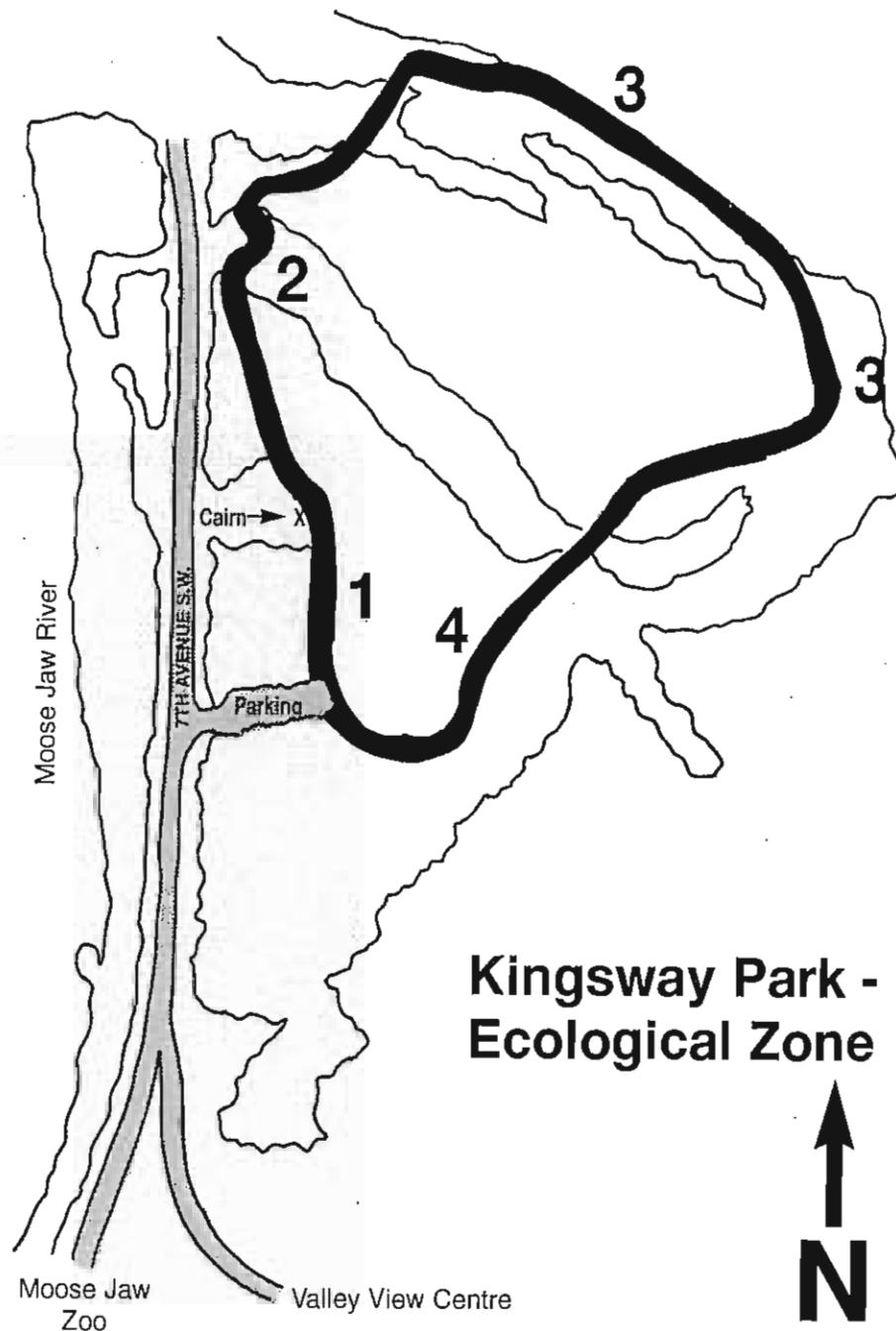

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Kingsway Park Ecological Zone! The Ecological Zone, part of the Wakamow Valley, has been designated as a protected area to preserve its unique plant and animal communities. An 800 metre self-guided nature trail allows you to learn more about the area as you enjoy a leisurely walk through a variety of habitats.

