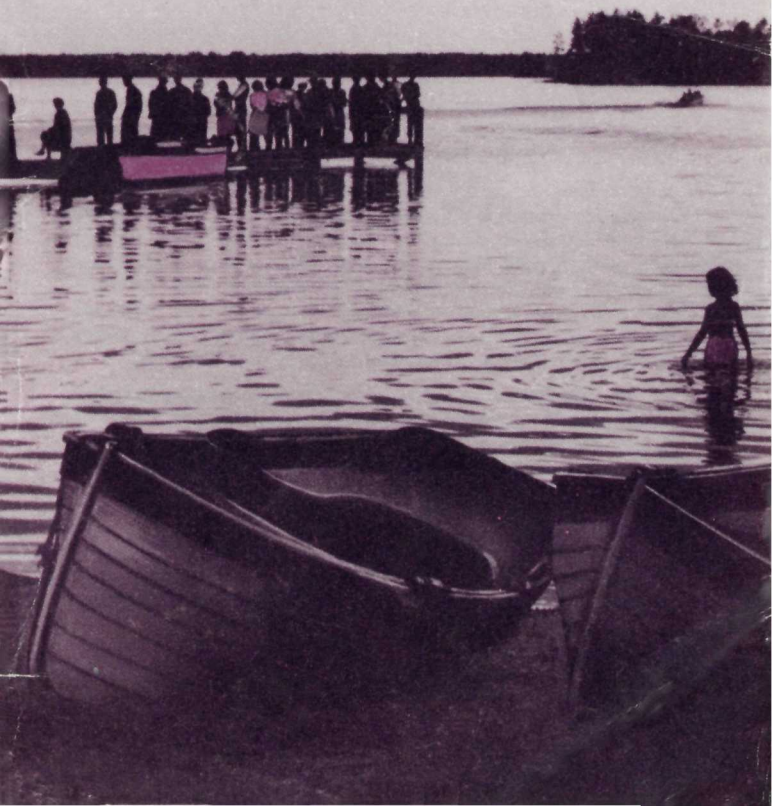


ELK ISLAND

NATIONAL PARK
CANADA



FOREWORD

The National Parks of Canada are areas of natural beauty and special interest that have been "dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education, and enjoyment." Established primarily for the preservation of the unspoiled natural landscape and for the protection of the native wildlife, they are to be "maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The discovery of mineral hot springs bubbling from the slopes of Sulphur Mountain, by engineers exploring the route for Canada's first transcontinental railway led to the establishment of Canada's first national park. From this small area of ten square miles at Banff, Alberta, set apart in 1885, the national parks system has been extended until it embraces 26 separate areas totalling more than 29,000 square miles.

Although a few parks have been devoted chiefly to the conservation of certain species of big game animals once threatened with extinction, some contain sites memorable in the early history of Canada. Others have been developed so that park visitors may more conveniently view the magnificent scenery and relax in the enjoyment of the inspirational and peaceful environment. From the sea-girt hills on the Atlantic Coast across the rivers and lakes of Central Canada to the alpine vistas of the Rockies and Selkirks, these national playgrounds provide ideal areas for nature study and for recreation.

It is the responsibility of the National Parks Service of the Lands and Development Services Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, to administer these natural areas for the enjoyment of Canada's present and future generations. By progressive stages the parks have been made more easily accessible, wildlife scientifically managed, public services provided, and accommodation and recreational facilities expanded. A staff of experienced wardens keeps constant vigilance throughout these park areas to ensure the protection of the flora and fauna, as well as the safety and convenience of park visitors. Conservation of the forests, the flowers, and the natural wildlife is their chief concern, and the co-operation of all visitors in this important work is greatly appreciated.

In marking, preserving, and restoring sites of national historic importance the National Parks Service is advised by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, an honorary body of recognized historians representing various parts of the country. From the Fortress of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia to Fort Prince of Wales on Hudson Bay, nine such sites are administered as National Historic Parks, and many other places of historical importance have been suitably commemorated.

Also of historical significance was the act of linking two great national parks in Alberta and Montana to be known as Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Commemorating the peace that has existed for over 130 years between adjoining nations, this unspoiled area of natural beauty is symbolic of the goodwill enjoyed by these two peoples.

The National Parks of Canada are part of a great national heritage, and under careful administration will continue as a perpetual asset—undiminished by use—for all future generations.

Front Cover Photo:
Sandy Beach, Astotin Lake.

