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The National Parks of Canada



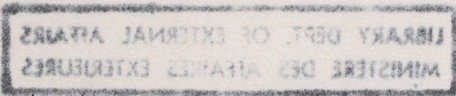
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The National Parks of Canada

(Revised February 1977)

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The
National Parks
of Canada

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The National Parks of Canada have been established by the Federal Government to preserve, for the benefit of Canadians, areas representative of the country's landscape, flora and fauna.

The national parks system began in 1885, when the Federal Government acquired 26 square kilometres of land surrounding the mineral hot springs at Banff, Alberta, and dedicated it to the people of Canada. Two years later, the Rocky Mountains Park Act was passed, reserving an area of 260 square miles "as a public park and pleasure ground".

By 1911, four more national parks had been established, all in Western Canada. In May of that year, the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act was passed, creating a Commissioner of Dominion Parks and a distinct National Parks Branch to protect, administer and develop the parks. During the next 20 years, nine more national parks were added to the system.

The next major development was the passage of the National Parks Act in 1930, legislation that has remained the basis for national parks administration. The National Parks Act states that the parks are dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, to be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Under the Transfer of Resources Agreement of 1930, all uncommitted public land and associated natural resources within the Western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and portions of British Columbia) came under the administration of the provincial governments. All national parks added to the system since that date have been set up with the co-operation of the provincial governments, which have made lands available for that purpose. The land, after having been assembled by the province, is ultimately transferred with all natural resources to the Federal Government. The National Parks Act is then amended to incorporate the lands involved into the Schedule of National Parks.

From 1930 to 1967, four national parks were established, and since 1968 ten new parks have been added to the system, including

three north of the 60th Parallel. With these additions, the national park system has expanded to more than 50,000 square miles.

Recognizing the need for more national parks, both to relieve the pressure on existing parks and to preserve representative samples of the natural landscape for the future, the Federal Government plans to continue to establish new parks.

Selection of sites

An important step in the development of national parks administration was taken in 1964 when all policies concerning the parks were reviewed, amended and consolidated in a statement that was tabled in the House of Commons.

Two obligations were recognized concerning the establishment of new parks — preservation of the Canadian heritage and assurance that present and future Canadians would have the opportunity to appreciate and understand their natural environment and to enjoy and benefit from the values of natural areas.

Originally, national parks were chosen primarily for their outstanding scenery and unique features, but today the inclusion of all major features is ensured in the selection.

There are now national parks in all of Canada's provinces and in both the territories.

Growing industrial development in Canada's North and the resultant population increase have brought recognition of the need to set aside land for national parks there, both to meet the future needs of the people who will travel or live there and to protect examples of its natural environment.

The first step towards this objective was the reservation of an area of more than 2,000 square miles at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories for national park purposes. In February 1972, three new national parks were announced: Kluane in the Yukon and Nahanni and Auyuittuq in the Northwest Territories. Development of these three parks is still at the planning stage.

Development

A resource-inventory program was begun by Parks Canada in 1970 to provide a description of the resource base of each national park. The main objective of this program is to ensure the preservation and rational utilization of the natural resources of the park.

The information contained in each resource inventory will be used by park planners to achieve a sound zoning plan. Park naturalists will use the information to plan programs suited to the character of each park, and resource-conservation personnel will initiate resource-management plans based on the findings.

The resource inventory has now begun in most national parks. An atlas and base description has been completed for Point Pelee and Kejimikujik National Parks. The collection of data on the natural resources in several other parks is nearly complete. Emphasis has been placed on collecting data on the new parks.

The program has been decentralized and is now an important part of the activities of the natural resources conservation section of each region.

Parks Canada seeks the active participation of Canadians in its planning process. A formal public-hearings program held ten "hearings" during the period 1970-1972. In 1974, the program was revised to permit group consultation at an earlier stage. This "public-participation program" is now conducted by staff in Parks Canada's regional offices. Its purpose is to involve the public in the framing of long-term objectives, management goals and development criteria for each park as represented by the master plan.

A system of land-use zoning allows visitors to enjoy the park, at the same time protecting park values. These zones range from special preservation areas to those that can withstand intensive use. The amount of land in each zone varies according to the character and purpose of the individual park. Those areas of a park designated as special preservation zones may contain unique and fragile natural and cultural features requiring maximum protection.

Most of the land within a national park is designated as wilderness recreation area, and visitor-use is limited to such activities as hiking and primitive camping. Roads are kept to a minimum in all national parks; they are carefully planned according to the particular characteristics of the park and to the objectives that have been established for its development.

