

RIDING
MOUNTAIN
NATIONAL
△△△ PARK
TRAIL GUIDE



CONTENTS

PAGE 1	Contents
PAGE 2	Introduction
PAGE 2	Pack-In, Pack-Out
PAGE 3	Be-Animal Wise
PAGE 4	Safe Hiking
PAGE 4-16	Trails

INTRODUCTION

With the steady increase of urban sprawl, more Canadians each year are taking to the trails to escape daily pressures. Through trail travel the beauty and atmosphere of the park can best be seen and appreciated. But with the experience goes a basic responsibility to leave the wilderness unimpaired for future generations. That is why the National Parks have instituted the Pack-In, Pack-Out policy — when you PACK IN your supplies, please PACK OUT your litter. Plastic bags are available from any Park Information Centre, or from Park Wardens. Covered trash cans are provided at trail heads and other locations.

PACK-IN, PACK-OUT

To lessen the amount of garbage:

- Plan menus at home.
- Freeze-dried foods are ideal for backpacking. Repackaging the food in plastic bags saves weight and eliminates noncombustible metal foil.
- Appetizing meals can be planned around rice, dried vegetable flakes and seasonings, dried soups, dried fruit and dried or smoked meats.
- On a day trip, weight may be less critical, but please pack out tins, bottles, bulk containers, plastic wrappers, paper and vegetable wastes to the nearest trash can.
- In areas where fires are permitted, burn foil and cans to remove food odors which attract bears, and flatten cans to reduce the volume to be packed out.
- Filled Pack-In, Pack-Out bags should not be thrown away or buried. Bears can easily sense and dig up the buried bags — they have been known to dig through two feet of fill.
- Encourage others to adopt the Pack-In, Pack-Out habit. It has been well documented that bears accustomed to feeding on garbage account for the majority of bear-inflicted injuries in the National Parks.
- When you return from your trip, please report any problem areas to the park staff.

BE ANIMAL-WISE

Related to back-country hiking is the problem of man-animal encounters. However, there is no reason why humans and animals cannot share the same area if sensible precautions are taken.

The bear is a natural scavenger and it is his innate curiosity which often brings him into contact with men. The smell of food encourages his investigation of a campsite, thus the Pack-In, Pack-Out policy. Garbage left in the back-country might well result in injury to the next group of hikers by a garbage-attracted bear and eventually force destruction of the animal.

To minimize the chances of a man-bear encounter take these basic precautions:

- Don't leave garbage or food exposed. Thoroughly burn all food scraps and grease.
- Don't camp in dirty campsites — report them to the park warden.
- Avoid using greasy or strong smelling foods.
- Pitch your tent a good distance from the eating and cooking area.
- Catch only the number of fish which can be eaten at one sitting. Burn entrails.
- If heading into bear country, wear bells or some other noise-maker to announce your presence. Travelling in groups and loud talking or singing can also help prevent a surprise encounter which may startle the bear into attack.
- If you encounter a bear, give him a wide berth.
- Learn to recognize bear country through droppings and diggings.
- Do not feed or tease bears. This is both dangerous and illegal.

Bears are not the only animals which can be dangerous. Seemingly docile animals such as moose, deer and elk can be unpredictable, especially during mating season or when the female is protecting her young. Chipmunks and squirrels seem friendly engaging creatures, but they can deliver a

sharp bite. The best attitude is observe — don't intrude.

If you take a dog along, it must be kept on a leash at all times. Sometimes a bear will be excited by the sight and smell of a dog, and a dog in conflict with a bear will often return to his master with the bear in pursuit.

Horseback riding is allowed only on those trails indicated in the trail guide.

SAFE HIKING

For your own safety, the National Parks regulations require that all overnight hikers register OUT and IN with a park warden. Failure to do so may result in a stiff fine, especially if it leads to a costly search and rescue operation.

Information on weather and trail conditions is available from the Park Warden Service. The wardens will also provide information on the equipment and experience necessary to complete a particular hike safely and comfortably.

A fire permit is necessary for fire-building outside designated areas. To ensure there is something to return to in future years, be sure to thoroughly extinguish all fires. A small, portable stove is preferable to an open fire.

The map and trail descriptions provided are to help guide you in the back-country. Knowledge accompanied by common sense and respect for the environment should ensure an enjoyable hiking experience.

