

Visitor Guide and Map 2023/2024



Aussi disponible en français.

Welcome to Elk Island

A true wilderness experience 35 minutes east of Edmonton

Elk Island National Park is 35 minutes from Edmonton but a world away. Come experience a place where the bison still roam as stars twinkle overhead. See the plants and animals that call the park home on one of more than 80 km of trails or paddle in the pristine lakes. Or, learn about how Elk Island contributes to global bison conservation. There's something for everyone at Elk Island.

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, plan your visit and pack appropriate equipment:

PLAN

- Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/elkisland for the latest info on park activities, events and conditions.
- Select a trip that best fits the group's abilities, experiences, interests, equipment and time available.
- Share a trip plan with friends or family.
- Check weather and road conditions.
- Learn what to do if encountering wildlife.
- Stop at the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre for park updates and to purchase your entry pass.
- Check the time to make sure you can complete your trip before the sun sets or be prepared to travel in the dark.
- Help reduce the spread of non-native plants by removing dirt and seeds from your footwear or equipment before arriving at the park.

PACK

All national parks have risks. Come prepared and help keep yourself safe. Pack the basics:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visitor guide and map | <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather appropriate clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sun protection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Food, water and equipment to be self-sufficient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fully-charged phone* | <input type="checkbox"/> Activity specific gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight | |

*Cell coverage varies and may not be available in all areas of the park.

Visit adventuresmart.ca for more safety tips and trip planning resources.

Guided programs

Enjoy FREE drop-in programs with paid park entry

Programs include:

- Bison Backstage tours
- Astotin Theater
- Archaeology of Elk Island
- Campfire programs
- Indigenous cultures
- Grassland restoration

Stop by the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre or visit parks.canada.gc.ca/elkisland for seasonal program schedules.

PRIVATE PROGRAMS

Parks Canada interpreters are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Private programs are available for school groups, organizations and families.



Camping

Sleep under the stars

Share stories around the campfire as the stars in the night sky twinkle above. **Reserve your campsite today for camping dates between May 19 and October 9, 2023:**
reservation.parks.canada.gc.ca
 1-877-737-3783

ASTOTIN LAKE CAMPGROUND

This campground is within walking distance of the beach, playground and theatre.

Astotin Lake Campground offers:

- Drinking water
- Hot showers
- Flush toilets
- Picnic shelter
- Bundled Firewood (for purchase)
- RV dump station

oTENTiks

For an easy and relaxing camping experience try an oTENTik. This A-frame tent and cabin in one can sleep up to six people in comfort. Sleeping bags and extra blankets are recommended in case of colder nights.



OSTER LAKE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPGROUND

This **hike-in only** (4 km) campground provides a truly unique camping experience on the west shore of Oster Lake. Fire permits can be purchased at the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre. Firewood is available at the campground.

WINTER CAMPING

Feeling adventurous? Create winter camping memories at Astotin Lake Campground or Oster Lake Backcountry Campground. Contact the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre at 780-922-5790 for more information.

Winter

Lace up your boots or strap on a pair of snowshoes and enjoy one of the park's many trails. Exploring Elk Island National Park in the winter is an excellent way to see the park and some of its inhabitants.



SNOWSHOE RENTALS

Listen to the crunch of snow underfoot and watch for resident wildlife while roaming more than 80 km of trails. Pick up a pair of snowshoes from the Astotin Lake Campground Kiosk.

Adult sizes: \$14.00; **Child sizes:** Free. Rentals are subject to availability.

Plan Ahead and Be Prepared

You are responsible for your own safety. Planning ahead will help keep you safe.

- Visit parks.canada.gc.ca/elkisland for up-to-date information on activities, conditions, important bulletins and closures.
- Visit 511.alberta.ca for provincial reports and drive according to the road conditions.
- Check the weather and be prepared for changes or emergencies.
- Thin ice may exist anywhere at any time in the park in the winter season. Parks Canada does not monitor natural ice surfaces.
- Warm up in a pavilion, picnic shelter or by a fire in a designated fire pit.
- Be prepared for shorter daylight hours.

