

Bear Hill



Bear Hill covers nearly 46 hectares of hilltop landscape, some of the oldest rock on Vancouver Island.

The last of the glaciers passed over the Saanich Peninsula nearly 15,000 years ago, scouring out Elk/Beaver Lake, and leaving behind residual hills, called monadnocks. Bear Hill is the result of the smoothing and rounding action of ice 1,000 metres thick.

Today, Bear Hill is known for its woodland trails, popular with hikers and horse riders, and its profusion of wildflowers in spring. Trails lead from the base of the hill, through stands of Douglas-fir, tall Oregon grape and glistening salal. The music of song sparrows and golden-crowned kinglets serenades you through Arbutus and licorice fern, until you reach the dry, exposed slopes at the summit. Garry oak trees cling to the hilltop, perfect cover for wildflowers like fawn lily, camas, sea blush and chocolate lily. Tread softly here, and leave the flowers where you find them for others to enjoy too.

Bear Hill is high enough to give you panoramic views of the Saanich Peninsula, Mount Baker, nearby Gulf Islands, and the San Juan Islands. And in case you think you're the only one enjoying the views, think again. You may see ravens, turkey vultures or a circle of bald eagles riding the thermals overhead. They make the 30-minute hike worth it.

How to Get There

Elk/Beaver Lake and Bear Hill are located in Saanich, 12 km north of downtown Victoria. To reach Beaver Lake, take the Pat Bay Highway (#17) to Elk Lake Drive. To reach Elk Lake, take Sayward Drive, off Highway #17, to Hamsterly Road, then turn right on Brookleigh Road.

To reach Bear Hill, continue along Brookleigh Road to Oldfield Road. Turn right on Oldfield Road and right on Bear Hill Road. Allow approximately 20 minutes driving time from Victoria.

A Message to Park Visitors

Regional parks and trails belong to you. Regulations exist so that residents and visitors can enjoy and appreciate protected natural areas. Regulations are posted at park kiosks or are available through CRD Parks.

Please obey all signs and:

- carry out all litter
- respect adjacent private property
- stay on designated trails
- keep dogs under control or on a leash
- pick up your dog's droppings and deposit in garbage containers
- boaters: observe posted boating regulations
- cyclists and horseriders: pass others with care

The following are prohibited:

- motorized vehicles on park trails
- firearms and hunting
- alcohol consumption
- camping and open fires
- removal of any natural material
- harassment or removal of any wildlife

Phone 1-800-663-5555 to report wild fires

What's Happening in CRD Parks?

Dial 474-PARK for 24-hour access to nature house hours, nature walks and special park events. Or find us on the Web at www.crd.bc.ca/parks



Capital Regional District
PARKS

490 Atkins Avenue Victoria, BC V9B 2Z8
tel (250) 478-3344 ■ fax (250) 478-5416
474-PARK (recorded info)

e: crdparks@crd.bc.ca | www.crd.bc.ca/parks



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ELK/BEAVER LAKE & BEAR HILL Regional Parks



Capital Regional District
PARKS

Elk/Beaver Lake



Elk/Beaver Lake is the most intensively used of all our regional parks, and offers the greatest diversity of year-round

water and land-based activities. The lake surface is used cooperatively by swimmers, windsurfers, sailors, water-skiers, fishers and rowers. Some park trails are designated multi-use, for hikers, cyclists and horse riders, while others are for hiking only.

At 411 hectares, Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park is large enough to accommodate virtually every outdoor interest. But where to begin?

Head for the south end of Beaver Lake. Beaver Beach has a shallow, sandy beach, perfect for swimming, picnicking and canoeing around the offshore islands. The old Filter Beds area contains group picnic sites, and provides access to quiet woodland trails. You can use the nearby ponds for retriever training, or the Equestrian Centre to exercise and train your horse. Both these areas are under licence agreements. For group activities, consult your local retriever or equestrian clubs for access.

