BEAVER LAKE STATE PARK

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BEAVER LAKE STATE PARK

NATURE TRAIL GUIDE

Beaver Lake State Park
Nature Trail

Welcome to Beaver Lake State Park and the Beaver Lake Nature Trail. The trail winds through woodlands, skirts the lake shoreline and meanders through prairie. This pamphlet serves as your guide. Match the numbers in it with those on the posts beside the trail. The trail is .3 miles long and takes just over a half an hour to walk.

When hiking, please stay on the path to prevent any harm or injury to the vegetation. Take time to investigate the interesting things you find, but take care to leave them behind so future hikers can enjoy them as well.

1. Green Ash

Most of the trees growing around you are very talented green ash trees. The green ash seeds resemble canoe paddles, but twirl like helicopter blades when falling. The same seeds feed finches and grosbeaks in the fall and winter. Beaver and porcupine like to nibble on the bark. Deer and rabbit chew on the twigs. What more can this tree do? Of the millions of baseballs and hockey pucks hit, most were sent their way with bats and sticks made of ash. Garden tools, oars, snowshoes and skis have been crafted with this most versatile of woods.

include voles, deer mice, pocket gophers, badgers and red foxes.

18. Juneberry

Juneberry, also known as serviceberry, is a native fruit bearing shrub. The fruits generally ripen mid July – early August. Its tasty fruit was a favorite of the Plains Indians, both fresh and dried for winter use. Juneberries are commonly used in pies, jams, jellies, and syrups.

19. Trails end

This is the end of the Beaver Lake Nature Trail. We hope you have enjoyed your hike and leave with a better understanding of the parks natural resources. If you do not plan to keep this trail guide, please help us conserve our natural resources and leave it in the box so it may be used again. Thank you.

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15. Sage

There are about five species of sage in the park. Most sages are easily identified by their silvery leaves and characteristic odor. Native Americans of the area used the sage in religious ceremonies as incense and prepared tea for stomach ailments. Species of sage found in the park include big sagebrush, wormwood, fringed sage and pasture sage.

16. Prairie Flowers

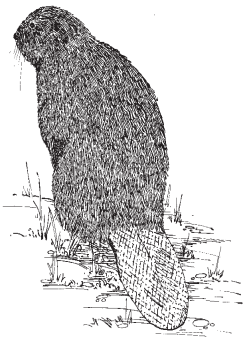
In early spring the parade of prairie wildflowers is just beginning. Early bloomers include pasque flower, yellow prairie violet and daisy fleabane. Wildflowers can be found blooming throughout the summer include leadplant, purple prairie clover, yellow coneflower, goldenrod, blazing star, purple coneflower, yarrow and cinquefoil.

17. Prairie Mammals

The prairie's abundant plant life provides food and shelter for an abundant resident mammal population. Common daytime mammals such as thirteen-lined and Franklin's ground squirrels can be seen scurrying through the grass and along the roadsides. Harder to see prairie dwellers

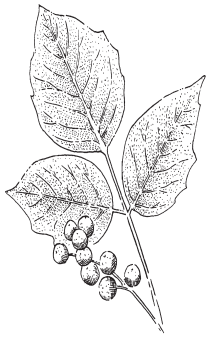
Wouldn't you agree, the green ash is a most talented tree?

2. Beaver Cuttings



The many beaver cuttings along Beaver Lake show us beaver are active here. Beaver have large, chisel-like teeth. These teeth continue to grow throughout the animals' entire life and are sharpened by the beaver's constant gnawing. Once a beaver gnaws down a tree, it eats the young, tender bark. It may then cut the tree into shorter pieces for construction of its lodge. A single beaver can gnaw down 1,000 to 2,000 trees in a year. Watch for more signs of beaver further down the trail.

3.Leaves of Three



Have you ever heard the saying "leaves of three, let it be?" This refers to poison ivy, a very common plant found many places throughout the park. The oil secreted by this plant causes an itching rash. Some people are more sensitive to the oil than others. The plant can be identified by its three glossy leaflets that change to yellow and red in autumn. Yellowish clusters of green

flowers appear in the early spring and produce a white waxy berry that remains throughout the winter. Many winter birds feed on the berries. The oil does not seem to affect the birds that eat the fruit.

4. On the Edge

At this point in the trail you are entering an area where you see a rather gradual change from woods to prairie. This transition area is called an ecotone. Along the prairie-woods ecotone you will often see a greater diversity of plants as well as animals thriving where these two plant communities merge.