① MA-EE-GUN TRAIL

Distance: 0.6 miles

The Ojibway word for 'wolf' gives its name to this trail. This shy animal is an occasional visitor here, watch for its tracks. The trail loops through a forest of spruce and fir. Off the trail, and in clearings, the ground cover consists of shrubs and saplings on high ground, and mosses and sedges on low ground. The observant hiker will see scars on many of the trees where elk have rubbed the velvet from their antlers. Access to the trail is along the Riding

Mountain Parkway near Camp Manito, approximately 4.3 miles northwest of the junction with Highway # 19.

② OMINNIK MARSH TRAIL

Distance: 1.2 miles

The Ominnik Marsh Trail begins on the south side of the Boat Cove Road in Wasagaming, near the Information Bureau. The entire trail is on an elevated boardwalk and winds through two distinct areas, a willow swamp and a cattail marsh. A sluggish stream feeds the marsh and can be seen draining out at the far end of the trail. Bird watchers can see short-billed and long-billed marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, ducks of several kinds, rails and coots. Muskrats and occasionally beavers can also be seen.

③ CLEAR LAKE TRAIL

Distance: 15 or 21 miles

The largest lake in the park, Clear Lake, covers 9½ square miles and is 110 feet deep in places. The clear blue water is a result of many factors. The depth of the water filters out much of the sun's spectrum and only the blue wavelength is reflected back to the surface. The cold water inhibits the production of great amounts of plant life, resulting in a relatively pure water. No large river drains into the lake, so the water remains free of silt. Access to the Clear Lake Trail begins at North Shore Drive, immediately west of the Bubbling Spring Wishing Well, or from the Boat Cove west of Wasagaming. The trail winds 15 miles around Clear Lake. It can be extended to a 21-mile hike circling the lake by using Wasagaming Drive to connect the two embarkation points.

The Clear Lake trail is especially rewarding, scenically and botanically, during the months of June, July and September. Several picnic sites and scenic viewpoints are located along this trail. It crosses a gravel ice-push ridge which now separates Clear Lake from South Lake, a former bay. Ducks, grebes, loons, terns and other birds are abundant on marshy South Lake. Horseback riding is permitted on this trail.



Legend

- Highway
- Secondary Road
- Trails
- Lake, River, Creek
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Parking Area
- Highway Number
- Fire Lookout
- Park Boundary
- Riding Mountain Parkway

0 1 2
Miles

④ EVERGREEN TRAIL

Distance: 1 mile

The Evergreen is a loop trail which passes through a mixed forest of spruce, pine, aspen and larch, as well as crossing open meadows. An easy trail for hikers of all ages, it begins at the main parking lot on the north shore of Lake Katherine, 6 miles east of Wasagaming via # 19, and the Lake Katherine access road. Turn right off the access road into the parking lot, then walk across the campground road at the kiosk to reach the head of the trail. Some of the interesting plants to be seen here are round-leaved orchid, one-flowered wintergreen and Labrador tea in the spruce bog; and in the meadow you'll see the Canada anemone, wood lily and hoary puccoon.

⑤ LOON'S ISLAND TRAIL:

Distance: 1.5 miles

An easy and enjoyable loop trail along the north and east shores of Lake Katherine, beginning at the parking lot. Rich in interesting plants, rocks, minerals and aquatic life, this is the only area in the park where Kalm's lobelia can be found. A member of the bluebell family, the lobelia is abundant along the beach in late July. Rocks and minerals were deposited here by glaciers. Granite, basalt, limestone, (with occasional fossils) and chert can be identified. A pair of loons nest on the lake each year.

⑥ ARROWHEAD TRAIL:

Distance: 1.7 miles

In the shape of a rough arrowhead, this trail is accessible from # 19 highway, 0.5 miles east of Riding Mountain Parkway. It provides an easy walk through stands of white-coated aspens, dark spruces and along pine covered ridges. The ponds are noisy with blackbirds and frogs. You may see signs of bear, moose, white-tailed deer and coyote. Pudge Lake also contains loons, ducks and a colony of beavers. A brochure is available at the trail head for a self-guiding nature hike.