VISITORS GUIDE

Location and Description

Elk Island National Park, situated in central Alberta about 30 miles east of Edmonton, is the largest fenced animal preserve in Canada. It contains an area of 75 square miles and occupies a portion of the extensive irregular region known as Beaver Hills. Evidences of the Ice Age are visible where the low hills are worn smooth, and many small lakes nestle between the ridges and in the hollows left by the retreating glaciers.

The park was originally reserved in 1906 as a sanctuary for elk, moose, and mule deer in the region, and since 1907 has formed a habitat for part of the herd of buffalo purchased that year by the Government of Canada. It is surrounded by strong fencing, with fireguard strips ploughed inside the fence for fire prevention purposes.

Of the many lakes in the park, Astotin, situated in the northern part, is the finest and largest. It is a beautiful body of water approximately 2½ miles wide, and is dotted with more than twenty islands. Of these, Long Island, situated near the western shore, is the largest. Near the southern shore is Elk Island, to which the park owes its name. Several of the islands, including Long, Elk, Pine, and Archer are connected with the mainland by rustic foot-bridges. On the eastern shore of Astotin Lake is an area known as Sandy Beach, the recreational centre of the park. In the section of the park north of Highway No. 16 are Tawayik, Little Tawayik, Oster, Paul, Long, Adamson, Moss, Spruce, Mud, and Oxbow Lakes.

The park is mainly a forested area but between the heavy growths of poplar on the main range are open meadows, rich in wild hay, which provide excellent grazing areas for the wild animals.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Elk Island National Park may be reached by the provincial highway system of Alberta through southern, western, and northern gateways. The southern gateway is situated on Highway No. 16 about midway between Edmonton and Vegreville. From this gateway an all-weather road through the park passes the administrative headquarters on Astotin Lake. The western gateway is reached by a road which connects with Highway No. 15 at a point about six miles east of Fort Saskatchewan. The northern gateway is reached by a good road from Lamont, on Highway No. 15, four miles distant. The distance from park headquarters to the south gate is nine miles, and to the north gate eight miles. The west gate is less than a mile from the administration buildings.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

As the chief purposes of Canada's National Parks require that they be maintained in their natural state, all wildlife within their boundaries is rigidly protected. For this reason hunting and the possession of firearms are strictly prohibited. As the parks are game sanctuaries, visitors must not molest any wild animals or birds or their nests. Dogs or cats are not allowed in any national park except under special permission.

PARK ADMINISTRATION

A resident Superintendent, whose office is located on the western side of Astotin Lake, supervises the local administration of Elk Island Park. The office of the Park Superintendent is open daily, and information concerning the wild animals, roads, and recreational facilities in the park may be obtained, together with literature and detailed maps. The park regulations are enforced by the Park Warden Service, assisted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Registration and Motor Licences

All motorists entering the park must register and secure transient motor licences. Licences for motor vehicles not used for commercial purposes are issued on the following basis:—

- (1) Single trip licence: Automobile, 25 cents; auto with trailer attached, 50 cents.
- (2) Licence good for the entire season, which also will be honoured in Waterton Lakes, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain, and Point Pelee National Parks: Automobile, \$1; auto with trailer attached, \$2.
- (3) Special licence good for the entire season, which also will be honoured in all national parks in Canada: Automobile, \$2; auto with trailer attached, \$3.

Special licences may be obtained for motor vehicles used for commercial purposes.

Accommodation

There are no hotels in the park but two newly-constructed bungalow camps on the eastern side of Astotin Lake provide accommodation for visitors. Excellent hotel accommodation is available in Edmonton, 30 miles distant, and limited hotel accommodation may be secured at Lamont, four miles from the northern gateway of the park.

Unless visitors are carrying their own camping equipment or have automobile trailers it would be advisable to arrange for accommodation in advance.