Serviced campgrounds, public-transportation facilities, interpretive centres and recreational facilities are confined to the general outdoor recreational areas. While commercial development of visitor services is allowed within the boundaries of parks, such developments are encouraged outside the park whenever possible.

Administration

Canada's national parks are administered by the Parks Canada Program of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. There are five administrative regions: Western, Prairie, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic.

The management of each park is carried out by a park superintendent, whose staff deals with maintenance, interpretation, visitor services and resource conservation.

Using information provided by the resource-base description and special studies of the total park environment (plant and animal life, land formation, soil, geology and climate), park naturalists develop interpretive programs to help visitors understand and appreciate the individuality of each national park. The programs include tours, guided walks and hikes, self-guided trails, exhibitions, films, slide shows, discussions and publications.

The natural resources of the parks must be protected against misuse, damage and destruction, a task that falls to the park wardens. Trained in resource-management, the wardens are involved in forest-fire control and in the assessment of the condition of plant and animal life. They also deal with visitor safety, search-and-rescue operations and law enforcement.

The National Parks staff consult specialists of the Canadian Wildlife Service on wildlife management and protection. Other federal agencies also provide expertise: the National Museum of Natural Science, the Forest Management Institute, the Geological Survey of Canada and the Fisheries Research Board.

A Junior Warden Program began in 1971 as a pilot project in Georgian Bay Islands National Park, Ontario, and Fundy National Park, New Brunswick. The program was extended to 12 parks in 1972 and became known as the National Parks Conservation Corps. In 1973, a number of positions were set aside for native youth, and in 1974 women participated in the program for the first time. The candidates, who are high-school students, are recruited through high schools and Canada Manpower centres. They spend seven weeks in July and August working with park naturalists and wardens, studying park resources, forest, wildlife and fisheries management, and forest-fire control and safety operations.

Description

Evidence of the increasing attraction of Canada's national parks lies in the growing number of visitors. In 1953-54, attendance was 2.9 million. This soared to 9.4 million in 1963-64 and to more than 18 million in 1974-75.

The 28 national parks extend from sea to sea — from Pacific Rim National Park on the west coast of Vancouver Island to Terra Nova National Park on the east coast of Newfoundland.

Pacific Rim National Park will be under development until the late 1970s. The park will encompass three distinct areas, totaling 150 square miles: Long Beach, including Grice Bay and a section of Kennedy Lake; 90 to 95 islands and rocks in Barkley Sound known as the Broken Islands Group; and a 45-mile stretch of coastline between Port Renfrew and Bamfield, encompassing the Life-Saving Trail.

There are two national parks in the Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia. Mount Revelstoke covers 101.4 square miles of timbered slopes, alpine meadows and lakes, and is located near the city of Revelstoke. Glacier National Park lies a few miles to the east and covers 521 square miles. There are more than 100 glaciers in this park.

The Rocky Mountains consist of numerous ranges, each contributing to the alpine beauty of the mountain parks.

The Continental Divide forms 150 miles of the western border of Banff and Jasper National Parks in Alberta and parts of the eastern borders of both Yoho and Kootenay National Parks in British Columbia.

In the interior of Banff National Park are the Sundance, Palliser, Sawback and Fairholme Ranges. Covering an area of 2,564 square miles, Banff is situated 80 miles west of Calgary.

Banff and Jasper National Parks meet at the Columbia Icefields. In Jasper a series of ranges run roughly parallel — the Miette, Jacques and Colin ranges, with the Desmet Range lying to the north. Jasper, 240 miles west of Edmonton, covers an area of 4,200 square miles.

Within the 507 square miles of Yoho National Park are the Van Horne, Ottertail, Waputik and President Ranges. A total of 28 peaks in this park rise over 10,000 feet.

Bordering Kootenay National Park are the Vermillion, Brisco and Mitchell Ranges. This park lies along the southwestern border of Banff National Park and covers 532 square miles.

In the southeast corner of Alberta, 70 miles from Lethbridge, mountain and prairie meet in Waterton Lakes National Park. The Canadian section of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, this park covers an area of 203 square miles.

The entire 75-square-mile area of Elk Island National Park is enclosed by a fence. While deer, elk and moose roam at will within the park, two sections isolate herds of plains bison and wood bison from visitors. The park is 30 miles east of Edmonton.

The Northwest Territories and Alberta share Canada's largest national park, Wood Buffalo National Park, 17,300 square miles of forest and open plain that are the home of the largest remaining herd of bison in North America and the only known nesting-ground of the rare whooping crane. Under strict protective measures by Canada and the United States, the whooping-crane population has increased to 68 birds, 20 of which are in captivity.

