here, where he homesteaded and worked on the 76 Ranch.

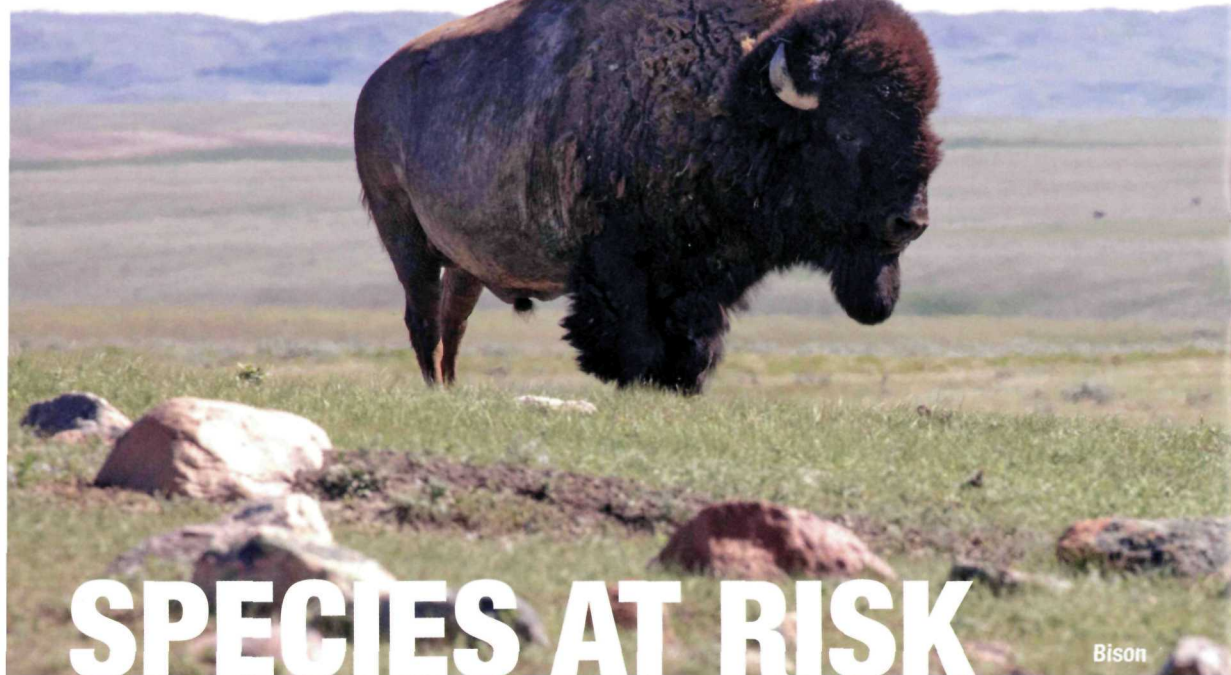


The Métis

From 1850 to 1880, as the fur trade moved westward, the Métis hunted not only for themselves but they supplied the new demand of trading posts setting up in the region. In Medicine Lodge Creek (Wetherall), remnants of an old traders trail still exists. In the early morning if the sun glints off the grass just right, a series of parallel ruts can still be seen.



Homesteaders



Bison

SPECIES AT RISK

Grasslands National Park - a leader and contributor to the recovery of Canadian Species at Risk

Visitors from around the world come to Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan to see the who's who of prairie species at risk; Burrowing Owls, Swift Fox, Greater Sage-Grouse, Short-horned Lizards and the crowd pleasing colonies of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs to name a few. The park is home to over 20 federally listed Species at Risk (SAR). These species have special designations provided by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

COSEWIC is a group of wildlife biologists from universities, governmental and non-governmental organizations and private industry that meet twice a year to assess the status of wildlife. These experts provide the official listings of species as extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or of special concern. This information is vital for our park biologists to develop recovery plans to try and bring prairie wildlife back from the brink. Ask park staff about the innovative conservation work taking place on the ground.

Reasons for species extinction can vary significantly. Threats to a species generally include over-hunting, poisoning and habitat loss either now or from in the past. But for many species in Grasslands National Park, it is simply because they are at the northern extent of their geographic distribution or because of their restricted habitat requirement.

