

KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK

BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Location

Kootenay National Park is situated on the western slopes of the Rockies in southeastern British Columbia, 107 miles north of the City of Cranbrook. It includes the remarkable scenic valleys of the Kootenay and Vermilion Rivers. The Park is a region 543 square miles in area notable for snowcapped peaks and glaciers whose meltwaters pour down rock faces and canyons into broad valleys with forested slopes.

Kootenay National Park is one of Canada's 19 National Parks which form a chain of nature sanctuaries extending from Mount Revelstoke in British Columbia to Terra Nova in Newfoundland. These Parks have been established for the preservation of selected areas in their natural state for the benefit, education and enjoyment of present and future generations of Canadians.

This vast area of more than 29,000 square miles is administered by the National and Historic Parks Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

NATURAL FEATURES

Geological

This Park borders a 65-mile section of the Banff-Windermere Highway between the Columbia Valley and Vermilion Pass on the Continental Divide. The highway crosses Brisco, Mitchell, and Vermilion Ranges and two passes, Sinclair (4,875 feet) and Vermilion (5,416 feet). The Vermilion and Kootenay Rivers drain through this region.

The rocks, especially through the Sinclair Pass area, present a perplexing series of problems to geologists. Exposed rock formations range from the Lower Cambrian to Middle Devonian in age. These rocks were formed up to 550 million years ago and were exposed by the upheavals that lifted up the Rocky Mountains in more recent geological times.

One of the famous landmarks of Kootenay Park is Marble Canyon, approximately 53 miles north of Radium Hot Springs. The canyon was formed by the waters of Tokumm Creek eroding the rock at a shattered break in the earth's crust. One of the major breaks or faults here is the Stephen-Denis fault.

The Ochre Beds, or "paint pots", are also in this area. Springs bring this peculiar colouration of iron oxide to the surface, staining everything they cover with the rusty-red hue. Miners once hauled this coloured rock to the railway and sold it as a base for paint.

Radium Hot Springs are the result of surface waters seeping deep along the Redwall fault to very hot rock masses. The steam rises through cracks and fissures, condenses into water, and returns to the surface as hot water.

The Park is particularly noted for its icefields, towering glaciers, and the magnificent rock basin lakes along the lofty peaks of the continental divide. The rugged eastern escarpment of Vermilion Range is known as the "Rock Wall". The Banff-Windermere Highway and many miles of trails provide convenient access to these areas of unspoiled nature.

Plantlife

Evergreen forests clothe the mountains and valleys. The vegetation of the Park is luxuriant and



Evergreen forests fill the Simpson River Valley and clothe its slopes to treeline.

varied. The terrain of mountains, glaciers, alpine meadows, slopes, river valleys and lakes supplies many habitats, each with its distinctive association of plants and animals.

The effect of altitude on plant growth is easily seen. The lower transitional forests of lodgepole pine, blue Douglas fir, western red cedar, trembling aspen, black cottonwood and a few Engelmann spruce soon give way, as one travels upward, to the sub-alpine forest of Engelmann spruce and alpine fir, in which lodgepole pine and blue Douglas fir are very minor elements.

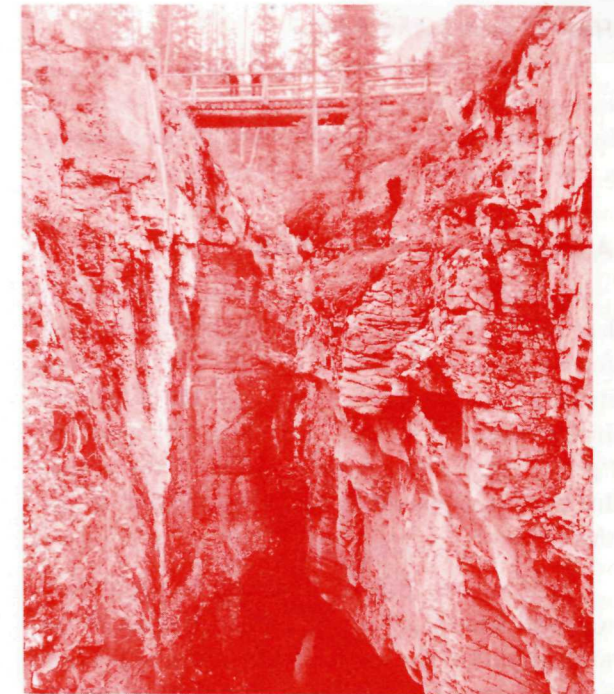
There are many other kinds of trees in these forests. Some of these are water birch, western white birch, rocky mountain juniper and western white spruce.

At timberline the forests end and the true alpine flowers, in all their variety and colour, become the dominating attraction.

