

Visitor Guide and Map 2024/2025



Aussi disponible en français.

Welcome to Elk Island

We respectfully acknowledge that Elk Island National Park is within the present-day territory of Treaty 6 and the homeland of the Métis. The lands and waters of Elk Island National Park have been used for millennia by Indigenous Peoples for sustenance, ceremony, trade and travel. We thank them for their continuous stewardship and for sharing the land with us.



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 on the lakes. Or, learn about how Elk Island contributes to global bison conservation. There's something for everyone at Elk Island.

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



Guided programs

Enjoy FREE drop-in programs with paid park entry

Learn about these topics with guided programs

- Bison conservation
- Archaeology
- Indigenous cultures
- Stargazing
- Community science
- Human-wildlife coexistence

Stop by the Wahkotowin Visitor Information Centre or visit ParksCanada.ca/ElkIsland for seasonal program schedules.

Paid private programs

Parks Canada interpreters are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Private programs are available for school groups, organizations and families for a fee. For more information contact interp.elkisland@pc.gc.ca.



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 17 and October 14, 2024:**
reservation.pc.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 cross between an A-frame tent and a cabin can sleep up to six people comfortably. 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. Rent a pair of snowshoes from the Astotin Lake Campground Kiosk.



Stay safe on your winter adventure

- 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
pnelkisland-elkislandnp@pc.gc.ca
ParksCanada.ca/ElkIsland

Reserve Your Campsite Now!

1-877-737-3783
reservation.pc.gc.ca

Stay informed about upcoming events, important park updates and conservation work at Elk Island National Park. Get the latest news straight to your inbox with the click of a button. Subscribe to our newsletter today!



Like us on Facebook
Facebook.com/ElkIslandNationalPark

Follow us on X
[@ElkIslandNP](https://X.com/ElkIslandNP)

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. Access Astotin Lake using the boat launch and enjoy your day on the water. Gas and electric motors are not permitted.

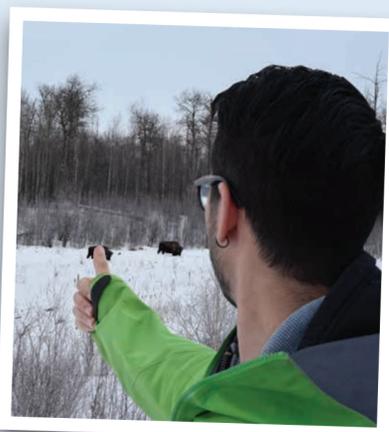
Visit ElkIslandPaddleRentals.com (ridgewilderness.com/rentals/) in the Astotin Lake Recreation Area for paddling rentals

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.



Your actions matter

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.

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



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 100 m from all wildlife.
- Do not exit your vehicle within 100 m of wildlife.
- Do not stop to view bears on roadways.
- Do not feed wildlife.
- Avoid startling wildlife. Be aware of your surroundings and travel in groups.
- Make noise on trails to alert animals. 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 pets on leash and under control at all times. Off-leash pets cause stress to wildlife which can put you, your pet and other visitors at risk.

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 transported 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, birds, 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." Most cell phones have a built-in GPS system.

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

Astotin Lake Recreation Area

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**

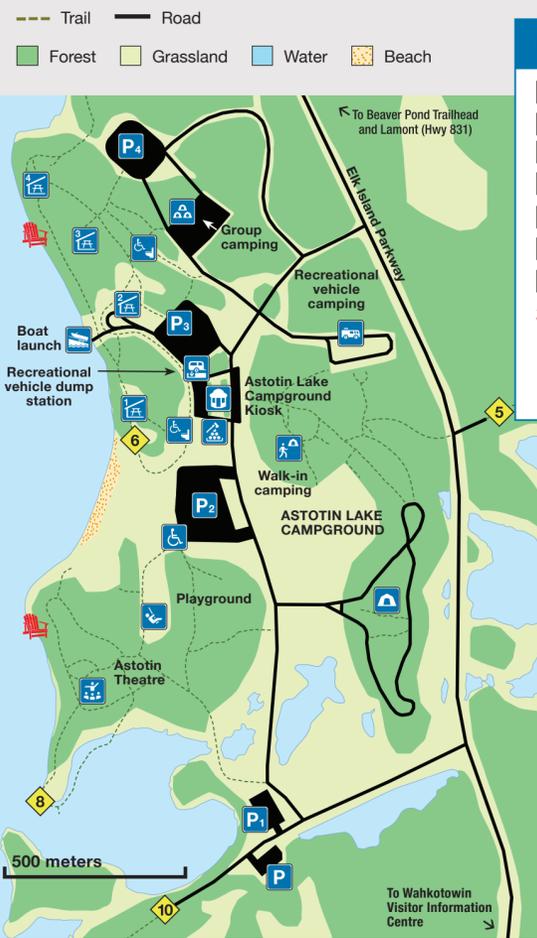
3.6 km loop (1-2 hours) – Flat terrain
Open aspen forest and sedge meadows along this trail are ideal for spotting birds or beavers in the summer. Watch for bison grazing in the winter.
- 8 Living Waters Boardwalk**

