



Grade 5 Field-trip; Teacher's Guide "Wetlands:  
Important to a Healthy Environment"

Website: [theweaselhead.com](http://theweaselhead.com)

E-mail: [education@theweaselhead.com](mailto:education@theweaselhead.com)

*Thank you for your participation in our Grade 5 Weaselhead Education Program!*

**The following items are included in this Teacher's Guide:**

- behavioural expectations
- a map of the Weaselhead
- field-trip program outline
- background information on the Weaselhead area

**Pre-trip preparation:**

- Please have the students broken into 5 groups per class prior to field trip.
- Students will need journals and/or copies of the worksheets available for download here: <http://theweaselhead.com/wp-wh/assets/Grade-5-Student-Worksheets.pdf>
- If possible, bring one adult leader (parent volunteer) per student group.
- View the Weaselhead Field-trip Introduction with students, available for download here: <http://theweaselhead.com/education/outdoorprograms/>

**Participants should bring:**

- appropriate clothing for the weather (dress in layers)
- two water bottles (students will need at least a litre of water for a full day trip)
- a snack, and a waste-free lunch (or bag for garbage)
- pencils (crayons, markers or paint are optional)
- journal and/or worksheets with something hard to write on (e.g. cardboard stapled to paper or a clipboard)
- if wanted something to put on the ground to sit on (e.g.: a carrier bag with folded newspaper or a magazine in it and taped shut)

*NOTE: This entire program is held outside with no indoor facilities, students must be prepared for all weather and conditions. They will be hiking up to 6km on dirt trails and should be wearing appropriate footwear. Lunch is held outside with no benches. Students will be sitting on the ground. The only washrooms available are in the parking lot – there are none in the Weaselhead itself.*

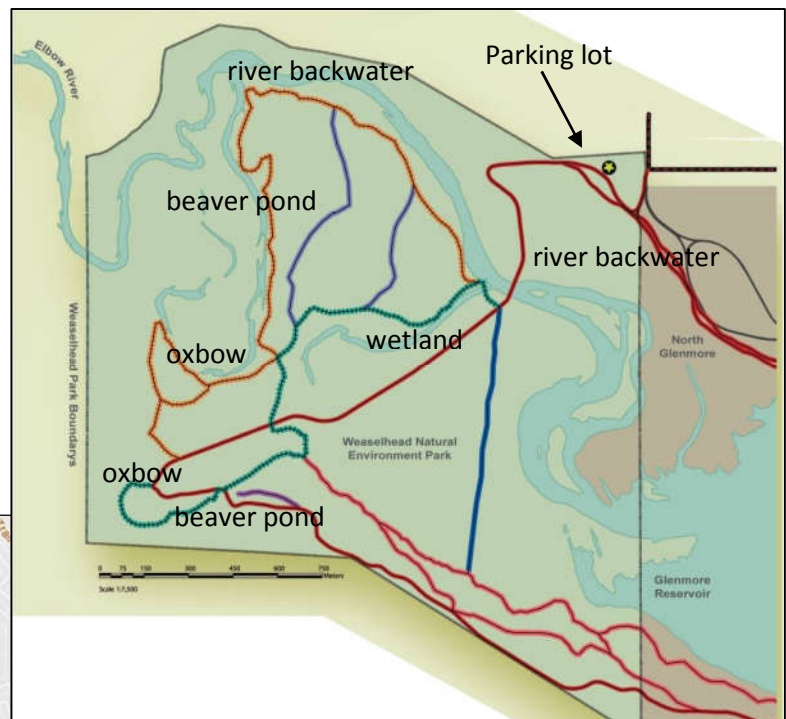


## Behavioural expectations of all group members (adults and students):

- Remain in the assigned group and keep in sight of supervisors at all times. Ensure there is always an adult leader in the lead and at the end of the group.
- NEVER remove natural items from the area, including stones, sticks, flowers etc.
- Vegetation, insects, animals – all life is to be treated with respect and unharmed.
- All garbage, even biodegradable items, must be packed out.
- Behaviours such as tripping, wrestling, and teasing is unacceptable and may result in withdrawal from the activity.
- Cooperation by listening, participating in group discussions, following park rules, observing and recording is expected.
- Every adult is expected to participate in the activities and to provide due safety and care of the students.

## Map of the Weaselhead:

*Naturalist leaders will decide where to take Grade 5 students based on their level of learning, the time available, weather, and their speed in hiking. All groups will visit the river and at least two wetlands. (Note: not all wetlands are suitable for students to do their own pond-dipping. At these wetlands the Naturalist will collect samples of the invertebrates in buckets for the students to study.)*



## **Field-trip Program Outline: full-day, 9.30 am to 2.30pm**

Meet the Naturalists at the grey parking shed found in the northwest corner of the Weaselhead parking lot <https://goo.gl/maps/1gqTLnYTTS3e6q2P6>. Please look out for the signs for the parking lot on the west side of the intersection of 37th St. and 66<sup>th</sup> Ave SW (before entering North Glenmore Park).

