



Weaselhead Grade 7 Field Trip Teachers Guide Package “Ecosystems & Plants for Food and Fiber”

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

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

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



Pre-trip preparation:

- o Please have the students broken into 4 or 5 groups per class.
- o Students should bring their Field Journals or the worksheets provided on our website. o
If possible, assign one adult leader (parent volunteer) per group.
- o View the Weaselhead Field Trip Introduction PowerPoint presentation found on our website.

Participants should bring:

- **Appropriate clothing for the weather. Dress in layers.**
- Water bottle.
- A snack and Waste Free Lunch for a full day fieldtrip.
- Pencils.
- Field Journal
- Something hard to write on (cardboard stapled to worksheets 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 on dirt trails and should be wearing**

appropriate Great Cities Have Great Parks resources.

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.

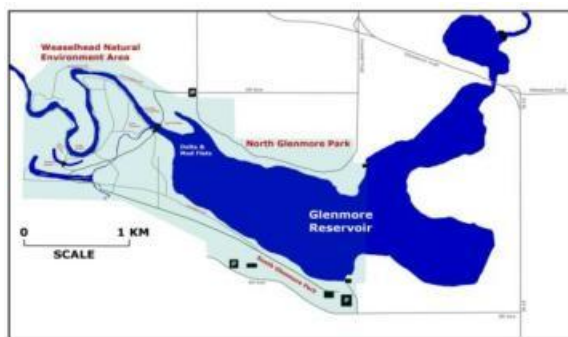
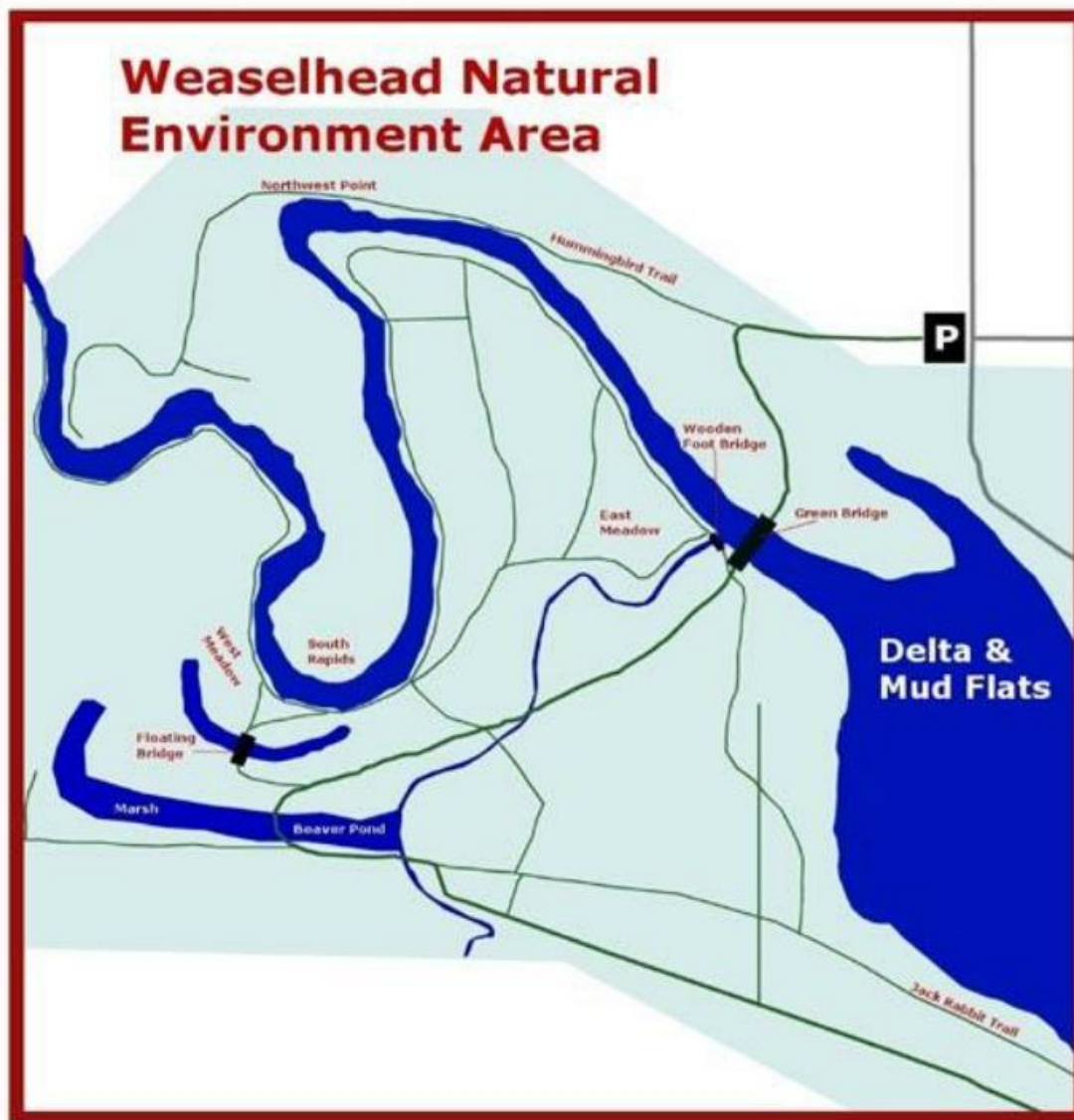
The river was formed by the melt waters from the glaciers at the end of the last glaciation period approximately 10 thousand years ago. Today's floodplains hold many clues to the past. We can see previous routes taken by the river by looking at the cutbanks, pointbars, and oxbow wetlands.