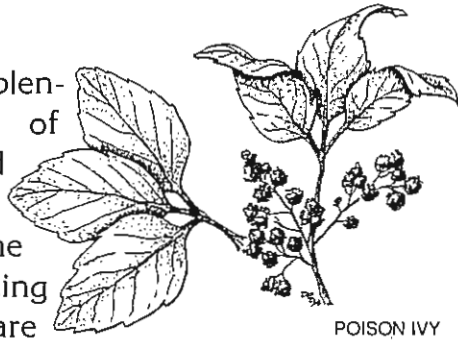
The Ecological Zone is a unique and diversified area of the Moose Jaw River valley. It encompasses harsh, dry, south-facing slopes, a moist marsh area, a grassy meadow and a woodland. It is home to 140 different plant species, used by over 100 bird species, 12 species of amphibians and reptiles and 20 animal species. It is also home to a variety of insects and plants which are not found for miles around.



BE ON THE ALERT!

POISON IVY

Poison Ivy can be plentiful along the edges of woods, roadsides and fences. Be aware that it is also found along the nature trail. Recognizing and avoiding it can spare you from the uncomfortable rash for which it is famous.



POISON IVY

Poison Ivy is a single-stemmed low shrub which can grow to 30 centimetres in height. It has three bright green, shiny leaflets. If present, flowers are whitish-yellow. White berries are produced in the fall. All plant parts can cause irritation. For those who are susceptible, even the sap or pollen can result in a severe skin reaction. Remember, "leaflets three, touch not me".

WOOD TICKS

Ticks are parasites that feed on the blood of humans and other animals. The most common tick species in this area is the Rocky Mountain Wood Tick. Adult ticks are small and flat with a reddish-brown body and eight legs. They are most common during May and June.

When you have completed your walk check yourself thoroughly. If you discover that a tick has secured itself to your skin, firmly grasp it as close to the skin as possible and pull steadily so that all mouthparts are removed.

GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

This area and the Moose Jaw River was created thousands of years ago with the retreat of the glaciers. As the glaciers melted, large volumes of running water carved the earth and created the valley. At that time, water would have filled the entire valley.

River valleys go through stages of development. An immature or young river cuts a valley with steep sides. The valley assumes a "V" shape because the water flows quickly and causes rapid erosion. Conversely, mature rivers have valley walls which are much further from the river and are characterized by a series of floodplains. A mature river follows a curved and winding path forming loops called "meanders". Both river flow and erosion slow down. The Moose Jaw River is an excellent example of a mature river.

Occasionally the meandering of the river forms large "U"-shaped bends. Erosion and deposition eventually cut the bend off from the river. When this happens, a small water body called an "oxbow lake" is formed. If the river bed is deep enough and moisture is made available, the oxbow will form an open marsh. In dry or shallow conditions, the area may develop into an open meadow. Eventually, however, erosion from the surrounding area and the accumulation of organic matter from dead plants fill in the oxbow lake. These areas are called meander scars. The continuous process of erosion and deposition provides habitat for plant growth and eventually woodland growth. This accounts for the variety of land distinctions in the river valley and Ecological Zone.

ECOSYSTEMS

The Ecological Zone is divided into four different ecosystems. The accompanying map will provide you with a brief account of the animals, plants, insects and land distinctions that you may see along the way. Different plants and animals can be seen at different times of the year.

Please remember this is a protected area. We encourage you to remove nothing and leave nothing behind. Enjoy your walk!



SEDGES

1) GRASSLAND

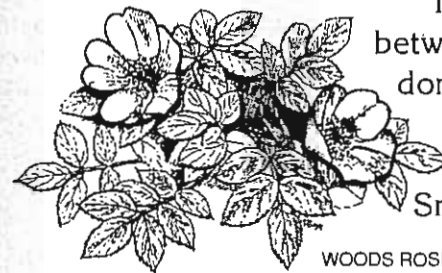
This open meadow is distinct from the treed area through which you have just walked. The absence of a tree canopy results in more direct sunlight which makes the area hotter and drier. It is also windier than the surrounding wooded area. Nevertheless, plants here have adapted to these conditions; they have found a way to survive.

