

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE

Your resource to paddling the
lakes and rivers of the
Battle River Watershed.

#PaddleTheBattle

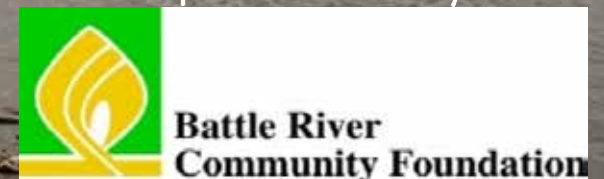


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Version 4, July 2020

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: BIG KNIFE PROVINCIAL PARK

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Why Go?

Big Knife Provincial Park and the surrounding area has some of the most beautiful scenery in the watershed. There is dense coniferous forest, large hoodoos, and beautiful coulees. Not only that, but once in the park you have access to kilometers of hiking trails, spacious wooded campsites, day use areas, fire pits and picnic spots, playgrounds, and washrooms. The boat launch area here is very accessible, but may also be busy with fishing boats. On several occasions we've seen huge flocks of turkey vultures soaring near the park entrance.



Know Before You Go

This section of the Battle River was dammed in 1956 to create a reservoir for the electricity generating station, and because of this it may feel more like you are paddling on a lake than a river. There are many areas to explore, just make sure you can find your way back out if you explore in the cattails! The warm water leaving the generating station keeps some of the river from freezing up in winter, attracting a variety of birds.



Plant and Animal Life

The mix of both white spruce and aspen forest makes this a hot-spot for wildlife viewing opportunities! It is common to see moose and deer in the park, and there has also been an abundance of beaver activity along Big Knife Creek and the park's many wetlands. Bald and Golden Eagles are often soaring overhead to feed on fish, as do the peregrine falcon who nest at the Generating Station.



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Local Attractions

Hoodoos

Walking among the hoodoos is fun for all ages, and is an unexpected treat in this region. It's like a mini Drumheller, right in our own backyard. You can take the easy walk along the River Flats trail to the Hoodoos, then climb the huge hills or admire them from below. Watch out for cacti!



Battle River Generating Station

This facility is a major source of electricity in the area. Since it was built in 1956 it has burned coal from the Paintearth mine. The mine can be viewed traveling south on Hwy 56, and you can visit the interpretive site a few miles north from the park entrance to learn more. As of 2019 the facility is transitioning from coal to natural gas.

Please use discretion when choosing a paddling route. You are expected to follow all traffic and boating laws, be aware of weather, respect private property, and assess hazards before going out. Prepare to be out longer than expected- bring extra food, water, and lights. The Battle River Watershed Alliance holds no responsibility for injuries or damage sustained on your paddle.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: DRIED MEAT LAKE

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Why Go?

Dried Meat Lake is only about 20 minutes south-east of Camrose. Dried Meat Lake is a naturally wide section of the Battle River. The Edberg Weir was built in 1975 (then heightened in 2010) to dam the waters as a drinking source for the City of Camrose. The dam has also created stable water levels, ideal for paddling. The maximum depth of the lake is 3.7 meters so you won't have to maneuver your canoe over beaver dams or shallows even late into summer. It's an ideal spot of novice paddlers or if you don't want to shuttle a vehicle.

Know Before You Go

The boat launch is accessible from Tillicum Beach Park. This lake is a major recreational hub; be wary of waves made by passing power boats. Prepare for these waves by turning into the wave, instead of letting it splash the side of your boat which is far less stable. Strong winds can also create waves and increase your traveling time if blowing the wrong direction. The lake is naturally nutrient rich and gets additional nutrient loads so algae blooms are common in the summer. Some types, such as blue-green algae are dangerous if ingested and should be avoided. Please see the Alberta Health Services Water Advisory page for updates.



Plant and Animal Life

The lake is an important staging ground for migratory birds such as snow geese and swans. These birds are protected by the Restricted Wildlife Area designation on the lake until November 1st each year. In the summer months, massive pelicans swoop overhead in flocks of up to 50. Bald eagles are a common sight around the lake, feeding on northern pike and other fish that are also the target of people fishing. Aberhart bridge (1) and the Edberg weir (2) are especially popular spots for anglers to catch pike and the occasional walleye. The weir was built with an eight-bay step-pool fish ladder to allow fish into the lake from downstream.

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Local Attractions

Beesley's Spring

North of Tillicum Beach, a side road south of Paradise Drive leads to this freshwater spring. It flows year-round thanks to the surrounding rock formations, and it is tested regularly. Stop by to fill up your water bottles.



Tillicum Beach Park

This small park on the north shore of the lake contains a small overnight campground operated by Camrose County. There you can access first-come first served camp sites, fire pits, washrooms, playground and the boat launch. Maybe make your trip an overnight expedition!

Dried Meat Hill

The name dried meat comes from First Nation's who would combine dry bison meat with berries to make pemmican. Local sources say, Saskatoon bushes still grow in abundance here. However, the hill has been impacted by a gravel mine.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: BATTLE LAKE

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Why Go?

Battle Lake and its surrounding landscape are the headwaters of the Battle River. It offers a beautiful micro climate and is home to unique animal and plant life due to the higher elevation and increased moisture. The County of Wetaskiwin has encouraged preservation of the natural forest and shoreline, so you will see few signs of disturbance and lots of animal life.



Know Before You Go

The boat launch is accessible from Battle Lake Park. There is no significant movement of water in the lake and the river downstream only has a strong current during spring runoff. Powerboats are allowed on the lake but are limited to 12km/h, minimizing their disturbance, but wind can also cause substantial waves and whitecaps on the open water. In the Battle River, there are several beaver dams as well as shallow spots depending on the time of year, so only paddle downstream if you are able and willing to lift your boat over obstacles. After crossing Highway 13, the river becomes even more shallow and difficult to navigate. It is not recommended to paddle except during spring runoff. During mid-summer, watch for blue-green algae advisories from Alberta Health Services.