Contact information

Emergency 911 – Police, fire and ambulance

Parks Canada Dispatch 1-877-852-3100 – Missing persons, first aid, poaching, wildfires, wildlife mortality, park violations and off-leash pets.

Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre & Gift Shop:

780-922-5790

Parks Canada Campground Reservation Service:

pnelkisland-elkislandnp@pc.gc.ca
parks.canada.gc.ca/elkisland
Parks Canada Campground Reservation Service:
 1-877-737-3783

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FROM EDMONTON

Travel east on Highway 16. The park entrance is located on the north side of Highway 16 approximately 35 minutes east of Edmonton.

The first large Elk Island National Park sign on Highway 16 marks the park boundary. Continue 7 km further east to reach the main park gate.

Come prepared with a full tank of gas as there is no gas station in the park.

Like us on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter
 @ElkIslandNP



Hiking



Explore the park at your own pace

With over 80 km of trails to explore, memories await! Watch a busy beaver construct its dam, listen to songbirds or enjoy a sunset over Astotin Lake. Most trails have parking, viewpoints, washrooms and garbage facilities.

Trail descriptions and locations are listed on the back of this guide.

Cycling



Enjoy the fresh air while pedaling through nature.

Bring a bike and breathe in the fresh air while cycling along trails or roadways in the park.

ON TRAILS

Watch for wildlife as you cycle through forest and across open grasslands on more than 80 km of trails.

ON ROAD

With ample wildlife viewing opportunities, paved roads in Elk Island National Park are a great option for road cyclists. Travel the parkway (20 km one-way) or the administration road (5 km one-way).



CYCLING SAFETY

- Fast, quiet travel increases the chance of sudden wildlife encounters. Slow down, stay alert and make noise.
- Do not get between bison gathered on the road.
- Ride single file to allow motor vehicles to pass safely.
- Wear a helmet and high-visibility clothing.

Paddling



A canoe or kayak is the best seat in the house

Paddling is a low-impact way to discover the natural wonders of the park.

Bring a canoe, kayak or paddleboard to the Astotin Lake Recreation Area or boat launch. Gas and electric motors are not permitted.



PADDLING SAFETY

- Wear a Canadian-approved personal flotation device (PFD).
- Check the weather forecast and be prepared for conditions to change.
- Carry essential safety equipment on board, as required by Transport Canada.

Wildlife viewing



Moose



Wildlife viewing tips

- Visit at sunrise and sunset when animals are most active. Be alert as females and their young travel at these times.
- Slow down. Bison and coyotes often travel on the parkway.
- Get wet. Moose and waterfowl are most active in rainy weather.

Can you find all of these tracks?

Elk



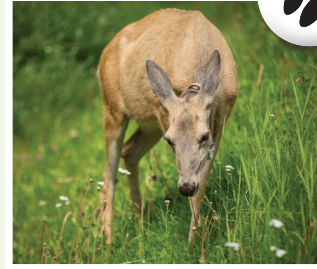
Wolf



Coyote



Mule Deer



White-tailed Deer



Black Bear



Beaver



Plains Bison



Wood Bison



Bring your binoculars: over 250 species of birds can be spotted in Elk Island throughout the year!



STAY SAFE AND PROTECT WILDLIFE

- **Keep a distance of at least 100m from all wildlife.**
- **Avoid startling wildlife.** Be aware of your surroundings and travel in groups.
- **Stay in the vehicle when driving by wildlife.** Wildlife can quickly become comfortable around humans and vehicles if they are viewed off roadsides, which puts the safety of visitors, neighbouring communities and the animal at risk. Allow wildlife to cross the road safely, enjoy the viewing opportunity quickly and continue on your way.
- **Do not feed wildlife.** Store all food, garbage and scented items when not in use.
- **Give wildlife the right of way.** If you see wildlife on a trail make noise to alert animals. Wait for them to move on or slowly back away as safe to do so
- **Keep dogs on leash and under control at all times.** Off-leash dogs cause wildlife stress which can put you, your dog and other visitors at risk of defensive behaviour.