To the north, Elk Lake offers even more. At Eagle Beach, swim, picnic under the Pacific willow trees, launch your scull from the Rowing Centre, or start a hike south to Beaver Lake. At Hamsterly Beach, join windsurfers skimming the waters, sailors seeking a strong breeze, and fishers searching for the elusive "big one."

A Park With a Past

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park is rich in natural and cultural history. For thousands of years, the Coast Salish people inhabited the Saanich Peninsula. The Songhees and the Saanich used the area for hunting, fishing and collecting plants. Camas bulbs were eaten as root vegetables; cat-tail leaves were used to weave baskets; licorice ferns were gathered for cold remedies; and cottonwood gum made excellent waterproofing for baskets, all as recently as 150 years ago. But in the 1850s, the Saanich Peninsula was purchased from the Coast Salish people for 386 wool blankets. Since that time, the area of Elk/Beaver Lake has undergone many changes.

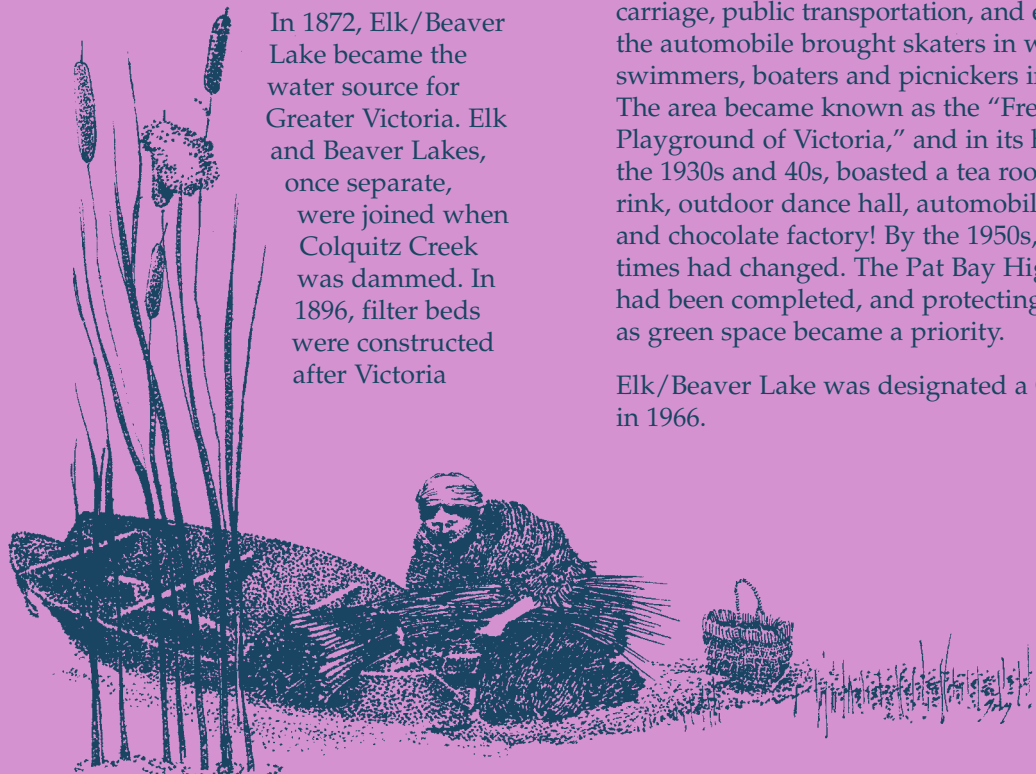
In 1872, Elk/Beaver Lake became the water source for Greater Victoria. Elk and Beaver Lakes, once separate, were joined when Colquitz Creek was dammed. In 1896, filter beds were constructed after Victoria

