

Northwest Parks

Clearwater Lake Provincial Park

Park Information and Map



Introduction

With an area of 593 km², Clearwater Lake Provincial Park is characterized by Clearwater Lake which comprises almost half of the park. Large areas of boreal forest including spruce bog cover the land areas.

Classified as a Natural Park, its purpose is to preserve areas that are representative of the Mid-Boreal portion of the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region; and accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses. The park will:

- Preserve the water quality of Clearwater Lake;
- Provide high-quality cottaging, camping, boating and fishing opportunities and permit related facilities and services; and
- Promote public appreciation and understanding of Clearwater Lake's natural features.



BearBerry

Manitoba Lowlands

The Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region is the large, south-central part of the province that is flanked on the west by the Manitoba Escarpment and by the Precambrian Shield on its northern and eastern sides. Much of it is occupied by our large lakes, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis. Its land portion is relatively flat, scraped to a nearly level plain by past glacial movements. Bogs, fens and swamps are common as drainage is generally poor. Vegetation in its northern part is coniferous and mixed forest. Its southern part is interspersed with meadows and merges with the Aspen/Oak Parkland.

The region's lakes and land are both underlain by various, Palaeozoic sedimentary rock, deposited in shallow, tropical, seas, between 250-600 million years ago. Exposures of Palaeozoic units are sparse in the Manitoba Lowlands, except locally along the shores of major lakes and rivers.

Two types of light-coloured rock deposited 400-500 million years ago, are found in the park. Silurian dolomite is evident along the southern shore of Clearwater Lake and at the Caves Self-guiding Trail. Older, Ordovician dolomite is visible in outcrops on islands in the northern part of the lake; they are used for nesting by cormorants and gulls.

Cusp of The Pas Moraine

The Pas Moraine is the highest topographic feature in the northern lowlands. This land formation is from 8 km to 16 km wide and forms a convex, or crescent-like escarpment that faces southwest. It extends from 15 km northeast of Wanless to the end of Long Point, on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg—a total distance of over 320 km.

It was formed during the Ice Age as the Hudson lobe of glacial ice stopped advancing in the area. While the ice front remained relatively stationary, ice continued to bring in and deposit large quantities of debris which was deposited along its stationary edge. These deposits are composed of poorly drained till which rise between 25 m and 33 m above the surrounding country.

Clearwater Lake is a few kilometres south of the crescent-shaped formation's northern tip, or cusp. In the park, the moraine runs southward along the west boundary. The main highway, PTH 10, is built on the moraine. The moraine's other cusp is the tip of Long Point which extends into Lake Winnipeg.

From 8,700-10,000 years ago the area was covered by Lake Agassiz, formed by glacial meltwater. Remnants of two Lake Agassiz beach ridges are in the park's northwest corner, and others are prominent on the moraine's south side along PTH 60. At times, the moraine itself was underwater. Lake-bottom, clay deposits and fluting marks made by icebergs have been found on its surface.

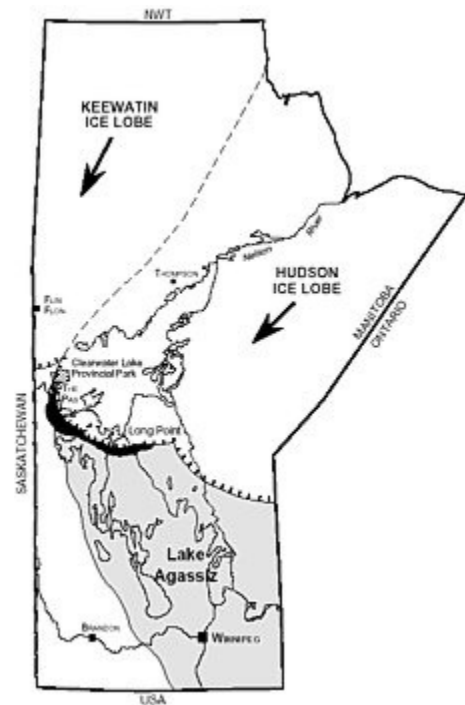


Figure 1: Building of The Pas Moraine between 10,000 and 12,500 years ago, with speculative extent of glacial Lake Agassiz during that time period. Adapted from R. W. Klassen.