Bison conservation



Millions of bison once roamed across the continent from Alaska to Mexico. However, within a single human lifetime, bison populations in North America were reduced to less than a thousand.

The Canadian government purchased one of the last herds of bison and between 1907 and 1912, over 400 wild bison were shipped by train to Elk Island National Park.

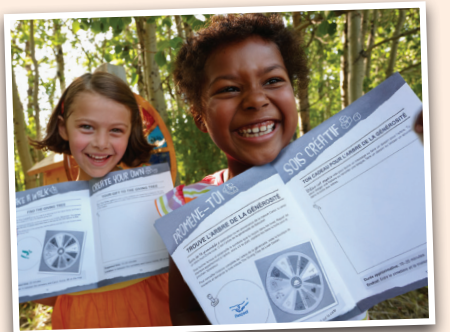
- Today, there are more bison in Elk Island National Park than there were in the whole of North America in 1890.
- Elk Island National Park is the only national park that maintains herds of both subspecies of North American Bison; Wood Bison on the south side of Highway 16 and Plains Bison on the north side.
- Wood Bison are the largest land mammal in North America.
- Elk Island National Park provides bison for conservation initiatives around the world.



Join an interpretive park program or stop at the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre for more information on bison conservation.

Xplorer Program

Elk Island National Park is a great place to have fun with your family, explore nature, and watch bison, moose, and beavers. Become an explorer and learn about Elk Island National Park by completing Xplorer challenges around the park. Start your adventure by picking up your Xplorer booklet from the Wahkotowin Visitor Centre, the Astotin Theatre or the campground kiosk. The Xplorer program is free of charge.



Geocaching



Hide and seek

Geocaching is a fun, high-tech adventure where participants use a GPS (Global Positioning System) to hunt for containers called "caches."

Caches in the park range from easy finds with vehicle access to challenging half-day finds on longer trails. Try to locate them all!

Visit geocaching.com or pick up the Elk Island Guide to Geocaching brochure at the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre.



Trail information

Legend

Hiking

Cycling

Picnic area

Picnic shelter

No dogs

Accessible

Easy

Moderate

Difficult

Larger trail numbers on map indicate trailheads. All trailheads outside the Astotin Lake Recreation Area have parking, outhouses and garbage facilities.

1 ● Hayburger Trail

11.6 km loop (3-4 hours) – Flat terrain

A wagon path until the 1930s, this trail winds through open forest and meadows. Keep an eye out for bison and moose where the trail crosses into a black spruce forest.

2 ■ Simmons Trail

2.6 km loop (1-1.5 hours) – Rolling hills

This trail goes through aspen forest and hills. Open areas along the trail offer the opportunity to watch beavers and muskrats in action.

Note: This trail begins on the north side of Tawayik Road 100 m east of the Tawayik parking lot.

3 ■ Shirley Lake Trail

11.6 km loop (3-4 hours) – Rolling hills

This trail is teeming with life. Listen for the frogs and birds as you walk amongst aspen forest and meadows.

4 ■ Moss Lake Trails

Walk amongst the songbirds and take the winding trail through the forest. The west side of the trail is challenging, and the grasslands there are ideal for seeing a bison or two.

4A ■ Moss Lake Moderate Trail

4.8 km loop (1.5-2.5 hours) – Hills

4B ■ Moss Lake Difficult Trail

12.6 km loop (3.5-4.5 hours) – Hills

5 ■ Amisk Wuche Trail

2.7 km loop (1-1.5 hours) – Moderate to steep terrain

This loop is short and sweet. Follow it through aspen, birch and spruce trees, go over beaver ponds on floating boardwalks and take in sweeping views at the top of hills.

6 ● Lakeview Trail

3.7 km loop (1-2 hours) – Limited steep sections

Watch for changing plant life as the trail bends through aspen and black spruce forest. With its panoramic views of Astotin Lake, this trail is perfect for photos.

