

# Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

Alberta Parks Summer Guide



The 97 square kilometre Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area contains forests, pastures and wetlands. 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.

Multiple pairs of nesting trumpeter swans have resided in the area since 2012. 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.



## Recreational Use

- Cooking Lake-Blackfoot is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.
- Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is a "day use only" site. However, overnight use by organized use groups may be permitted. Visit [albertaparks.ca](http://albertaparks.ca) and search 'permits' to inquire about booking back country shelters for youth groups.

- 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.
- It is unlawful to collect and burn deadfall in all provincial parks and recreation areas.
- Staging areas are equipped with a shelter, multiple fire rings and vault toilets. Potable water is not provided at backcountry 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 online at [albertaparks.ca](http://albertaparks.ca).
- 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. **Note:** under the *Provincial Parks Act*, bows are considered to be firearms.
- For the safety of yourself and others please respect and obey all signage within the provincial recreational area.

- 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 (beavers breed rapidly, cause extensive damage to trails and other facilities, and are responsible for flooding nearby farms and residential lands).

## Safety

Travel on recreation area 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 and socks
- extra food & drinks
- headlamp or flashlight
- lighter or matches
- pocket knife
- whistle
- map and compass
- hoof pick and leather sticker (equestrian users)
- cell phone – there is cell coverage in most areas of Blackfoot.
- bike repair kit (mountain bikers)

To obtain assistance in an emergency, call 310-LAND (5263) for area emergency or call 911 to reach police or other emergency help. Be prepared to give a detailed description of your incident and your location.



## Contact

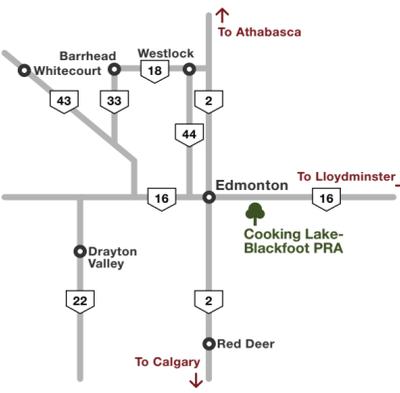
**Park Office**  
Phone: Phone: 780-922-3293

**General Provincial Park Information**  
Web: [albertaparks.ca](http://albertaparks.ca)  
Phone: 1-877-537-2757

**Fire Bans in Alberta**  
Web: [albertaparks.ca/firebans](http://albertaparks.ca/firebans)

**Illegal Activity/Public Safety (24/7)**  
Phone: 310-LAND (5263)

**Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance)**  
Phone: 911



Updated April 2024

## 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, vault toilets 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"). No riding allowed in the pastures where there is cattle in them and no riding allowed in the holding fields.
- Shelters, vault toilets and a few bus stop shelters are situated along trails.



- Equestrian trails are accessible from Washehegan, 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 Areas are closed to equestrian use from December 1 until March 31 so that they can be track-set for skiing.

## Washehegan Staging Area

**Blackfoot** (25.5 km): longest equestrian trail in the area. Connects Washehegan and Blackfoot staging areas.

**Cutoff** (0.5 km): connecting trail between Blackfoot & Washehegan 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.

**Ed's Way** (2.7 km): runs along the boundary fence from Siksika to Wanisan/Detour junction (used for the full 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 near Range Rd. 210. Connects onto Blackfoot Trail.

**Lost Lake** (14.9 km): connects Islet and Washehegan Staging Areas. Longest hiking trail in the recreation area.

**Meadow** (0.8 km): short connector with views of grazing fields. White-tailed deer & moose are sometimes seen along this route.

**Neon Lake** (1.6 km): an easy trail that circles the western edge of Neon Lake.

**Siksika** (4.6 km): remote trail in hilly terrain, with numerous beaver ponds. Moose are sometimes seen along this trail.

**Spruce Hollow** (2.4 km): passes through some of the few spruce untouched by the forest fires in the early 1900s.

**Swan** (0.7 km): named for the swans that live in the area during summer months. Trumpeter swans have been known to 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.

**Washehegan** (1.3 km): connects forests north and south of grazing fields. Equestrian use permitted north of junction with Central Alleyway.

**Winter** (3.7 km [South 2.4 km; North 1.3 km]): excellent wildlife viewing. South portion is for skiing, north portion is for both equestrian use and skiing.

## 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 Washehegan 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 antler this trail is named after can be viewed at the Heritage Interpretive Centre.

**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 Hallow** (2.1 km): short connector across Norris Creek to Elk Island boundary. Watch for great blue heron in the vicinity.

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

**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 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 this 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 for 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 office.