IN DANGER TODAY

Extinct: A species that no longer exists.

- Plains Grizzly
- Prairie Wolf

Extirpated: A species no longer existing in the wild in Canada, but occurring elsewhere.

- Black-footed Ferret
- Greater Prairie Chicken

Endangered: A species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.

- Burrowing Owl
- Greater Sage-Grouse
- Greater Short-horned Lizard
- Little Brown Myotis



American Badger

Threatened: A species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Loggerhead Shrike | • Common Nighthawk |
| • Sprague's Pipit | • Black-tailed Prairie Dog |
| • McCown's Longspur | • Mountain Sucker |
| • Ferruginous Hawk | • Barn Swallow |
| • Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer | • Bank Swallow |
| • Swift Fox | • Bobolink |
| • Chestnut-collared Longspur | • American Badger |



Paul Kuelker

Greater Sage-Grouse









Special Concern: A species of special concern because of characteristics that are particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events.









- Long-billed Curlew
- Northern Leopard Frog
- Short-eared Owl
- Baird's Sparrow
- Mormon Metalmark
- Western Tiger Salamander

Protect your National Park

- Keep vehicles on designated roads and pull-offs
- Leave natural and cultural objects undisturbed for others to discover and enjoy
- Give wildlife their space and respect.
- Do not approach or feed wildlife! Plague is present in our prairie dog and ground squirrel populations. Keep the wild in wildlife and do not approach or feed.
- All-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles are not allowed in the park
- Keep pets on a leash and off the prairie dog colonies
- Report any concerns or unlawful activities to Parks Canada staff or RCMP

WILDLIFE WONDERS

CHECK OUT	EASY ID TIPS	CLUES	WHERE TO VIEW	GNP FACTOID!
<p>Plains Bison</p> 	<p>Male or female? Look at the horns for size and shape. Bulls grow larger, more robust horns and 'horn buds' are visible on the male calf within the month they are born.</p>		<p>The bison will group and move around the park throughout the seasons. Ecotour Road is a safe and accessible place to view.</p>	<p>Bison were absent from this landscape for over 120 years. As of 2005, Bison roam free in the West Block of GNP.</p>
<p>Black-tailed Prairie Dog</p> 	<p>They are easily distinguished from the Richardson's Ground Squirrel "gopher" as the Prairie Dogs are twice the size. Prairie Dogs are also highly social critters and live in extensive communal 'dog towns'.</p>		<p>Sneak a peek at the Prairie Dogs through the telescopes on Ecotour Road.</p>	<p>The West Block and neighbouring lands are the only places in Canada where Black-tailed Prairie Dogs exist in their natural habitat.</p>
<p>Prairie Rattlesnake</p> 	<p>They have a wide, flat triangular shaped head and a rattle on their tail. Female colouring is a light olive green and males are pale gold; both have dark blotches on their back.</p>		<p>Within 100 square kms of the Frenchman River Valley. Slumping hillsides provide ideal locations for winter hibernation dens. They gather at these areas in September for the winter, and emerge from hibernation in spring.</p>	<p>In 2011, historic moisture conditions created flooding and slumping in the Frenchman River Valley and buried one of the largest rattlesnake dens in the park. The same type of natural phenomenon that created these slumping formations destroyed it!</p>
<p>Pronghorn Antelope</p> 	<p>Male and female pronghorns have the only forked horns in the world. Pronghorn are much faster than deer; they can endure speeds of 100 km per hour to escape coyotes.</p>		<p>In the open grasslands browsing sage bush, grease wood and cactus in the valley bottoms. Fences: Pronghorns go under and deer jump over!</p>	<p>Less than 300 antelope survived the harsh winter of 1926! Today, antelope are once again a common sight in the grasslands.</p>