7 ● Beaver Pond Trail

3.6 km loop (1-2 hours) – Flat terrain

Open aspen forest and sedge meadows along this trail are ideal for spotting birds or beavers in the summer. Watch for bison grazing in the winter.

8 ● Living Waters Boardwalk

400 m loop (15-30 minutes) – Boardwalk

Start behind the Astotin Theatre and take the boardwalk over the water of Astotin Lake. Watch for beavers and birds or peer into the water to see aquatic life.

9 ◆ Tawayik Lake Trail

15.1 km loop (4-5 hours) – Rolling hills

Winding through an aspen forest and meadows, this trail is great for seeing birds and bison. Fire pits and picnic tables are available near the trailhead. For your safety, dogs may not be allowed on the south portion of the trail. Please check the important bulletins page on the park website for updated information.

10 ● Shoreline Trail

6 km return (2-3 hours) – Flat terrain

This paved trail follows the original road around Astotin Lake. Short paths off this trail lead to clearings that are great for observing waterfowl or picnicking on the shore of Astotin Lake.

11 ◆ Wood Bison Trail

15.6 km loop (4-5 hours) – Rolling hills

Go south of Highway 16 to spot North America's largest land mammal, the wood bison. This trail is challenging and goes through aspen forests, wetlands and along ridges.

Astotin Lake Recreation Area



Legend

Washrooms

Outhouse

Picnic Area

Picnic Shelter

Firewood (fee)

Parking

Recycling/Waste Disposal

Red Chairs

Slow down and relax in the pairs of Red Chairs in Elk Island. Red Chairs are placed in areas with great views.

Safety while at Elk Island

- Safety is a shared responsibility**
- Trails and beaches are not patrolled: use at own risk. Wear a lifejacket on Astotin Lake and other waterbodies.
 - Be self-reliant: prepare for changing weather conditions and emergency situations. Conditions can change from minute to minute and place to place.
 - Review the website or contact the Visitor Information Centre to check for closures and restrictions.
 - Stay hydrated: bring enough water and food to last through an emergency or unexpected delay.
 - Do not rely on a cellular telephone: cell coverage varies and may not be available in all areas of the park.
 - Respect animals space: stay at least 100m from wildlife.
 - Stay alert: be aware of surroundings and avoid using headphones.
 - Food and scented items must be attended at all times when not in use or stored in a vehicle or bear proof container.
 - Clean as you go by placing garbage and recyclables inside bins.
 - Fires are only permitted in designated fire pits.