Clear Water

Clearwater Lake, a deep, clear, cold lake, is renowned for its excellent water quality and large lake trout. The nearly circular lake, 16 km (10 mi.) in diameter, has an average depth of 13.1 m (43 ft.) and a maximum depth of 39 m (127 ft.). Lake clarity has been measured to a depth of 10 m or 33 feet. It is spring fed and lacks major inflowing streams which may carry silt, although there are several small inflowing streams on its south and west shores. The single outflowing stream empties into Cormorant Lake and eventually into the Saskatchewan River system. The cold year-round water temperatures slow the growth of lake trout. Yet, these conditions are essential for lake trout to survive.

Any adverse changes to water quality due to pollution could affect the trout population and the lake's natural beauty.

Lake Trout

Found only in deep, cold water and in relatively small numbers, lake trout are highly prized by anglers.

Lake trout spawn in the fall, rather than in spring like most fish in Manitoba. The eggs, deposited on large rocks or pebble bottoms, hatch four to five months later. After steady growth to maturity at eight years, the growth of lake trout in Clearwater Lake slows down to about 1/4 kg (1/2 lb.) per year. Add to this a potentially long lifespan and the result could be a 60-year-old, 16-kg (35-lb.) lake trout!

Lake trout have a lower capacity for reproduction than other fish. They mature at a later age, may not spawn every year upon maturity, and produce fewer eggs per body size than other species. In addition, only about one egg in a hundred survives to maturity.

This slow growth and low productivity limits the size and number of lake trout in Clearwater Lake. The average lake trout caught here is 53 cm (21 in.) long, weighs 1.8 kg (4 lbs.) and is 10 years old. Their colour varies from silver to almost black, with lighter spots covering the entire body. The tail fin is deeply forked.

Clearwater Lake's trout are a valuable resource. Quality angling and future trout populations and the necessity of maintaining suitable water conditions call for special measures. These include angling restrictions to protect the mature fish, catch limits, partial closure of the lake in the fall to protect the spawning lake trout and regulations to maintain a clean environment. Clearwater received "High Quality Surface Water" designation from Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission in 1989.

Clearwater Lake is an important source of lake trout eggs for Manitoba fish hatcheries. Collected each fall, the eggs are carefully raised in a hatchery, resulting in a higher hatch rate than occurs in nature. A portion of the fertilized eggs are returned to Clearwater Lake to compensate for eggs that were removed.

Continued high-quality angling is helped by the use of barbless hooks and by those who practise catch and release fishing. Careful handling, quick hook removal and a gentle release will ensure the trout survive.

The First People

The First People appeared here soon after the boreal forest began growing on the tills and gravels left by melting glaciers. They came from the great plains to the southwest. Forced from their ancestral hunting grounds by severe drought, these bison hunters arrived 150 to 200 generations ago.

The forest environment was strange to the newcomers. Unlike the plains they had left behind, the forest contained different animals to hunt and plants to collect. Over time the new arrivals learned to hunt moose and woodland caribou with as much skill as they had to hunt bison. Fish also became an important source of food. Soon, dried moose meat or fish, mixed with fat and berries, replaced bison in making pemmican for winter storage. Still, trips were made to the plains to hunt bison, especially in the early years before the people had fully learned how to live in the forest.

As they became more accustomed to the forest environment, and as generation succeeded generation, stories of moose hunts replaced those of the bison around the evening campfires. For some families who had moved deep into the forest, the plains may have become a land of legend.

It is uncertain whether all of the First People who came to the forest remained there. Once climatic conditions had improved, some likely returned to the plains and resumed their old ways of life. Families remaining in the forest would eventually have met others from further north who travelled south to escape the worsening climate of the subarctic. Knowledge and ideas would have been shared and marriages would have taken place between members of the two groups.

Soon the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the first residents were walking over deep winter snows on snowshoes and pulling toboggans laden with the products of their hunts. Both of these essential tools of winter were invented by residents of the boreal forest. In late summer, light birchbark canoes glided across lakes to lift and set fishing nets woven by women of the group. The canoe, and possibly the net too, were inventions of these forest-dwelling people. Later, clay cooking vessels were made for storing foods or boiling stews over open fires.

Pottery making, an idea brought to the forest about 2,000 years ago by people living in the south, was quickly accepted by the residents of this area as a useful innovation. Over time, potters improved upon designs and ways of making pottery. One type of pottery, developed in the forest about 1,200 years ago, is called "Clearwater Lake" after its discovery by archaeologists at this lake about 30 years ago.