CHECK OUT	EASY ID TIPS	CLUES	WHERE TO VIEW	GNP FACTOID!
<p>Mule Deer</p> 	<p>Mule deer have large 'mule-like' ears and are easily distinguished by their white rump patch and short black-tipped tail. Mule deer are often spotted bouncing on four limbs up and down hill sides.</p>		<p>At dawn and dusk they emerge from sheltered coulees to feed on shrubs and grasses. Snowberry bushes are nicknamed 'buck brush' as it makes for excellent shelter for 'bucks' to bed down in.</p>	<p>South-west Saskatchewan is well-known for producing magnificent mule-deer with large beautiful antlers. Perhaps, it is the sun-cured native grasses that provide the nutritional edge!</p>
<p>White-Tailed Deer</p> 	<p>'White-tailed' refers to the white underside of the flag-like tail, which waves when they are alarmed.</p>		<p>Grain and hay fields neighbouring the park lands. In the winter time, you can see up to 100 deer feeding in one hayfield.</p>	<p>Did White-tailed deer occur in SW Saskatchewan prior to farm settlement? It is uncertain, however, populations have risen due to agricultural development.</p>
<p>Greater Short-horned Lizard</p> 	<p>Short-horned Lizards do not resemble any other reptile or amphibian in the park. They look prehistoric, as they are a living remnant from the days of the dinosaurs!</p>		<p>In Badland habitat. Bearpaw shale slopes in the Frenchman Valley and the lower reaches of Rock Creek. August is the best time to view them as the young of the year have been born, and they are temporarily more abundant.</p>	<p>Short-horned Lizards are very difficult to see as they are very small and their camouflage is superior. Usually, you can only spot them if they move! In winter, the lizards will bury themselves under about 10 cm of loose soil on south facing slopes.</p>
<p>Coyotes</p> 	<p>These medium sized 'song-dogs' can be identified by their iconic howl and high-pitched bark. Since the extirpation of the prairie wolf, the Coyote is 'top-dog' on the prairie!</p>		<p>Coyotes are native to the prairie, but can be seen in both prairie and non-prairie environments.</p>	<p>Coyotes are territorial and will kill Red and Swift foxes. Foxes are viewed as competitors for hunting gophers, rabbits and mice.</p>

DID YOU KNOW?

That some of our road signs in the park have anti-perching devices on top of the posts? (Look for these as you travel). This is done to protect the Sage Grouse so that raptors don't use the signs as perches to hunt this very endangered species!



BIRDING GRASSLANDS STYLE!

Burrowing Owls

Welcome to this special grassland environment, whether you are a beginner or expert birder, the Park provides an excellent opportunity to check off some of the rarest grassland birds from your list!

The prairie was shaped over the centuries by fire, grazing and climate creating a mosaic of vegetation and height structures essential to the success of prairie wildlife, like grassland birds. We invite you to explore the diverse habitats, as that will be the key to spotting some of the most iconic species.

Check-out the native prairie uplands for the elusive **Sprague's Pipit**. Binoculars are a necessity to see this secretive bird as it spends hours high in the sky (150 metres) performing elaborate circular displays and then rapidly dropping down to hide in the grass. Each flight display can last from a half hour to 3 hours! Taller prairie grasses with less grazing are most attractive to these birds.



Sprague's Pipit

To catch a glimpse of the rare and endangered **Greater Sage Grouse**, tracts of Silver Sage Brush habitat is where they reside. In the early 1900's, approximately 10,000 Sage Grouse strutted across the mixed grass prairie, but due to farming and development, habitat has been reduced dramatically. Today, the moderately grazed parklands and neighbouring ranch lands are home to half of the remaining Sage Grouse in Canada – less than 100 birds!

Burrowing Owls love treeless areas with short vegetation, so what better place to hang out than a closely cropped prairie dog colony. Abandoned burrows within the colony provide ready-made homes for the owls and the barking prairie dogs act as a built-in alarm system to warn all residents of approaching predators-excellent adaptations for these wise little owls! Burrowing owls arrive in early May and head south to Mexico and Texas in early October to spend the winter.



Loggerhead Shrikes

An open, mixed grass prairie with valley bottoms and scattered trees and shrubs is where many **Loggerhead Shrikes** nest. They sometimes impale their prey on the spikes of the Thorny Buffalo Berry or barbed wire fence to hold them while they eat or store a snack for later. This technique has earned them the nickname "Butcher Bird". These masked birds tend to avoid heavily grazed grasslands, likely due to reduced food options.