*Please note: Naturalist leaders may adapt this program outline to suit the day's needs. If more than one class is participating, classes will follow different routes and may visit different wetlands.*

### **Weaselhead Parking Lot 37<sup>th</sup> St and 66<sup>th</sup> Ave SW (approx. 15 min.):**

- introduction, park regulations and behavioural expectations
- hand out pond study kits
- washroom visit (*Please note: there are no washrooms in the Weaselhead, and the Porta-potties in the parking lot are only accessible at the beginning and end of the field-trip*)

### **Overview of the valley (approx. 30 min.):**

- Weaselhead history and introduction to wetlands
- relate plant life to wetlands

### **Elbow River (15 min.):**

- SNACK
- View the Elbow River and discuss the plants growing along its edge.
- Observe the swallow nests under the green bridge.

### **Visit Wetland 1 (approx. 60 min.):**

- Students get into groups for their pond study.
- Students study the plants growing around the wetland and/or in the wetland.
- Students identify the aquatic invertebrates in a sample drawn from the wetland.

### **Lunch break (approx. 30 min)**

### **Visit Wetland 2 (approx. 60 min.):**

- Students get into groups and for another pond study.
- Students study the plants growing around the wetland and/or in the wetland.
- Students identify the aquatic invertebrates in a sample drawn from the wetland.

### **Visit third wetland: optional depending on time (approx. 30 min)**

- Listening exercise – a quiet period to listen to the sounds in the park.

### **Back to the top of the hill**

- final questions
- if there is time play a game e.g. 'R U Me?' ( invertebrate life cycles), 'Weaselhead Theatre'

## Weaselhead History

A common question from students is 'How did the Weaselhead get its name?' It has nothing to do with weasels, nor a weasel's head ! The City's website suggests it was named after a Tsuut'ina Chief Weaselhead who was in power at the time of European contact, but Hal Eagletail, a Tsuut'ina elder told the Society it was named it after a Cree man, 'Weaselhead' who was murdered here...

The area was part of the Tsuut'ina Nation's lands until 1931 when it was sold to the City to protect land adjacent to the new Glenmore Reservoir. For a long time (from 1913) the Weaselhead was used as a training ground by the Canadian military until being made a park in the early 1980's. Today, the Weaselhead Natural Environment Park covers approximately 237 hectares and receives the highest level of protection available to a Calgary park. The area consists of the Elbow River, the north and south escarpments of the river valley, the river floodplain and the delta where the river flows into Glenmore Reservoir.

The river was formed by melt waters from the retreating ice sheet at the end of the last glaciation period approximately 10 thousand years ago (although the valley itself predates that glaciation). As that time the river was much larger than nowadays accounting for the disproportionately large floodplain we see today. The meandering of the river back and forth across this floodplain is evident in the numerous old and new oxbow wetlands that can be seen in satellite images – the newest being created as recently as 2006. Fossils dating back 35 million years have been found in the sandstone deposits along the cliffs and there are numerous indigenous archaeological sites, including buffalo runs and hunting campsites that can be dated as recently as 1887.

The flora of the area is rich and varied: coniferous white spruce grow next to deciduous balsam poplar in the moist floodplain; patches of tall shrubs such as red-osier dogwood and saskatoon find room between stands of trembling aspen on drier slopes; wildflowers bloom in the remnant fescue grassland above the valley... There are numerous aquatic habitats ranging from oxbow wetlands, to beaver ponds, to the river itself, all supporting a variety of aquatic plant life. The flora of the area is made up of some 480+ species including some that are threatened such as the western wood lily.

The varied plant life supports a diversity of wildlife. There are untold numbers of invertebrates both aquatic and terrestrial. At least ten species of fish are known, with several being sought by sport fishers. Amphibians live here - boreal chorus frogs and wood frogs, and sadly now rarely, tiger salamanders. Few reptiles inhabit Alberta, but garter snakes are common here. Over 200 species of birds, from waterfowl, to songbirds, to raptors use the park. Some of these use the region as a stopover during fall and spring migrations, others nest in the Weaselhead during the summer only, still others live here all year round. For mammals like shrews, hares, deer, and beaver, the Weaselhead provides a permanent home. Other species, including moose, black bear, and cougar are known to use the park on a seasonal basis.

*REMEMBER: Never remove anything from the area. Fossils, archeological remains and certain plant species are protected in Alberta.*