5. Chokecherry

Chokecherry is among the most common shrubs of Beaver Lake State Park. Anyone who has tasted the berry knows it is well named. This shrub was very important to the Plains Indians who mixed crushed chokecherries with dried meat to form pemmican. Pemmican, or Wasna as called by the Sioux, was a staple food of the Native Americans in the winter months. People today still use the berries in making jellies, jams and syrups.

6. Beaver Lake

Beaver Lake was formed when glaciers scraped out a depression in this land about 12,000 years ago. As the glaciers receded, they deposited rocks and gravel and left behind melt water. Water filled in the depression resulting in what we call today, Beaver Lake. This shallow lake, which is fed by a spring at its north end, serves as an important resting and nesting

12. Buckbrush

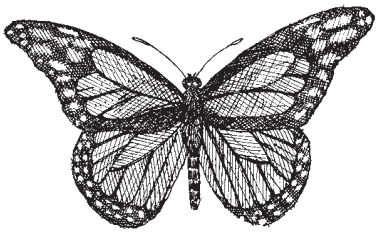
A common woody species of the prairie is buckbrush or Western snowberry. The dense growth of buckbrush provides excellent cover for nesting areas for small mammals and birds. The whitish berries form in the late summer and provide food for many species of wildlife.

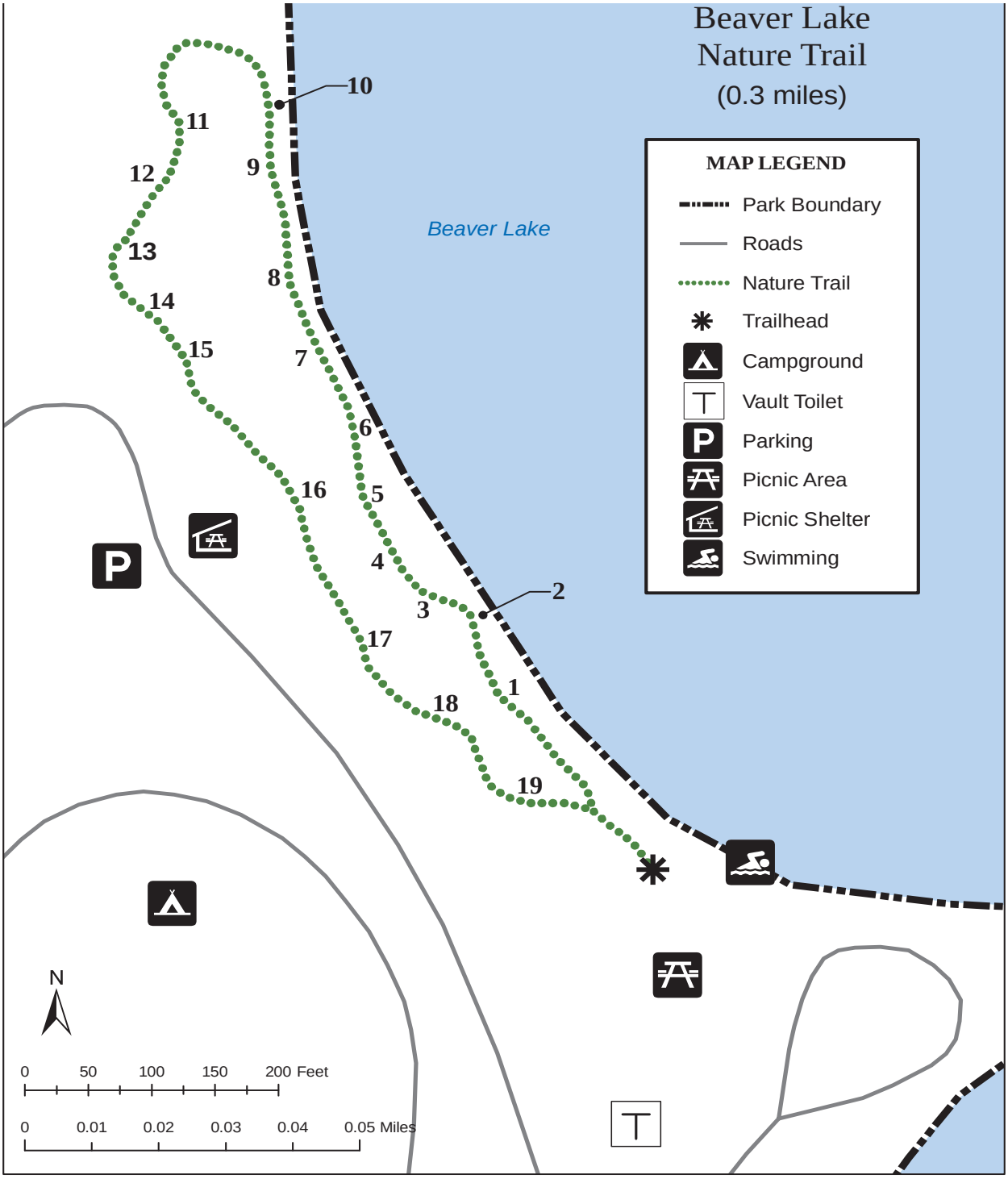
13. Glaciers

The large boulders you see scattered throughout the park are evidence that glaciers covered this area thousands of years ago. As the huge ice sheet moved southward, it picked up pieces of rock in Canada and carried them along. When the ice melted, the boulders were deposited on the surface of the land.

14. Prairie Butterflies

Many prairie wildflowers such as leadplant and purple coneflower provide nectar as food for adult butterflies. Just as importantly, prairie grasses such as green needle and needle-and-thread are important food sources for the larval stages of many butterflies. Some common prairie butterfly species include the monarch, regal fritillary, painted lady, Melissa blue and variegated fritillary.




Beaver Lake
Nature Trail
(0.3 miles)
MAP LEGEND
Park Boundary
Roads
Nature Trail
Trailhead
Campground
Vault Toilet
Parking
Picnic Area
Picnic Shelter
Swimming
Beaver Lake
1
2
3
4
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N
0 50 100 150 200 Feet
0 0.01 0.02 0.03 0.04 0.05 Miles