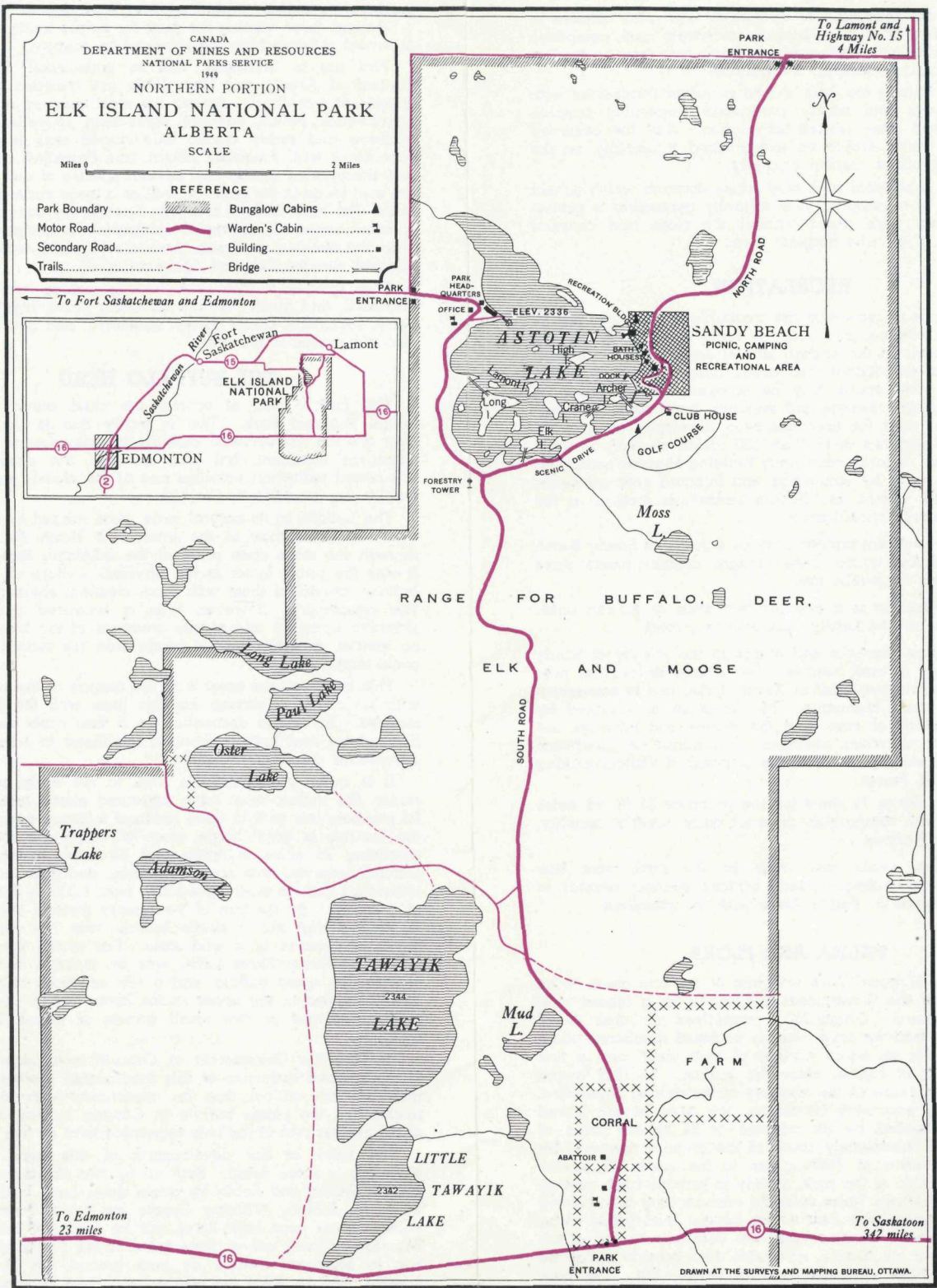
Name	Capacity	Daily Rates
Sunset Cabins (DeLuxe)	20 cabins	2-4 persons \$5.00 and up to \$10.00 (E)
Birch Bungalows (modest type)	20 cabins	2 persons \$2.50 each additional .50 (E)

(E) indicates European Plan (without meals)
Meals may be obtained at nearby restaurants.

CAMPING

Visitors bringing their own camping equipment will find a well-equipped camp-ground on the eastern side of Astotin Lake, within a short distance of Sandy Beach. Kitchen shelters, equipped with camp-stoves, tables, benches, firewood, and other conveniences are provided. A limited number of tents have been erected and are for hire. Space is also available for automobile trailers. A refreshment booth situated at Sandy Beach serves both campers and picnickers. Large parking areas are also provided in the vicinity. A gasoline filling station is in operation at the Sandy Beach area; also a restaurant consisting of a dining room and coffee shop, known as "Wapiti Inn".

For each period of two weeks or less camping fees are \$1 for an ordinary tent. For automobile trailers the rate is 50 cents for one day, \$1 for two days, and \$2 for any period over two days up to two weeks. Permits may be obtained from the camp-ground attendant.



