



Weaselhead Grade 5 Field Trip Teachers Guide Package “Wetlands: Important to a Healthy Environment”

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

The following items have been enclosed in this Teacher’s Guide package:

- o A map of the Weaselhead.
- o Field trip program outline.
- o Behavioural expectations.
- o Background information on the Weaselhead Area.



Pre-trip preparation:

- o Please have the students broken into 4 or 5 groups per class prior to field trip.
- o Students should bring their field journals or set up a field trip journal with scrap paper including the worksheets provided on our website.
- o If possible, have an adult leader (parent volunteer) per student group.
- o View the Weaselhead Field Trip Introduction PowerPoint presentation.
- o Some worksheet questions could be covered.

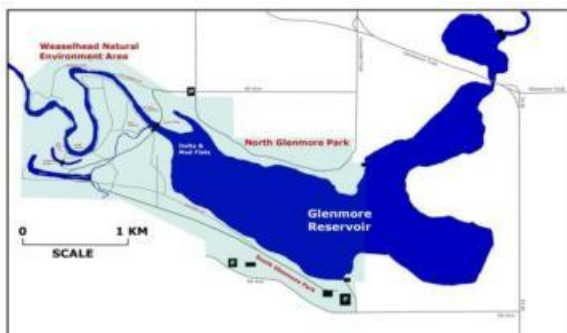
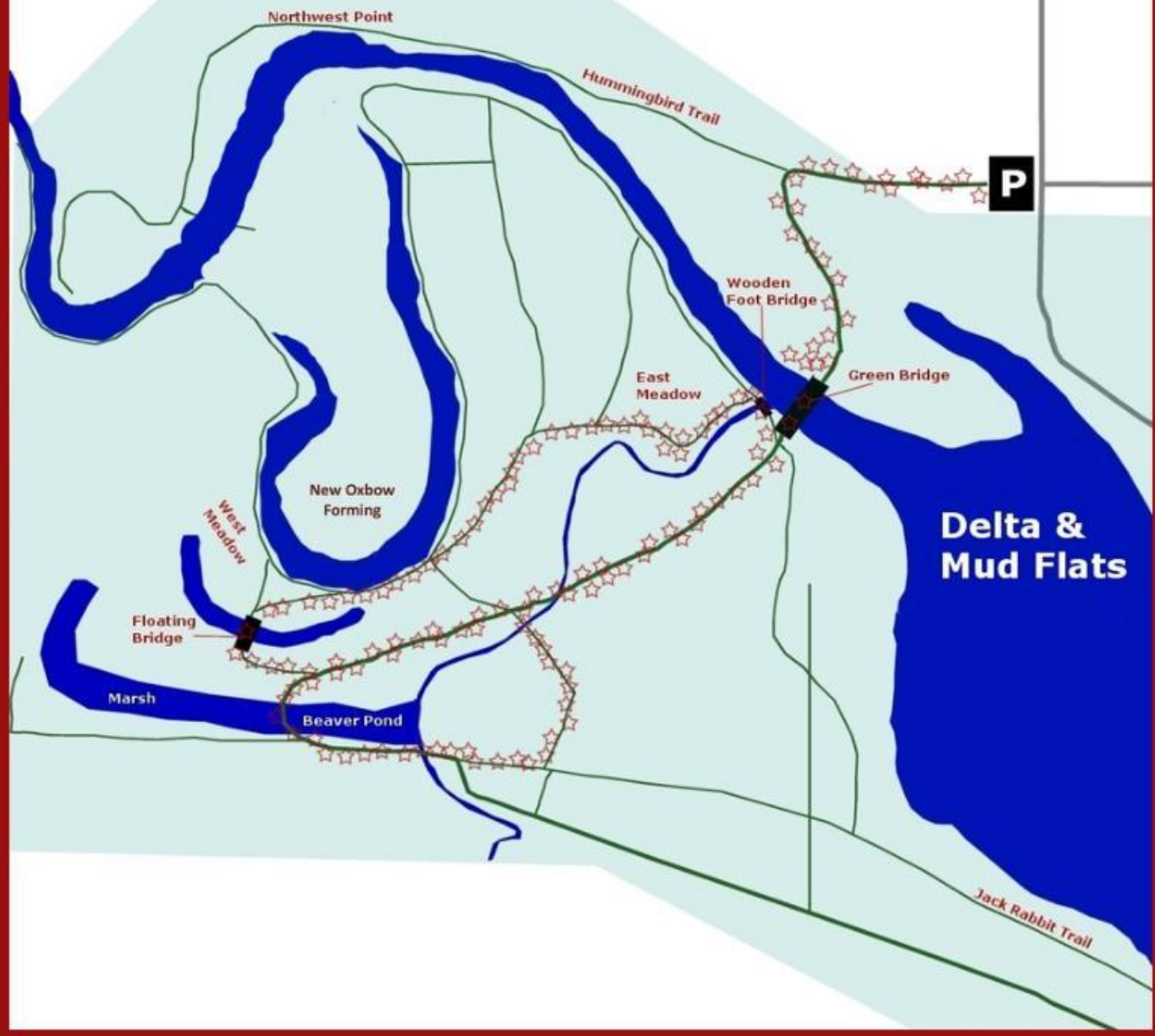
Participants should bring:

- **Appropriate clothing for the weather. Dress in layers.**
- Water bottle.
- A snack and a waste free lunch for a full day field trip.
- Pencils (pencil crayons, crayons, markers or paint is optional).
- Field Journal
- Something hard to write on if your Journal is scrap paper stapled together (cardboard stapled to paper or clipboard etc.).
- If uncomfortable with sitting on the ground, then something to sit on (for example: A grocery bag with newspaper in it and taped shut). Lunch is held outside with no benches. Students will be sitting on the ground.