ditches in the park. Male frogs make a short rattling, snore-like call from the water during the spring and summer. They are powerful swimmers and can leap five to six feet to avoid capture. Also, frogs have extremely sensitive skin, so you shouldn't touch one if you have lotion or something else on your hands.

9. Kingbirds

During your walk you may have noticed several different types of birds. The Eastern and Western kingbird are the more obvious birds which can be seen along the trail. The Eastern kingbird is recognized by its white breast and dark back, and the Western kingbird is identified by its yellow breast and gray back. The birds are territorial, driving other birds and animals away from their nesting areas. During the spring and summer kingbirds eat mostly insects.

10. Prairie Wild Rose

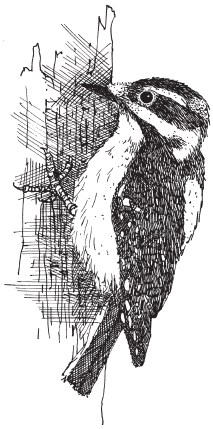
The fragrant blossoms of the wild rose range from white to pink and make it one of the prettiest flowers in the park. The persistent fruit is called a hip and is eaten by wildlife during the winter months. Rose hips are an excellent source of vitamin C and when ripe are eaten raw, or made into jams, jellies, or tea.

11. Native Prairie

You are now entering the prairie portion of the trail. Prairies provide important habitat for many grassland birds such as the Eastern meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, savannah sparrow and the chestnut-collared longspur.

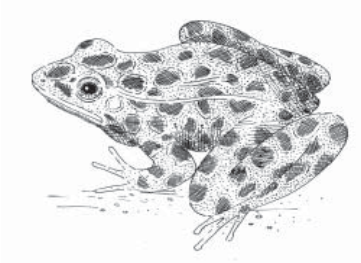
area for migratory waterbirds such as pelicans, ducks and geese.

7. Sights, Sounds and Smells



A deeper awareness of nature's creatures can be yours by using all of your senses. Perhaps you may get a glimpse of a squirrel, its cheeks stuffed with seeds, scampering up a tree. The musical *sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet-than-sweet* song of the yellow warbler or the *rat-a-tat-tat* of the downy woodpecker as it is hammering away at a branch to extract a juicy meal with its long, pointed tongue. When walking through moist, low places, to out into sunny meadows, you can distinguish the smells of stagnant water, rotting wood, and fragrant flowers.

8. Grass Frogs



Grass frogs, more commonly known as Northern leopard frogs, are a bright grass-green color with oval black spots. They spend a lot of time foraging in grassy places during the summer. You may see them along the trail, in meadows and grassy roadside