



Website: theweaselhead.com
E-mail: education@theweaselhead.com

Weaselhead Grade 6 Field Trip Teachers Guide Package “Trees & Forest Diversity”

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

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

- A map of the Weaselhead
- Field Trip Outline
- Behavioural Expectations
- Weaselhead History



Pre-trip preparation:

- Please have the students broken into 4 or 5 groups per class.
- Students should bring their Field Journals or set up a field trip journal with scrap paper.
- If possible, have one adult leader (parent volunteer) per group.
- View the Weaselhead Field Trip Introduction PowerPoint presentation.
- If you would like to conduct the ‘Take A Stand’ activity, please prepare student groups with their stakeholder roles and contact the education coordinator.

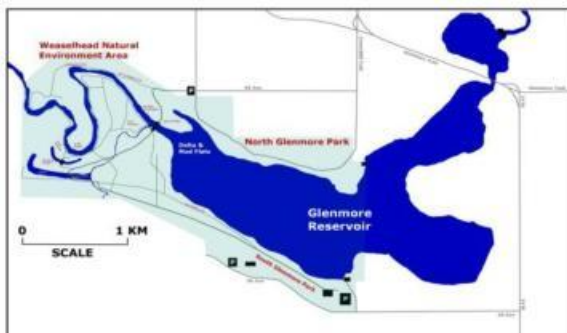
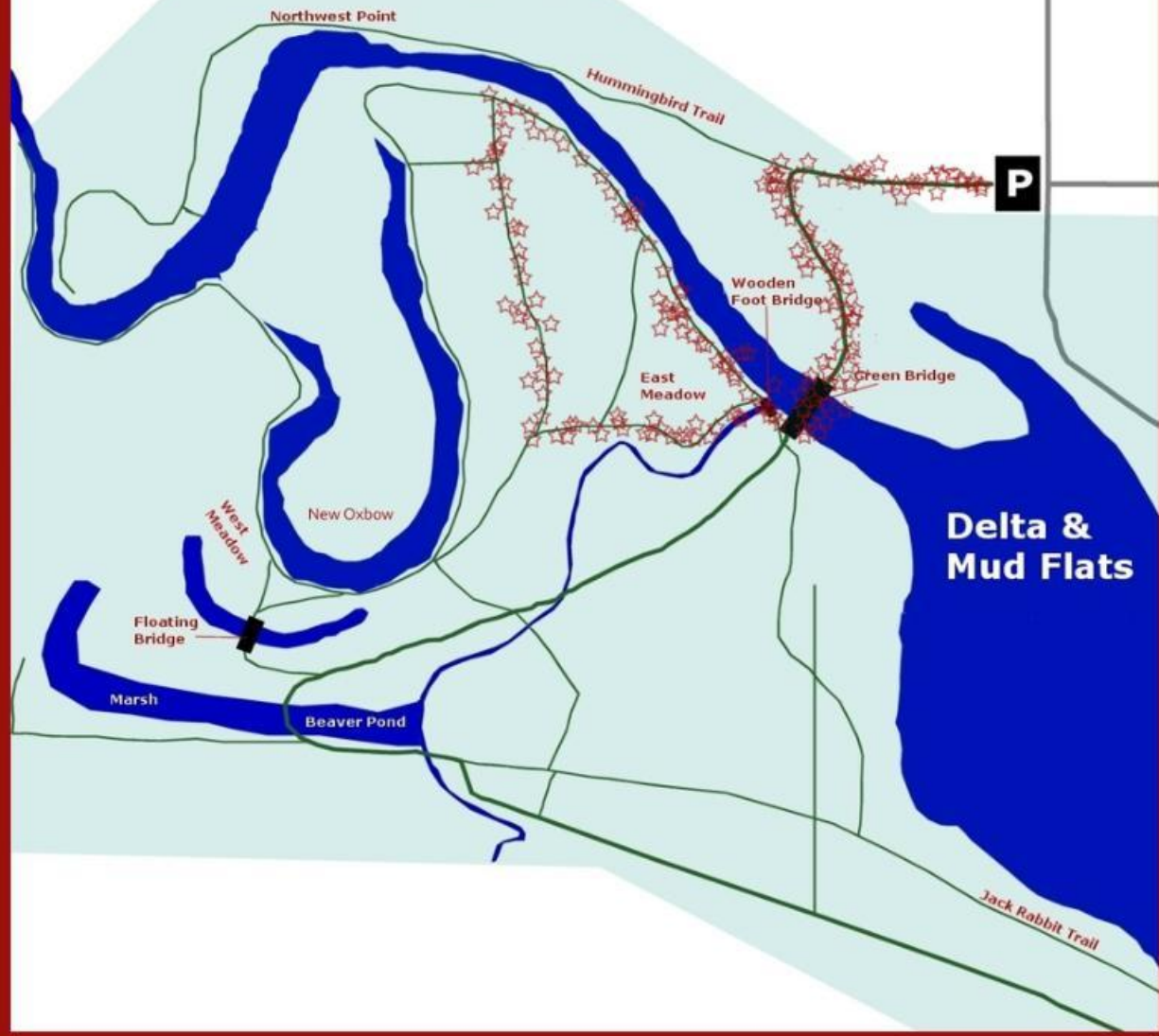
Participants should bring:

- **Appropriate clothing for the weather. Dress in layers.**
 - Water bottle.
 - A snack and waste-free lunch for a full day field trip.
 - Pencils.
 - Field Journal and/or the worksheets provided on our website.
 - Something hard to write on (cardboard stapled to worksheets or clipboard etc.).
 - 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 on dirt trails and should be wearing appropriate footwear and be dressed in layers.

Great Cities Have Great Parks

Weaselhead Natural Environment Area



Your group will be starting their hike at the North parking lot (P). We will discover how plant and forest diversity changes as we hike down into the valley. Crossing the Green Bridge we will explore different forest habitats comparing biodiversity.

Field Trip Program Outline

Meet your Naturalists at the grey shed in the NW corner of the parking area

*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 and number of classes participating. Weaselhead outdoor programs are inquiry based and thus may adapt to student interests.

North parking area : *Approx. 15 min.*

- Introduction, park rules and expectations
- Weaselhead history
- 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. 25 min.*

- Naturalists will identify the area's plants and wildlife as they are encountered, noting the differences between the two native deciduous tree species in the park. Students will observe how biodiversity changes from the upper slopes as they walk down to the river valley.
- Aspen Stand: Trembling aspen trees are introduced as Naturalists and students discuss the facts about this tree species.
- Riverine Forest: Dominated by Balsam poplar, this richly diverse forest habitat is one of the most valuable ecosystems in urban areas across North America.

Green Bridge: *Approx. 5min.*

- Discuss and view the Elbow River and the forest and plant life surrounding it.
- SNACK

Meadow: *Approx. 20min.*

- Forest succession is discussed through the observation of different stages of forest growth. Students give examples of human and natural disturbances.
- **Spruce Grove Forest**
 - White spruce is the only coniferous tree species found in Calgary's Elbow River valley, and the third and final native tree species found in the area.
 - Students will learn about different ways to age a tree. For smaller spruce trees, an estimate of age can be made by counting the swirls of branches. Groups may estimate a tree's age using this method.

LUNCH: *Approx. 25 min.*

- On the path, to be determined by naturalist. Be prepared to sit on the ground.
- Game may be played after lunch.

Tree Study Path: Approx. 35 min.

- o Tree Detectives: Divide students into groups and do tree studies on the three native species. Students will present their findings to the rest of the class.
- o Plant Key: As participants finish their Tree Detective activity, they will use a key to identify the surrounding woody shrubs found near their tree.

Walk Out & Wrap Up: Approx. 35 min.

- o Hike back to the top of the hill
- o Summary Activity
- o 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 Take A Stand: * **Please let Naturalist leaders know if you would like to conduct this activity in your field trip.** If so, please prepare student groups with their roles prior to the field trip. Student groups are assigned a stakeholder role and must present their opinions regarding the SW Ring Road going through the Weaselhead.
- o Hug A Tree: Partners explore the tree community using their senses other than sight. One of the students is spun around, eyes closed and lead to a tree to investigate it with their eyes remaining closed. They are then lead away from the tree and now with their eyes open are asked to find their tree. Several rounds of this game may be played.
- o Protect A Tree: The object of this activity is to make students aware of the importance of all the trees in the forest. And how a single tree is important to other life in the forest. Students think about an advertising slogan they could use to protect their assigned tree pretending that the forest is slated to be logged. Groups present their slogan to the rest of the class.
- o Make A Tree: A fun way to introduce trees in a role-play that teaches about tree biology. Students act out the different parts of a tree and their purpose.

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 (silver-berry) 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 song birds, to raptor 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