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**

15.6 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 are not 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.



- ### Legend
- Washrooms
 - Accessible Washrooms
 - 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.

GAS AND ELECTRIC MOTORS ARE NOT PERMITTED ON ASTOTIN LAKE.

Safety while at Elk Island

- ### Safety is a shared responsibility
- **Trip Planning:** Plan your travel route, know the terrain and conditions, check the weather. Always fill out a trip plan or let someone know your plan.
 - **Training:** Get the knowledge and skills you need before heading out. Know and stay within your limits.
 - **Take the Essentials:** Flashlight, extra food and water, extra clothing, navigational/communication devices, fire-making kit, signaling device (i.e. whistle), first aid kit, emergency blanket/shelter, pocket knife, sun protection
 - **Wear a lifejacket** on all water bodies, including Astotin Lake.
 - **Trails and beaches are not patrolled:** use at your own risk.
- Visit: AdventureSmart.ca for more information

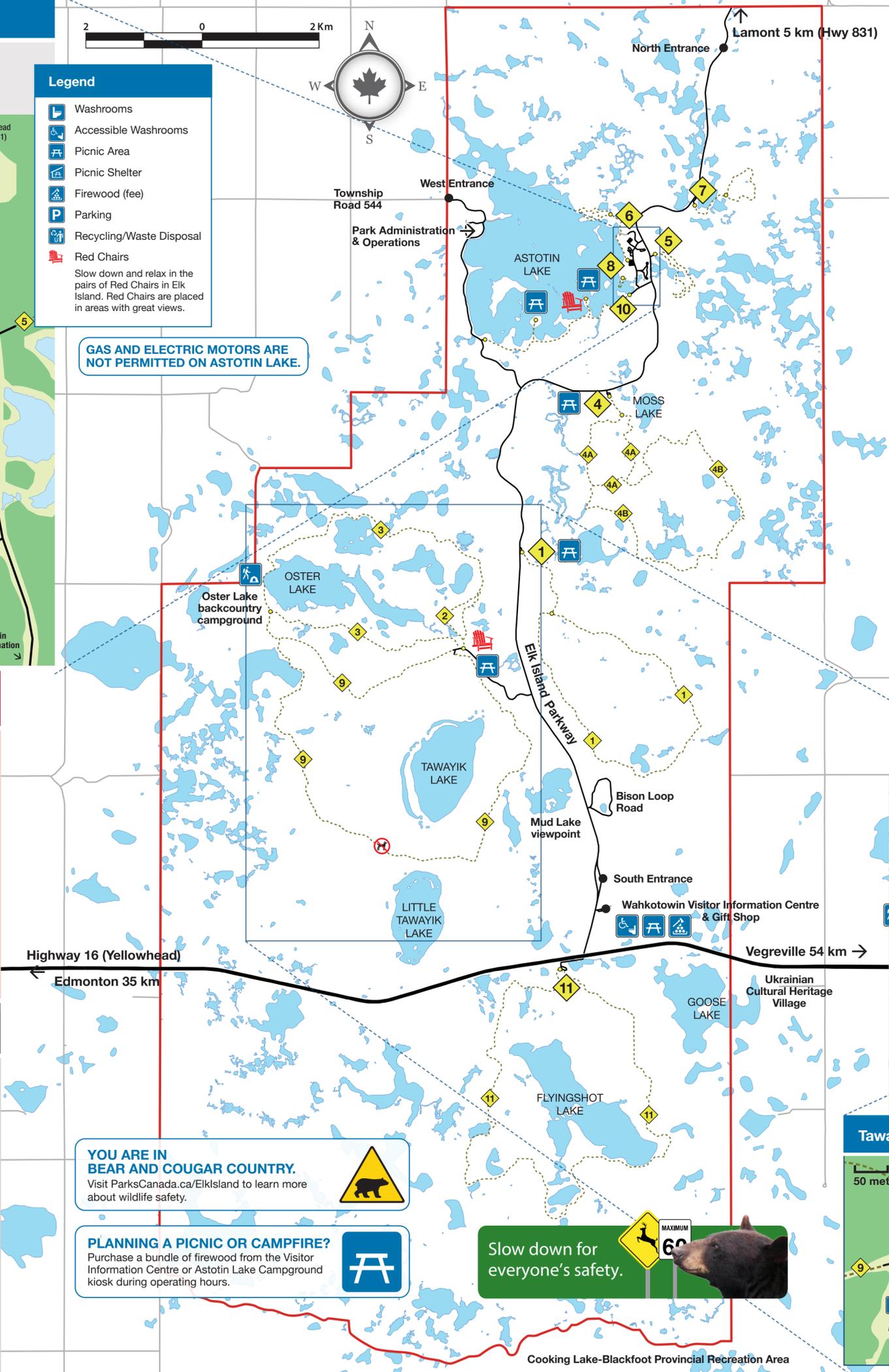
National Park Regulations

- Follow all National Park regulations. More information is available online under the Canada National Parks Act and at Parks Canada visitor centres.
- Do not feed wildlife. Leaving food, garbage and scented items unattended can result in inadvertent feeding of wildlife. Securely store all wildlife attractants when not in use.