Ferruginous Hawks are true prairie specialists targeting gophers and prairie dogs as main food staples. In the wintertime, when other birds migrate, Ferruginous Hawks stay, taking advantage of the neighbouring, non-hibernating prairie dogs. It is also not uncommon to see Ferruginous Hawks build nests on cliff slopes in the river valley and badlands rather than trees, another special adaptation. Historically, Ferruginous Hawks added bison bones, wool and dung to their elaborate nests. Since the bison reintroduction, this handy technique can be used again!



Ferruginous Hawks

The **Long Billed Curlew** is North America's largest shorebird, and oddly enough, its prime habitat is in the grass! Curlews spend much of their time foraging through grassy uplands, but when they are spotted near water it is typically next to a cattle or bison 'watering hole'. The outer perimeter of the waterholes are moist with shortly grazed vegetation that are rich with insects. These waterholes are generally located within a quarter mile of curlew nest sites.



Long Billed Curlew

These are just a few hints on how to locate some of the classic prairie birds that make their home in the Park, make sure to take along a field guide to assist you in identifying the many others. Bird Checklists and Wildlife Viewing Guides are available at the Visitor Centres.

GLORY OF GRASS

Grasses aren't known to receive a lot of glory in a wild and captivating ecosystem and can be easily overlooked. But don't be fooled! Grass plays a central role and is a defining species group in the grasslands.

Here is a quick snapshot to introduce the vegetation zone, highlight the main vegetation communities and the ten most common grasses that make up the turf here.

The Park is part of a large natural vegetation region known as the **Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass region**. These are the main grasses that make up the native grasslands here. This region extends from the South Saskatchewan River down to Wyoming. The Park is also part of a larger vegetation zone known as the **Mixed Grass Prairie** that extends throughout the Great Plains. The name 'mixed-grass' means that no single species dominates the prairie and there is a mixture of short and medium sized grasses.

Four different vegetation communities exist within the park:

- Grasslands
- Wetland Meadows
- Shrublands/Wooded Coulees
- Badlands/Cultivated fields

Grassland Community - 70% of the park is dominated by Needle-and-Thread grass, Blue Grama grass and Western Wheatgrass. Spike Moss and June Grass are also in this mix. Shrub cover is absent and Pasture Sage is very abundant. The most common lichen in the park is Xanthoparmelia chlorochroa and Coelocaulen aculeatum.

Wet Meadows Community - 10% of wet meadows are scattered in the uplands and in dry valley creek beds. These areas have poor drainage creating ideal conditions for Western Wheatgrass, Sedge, Foxtail Barley and rushes.

Shrubland and Wooded Coulee Community - 10% of the park has water close to the surface as well as enough protection from the elements to promote growth of woody species such as Snowberry (buck brush) and Prickly Rose.

Eroded Badlands and Cultivated Lands - 10% of the park area is comprised of bare soil. Whether it's natural badlands or cultivation, this landscape can support a diverse group of vegetation types. *Creeping Juniper* and the *Goosefoot* species are the most common in the badlands and *Crested Wheatgrass* and annual weeds in cultivated fields.

The park is home to over 70 different grass species. In this list are the 10 most common grasses, 7 native species and 3 non-native species.

10 most common grass species at GNP:

NATIVE:

Blue Grama
(*Bouteloua gracilis*)

Western Wheat Grass
(*Pascopyrum smithii*)

Needle and Thread
(*Hesperostipa comata*)

June Grass
(*Koeleria macrantha*)

Porcupine Grass
(*Herperostipa curtipseta*)

Northern Wheat Grass
(*Elymus lanceolatus*)

Slender Wheat Grass
(*Elymus trachycaulus*)

NON-NATIVE:

Crested Wheat Grass
(*Agropyron cristatum*)

Smooth Brome Grass
(*Bromus inermis*)

Quack Grass
(*Agropyron repens*)



A PRAIRIE IN BLOOM...

Witness a succession of vibrant colours and sweet aromas. Crocus, prairie onion, cinquefoil, rose, cactus, vetch, locoweed, violets, asters, fleabanes, goosefoot, and buttercup to name a few! June is the peak season.



