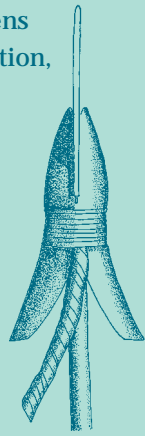


The people before the park

The first settlers in what is now Witty's Lagoon Regional Park were the Northern Straits Salish people. When Fort Victoria was established in 1843, members of the Ka-Kyaakan band were the sole inhabitants of the area north of the spit. They fished, gathered camas bulbs, berries and shellfish, and crafted baskets, canoes and clothing. Shell middens reveal traces of their early habitation, including their village site at the edge of the lagoon.

In 1850, James Douglas of the Hudson Bay Company purchased the land from Pedder Bay to Albert Head for £43 worth of blankets. One year later, the Witty's Lagoon section was purchased privately, and farmed by various families until 1867, when John Witty took ownership. During this time, the Ka-Kyaakan band continued to live on the beach, providing canoe transport to Fort Victoria for the community. Today all that remains of the early settlements are shell middens, heritage orchards and part of a cement weir once used for a gravity-fed irrigation system.

In 1966, CRD Parks purchased 18 hectares of land around the lagoon from the Witty family. Today 56 hectares of this unique ecosystem are protected within the regional parks system.



fishing tool

How to Get There

Witty's Lagoon is located on Metchosin Road in Metchosin, 18 kilometres from Victoria.

Main Entrance: Follow the Trans-Canada Highway from Victoria, and take the Colwood exit. Follow the Old Island Highway, which turns into Sooke Road. From Sooke Road, turn left on Metchosin Road, which leads to the park entrance on the left.

Tower Point Entrance: From Metchosin Road, turn left on Duke Road, then right on Olympic View Drive, which leads to the parking area on the left.

Allow approximately 40 minutes driving time from Victoria.

Park Etiquette: What You Need to Know

To help preserve parks for everyone to enjoy, please:

- stay on designated trails
- keep dogs under control and on the trail
- pick up your dog's droppings
- carry out litter

The following are prohibited:

- bicycles and motorized vehicles
- wildflower picking
- camping and open fires
- alcohol
- removal or disturbance of plants or animals

Need More Info?

For more information about your regional parks and trails, visit the CRD Parks web site at www.crd.bc.ca/parks.

Dial 9-1-1 in case of emergency or fire, or if you observe unlawful activities.



Regional Parks

490 Atkins Avenue
Victoria BC V9B 2Z8
T 250.478.3344 | F 250.478.5416
www.crd.bc.ca/parks



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04-5,000

WITTY'S LAGOON Regional Park



Regional Parks

Water is the essence of Witty's Lagoon. Creek, waterfall, lagoon, beach and rocky shore draw you into an ecosystem rich with coastal plants and animals.

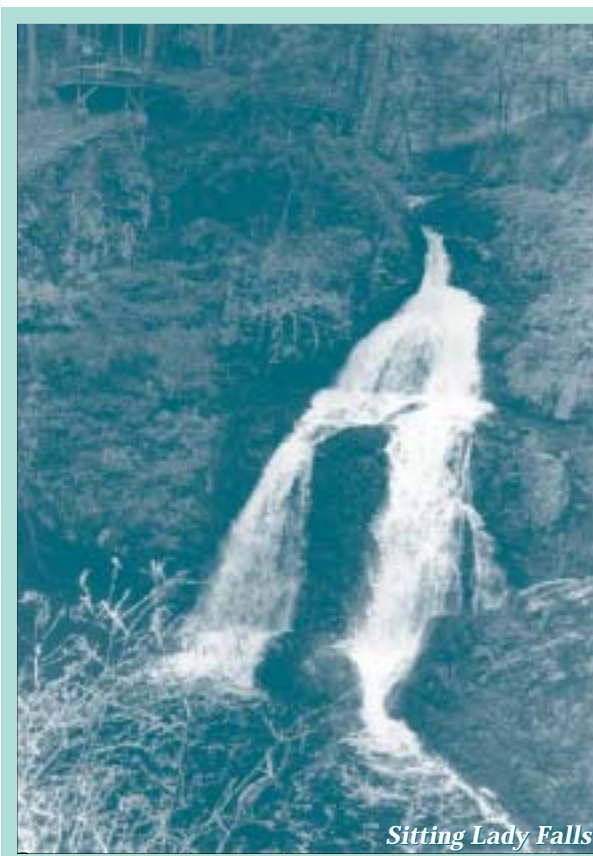
Adjacent to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in the Bilston Creek Watershed, lies Witty's Lagoon Regional Park, a harmonious blend of protected natural environments.