⑦ BRÛLÉ TRAIL

Distance: 2.6 miles

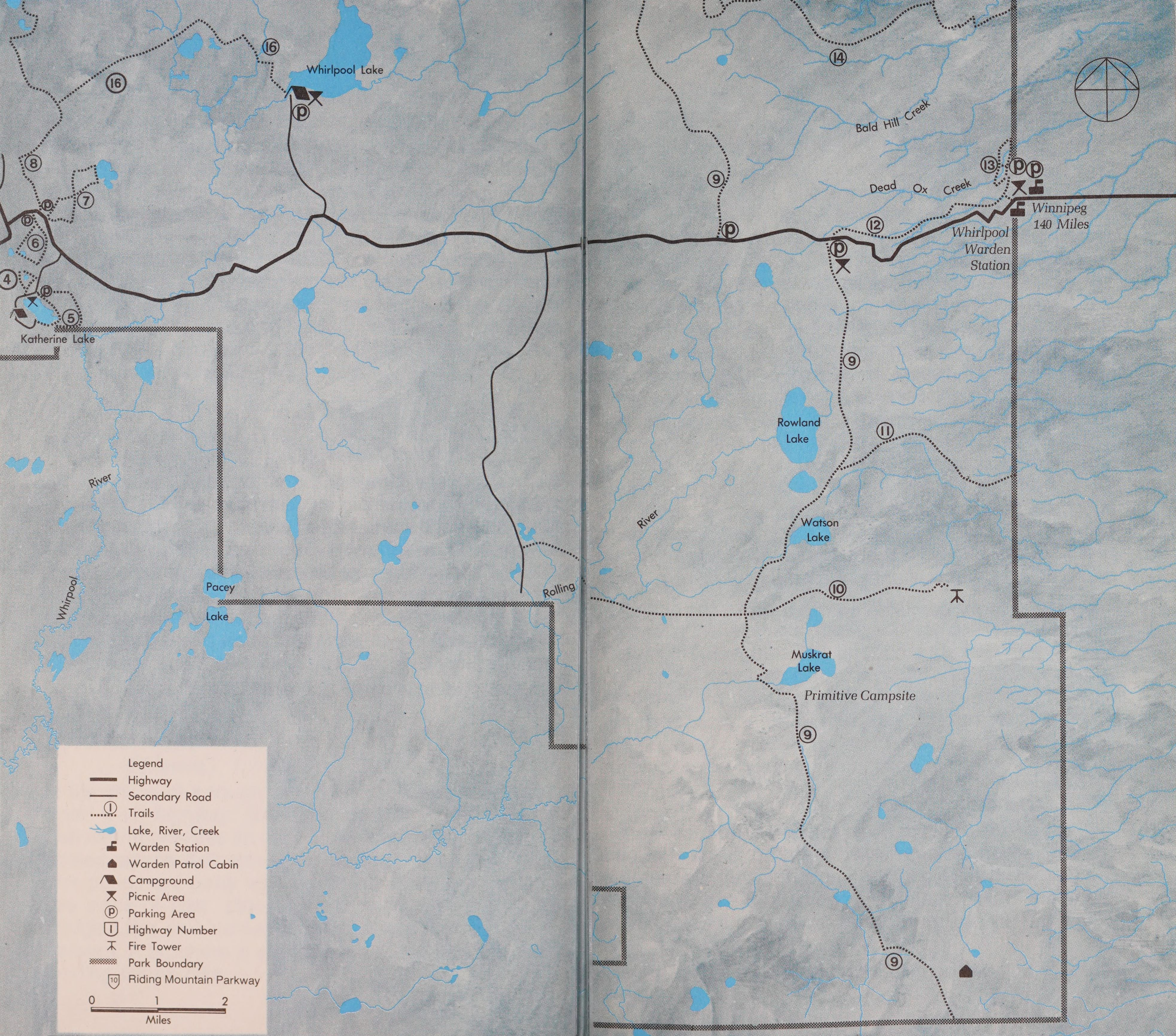
Situated on the north side of # 19 highway, 0.6 miles east of its junction with Riding Mountain Parkway, the Brûlé Trail forms a figure eight loop. Early explorers and surveyors of the region named the trail "Brûlé" meaning "burnt" in French. Fires burned over this area in 1929, 1957 and 1971. Jack pine, black spruce, trembling aspen, fireweed, twin-flower, smooth aster and black-eyed susan are only a few of the plants along the trail. Look for signs of elk, moose, white-tailed deer, coyote, snowshoe hare and the red squirrel.

⑧ GREY OWL TRAIL:

Distance: 10 miles

The trail leads to the cabin inhabited by Grey Owl, one of Canada's most famous conservationists, during his six-month stay at Beaver Lodge Lake in 1931. Access to the trail is from # 19 highway, 0.6 miles east of Riding Mountain Parkway. It meanders for five miles through dense stands of aspen and spruce, and crosses open pine-dotted meadows. Several ponds along this trail are home to beaver. It is also possible to witness some of the park's larger wildlife along the Grey Owl Trail.

Horseback riding is permitted on this trail.