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



Your group will be starting their hike at the North parking lot (P). Discover how plant and forest ecosystems change as they hike down into the valley. Crossing the Green Bridge they will explore different forest habitats and learn about some of the food and fiber uses for the trees and plants in this area.

Grade 7: Ecosystems & Plants for Food and Fiber Program Outline

Weaselhead Shed (found in the NW Corner of the Weaselhead parking lot on the west side of the intersection at **66th Ave & 37th St. SW**). **This is on the north side of the Glenmore reservoir.**

Note: *The naturalists may vary the day according to how many classes there are or what the weather and trail conditions are like.*

Welcome – meet your Naturalist leaders
Park regulations and expectations
Washroom visit

Grasslands Ecosystem

Grasslands background, introduction to invasive plants such as Smooth brome
Grasslands study, observations and discussion
Identifying plants that can be used for food, medicine or fiber
Introduction to biodiversity to be considered throughout the field trip

Aspen Stand Ecosystem

Introduction to Trembling aspen trees
Identifying plants that can be used for food, medicine or fiber
Aspen stand ecosystem study, observations and discussion

Riverine Forest Ecosystem

Introduction to Balsam poplar trees
Identifying plants that can be used for food, medicine or fiber
Riverine forest ecosystem study, observations and discussion

Tall Shrub Ecosystem

Snack break
Identifying plants that can be used for food, medicine or fiber
Tall shrub ecosystem study, observations and discussion

Wetland Ecosystem

Identify and discuss the importance of wetlands to a healthy environment

Spruce Grove Forest Ecosystem - LUNCH

Introduction to White spruce trees
Identifying plants that can be used for food, medicine or fiber
Spruce grove forest ecosystem study, observations and discussion

Conclusion Activity

The class hikes back to the parking lot to end their field trip. If time allows, the students will prepare and present a dinner menu using only the native plants and animals they have learned about in the Weaselhead area.

Behavior Expectations of ALL Group Members:

1. Remain in the assigned group and keep in sight of supervisors at all times.
2. There is always an adult leader in the lead and at the end of the group.
3. NEVER remove natural items from the area. Vegetation, insect, mammal, bird and amphibian life is to be respected and left in the natural habitat.
4. Leave no trace of our visit! You must bring out all of your litter.
5. Unsafe behaviour such as tripping, wrestling and teasing is unacceptable and may result in withdrawal from the activity.
6. Cooperation by listening, participating in-group discussions, observing and recording is expected during the learning experience.
7. Each adult is expected to participate in the activities and to provide due safety and care for each of the students. Please limit cell phone usage.
8. Pets (such as dogs, etc.) are not permitted on the field trip.