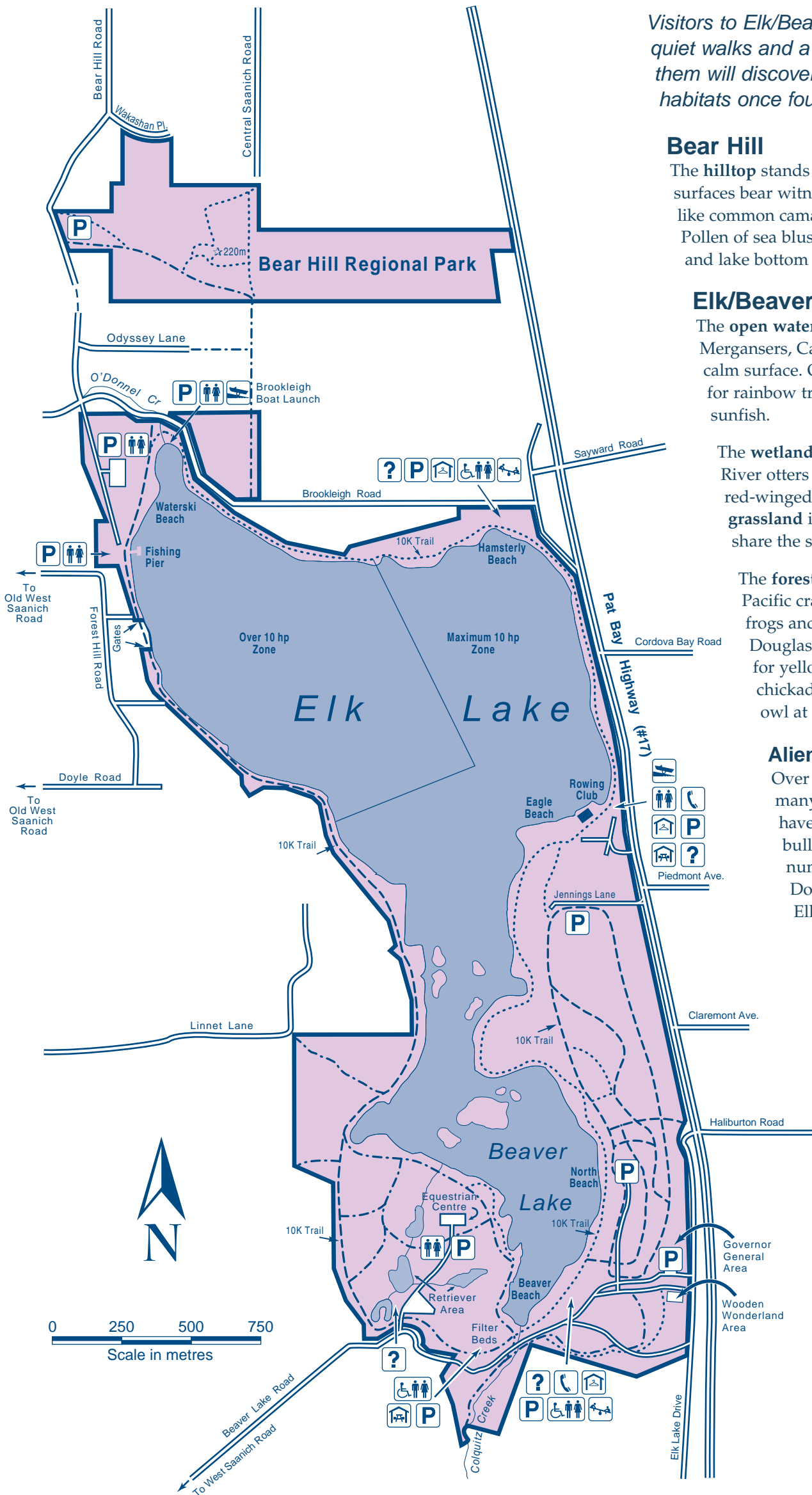
residents complained of fish and tadpoles in their drinking water. The lake remained a water source for some areas of the region until 1977.

Meanwhile, railways moved across Vancouver Island, including the Victoria & Sidney Line. From 1894 to 1919, the "Cordwood Limited" travelled one of the more scenic, and dangerous, passages along the west side of Elk/Beaver Lake, where the tracks hugged the shoreline, and the train took many sharp turns.