- 1: Prickly Pear Cactus
- 2: Pin Cushion Cactus
- 3: Dotted Blazing Star

- 4: Three Flowered Aven
- 5: Smooth Blue Beardtongue
- 6: Gumbo Evening Primrose

GRASSLANDS, A DARK SKY PRESERVE

When thinking about conservation in national parks, protection of native habitat and wildlife immediately comes to mind. However, an ecosystem goes beyond the living things and includes other natural elements such as weather, soil, climate and sky. Grasslands National Park is not only renowned for its pristine landscape but also for its pristine sky, the dark sky that is!

National parks make excellent locations for Dark Sky Preserves simply due to the fact that they protect natural, undisturbed spaces and with that comes the natural, undisturbed night skies! In urban centres, it is very difficult to see a starlit sky as the glare from city lights outshines the stars and creates an overwhelming sky glow that illuminates the landscape for hundreds of kilometres. This human made 'light pollution' not only affects our ability to see the natural beauty of stars and other celestial bodies, but it impacts the health of the ecosystem and can alter the behaviour of animals and plants. Wildlife require daylight and darkness for normal biological functions such as navigation, migration and mating, while plants require the natural light patterns for proper germination.

The goal of a Dark Sky Preserve is to protect the integrity of the night sky as well as provide visitors with dark sky observation opportunities. Ask park staff about Dark Sky Conservation programming.

Dark sky viewing tips:

- Camp out on a clear night with minimal cloud cover
- Pack your binoculars or telescope
- Take along a flashlight covered with a red filter or cellophane plastic (less obtrusive than white light)
- Download a star gazing chart or app (charts also available at the Visitor Centres)
- Dress in warm, layered clothing as summer nights can still be quite chilly
- Stargaze near your vehicle or campsite as walking lengthy distances at night can be difficult
- Be mindful of the rugged terrain and keep a watchful eye for bison and rattlesnakes



WORKING WITH

OUR COMMUNITIES

Prairie Wind & Silver Sage – Friends of Grasslands located at the historic Little Brick Schoolhouse is a volunteer, non-profit organization based in Val Marie, Saskatchewan.

- Eco-museum
- Art gallery featuring local artists
- Gift shop
- Espresso bar
- Wireless internet access

1-306-298-4910
www.pwss.org

The Rodeo and Ranch Museum is located in the Wood Mountain Regional Park near the East Block of Grasslands National Park.

- Museum activities and group tours
- Museum featuring ranching, rodeo, and homesteading artefacts
- Metis Adobe house and Heritage house
- Archive and extensive photograph collection
- Bookstore featuring books by local authors

Wood Mountain Historical Society – Rodeo and Ranch Museum

1-306-266-4953 (seasonal)
woodmountain.ca/RodRanc.html

Wood Mountain Regional Park

1-306-266-4249
woodmountainpark.ca

VISITOR CENTRE

The Visitor Centres will make your trip most memorable, as friendly, knowledgeable staff provide up-to-date information on park programs, camping opportunities, maps, road conditions, weather safety and more.

The Centres exhibit significant prairie stories: grassland ecosystems, endangered species, human history, palaeontology and geology.