Enter through a dark woodland of immense Douglas-fir: the Songhees people made fishing hooks from the knots in this wood. Bigleaf maple is common here, called "Paddle-Tree" in a number of Coast Salish languages, a reference to its carving use.

Running through the forest is Bilston Creek, its edges laced with delicate lady fern. The creek tumbles toward a waterfall, then spills over volcanic rock—a trickle in summer, and a thunderous cascade in winter—misting ocean spray and stonecrop clinging to the cliff.

Where fresh water meets salt water, the lagoon is formed. Wind, tide and current create an environment teeming with life. The calm, nutrient-rich waters are warm and shallow, valuable as nurseries for animals that tolerate both salt and fresh water, and feed on the microscopic life flourishing here.

Further on lies the saltmarsh, a tidal zone bordering the lagoon. Here channels of salt water create new territory for tiny snails, rock crabs and fish which migrate from the ocean. A thick carpet of green covers the marsh. This is glasswort; in summer it is entwined in the orange stems of saltmarsh dodder, a parasitic



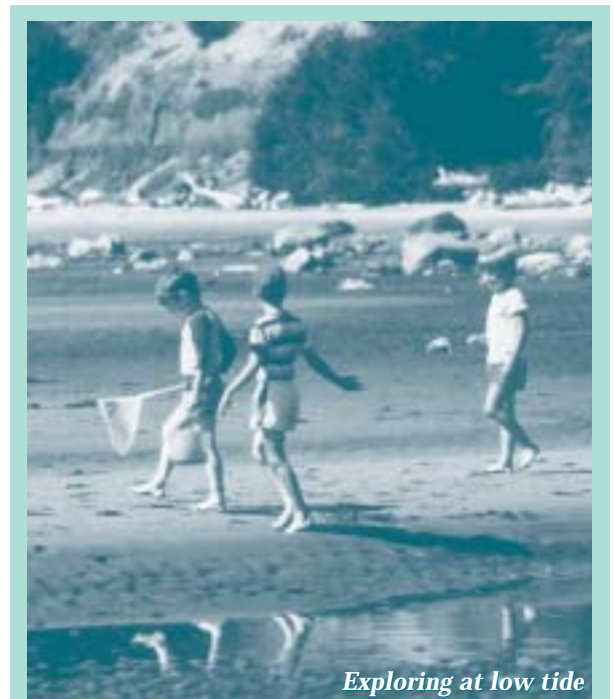
Sitting Lady Falls

plant. Many of the plants found in the saltmarsh are critical for the wintering waterfowl that feed in this area.

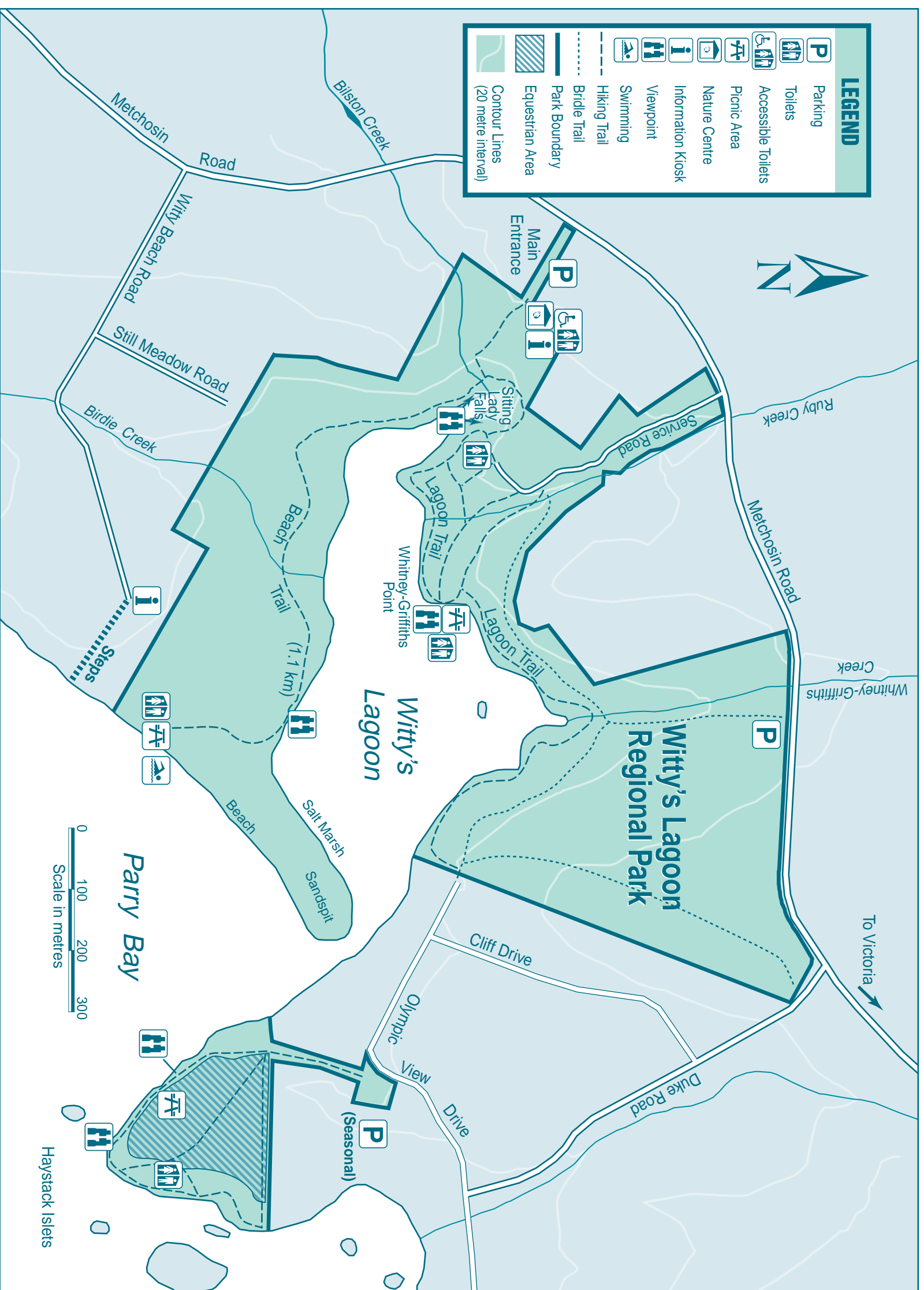
Beyond, a wide beach beckons. Few plants and animals survive the rolling, churning movement of sand here. But just below the surface are those who have adapted. Burrowers such as bloodworms find food among the tiny grains. Bent-nose clams—filter feeders—strain food out of the water, while browsers like purple shore crabs eat decomposing plants and animals. Above the high water mark, tall rye grasses rustle in the wind, and beach pea and sea rocket grow among the dunes and driftwood.