Legend

- Highway
- Secondary Road
- Trails
- Lake, River, Creek
- Warden Station
- Warden Patrol Cabin
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Parking Area
- Highway Number
- Fire Tower
- Park Boundary
- Riding Mountain Parkway

0 1 2
Miles

⑨ ESCARPMENT TRAIL:

Distance: 40 miles

The southern portion of this trail begins at the Dead Ox Creek picnic site on #19 Highway and proceeds south along the top of the escarpment for approximately eight miles to Muskrat Lake, where there is a primitive campsite. From there, the trail continues south following a creek dammed along its course by beaver then enters the McFadden Valley and follows this former glacial river bed for 3.5 miles to the boundary in the southeast corner of the park. A hiker will see several natural mineral licks, and observe beaver dams south of Muskrat Lake. The trail passes through natural prairie interspersed with black spruce and on into stands of aspen, birch and balsam poplar. The northern section of the Escarpment Trail begins at the Wilson Creek Watershed access road, with #19 Highway the connecting link for 1.2 miles from Dead Ox Creek picnic site. Follow the road for approximately six miles to the trail leading north to the McKinnon Creek area. Spectacular views from the escarpment to the lowlands highlight this portion of the trail. The hiker will reach the highest point in the park, over 2,480 feet above sea level. A wind gauge (anemometer) tower is situated near the high point.

Horseback riding is permitted on this trail.

⑩ MUSKRAT LAKE TRAIL:

Distance: 10 miles

Beginning at the Rolling River road, the trail follows an easterly direction on a gravelled fire road to the Kelwood fire tower. Halfway along its length the trail crosses the Escarpment Trail, presenting a choice to the hiker of continuing east, or turning north or south on the Escarpment Trail.

Horseback riding is permitted on Muskrat Lake Trail.

⑪ KELWOOD TRAIL:

Distance: 3.2 miles

This old fire trail branches east from the Escarpment Trail and winds its way down the escarpment to the lowland plain. Passing through a birch-aspen forest, the trail descends from 2,250 feet to 1,375 feet above sea level.

Horseback riding is permitted on this trail.

⑫ GORGE CREEK TRAIL:

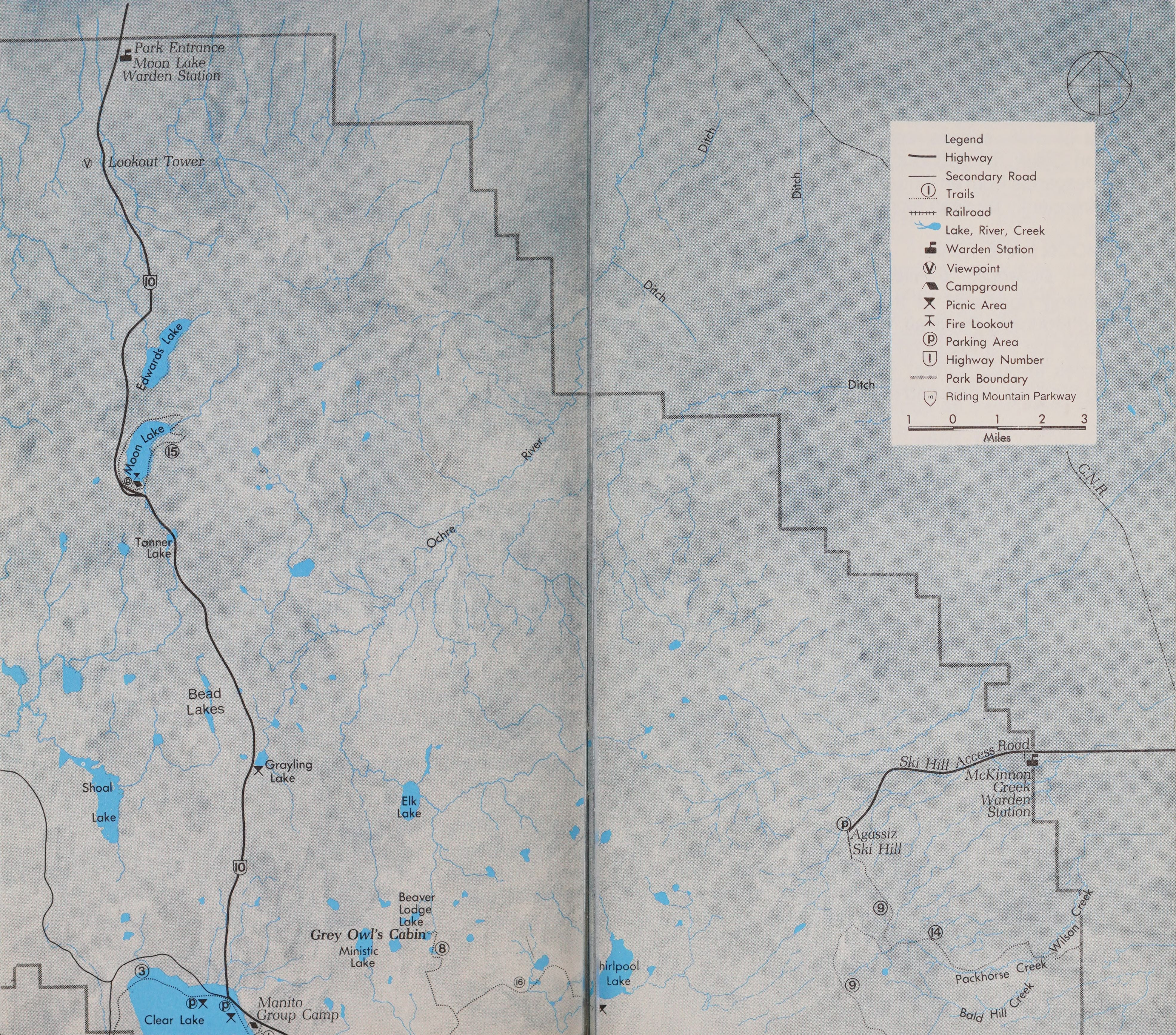
Distance: 4 miles

Following the Dead Ox and Gorge Creeks for four miles, the trail descends the Manitoba Escarpment from 2,300 to 1,375 feet of altitude. The scenery and vegetation along this trail are spectacular, but the terrain is rough. Inexperienced hikers should proceed with caution. Parking areas are situated at both ends of the trail, and the downhill hike is recommended. Beware of poison ivy.

⑬ BURLS AND BITTERSWEET TRAIL:

Distance: 1.4 miles

The Burls and Bittersweet trail begins on the north side of # 19 highway, 21.8 miles east of the Interpretive Centre in Wasagaming, and 0.2 miles west of the east entrance to Riding Mountain National Park. The parking lot is at the far end of the 0.8 miles scenic access road. This trail follows Dead Ox Creek, passing through a portion of the eastern hardwood forest of elm, oak, ash and maple. Strangely deformed "burled" poplars are visible. This is also an excellent location from which to study the effects of beaver on forest and streams. A brochure is available at the trail head for a self-guiding nature hike.



Legend

- Highway
- Secondary Road
- Trails
- Railroad
- Lake, River, Creek
- Warden Station
- Viewpoint
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Fire Lookout
- Parking Area
- Highway Number
- Park Boundary
- Riding Mountain Parkway

1 0 1 2 3
Miles

Park Entrance
Moon Lake
Warden Station

Lookout Tower

Edwards Lake

Moon Lake

Tanner Lake

Bead Lakes

Shoal Lake

Grayling Lake

Elk Lake

Beaver Lodge Lake

Grey Owl's Cabin

Ministic Lake

Clear Lake

Manito Group Camp

Whirlpool Lake

Agassiz Ski Hill

McKinnon Creek Warden Station

Packhorse Creek

Bald Hill Creek

Wilson Creek

Ski Hill Access Road

C.N.R.

⑭ PACKHORSE CREEK TRAIL:

Distance: 6 miles

This trail descends the Manitoba Escarpment through a thick forest of white spruce, aspen and birch to a ford on the Wilson Creek. Throughout its length, the Packhorse Creek trail descends from an altitude of 2,400 to 1,200 feet. Moose can frequently be seen along this trail.

⑮ MOON LAKE TRAIL:

Distance: 6 miles

Beginning northwest of the parking lot, adjacent to the Riding Mountain Parkway, this trail circles Moon Lake with some of the trail following the shoreline. In other sections it passes through forest. You can observe beaver lodges along the west shore, and moose are abundant in this area.

⑯ COWAN LAKE TRAIL

Distance: 5 miles

Beginning at the dam at Whirlpool Lake Campground, the hiker passes through a jackpine forest interspersed with aspen, birch and spruce on the 3 mile leg to Cowan Lake. After passing north of Cowan Lake, the trail continues southwest for 2 miles to connect with the Grey Owl Trail at a point about 2 miles from # 19 Highway or 3 miles from Grey Owl's Cabin. The forest cover is quite heavy at first and gradually opens up into large meadows and prairie areas. Several small lakes and beaver dams are also points of interest along the trail. Good chance of seeing all the larger mammal forms such as moose, elk, deer, wolf and bear.



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