Kluane National Park, situated in the southwestern corner of the Yukon some 1,408 road-miles northwest of Edmonton, covers an area of 8,500 square miles. Mount Logan, at 19,850 feet Canada's highest peak, is located within this park. One of the world's largest non-polar glacier systems is also found there.

The 1,840-square-mile Nahanni National Park is located about 653 air-miles northwest of Edmonton. The park contains a major portion of the South Nahanni River — the most spectacular wild river in Canada —, Virginia Falls, twice the height of Niagara, three major canyons up to 4,000 feet deep, and a large number of caves and sulphur hot springs.

Saskatchewan's only national park is located 35 miles north of the city of Prince Albert. Covering 1,496 square miles, Prince Albert National Park exemplifies the transition between the northern forest and prairie grassland.

Riding Mountain National Park on the Manitoba Escarpment preserves 1,149 square miles of evergreen and hardwood forests, many lakes and a variety of wild creatures. It is situated 60 miles north of Brandon.

Point Pelee National Park, south of Windsor, Ontario, is the most southerly point of Canada's mainland. Located on the Missis-

sippi flyway, the 6-square-mile park is a staging-ground for migratory birds. The marshland of Point Pelee is one of the few remaining freshwater marshes in North America. The park also contains a small remnant of the original North American deciduous forest.

Georgian Bay Islands National Park is made up of 42 islands with dense woodlands and interesting geological formations. The formations that gave Flowerpot Island its name are vertical pillars of rock eroded by the action of the waves. The total land area of the park is 5.5 square miles.

With a land area of 1.6 square miles, St. Lawrence Islands National Park is Canada's smallest national park. It is made up of 18 islands and 80 islets in the St. Lawrence River between Kingston and Brockville, Ontario.

Pukaskwa, Ontario's newest national park, is a 725-square-mile wilderness area on the north shore of Lake Superior. The park is characterized by its rugged terrain, its many lakes and rivers and a large variety of wildlife.

Situated on the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island, the 8,290-square-mile Auyuittuq National Park is Canada's first national park lying above the Arctic Circle. Deeply-carved mountains are dominated by the massive Penny Ice Cap, and the coastline is indented by spectacular fjords. The park is situated some 2,415 air-kilometres northeast of Montreal.

Forillon National Park in Quebec was established in 1970. Situated on the scenic tip of the Gaspé Peninsula on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the park covers an area of 92.8 square miles.

La Mauricie National Park is a heavily-wooded area covering 210 square miles, with more than 50 lakes, in the Laurentian Mountains near Trois-Rivières, Quebec.

Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick covers an area of 87 square miles on the northern section of Northumberland Strait. An outstanding feature is its sweep of offshore sandbars.

Fundy National Park, also in New Brunswick, has a rugged shoreline, steep cliffs and the highest tides in the world. Magnified by the shape and size of the Bay of Fundy, the tides reach as high as 40 feet in the park area, which covers 79.5 square miles.

Kejimikujik National Park lies southwest of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It covers 147.3 square miles of inland country with numerous lakes and islands. Cape Breton Highlands National Park in northeast Nova

Scotia has a rugged coastline, forested hills and a greatly-varied wildlife. It covers 367 square miles.

Prince Edward Island National Park is a coastal strip of dunes, cliffs, marshes and beaches stretching for 25 miles along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The total area of the park is 7 square miles.

Gros Morne National Park on the western coast of Newfoundland contains mountains, fjord-like lakes and forests in its 750-square-mile area.

The rugged coastline of Terra Nova National Park on Bonavista Bay contrasts with the rolling terrain and the thick boreal forests found inland. It covers an area of 153.1 square miles.

With the addition of new parks, the national parks system in Canada will acquaint more and more Canadians with the natural beauty and wonders of their country.



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Scotia has a rugged coastline of hills, and a grassy prairie within. It covers 107,000 square miles.

Prince Edward Island National Park is a beautiful strip of dunes, cliffs, marshes and beaches, 25 miles long along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The total area of the park is 7 square miles.

King George National Park on the western coast of Newfoundland contains mountains, fjord-like lakes and forests in its 150-square-mile area.

The rugged coastline of Terra Nova National Park on Bonaville Bay contrasts with the rolling terrain and the thick boreal forests found inland. It covers an area of 134 square miles.

With the addition of new parks, the national parks system in Canada will acquaint more and more Canadians with the natural beauty and wonders of their country.

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