The spit is home to sprawling plants like silver burweed and rare yellow sand verbena. Waves push and mould this long bank, carrying and sorting sand from a nearby eroding cliff. If the spit ever meets the far shore, the lagoon will disappear as the saltmarsh slowly takes over.

The spit points toward the rocky shore at Tower Point. In this intertidal zone, plants and animals must be able to survive different periods of wet and dry. At low tide, look for purple sea stars, white acorn barnacles and brown rockweed. Scurrying hermit crabs and shield limpets with their cone hats find shelter under seaweed. Harbour seals play in kelp beds and sea lions pass by on their migration route each spring.



Exploring at low tide



Explore and Discover

Begin your exploration of Wittty's Lagoon at the Nature Centre. Check out the interpretive displays on the lagoon's natural and cultural history, and find out what's in season. CRD Parks staff and volunteer naturalists will give you a sense of direction before you hit the trails.

Birds

Wittty's Lagoon is as diverse in bird life as it is in landscapes, making it a birder's paradise. The park contains over 160 documented species and is considered one of the best places in the region to birdwatch. Listen for the rattle call of the belted kingfisher flying high over the creek. Feel the air vibrate as orange-crowned warblers and dark-eyed juncos fill the forest with birdsong. Wander through the tidal flats from the sand spit to Tower Point. Bring your binoculars and be prepared for discovery, but remember to respect the habitat and birds that use it.

Blossoms

Wittty's Lagoon is also known for its abundance of beautiful wildflowers in spring and summer. On the rocky meadow near the main entrance to the park, common camas, early saxifrage and nodding onion create a welcome display. Closer to the lagoon, wild rose, snowberry and English hawthorne thrive in the grassland where cattle once grazed. Out on the exposed hillside of Tower Point, great canas, sea blush and western buttercup enjoy colourful co-existence. Take photographs, make drawings, but leave the wildflowers growing where you find them. Please don't let your dog trample the flowers.

Stones and Bones

Wittty's Lagoon contains five known archeological sites – three shell middens and two fortified sites – protected by the Heritage Conservation Act. One shell midden was excavated in 1987, part of a research project undertaken with Simon Fraser University, the Royal BC Museum and CRD Parks. Artifacts uncovered include microblades, animal bones and shells from aboriginal activity. Today the archaeology and history of Wittty's Lagoon are an important focus of CRD Parks education programs. If you think you've discovered an archaeological site or artifact at Wittty's, do not disturb it. Please contact CRD Parks so the resources can be recorded and protected in the park's archaeological inventory.