FIRE PREVENTION

Visitors are requested to co-operate with park officers in the prevention of fires. Smoking materials and camp-fires should be completely extinguished. Camp-fires may be kindled only at places provided for the purpose.

Persons visiting the park should acquaint themselves with the regulations and secure particulars concerning suitable camp-sites and other related information. Any fire observed by a park visitor should be extinguished if possible, or the nearest park officer notified promptly.

A fire in a national park may cause damage which cannot be repaired in a century. It is virtually impossible to protect these national park areas without the close and constant co-operation of all who frequent them.

RECREATION

Many forms of recreation are available in the park, including bathing, boating, and golf. A large area in the vicinity of Sandy Beach on the eastern side of Astotin Lake has been laid out as a recreational area where baseball, softball, horse-shoes, and other sports may be enjoyed. Amusements for children, including swings and seesaws, have been provided. Another area near the lake has been developed as a picnic ground, and contains more than 100 tables as well as other conveniences. A large community building situated nearby on Scout Hill is used for sing-songs and informal entertainments. A dance hall, known as "Buffalo Lodge", is located at the Astotin Lake recreational area.

Bathing—Excellent bathing may be enjoyed at Sandy Beach on Astotin Lake, where three modern dressing-rooms have been provided for public use.

Boating—Boating is a popular recreation at Astotin Lake. Boats may be rented locally from private owners.

Golf—A fine nine-hole golf course in the vicinity of Sandy Beach is open to park visitors. The course is laid out over the rolling terrain southeast of Astotin Lake, and is convenient to the main park highways. The fairways are flanked by beautiful growths of trees, and the greens and fairways are maintained in excellent condition. An attractive club-house overlooking Astotin Lake is at the disposal of visitors making use of the golf course.

The green fee is 75 cents for one round or \$1 for 18 holes (continuous) with comparable rates for daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal periods.

Hiking—The roads and trails in the park offer fine opportunities for hiking. Rustic bridges connect several of the larger islands in Astotin Lake with the mainland.

FAUNA AND FLORA

Elk Island National Park was one of the first areas to be established by the Government of Canada as a fenced wild animal sanctuary. Originally it comprised an area of 16 square miles, and the wild animals enclosed numbered about 30 head of elk, an equal number of mule deer, and a few moose. Later, of course, came the buffalo. In 1922 owing to the rapid increase in the numbers of the animal population, now enjoying sanctuary conditions, the area of Elk Island Park was extended by an addition of 36 square miles of territory lying immediately south of the original reserve. By a further extension in 1947, again to the south, 23 square miles were added to the park, mainly to provide fresh grazing areas for the buffalo. These splendid animals may be observed feeding or roaming over their native habitat, from points along the main highway which crosses the northerly section of the park. Herds of elk, moose, and mule deer provide an added attraction to those interested in wild animal life. The park

is also a sanctuary for smaller animals, including weasel, muskrat, porcupine, rabbit, squirrel, and gopher.

Among those visiting the park for nature study are parties of school children from the surrounding country.

Bird life is abundant, and in midsummer the marshy portions of Astotin and other lakes are crowded with many species of waterfowl. Among the most common are mallard, canvas-back, pintail, gadwall, buffle-head, shoveller, American gold-eye and ruddy ducks, blue-winged teal, lesser scaup, coot, black tern, American bittern, and Franklin's gull. Ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse and several species of owl and hawk are also found in the park, as well as a large variety of smaller birds. The latter include blue jay, Canada jay, magpie, English sparrow, crow, black-capped chickadee, Bohemian waxwing, pine and evening grosbeak, mountain bluebird, willow thrush, pileated woodpecker, and Baltimore oriole.

Tree species in the park include poplar, white spruce, tamarack, and birch. Shrubs including hazel, highbush cranberry, saskatoon, choke cherry, raspberry, and bird cherry are also indigenous to the area.

THE BUFFALO HERD

The buffalo are, of course, the chief attraction in Elk Island National Park. This is partly due to the fact that they are the largest wild animals in existence on the North American continent, but also because the story of their threatened extinction provides one of the classic examples of wildlife conservation in Canada.

The buffalo, in its natural state, once ranged in vast herds over the grasslands of the interior of North America and through the more open parts of the adjoining forest regions. It was the prime factor in the physical welfare of the Plains Indians, providing them with food, clothing, shelter, and fuel. The relationship, however, was a balanced one, as the primitive economy and simple weapons of the hunters made no greater demands on the herds than the natural increase could supply.