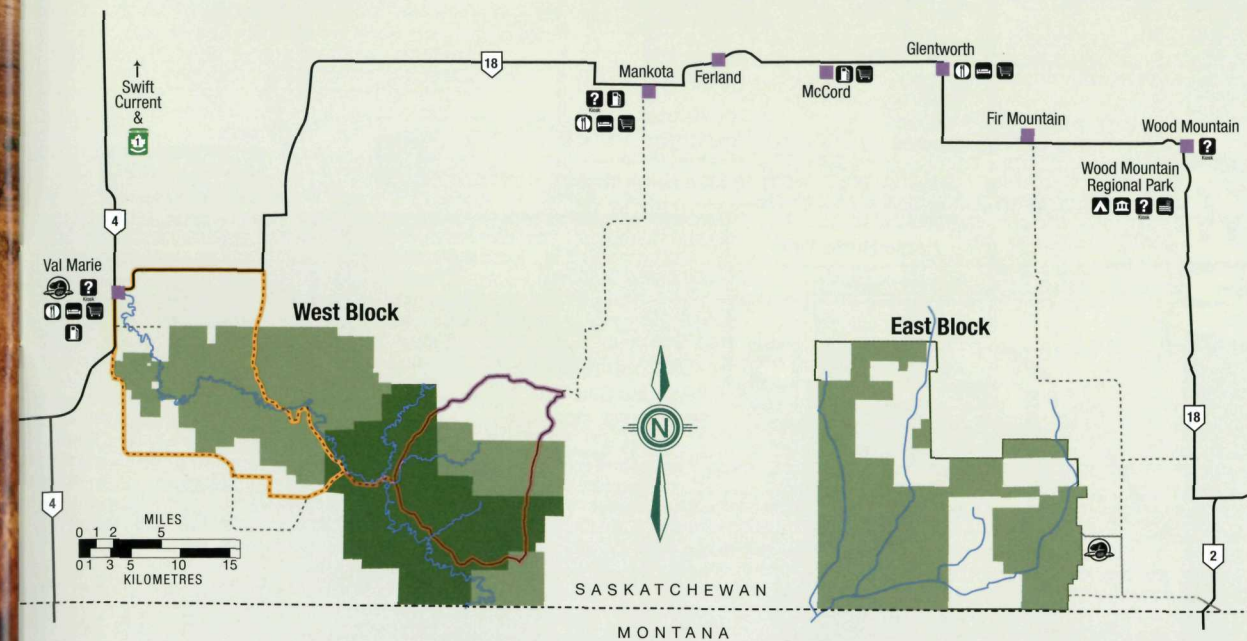
West Block Visitor Centre is located in Val Marie, Saskatchewan at the junction of Hwy #4 and Centre Street.

East Block Visitor Centre is located at the Rock Creek campground.

For more information on operating hours and dates, please visit our website at parkscanada.gc.ca/grasslands.

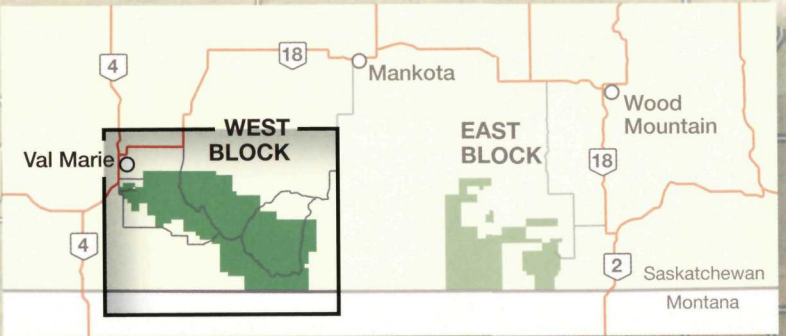
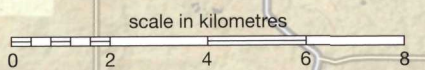
The park itself is always open.

REGIONAL MAP



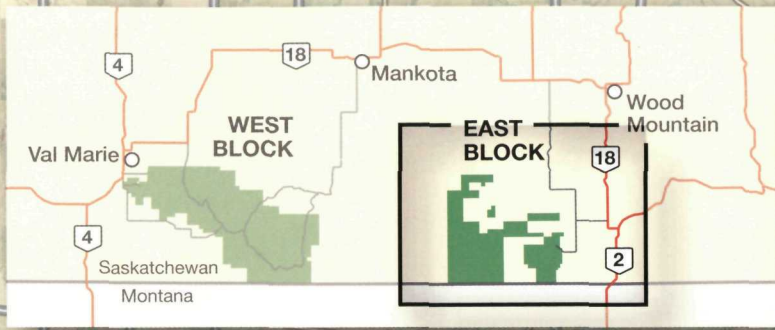


- Trail
- Route
- Trailhead
- Bison fence
- Permanent watercourse
- Lands in transition
- Ecotour pull-off
- Visitor centre
- Equestrian campground
- Paved road
- Gravel road
- Dirt road
- Dirt road (authorized vehicles only)
- Private
- Campground
- Back country trailhead
- Vault toilet

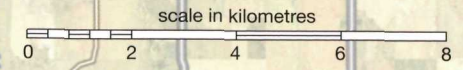


CANADA
U.S.A.