The vessels were globular in shape with a constricted neck and an opening diameter of about 28 cm (11 in.). A distinctive feature is a single row of punctates, or impression marks, around each



Making Clearwater Lake pottery
Courtesy Historic Resources Branch

vessel's neck. Archaeologists have identified pieces of pottery with such decorative markings in Grass River Provincial Park, Paint Lake Provincial Park and northeastern Saskatchewan.

For at least the past 3,500 years, and perhaps as long as 5,000 years, the First People lived and prospered in the boreal forest. They left a lasting record of their ways of life in the tools and campsites that they left behind. Should you come across pottery fragments or stone tools in your travels, please do not disturb them and report the site location to the nearest Manitoba Conservation office.

Things to Do, Places to See

Accommodation

A variety of accommodations is available along the south shore. Three lodges are accessible from PR 287. For information about their facilities, services, rates, reservations, other amenities and operating seasons, contact the lodges directly.

Camping

Campgrounds are on the south shore. Campers Cove campground has 78 large level sites with modern washrooms and showers. Most of the sites are electrically serviced, but eight have been built for tenting or tent trailers, and are unserviced.

Pioneer Bay campground offers 27 large level sites with a number of drive throughs. Each site is electrically serviced and located close to a central washroom/shower building. All sites offer a view of the lake. Please register at the Campers Cove campground office.

Day Use

For those who wish to spend a day in the park, day-use areas are at Sunset Beach, Campers Cove and Pioneer Bay. All include unsupervised beaches, changehouses, beach volley ball courts and picnic areas.

A winter day-use area is located east of Pioneer Bay off PR 287. Adjacent to the chalet and parking lot, visitors can enjoy skating or tobogganing. This is also the trailhead for an 8-km looped, cross-country ski trail system.

Boating

Since Clearwater Lake has few islands and is approximately 16 km in diameter, the water can quickly become rough due to strong winds and waves. Boaters should be aware of local weather

forecasts and note any significant changes of wind direction. Be sure your boat is equipped with basic safety gear and advise someone of your travel plans.



Windsurfing at Sunset Beach

Fishing

Angling is generally good year-round, with the trout population spread throughout the lake in spring and fall, and in deeper holes during summer. In addition to lake trout, catches include northern pike and whitefish. During winter, ice fishing for these species and burbot is very popular. Consult the provincial angling guide for current and specific regulations, seasons and limits.

Hiking

The Caves Self-guiding Trail leads through a dramatic feature found on the south shore of Clearwater Lake. Halfway around are deep crevices that formed when rock masses split away from shoreline cliffs. It's not unusual to find ice in the dark, cool depths as late as July, and hardy plants that can grow in low-light conditions. Please stay on the stairs and trails that have been provided for your safety. A trail guide brochure is available at the Campers Cove campground office. Return distance is 1.2 km. Allow 45 minutes.



Rock formation on the Caves Self-guiding Trail

Jackfish Creek Fishway

On PR 287, a short distance east of the Sunset Beach turnoff, this fishway was built to help northern pike and white suckers swim up Jackfish Creek to reach spawning areas in Campbell Lake. Early spring is the best time to observe the spawning run.

Snowmobiling

Trails within the park are limited, but they are connected to other trail systems. A two-way trail connects with The Pas. Another trail leads to Flin Flon.

All snowmobile trails inside the park are designated SnoFund Trails. Please ensure that each snowmobile has a valid SnoPass.

Opaskwayak Cree Nation

Opaskwayak Indian Days, held in August, is a week-long celebration of local Native heritage.

The Pas

The Pas is the nearest major centre, situated about 20 km south on PTH 10, on the Saskatchewan River. All services, including a golf course, are available in this, one of Manitoba's oldest settled communities.

The Sam Waller Museum

Located at 306 Fischer Avenue, PTH 10 at 3rd Street, in a provincial historic site. The Pas Courthouse-Community Building contains a wide variety of human and natural history collections from the local area, northern Manitoba and around the world.

The Pas Trapper's Festival

Manitoba's oldest, continuing winter festival started in the early 1900s when northerners came together from their winter camps to sell furs, buy supplies and socialize. Highlights include the World Championship dog-sled races and competitions (such as flour-packing, King and Queen Trapper) that test people's performance of traditional, northern-living skills. This week-long event is held in February.



World championship dog-sled racing at The Pas Trapper's Festival



Spruce Grouse