**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.



# Cooking Lake/Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

## Summer Trail Use

Township 52, Ranges 19-20  
West of the Fourth Meridian

### Recreation Symbols

- Recreation Area Boundary
- Trail - Equestrian
- Trail - Hiking, Cycling
- Trail - Shared (Equestrian, Hiking, Cycling)
- Junction Distance (Kilometres)
- Bus Stop Shelter
- Backcountry Shelter
- Parking
- Park Office
- Picnic Area
- Firepit
- Firewood
- Information Kiosk
- Staging Area
- Washrooms
- Water

### Base Symbols

- Secondary Highway
- Improved Road
- Gravel Road
- Texas Gate
- Restricted Road
- Railway
- Pipeline
- Wellsite
- Lake
- Intermittent Lake
- Creek

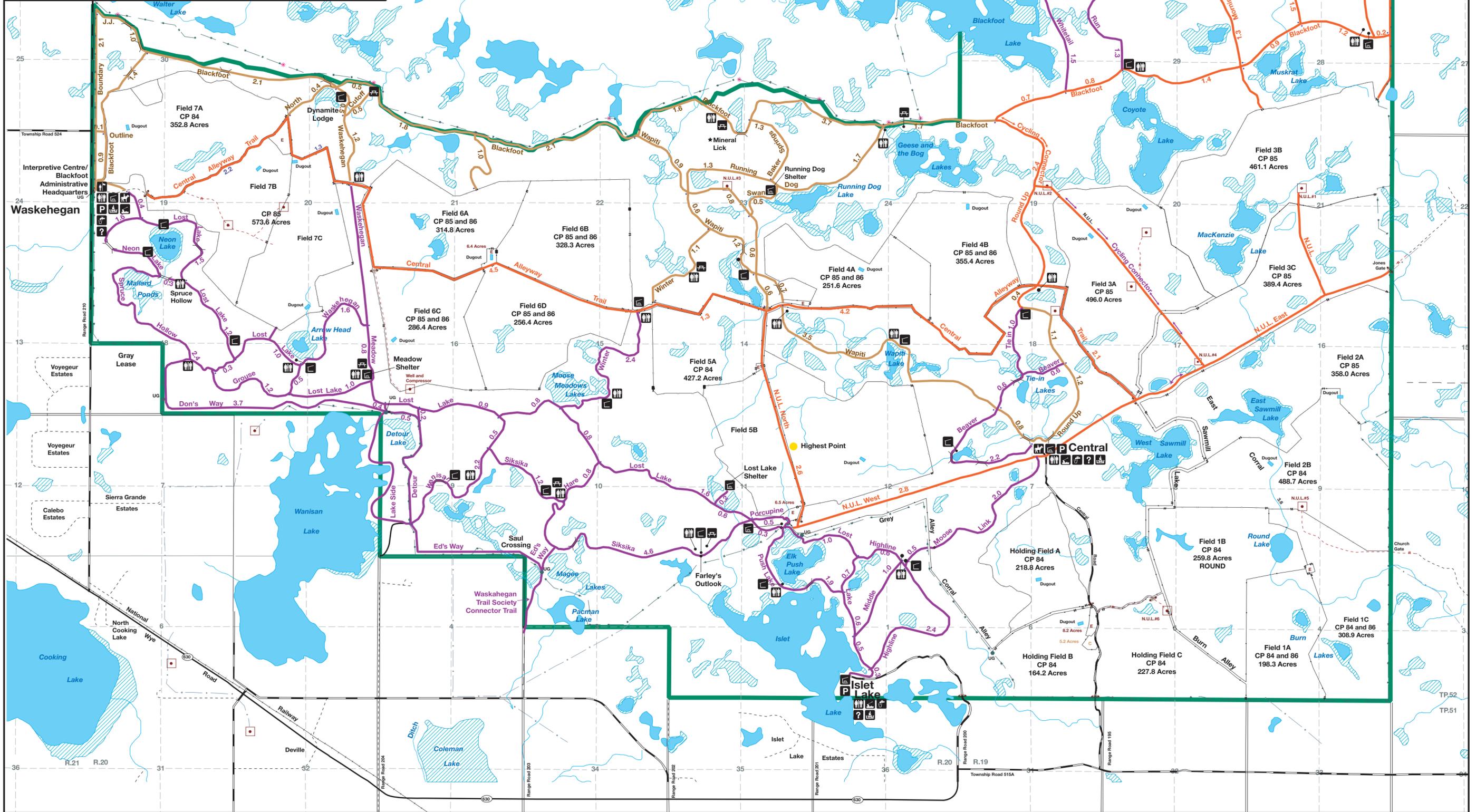
### Pasture Symbols

- Pasture
- Enclosure, Corral
- Ungulate Fence
- Ungulate Gate
- Barbed Fence, Single Wire Gate
- Smooth Wire Fence
- Elk Trap Jump Rails

Field 6B  
E C  
UG

Scale 1:25 000  
metre 500 0 1/4 1/2 1 km  
mile 0 1/4 1/2 1 Mile

**Total Trail Distance 171 Kilometres**



Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Summer Trails Map