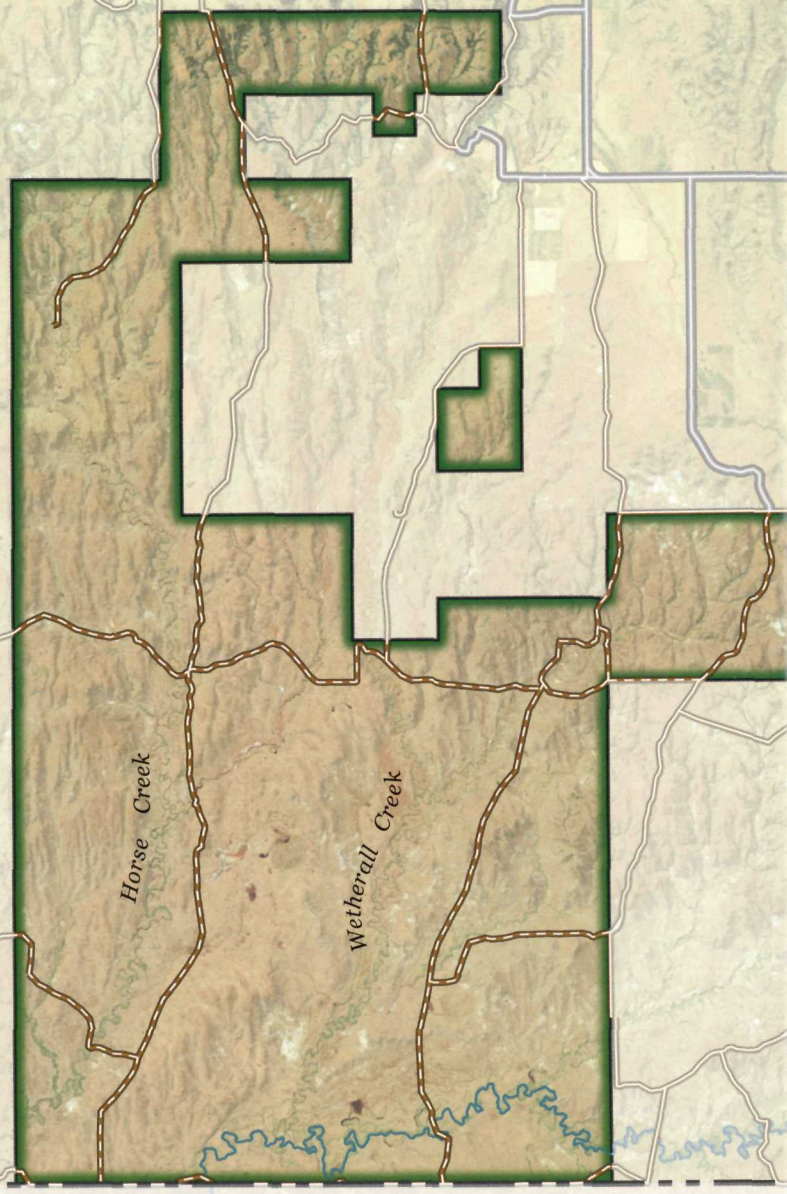
EAST BLOCK



Trail	Paved road
Route	Gravel road
Trailhead	Dirt road
Permanent watercourse	Dirt road (authorized vehicles only)
Campground	Equestrian campground
Visitor centre	



to Wood Mountain and WEST BLOCK



Red Buttes Route

Rock Creek Trail

Valley of 1000 Devils Route

Rock Creek

Creek to Peak Trail

BADLANDS PARKWAY



authorized vehicles only

Port of West Poplar border crossing

CANADA
U.S.A.



Grasslands National Park



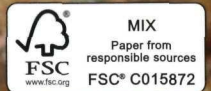
GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK

www.parkscanada.gc.ca/grasslands

grasslands.info@pc.gc.ca

306.298.2257 (West Block Visitor Centre)

306.476.2018 (Rock Creek Visitor Centre)



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