This balance was upset with the coming of the white man, with his superior firearms and his links with the far distant markets. An era of destruction on a vast scale started, and both whites and Indians found a livelihood in supplying the commercial demands for hides.

It is quite understandable that, to the early settler and trader, the buffalo must have appeared almost inexhaustible. Its numbers are said to have reached millions, and it roamed the prairies in great herds, some of which are recorded as extending 25 miles in width and 50 miles in depth. The picture, however, was soon to change, and it is thought that individual hunters must have killed from 1,000 to 3,000 buffalo in a season. By the turn of the century there is every reason to believe that not a single buffalo was left roaming the plains of Canada in a wild state. Far to the north, in the vicinity of Great Slave Lake, was an isolated herd of sub-species, the wood buffalo, and a few scattered animals may have persisted in the upper Peace River Valley. In addition there were one or two small groups of plains buffalo in captivity.

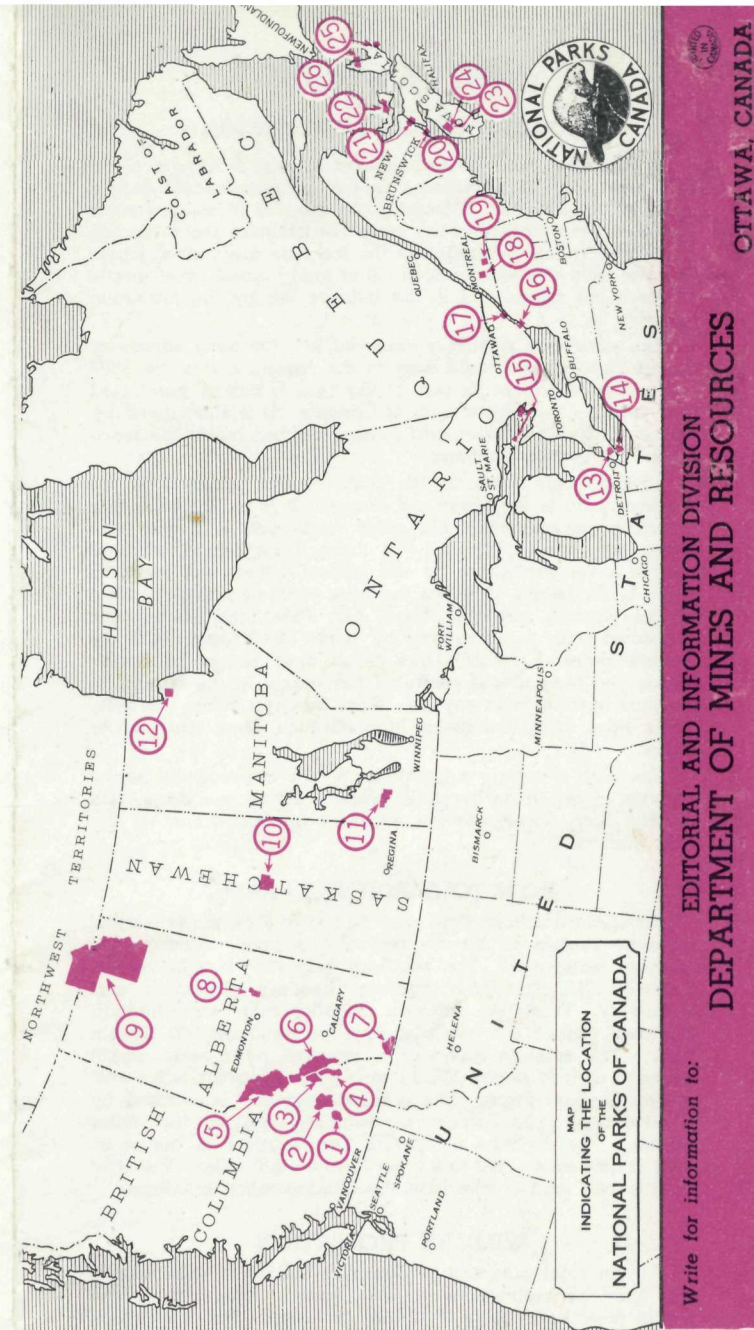
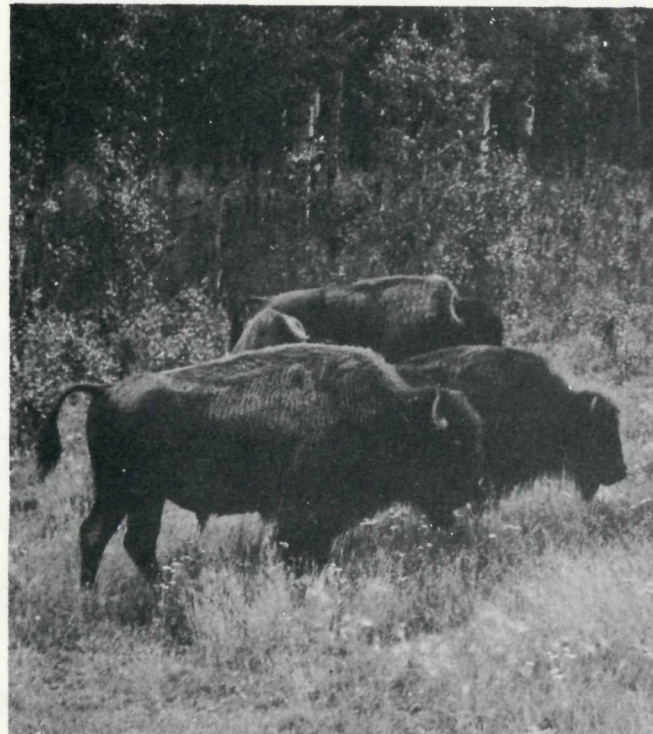
In 1905 the Government of Canada took steps to avert the threatened extinction of this magnificent species. Fortunately at that critical time an opportunity was afforded to re-establish the plains buffalo in Canada by the acquisition of the greater part of the only remaining herd on this continent.