Many shrubs are as attractive as the trees or other vegetation—at times dominating the landscape with their colours. A few are serviceberry or saskatoon berry, ground juniper, buffalo berry, labrador tea, mountain alder, rusty menziesia, white mountain rhododendron, and oval-leaved blueberry. Many kinds of willows are present and some like the Barratt's willow have very large, attractive catkins.

The wildflower display of the Park is a sight to behold. If one had to study and pick out each kind separately the variety would be bewildering. You will find them, each in its particular place or habitat whether it be in the lowest river valley or on the edges of a high glacier. No matter where a particular flower or plant lives, you can usually travel easy trails to reach and see it.

Only a few of the wildflowers will be mentioned. They are all gems when found singly or in masses blanketing a mountain slope or alpine meadow. Even their names promise visual pleasure—mariposa lily, purple clematis, dwarf Canadian primrose, western anemone, white globe-flower, balsam-root, avalanche or snow lily, yellow mountain-avens, alpine saxifrage, butterwort and Venus'-slipper orchid.



For thousands of years this stream has been eroding the walls of Marble Canyon.

Wildlife

The Park supports a large variety of animal life but unless you have learned how to observe the smaller animals, such as the cinereous shrew, jumping mouse, white-footed mouse, and meadow vole, you will see only the large ones. An incomplete list includes wapiti or American elk, black bear, grizzly bear, moose, white-tailed deer, mountain lion, mule deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, coyote, wolverine, lynx, beaver, red squirrel, golden-mantled ground squirrel, hoary marmot, and pika.

All National Parks are wildlife sanctuaries in which neither hunting or trapping is permitted. Under these conditions some animals which you may observe, especially along the highways, often appear quite tame. This attitude in wild animals is quite deceptive however, and bears especially are not to be trusted. Under no circumstances should a bear or other animal be fed or approached closely.

Some animals may be seen more easily from certain vantage points; consult the Park Wardens if you need advice on getting a good view of wildlife.

Mountain goat frequently display their agility on the slopes of Mount Wardle, while bighorn sheep visit the vicinity of Radium Hot Springs throughout the year.

Birdlife

Like plants and other animals, birds frequent habitats of their choice and must be looked for in these places. Some of the common birds found at lower elevations in the transitional forest of lodgepole pine and blue Douglas fir are red-shafted flicker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, western wood pewee, mountain bluebird, tree-swallow, warbling vireo, western tanager, red-eyed vireo, dusky flycatcher, Oregon junco, pine siskin, audubon warbler, spruce grouse and Cassin's finch.

The sub-alpine forest of Engelmann spruce and alpine fir is home to such distinctive birds as boreal chickadee, Tennessee warbler, Lincoln sparrow, hermit thrush, varied thrush, ruby-crowned kinglet, Canada or gray jay, Bohemian waxwing and evening grosbeak.

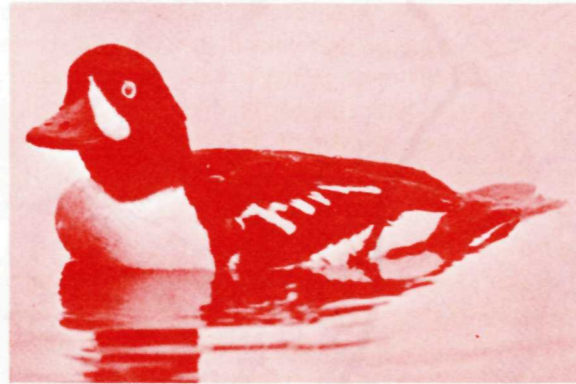
Some of the birds characteristic of the high alplands, above timberline, are white-tailed ptarmigan, water pipit, grey-crowned rosy finch, and golden eagle.

Fish

On the accompanying map it can be seen that the Vermilion, Simpson, and Kootenay Rivers present the main drainage pattern in the Park. These rivers and their tributaries and several lakes provide excellent angling. Various species, including Dolly Varden, Eastern Brook, cutthroat, and rainbow trout, are found in the lakes and streams of the Park.

A regular stocking program utilizing modern methods of fish management is carried out to maintain fish in a number of lakes in the Park.

Up-to-date information on fishing regulations, licences, seasons and bag limits is available from the Park Information Office, Park Wardens, and at campgrounds.



Barrow's Goldeneye, one of the ducks seen in the Park.

How You Can Learn More About the Park

To help you know the Park better and obtain greater enjoyment from your visit, the National Parks provide an Interpretation Service. This includes conducted tours and nature talks illustrated with coloured slides and films to explain the purpose and the natural phenomena of the Park. The evening programs are presented at different locations according to a seasonal schedule.

Well marked nature trails are maintained for convenient access to unspoiled natural areas as indicated on the accompanying map. Various species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers on the trails are identified with labels. Detailed information on the park naturalist's program is available at the Park Information Office and Red Streak Campground.

