

Eastern Parks

Whiteshell Provincial Park

Pine Point Selk-guiding Trail



Welcome to the Pine Point Trail, used for cross-country skiing in winter and for hiking during the rest of the year.

For your safety, and to reduce damage to sensitive plants, please remain on the trail and heed the signs.

You can ensure the enjoyment of those who follow and help in the maintenance of the trail by not littering and by packing out your garbage.

Whiteshell Provincial Park is a place of contrasts, not only in the changes of seasons but also in its different

communities that often exist side by side. Some of the differences are subtle and catch the eye of only the most observant.

At numbered sites along the trail you will be introduced to some of the area's communities and to some conditions responsible for their character. Other information is keyed to symbols showing their appropriateness to the particular season.



Spring

Although bridges and corduroy have been placed along the trail, when conditions are wet, a pair of waterproof or rubber boots will make your hike more enjoyable.



Summer

Insect repellent is required most in summer, less in spring and autumn. Happy hiking!



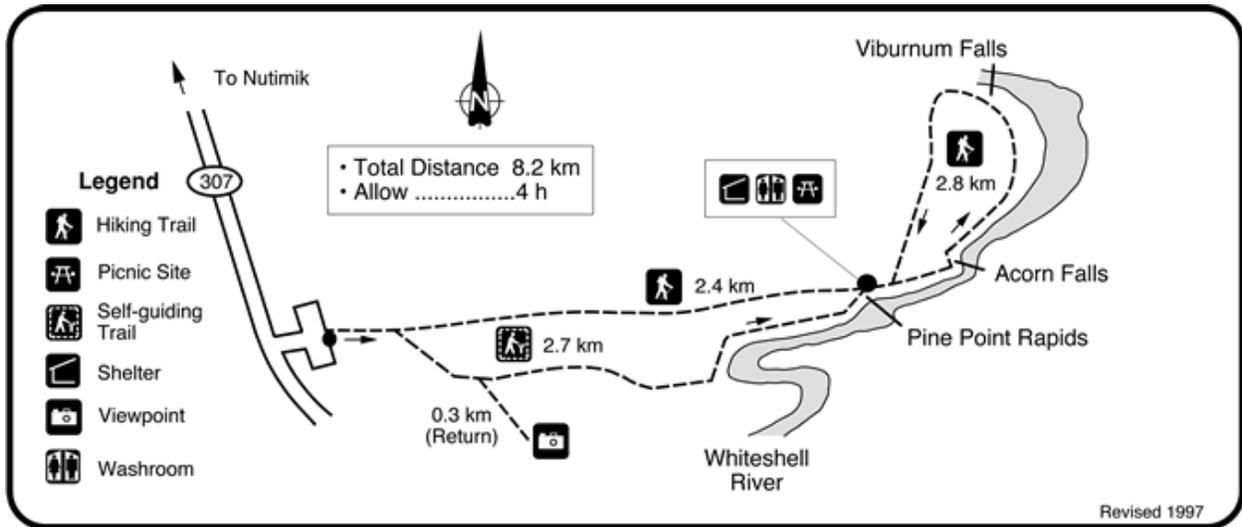
Autumn



Winter

It is possible to ski along the entire trail network however, only the initial loop is recommended for novices. The ideal temperature for skiing ranges from -5°C to -15°C . The temperature may drop quickly in the late afternoon.

Whether you ski the long or the short trail, you should be dressed properly. This includes a warm hat and several layers of clothes such as T-shirts, shirts and sweaters rather than in a single heavy garment. Your pack should contain food (chocolate bars, nuts, sandwiches, a thermos of hot beverage), extra clothing, waxes and a spare ski tip. Good skiing!



Pine Point Self-guiding Trail Map

A natural community is a group of interacting plants and animals dependent on each other for survival.

A white-tailed deer nips off a young twig. Overhead, a woodpecker raps on a tree, seeking insects.

A fallen tree decomposes, returning nutrients to the soil and providing food for fungi, insects and woodpeckers. Deer are the wolves' prey. Remnants of the wolf's meal decompose, providing food for scavenging animals. A few deer hairs are used by birds to construct their nest.

The interactions of community members are set against the backdrop of changing seasons.



Deer browsing



Insects and migrating birds return. Black bears become active again; the females leave their dens with the cubs born in late January. Flowering plants and leaves begin to appear as daylight and warmth increase.



Leaves appear green all summer because the pigment, chlorophyll, is present and actively using sunlight to help in the plants' food-making process.



With the arrival of shorter days and cooler temperatures, the chemical processes in leaves change. When chlorophyll ceases to be active, the colour changes to those of other substances present in the leaf. Carotene gives a yellow or orange colouration. Red leaves occur when the sugar cannot flow into the branches on cool nights.



Deciduous trees lose their leaves to avoid loss of moisture during winter.