NOTE: This entire program is held outside with no indoor facilities, students must be prepared for all weather and conditions. They will be hiking approximately 5km on dirt trails and should be wearing appropriate footwear.



Weaselhead Natural Environment Area



Your group will be starting their hike at the North parking lot (P). We will discover how plant diversity changes as we hike down into the valley. We will cross the Green Bridge, visit the Beaver Lagoon, the Oxbow floating bridge and the Beaver Pond. We will explore approximately 5 km of trails and lead two invertebrate wetland studies during our visit.

Field Trip Program Outline: *Full-Day*

Meet your Naturalists at the grey parking shed found in the northwest corner of the lot.

*The Weaselhead Natural Environment Area North Parking Lot is located on the West side of the intersection of 66th Ave & 37th Street SW. Please look out for the signs at the entrance of the parking lot and do not enter North Glenmore Park.

Please note: Naturalist leaders may adapt this program outline to suit the day's needs. If three classes are participating, one class will start at the Beaver Pond opposite of below.

North parking area: *Approx. 15 min.*

- Introduction, park rules and expectations
- Hand out pond kits
- Washroom visit

(please note: There is one outhouse in the Weaselhead Natural Environment Area, visited only at the beginning and end of the field trip)

Walking down pathway: *Approx. 20 min.*

- Weaselhead history and introduction to the area plants and wildlife
- Relating plant life to wetlands

Green Bridge: *Approx. 10min.*

- SNACK
- Discuss and view the Elbow River
- Observe swallow nests and water fowl

Beaver Lagoon: *Approx. 45 min.*

- Participants will observe the plant and animal life around the wetland
- Pond Study! Discover aquatic invertebrates and plant life

LUNCH: *Approx. 25 min.*

- Area determined by time and appropriate location. To reduce impact on the park, lunch areas are moved to decrease erosion.

Oxbow: *Approx. 45 min.*

- Invertebrate pond study on the floating bridge
- Wetland plant study on and around the floating bridge

Beaver Pond: *Approx. 35 min.*

- Participants will observe Beaver activity
- Quiet period to listen for wildlife vocalizations and other sounds

Walk Out & Wrap Up: *Approx. 35 min.*

- Hike back to the top of the hill
- Summary activity
- Gathering back at the bus



Behavioural Expectations of ALL Group Members:

- o Remain in the assigned group and keep in sight of supervisors at all times.
- o There is always an adult leader in the lead and at the end of the group.
- o NEVER remove natural items from the area. Vegetation, insect, mammal, bird and amphibian life is to be respected and left in the natural habitat.
- o Leave no trace of our visit. All litter must be brought out by you.
- o Unsafe behaviour such as tripping, wrestling, and teasing is unacceptable and may result in withdrawal from the activity.
- o Cooperation by listening, participating in group discussions, observing and recording is expected during the learning experience.
- o Each adult is expected to participate in the activities and to provide due safety and care for each of the students.



Activities may include:

- o *Are You Me?*: Activity to show how juvenile forms of some species look very different from adults. A variety of cards are handed out with pictures of young and adults, participants try to find their matching pair.
- o *Wetlands Web of Life*: Forming a circle, participants are assigned a wetland species with identification cards. Using a rope as a visual they make connections to each other identifying species' interactions forming a web. Different factors are introduced causing the web of life to collapse.
- o *Weaselhead Theatre*: A summary activity where each group selects a topic visited in the field trip and presents a creative play/song/skit teaching the rest of the group.



Weaselhead History:

It is unknown exactly how the Weaselhead area received its name. It is however known that it has nothing to do with weasels, nor a weasel's head. Some say the area is named after the Chief of the T'suu Tina First Nations people holding authority at the time of early European contact. Sam Livingston, whose house is now part of Calgary's Heritage Park, was the original European settler to the Elbow River valley in the region now known as the Weaselhead.

Today, the Weaselhead Natural Environment Area covers approximately 404 hectares or 989 Acres and receives the highest level of protection available to a Calgary Natural Area. The area consists of the Elbow River, the north and south escarpments of the river valley, the river floodplains and delta. A walk through the area will give the keen observer insight into the geological, anthropological and natural history of the area.

The river was formed by the melt waters from the glaciers at the end of the last glaciation period approximately 10 thousand years ago. Today's floodplains hold many clues to the past. We can see previous routes taken by the river by looking at the cutbanks, pointbars, and oxbow wetlands.

Fossils dating back 35 million years can be seen in the sandstone deposits along the cliffs of the river valley. There are numerous indigenous archaeological sites, including buffalo kills and hunting campsites that can be dated as recently as the buffalo runs that existed in 1887.

The natural history of the area is extensive. Coniferous forests of White Spruce can be found next to deciduous riverine forests of Balsam Poplar mixed with shrubs such as Red-Osier Dogwood and Wolf Willow (Silverberry) and stands of Trembling Aspen. During the warm seasons wildflowers bloom in the grassland areas. There are numerous aquatic habitats ranging from riverine 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. Some of these species are endangered or threatened such as the Western Wood Lily.

The varied plant life supports a variety of wildlife forms. 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. Although there have been no recent recorded sightings of the endangered northern leopard frog it was once found in this area. Amphibians are found in the area such as the Tiger Salamander, the Boreal Chorus Frog and the Wood Frog. Few reptiles inhabit Alberta, but the Garter snake is sometimes seen 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 months, still others live here all year round. For mammals like the shrews, hares, deer, and beaver, the Weaselhead Natural Area provides a permanent home. Other species, including moose, black bear, and lynx are known to use the region on a seasonal basis.

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