When the railway closed, people found other ways to travel to Elk/Beaver Lake. Horse and carriage, public transportation, and eventually the automobile brought skaters in winter, and swimmers, boaters and picnickers in summer. The area became known as the "Freshwater Playground of Victoria," and in its heyday, the 1930s and 40s, boasted a tea room, roller rink, outdoor dance hall, automobile camp, and chocolate factory! By the 1950s, however, times had changed. The Pat Bay Highway had been completed, and protecting the area as green space became a priority.

Elk/Beaver Lake was designated a CRD park in 1966.





Visitors to Elk/Beaver Lake and Bear Hill who prefer quiet walks and a closer look at the world around them will discover remnants of diverse natural habitats once found in the region.

Bear Hill

The **hilltop** stands the test of time. Grooves and polished surfaces bear witness to ancient glaciers, while wildflowers like common camas and spring gold are as old as the hills. Pollen of sea blush, an annual, has been found in wetland and lake bottom sediments laid down 10,000 years ago.

Elk/Beaver Lake

The **open water** is the habitat of many species. Mergansers, Canada geese and buffleheads share the calm surface. Overhead, bald eagles and osprey look for rainbow trout, smallmouth bass and pumpkin-seed sunfish.

The **wetland** serves as a transition from lake to shore. River otters swim among the yellow pond lilies, and red-winged blackbirds balance on cat-tails. The **grassland** is a quiet refuge. Savannah sparrows share the serenity with Columbian black-tailed deer.

The **forest** is lush with life. Stands of cottonwood, Pacific crabapple and red alder shelter red-legged frogs and provide homes for cavity-nesting birds. Douglas-fir and western red cedar form a canopy for yellow warblers and chestnut-backed chickadees. The lucky may even hear a screech owl at dawn.

Aliens at Elk/Beaver!

Over the years, plant and animal species, many of them harmful to the park's ecosystem, have been introduced into the lakes. The giant bullfrog, for example, has multiplied in large numbers, crowding out native amphibians. Do not release any fish or other animals into Elk/Beaver Lake.

LEGEND	
	Parking
	Toilets
	Toilets (Wheelchair Access)
	Changehouse (Summer Only)
	Boat Launch
	Information Kiosk
	Group Picnic Shelter
	Emergency Telephone
	Playground
	Hiking Trail
	Hiking/Bridle Trail
	Hiking/Bridle/Cycling Trail
	Park Boundary

Note:
Toilets at Waterski Beach, Brookleigh Boat Launch, Filter Beds and Equestrian Centre are open all year.

Boating Regulations

(Canadian Coast Guard - Canadian Shipping Act)

- Maximum ten horsepower vessels permitted on Beaver Lake and east half of Elk Lake.
- Over ten horsepower vessels permitted on the west half of Elk Lake except within 10 metres of north shore.

(White buoys with orange decals mark the boundary between maximum ten horsepower and over ten horsepower zones.)

- Power driven vessels towing a person(s) on waterskis or other equipment are prohibited between sunrise and 11 a.m.
- All vessels prohibited on the eastern half of Elk Lake during swimming events.
- Over ten horsepower vessels prohibited during rowing events.
- A permit from the Canadian Coast Guard is required for lake events, i.e., regatta, derby. Submit event applications to CRD Parks by March 30 each year, for events held in the following year. Applications are reviewed by the Elk/Beaver Lake Recreational Use Advisory Group, Provincial Boating Officer and Canadian Coast Guard. Call CRD Parks at (250) 478-3344 for application forms.

Criminal Code of Canada Offenses

- Careless or dangerous operation of a vessel.
- Operating a vessel while impaired.
- Towing a person after dark or without a spotter.
- Failing to stop at the scene of an accident.

Important Notice

- Submerged stump warning. Boaters should use extreme caution at all times. The water level of Elk Lake fluctuates and submerged stumps may be encountered close to shore.
- Boating regulations are enforced by the Saanich Police. If you observe any violations, call 475-4321.