The story of the development of this herd is worth recording in some detail. Built up by two Montana ranchers, Messrs. Allard and Pablo, its origin dates back to about 1873 when an Indian, Walking Coyote by name, captured four young calves near Milk River, not far from the International Boundary. These calves were taken to the Flathead Reservation in Montana, treated as pets around the St. Ignatius Mission, and by 1884 the original four had become thirteen.

In this year ten of these animals were purchased by the two ranchers, who lived on the reservation and who realized the profitable investment in a near-extinct species. In 1893 they added to their holdings by the purchase of 26 pure bred animals from the "Buffalo" Jones herd at Omaha. This herd, although derived mainly from wild Texas stock, also contained animals procured from Colonel Bedson, of Stony Mountain, Manitoba, originally collected in the 1870's. On the death of Allard in 1896 a half share of the herd, then about 300 head, went to his estate and was divided equally among his heirs. These animals were sold and provided the nucleus of, or contributed largely to, the majority of existing herds in the United States today.

Through the demands for settlement on the range country of the remaining Pablo holdings of the original herd, it became faced with dispersion and destruction. The Government of Canada, becoming aware of this fact and realizing the tragedy involved, offered to purchase the greater portion of this remaining herd and move it to a suitable habitat in Canada. Added interest was given to the transaction in the fact that the herd contained descendants of Canadian animals, if not some of the original stock.

Negotiations conducted through the office of The Minister of Interior were successfully concluded in 1906 and, after overcoming many difficulties in the round-up and shipment, 716 head of buffalo were brought safely north during the years 1907 to 1912. Although the first shipments were sent to Elk Island Park, later ones went direct to the newly-established Buffalo National Park at Wainwright. Subsequently all animals at Elk Island, with the exception of some 48 too wild to capture, were transferred to the new park. From this small, vigorous band has grown the present splendid herd of buffalo at Elk Island National Park numbering more than 1,000 head and regarded as the finest on the North American Continent.



Key to map of National Parks

1. Mount Revelstoke
2. Glacier
3. Yoho
4. Kootenay
5. Jasper
6. Banff
7. Waterton Lakes
8. Elk Island
9. Wood Buffalo
10. Prince Albert
11. Riding Mountain
12. Fort Prince of Wales
13. Fort Malden
14. Point Pelee
15. Georgian Bay Islands
16. St. Lawrence Islands
17. Fort Wellington
18. Fort Chambly
19. Fort Lennox
20. Fundy
21. Fort Beausejour
22. Prince Edward Island
23. Fort Royal
24. Fort Anne
25. Fortress of Louisbourg
26. Cape Breton Highlands

Write for information to:

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