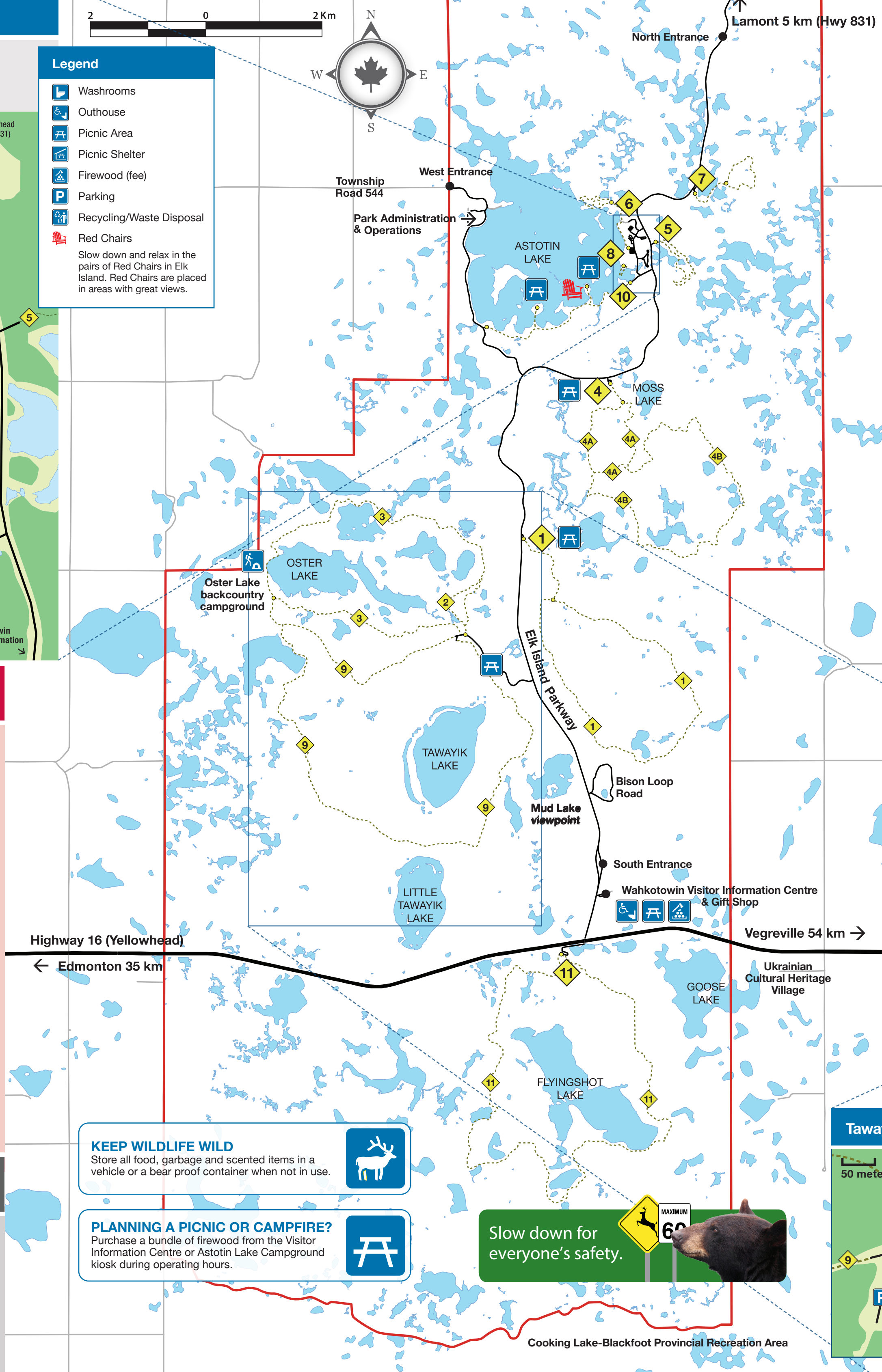
National Park Regulations

Follow all National Park regulations. More information is available online under the Canada National Parks Act and at Parks Canada visitor centres.

Preserve the park. Leave flowers, rocks, antlers, artifacts and all other objects undisturbed.

NO DRONE ZONE!

All Parks Canada places are “no drone zones.” Leave drones at home and enjoy Elk Island National Park from the ground!



KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

Store all food, garbage and scented items in a vehicle or a bear proof container when not in use.

PLANNING A PICNIC OR CAMPFIRE?

Purchase a bundle of firewood from the Visitor Information Centre or Astotin Lake Campground kiosk during operating hours.

Slow down for everyone's safety.

Use your thumb

Protect yourself and wildlife by giving animals space. Animals in the park are wild and may react to perceived threats when startled, threatened or protecting their young. To determine if you are at a safe distance use your thumb:

1. Hold your fist straight out in front of you
2. Raise your thumb
3. Cover the animal with your thumb

If the animal is totally covered by your thumb, you are a safe distance away (about 100 m). If your thumb does not cover the animal you are too close and should back away.



Reduce the spread of invasive plants

Invasive species are non-native and spread rapidly to take over new areas. You can help reduce the spread of invasive plants by removing any dirt or seeds from your footwear and equipment before you arrive, before you travel to new areas of the park and before you leave the park.

Boot brush stations are now available at trailheads.

Tawayik Lake Area