Grasses and grass-like plants are perfectly adapted and dominate the area as a result. Grasses have extensive, deep root systems to obtain the moisture they require. Thin leaves also act to reduce water loss through evaporation. Some species have further reduced water loss by the addition of fine hairs on their leaves. Low growth and flexible stems allow grass plants to withstand high winds.

The wildlife species using the grassland are also different from those in other areas of the Ecological Zone. Songbirds such as Meadowlarks and Clay-coloured Sparrows nest here. Other animals, such as Snowshoe Hares, use the meadow for food while obtaining protection in the nearby wooded area.



MEADOWLARK

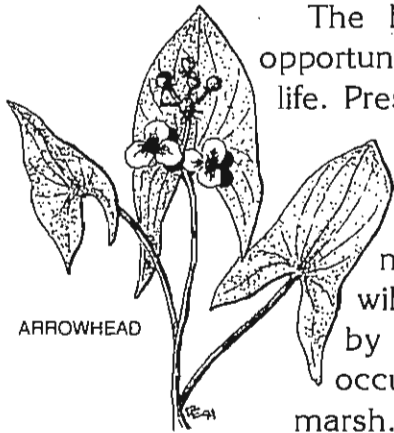


WOODS ROSE

The transition area (ecotone) between grassland and woods is dominated by shrubs and thickets. The most common species are the Western Snowberry and Woods Rose.

2) MARSH

The marsh is home to a variety of aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The species vary from year to year depending upon the moisture conditions.



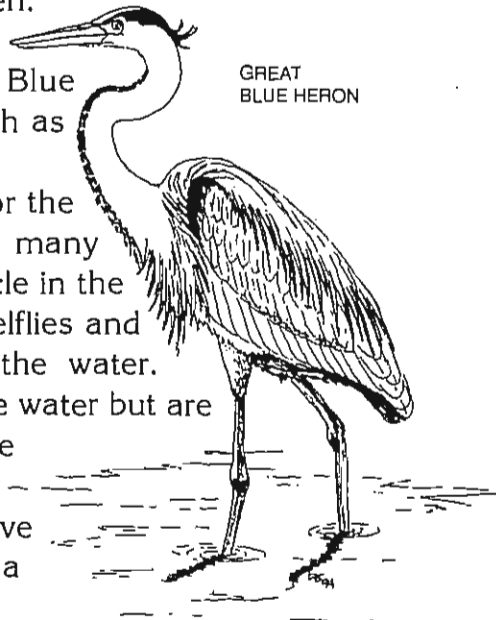
ARROWHEAD

The boardwalk allows an excellent opportunity for viewing the marsh and its life. Presently, moisture conditions provide habitat for a plant community which includes bulrushes, sedges and arrowheads. The marsh is home to a wealth of wildlife. Beaver activity is evident by gnawed tree stumps which occur all along the edge of the marsh. In the spring, several species

of waterfowl can be seen.

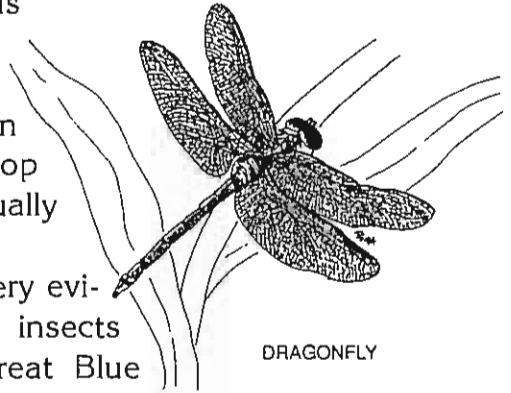
Though Mallards are the most common, Great Blue Herons also use the marsh as a hunting ground.

Water is essential for the survival of insects since many spend part of their life cycle in the water. Mosquitoes, damselflies and dragonflies lay eggs in the water. Their larvae also live in the water but are air breathers. They have special tubes from their mouths that stick up above the water - much like a scuba diver's snorkel.



GREAT BLUE HERON

Amphibians, such as the Leopard Frog, live in and around the water. Their eggs which are laid in masses in the water, develop into tadpoles and eventually adults.