How to See the Interesting Features

While the Banff-Windermere Highway provides a convenient method of seeing the Park, a fuller appreciation of its natural features will be obtained from its many trails. A number of trails with various walking times are well marked and are indicated on the accompanying map. For a more intimate contact with this mountainous area, the Park trails offer many new and wonderful experiences. Traveling on foot or on horseback to the alpine meadows and remote lakes reveals scenery as a living museum

of nature. A walk along a quiet stream or up the slopes to timberline will reveal different facets of natural history. A trip into the high country will reward the visitor with an unequalled view of the tops of the mountains. Massive peaks and glaciers glistening in the clear mountain air provide a panorama of geological features not soon forgotten.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Park Administration

A resident Superintendent is in charge at the Park Office near Radium Junction. Park Wardens stationed in the three districts of the Park are responsible for the protection of all natural features and for the safety and guidance of visitors. A detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police assists in the maintenance of law and order.

Camping

Within the Park there are five campgrounds adjacent to the highway and one on a bench of Redstreak Mountain near Radium Hot Springs. Redstreak, McLeod Meadows and Marble Canyon campgrounds are fully serviced and camping fees are charged. The other campgrounds, which have kitchen shelters, water, and firewood, are free. No camping is permitted except at designated campgrounds. Persons wishing to camp along trails must register with a park warden on leaving and on return. Picnic areas and wayside tables are located along the highway; most of these have firewood, water and sanitary facilities.

Accommodation

Commercial accommodation is available at Radium Hot Springs and other locations in the park as well as at Radium Junction, just outside the park. The National Parks Service does not arrange accommodation or reservations but listings of commercial accommodation and rates are available at the Information Bureau.

Preservation

National Parks are selected areas set apart as nature sanctuaries and special care is taken to maintain them *in their natural state*. For this reason *all birds, animals, wildlife, trees, rocks and fossils are to remain undisturbed. Even the wildflowers are not to be picked; they are to be left for others to enjoy. Feeding, touching or molesting wild animals is not permitted.* This is in the interests of the animal, as well as the human who could receive serious injury.

Please help protect your own Park for future enjoyment. It is part of your national inheritance.

Prevent Fire

Campfires may be kindled only in fireplaces provided for this purpose and must be completely extinguished before campers leave the site. Visitors observing an unattended fire should attempt to extinguish it if possible and promptly report it to the nearest Park employee. Fire in a National Park can cause damage that cannot be repaired in a hundred years.



A young mule deer picks its way down a slope.



Numa Creek Valley—from Marble Canyon.

Season

The Aquacourt and the Banff-Windermere Highway are open all year but the main visitor season is between early June and late September.

Mountain Climbing

For the protection of mountain climbers, all mountain travel off the Park trails must be registered with the District Warden before and after the climb. Inexperienced climbers should obtain the services of a guide and full information concerning the necessary equipment.

Pets

Dogs and cats may accompany visitors into the Park. For the protection of Park animals, however, dogs must be kept on leash.

Motor Licence

Motoring visitors are required to obtain a Park motor vehicle licence at the entrance. This licence is good in all National Parks for the entire season.

Boating

Boats, canoes, rafts or floats cannot be used in the park.

How to Reach the Park

The Park is well served by all modern means of transportation rail, air, bus, or car, as indicated by the map. The nearest airport is at Windermere, a few miles from the western Park entrance.

A Brief History of the Park

The name "Kootenay" is of Indian derivation. It has several spellings but the accepted Canadian form is as used in relation to this Park. The word itself is an Anglicized version of the Kootenay Indian word "K'tunaxa" meaning "strangers" or "people from beyond the hills" and the prairie Indians are supposed to have been the first to use this name.

The area now forming Kootenay National Park was well known for generations to Indians of the western part of the United States and Canada. All knew of the Hot Springs—a favourite gathering place of tribes and bands from the prairies and British Columbia. Sir George Simpson and James Sinclair of the Hudson's Bay Company during the 1840's were the first Europeans to travel in this region. Landmarks commemorating their journey can be found throughout the Park. Father de Smet, one of the earliest missionaries in the west, made his first journey into the Kootenay and Columbia Valleys in 1845. Diaries record that these early travellers visited the Hot Springs.

In 1881 the area was included in the homestead of John McKay and was privately owned until the establishment of Kootenay National Park in 1920.

A road connecting Banff with the Columbia Valley was constructed between 1911 and 1923. Later revisions and reconstruction of this roadway have brought the Banff-Windermere Highway to its present high standards.

Additional information concerning the Park may be obtained from:

The Superintendent,
Kootenay National Park,
Radium Hot Springs, B.C.,

or

National and Historic Parks Branch,
Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development,
Ottawa, Canada.

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