Black Bear

The Whiteshell's contrasts are apparent in its plant communities. This trail passes between two sharply different communities that are typical of the park: on the left a mixed-wood forest, on the right a rock outcrop.

Light, water, nutrients, soil, and shelter from the wind promote plant growth. The presence of these essentials, in varying amounts, determines the kinds of plants that will grow in a particular area.



Plants like blue-bead lily, false Solomon's seal, trillium, wild lily-of-the-valley and sarsaparilla, bloom close to the ground in the mixed-wood forest. Plenty of light reaches the forest floor before the leaves come out. Shade, created by the canopies of shrubs and trees, slows down the evaporation of moisture from the ground. There is little or no shade on the rock ridge.



Fallen leaves and dead vegetation on the ground begin to decompose, creating new soil.



The ground temperature beneath the snow remains at about 0°C providing habitat for voles and shrews that become prey to the great horned owl.



False Solomon's - seal

Jack pine is one of the most common trees in the Whiteshell. It is an evergreen with scaly, grey bark and paired needles.

Although it prefers to grow in sandy well-drained soils, members of a community do adapt to less than ideal conditions. Existing in cracks of the ancient rock, jack pines have adjusted to variations in nutrients, water, wind and sunlight. Those in the low-lying area are tall and sturdy while those on the rock ridge are stunted. Where there is no adequate anchorage in soil, they are often blown over by strong winds.



Jack pine



Because the vegetation is sparse on the rock outcrop, it is open to sunlight. Snow disappears from the rock earlier than from the forested area where there is more shade. Snow and ice in north-facing clefts may linger until June. Melted snow runs off into the area below since there is little to hold it back. The forest fire hazard becomes greater, more quickly on the rock outcrop.



The year's first blueberries are found on rock ridges. Sumac, another shrub on the rock outcrop, has leaves that turn a brilliant red, an indication that autumn is at hand.



In sheltered areas of the rock ridge, where soft snow accumulates, spruce grouse and ruffed grouse shelter by burying themselves in the snow.



Blueberries

From the scenic overlook, there are views of a mature black spruce community and distant rock ridges.

The relatively steep climb is not recommended in the winter.



Black Spruce cones



Black Spruce

It is difficult to see the pink colour of the rock because it is hidden by lichens. The lichens' colours vary according to the species, and include black, grey, green, yellow, orange and red.

Only lichens are capable of living on the bare rock. They require sunlight like other plants but very little soil, which they create from the rock. They are delicate and grow very slowly. Please stay on the trail to avoid damaging them.

Lichens are classified according to their form: crustose, crust-like with a hard surface; foliose, leaf-like; and fruticose, fruit-producing.

Rock tripe, a dark leaf-like lichen that often appears on boulders, can be used as emergency food.



The Whiteshell River winds northward through the park from West Hawk Lake to Nutimik Lake. It takes many forms on its journey. In some places the river widens, or changes into large deep lakes or into shallow ones where wild rice grows. In other places it rushes over rocks, creating spectacular waterfalls and rapids.



The greatest diversity and abundance of aquatic plants and animals occur where the river is slow-moving and there is no turbulence.



This is one of the first areas of open water for returning waterfowl. Geese and ducks rest on ice shelves at the edges and obtain food from the water. Swollen with meltwaters, the river's level is usually high.



Waterfowl in wild rice



Snapping and western painted turtles can be seen occasionally, basking on logs or rocks.



Waterlevels are low in autumn, particularly after a dry summer. The forest fire hazard may be high.

Wild rice along the shores, where the river is wide, is an important food for southbound waterfowl during their migration.

Aboriginal people have used this river system for centuries to reap the annual wild rice harvest.



The current makes the ice treacherous, so remain on the trail. The water levels begin to rise again in late winter.

The bur oak community is more common on the prairies to the west. So how did the oaks get here?

One possibility is that they are a remnant of the prairie vegetation that covered the Whiteshell hundreds of years ago. Another possibility is that they were introduced by Aboriginal people, voyageurs or fur traders who travelled along the river, often bringing along acorns as food.



Shrubs with white blossoms are high bush-cranberry, downy arrowwood, dogwood and nannyberry.



The berries of cranberry are red; those of downy arrowwood and nannyberry, blackish; and those of dogwood, white. Acorns are food for white-tailed deer and red squirrels. In the summer squirrels begin to store them for winter.



As the leaves and vegetation die, twigs of standing plants become the main food for deer. The deer's rut or mating season begins. Beavers begin to store their winter food supply of aspen and shrubs a short distance from their lodges.



Snowshoe hares feed on bark from the stems of shrubs, being able to reach higher as the snow level rises.



Bur Oak



With each visit, as you notice different things you'll develop a new impression of the Pine Point Trail and Whiteshell Provincial Park.