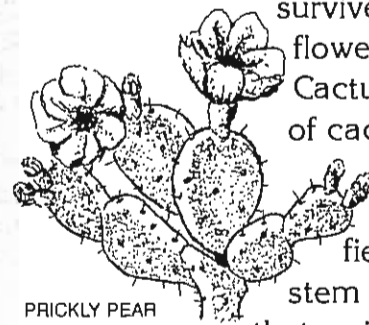
DRAGONFLY

The food chain is very evident here. Frogs rely on insects for food and in turn, Great Blue Herons feed on frogs. Water remains the common element for all.

3) VALLEY WALLS

The steep, south-facing slope represents one of the harshest environments on the prairies. Here, the valley wall faces directly into the sun and creates arid or desert-like conditions. This steep slope limits many plants from taking hold. Wind and water erosion are also constant problems.

Plant cover is sparse; only the hardiest species can survive here. The Prickly Pear (yellow flowers) and the Pincushion or Ball Cactus (purple flowers) are two species of cacti which are able to cope with the hot, dry conditions. Their protective spines are actually modified leaves on a fleshy stem. The stem is covered with a waxy substance that minimizes evaporation and maintains inner moisture. Even the flower petals have a waxy coating. Such adaptations enable these plants to survive.



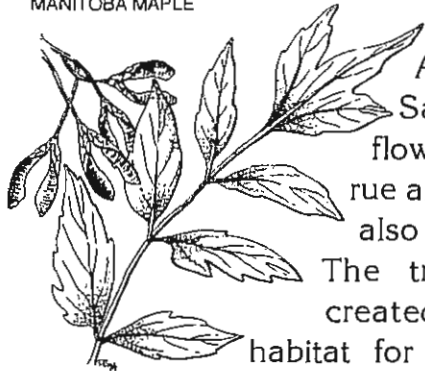
PRICKLY PEAR

The west-facing slopes provide another challenging growing environment. Though less severe than the south-facing slopes, its wind-swept and sun-dried conditions naturally prevent many plants from surviving. This is another example of an ecotone as it serves in the transition between the desert-like conditions of the south-facing slopes and the lush valley floor.

Raptors such as the Swainson's and the Red-tailed Hawk are often seen during the spring, summer and early fall riding the thermal air currents above the Ecological Zone. Their keen eyesight, when combined with a speedy attack, allow hawks to soar high, undetected by their prey.

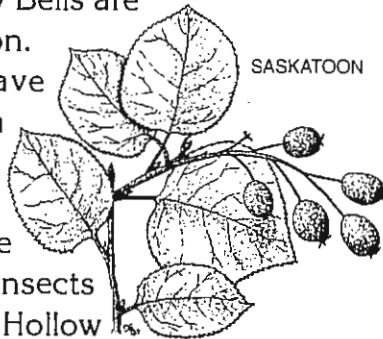
4) WOODLAND

MANITOBA MAPLE



This wooded area is dominated by Manitoba Maple and Green Ash trees. Chokecherry and Saskatoon shrubs as well as flowering plants such as Meadow-rue and Fairy Bells are also common.

SASKATOON



The trees have created a habitat for certain species of wildlife such as the Downy Woodpecker. They use the trees for cavity nests and feed on insects found on and under the bark. Hollow trunks also provide a place where the male woodpeckers can "drum" to produce sounds for establishing territory and attracting mates.

DOWNY WOODPECKER



Porcupines and other mammals feed on trees and shrubs. Porcupines gnaw the bark exposing the lighter coloured inside of the branch. Deer, browsing on the twigs of shrubs and young trees, leave a ragged chewed end. In contrast, shrubs browsed by rabbits and hares show a clean cut at a 45 degree angle. By standing on deep snow cover, rabbits and hares are able to reach higher up on the shrub.

CONCLUSION

We hope you've enjoyed your walk through the Kingsway Park Ecological Zone. This brochure provides you with a brief look at the vast diversification of plant and animal communities within Wakamow Valley.

If you have any questions about what you have seen in the Ecological Zone, please do not hesitate to inquire at Wakamow Valley's office or write to us at:

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