 - Preserve the park. Leave flowers, rocks, antlers, artifacts and all other objects undisturbed.
 - Obey all posted speed limits, area closures, restrictions and warning signs.
 - Fires are only permitted in designated fire pits.
 - No drone zone: Leave drones at home and enjoy Elk Island National Park from the ground!
 - For the safety of pets and wildlife, it is illegal to let any pet off leash in Elk Island National Park

YOU ARE IN BEAR AND COUGAR COUNTRY.
Visit ParksCanada.ca/ElkIsland to learn more about wildlife safety.

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.



Hiking and Cycling

Explore the park at your own pace

With over 80 km of trails to explore by foot or by bike, memories await! Most trails have parking, viewpoints, washrooms and garbage facilities.

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).

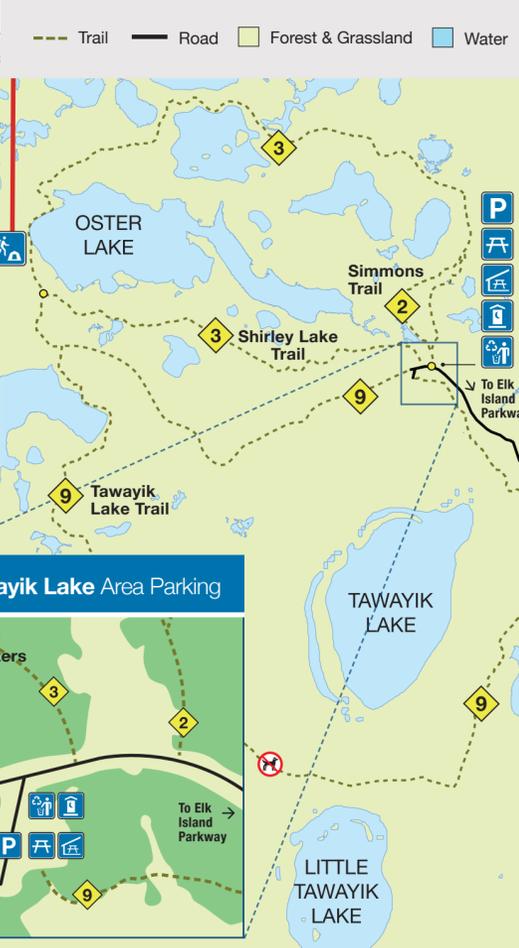
- ### ! CYCLING SAFETY
- Fast, quiet travel increases the chance of sudden wildlife encounters. Slow down, stay alert and make noise.
 - Do not get between bison gathered on the road.
 - Ride single file to allow motor vehicles to pass safely.
 - Wear a helmet and high-visibility clothing.

Reduce the spread of invasive plants

Help reduce the spread of harmful invasive plants by removing dirt and seeds from your footwear and equipment before you arrive, before you travel to new areas in the park and before you leave the park by using the boot brush stations available at all trailheads.



Tawayik Lake Area



Tawayik Lake Area Parking

50 meters

To Elk Island Parkway