Plant and Animal Life

Large flocks of Franklin's gulls enjoy the fish in Battle Lake, but you might also see pelicans and loons on the water's surface. Fish species in the lake include yellow perch, northern pike, white sucker, lake whitefish, and burbot. Plant highlights include water lilies, ferns, and a greater diversity of tree species such as yellow birch and hazelnut than you generally find in other parts of the watershed.



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Local Attractions

Fern Glade

The 4-H Center's 7 km of walking trails pass through Alberta's largest natural fern glade, where ostrich ferns can grow over 1m tall. Numerous springs and streams provide the perfect habitat for these ancient plants. Access is limited when kids are at camp- call ahead.

Mount Butte

Mount Butte is on the north-west corner of the lake. Though it is hardly a mountain, it is actually one of the highest elevation areas in the entire Battle River Watershed! There is a steep trail up the south side, accessible from the shore. To approach the mountain by car, drive 5 minutes past the campground until you come across a gate leading to a meadow and oil lease. You can leave your car parked at the gate while exploring! A trail there will take you past the meadow, across a small stream, and up the mountain. The trail gets moderately steep in some places. At a leisurely pace, it should take approximately one hour to summit.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: LITTLE BEAVER LAKE

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Why Go?

Little Beaver Lake provides paddlers of all experience levels a chance to get out and explore close to home! Camrose, Ponoka, Wetaskiwin, and Maskwacis are only just over a half hour away from this gem beside the village of Ferintosh. Little Beaver Lake is a great choice for paddlers not interested in traveling great distances or dealing with shuttle driving arrangements.



Know Before You Go

Little Beaver Lake is a place where you can completely immerse yourself in nature. No motor boats are allowed here, and the majority of the lake has been left natural. The deepest point of the lake is found near the dock, but gets much shallower towards the north shore. Blue-green algae advisories are rare but check the Alberta Health Services before swimming.

The lake is the headwaters of Meeting Creek, which flows south through the town of the same name and past Donalda. It meets the Red Willow Creek before emptying into the Battle River. Meeting Creek may be navigable in high water, but is untested by us.



Plant and Animal Life

Little Beaver Lake is home to a variety of fish and minnows. The most commonly angled for is fish here is Northern Pike. A rough hiking trail follows the east side of the lake and offers a peek into the lives of the creatures here. If you're lucky you may see a beaver or muskrat. In the spring, the lake is surrounded by wild roses in full bloom, and during the summertime the trails are a mycology (mushroom) enthusiast's dream!



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Local Attractions

Ferintosh Campground

The Ferintosh Campground is conveniently located on the eastern shore of Little Beaver Lake, only a short walk away from Ferintosh amenities, which includes the Ferintosh Hotel—a rustic pub with a patio. A free day use area includes the playground, picnic tables and walking trail. Paid camping gives you access to sites with water and electricity, and washroom facilities. You can also pay \$25.00 for a daily rental of the picnic shelter. The campground has a central boat launch making getting in and out a breeze.



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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: WAINWRIGHT

From Fabyan Campground to Riverdale Mini Park

Why Go?

The paddle from Fabyan Campground to Riverdale Mini Park provides beautiful scenery, wildlife sightings, and calm waters. This is one of the more natural sections of the river, with healthy riparian areas throughout. This paddle is about 25km long and should take 4-6 hours, depending on water levels given the river's meandering nature and slow moving waters. Both the put in and take out locations are at parks with ample parking and washrooms, and are only about a 20 minute drive from each other.



Know Before You Go

This is a long stretch of river- get an early start and be sure you have enough food and water. There were a few fences crossing the river, but there was always a large opening to pass through. The fences were easy to see from a distance and we had lots of time to maneuver around. Also, businesses close early in these parts, so have a plan for where you will go for dinner, and make sure you have a full tank! If you can, plan for dinner at the Honey Pot in Wainwright- it's our favorite.

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Local Attractions

Mistahiya Retreat Centre

Just down river from Riverdale is a jewel of the Battle River valley- Mistahiya (named for the Cree word for Grizzly Bear). Once a ski resort, it now hosts private events and the Come by the Hills Music festival in August. Check their website for events. A 7.5km nature trail with wildlife lookout tour is publicly available.



Riverdale Mini-Park

The park, operated by the MD of Wainwright is serviced with a golf course, mini putt, playground, campsites, and clubhouse (check ahead for operating hours). The take out point is a beautiful beach, a naturally sandy section of the river which is a nice place to stretch out after your paddle.

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The Hwy 14 bridge at Fabyan

Plant and Animal Life

The soil along this stretch is very sandy, making a unique habitat. You will see a lot of sandbar willow along the banks and sizable sandbars to stop for breaks. Take a closer look in the water to find crayfish jetting around the riverbed, who love the sandy habitat. As you're paddling, keep your eyes peeled for bison bones and petrified wood sticking out of the banks! Local paddlers know this route is a treasure trove for fossils, but make sure to contact Alberta Environment if you find anything bigger than bison!

As for birds, bring your binoculars! We saw; Osprey, Bald Eagle, Cooper's & Redtail Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Kingfisher, Catbird, and Goldfinch.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: BIG JOHN ROUTE

Hwy 53 East of Donalda to Big Knife Provincial Park

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Why Go?

If you subscribe to the mentality that life is not the destination but the journey, this route is for you. Packed with large oxbows, you can paddle all day but not get far. Don't let that deter you, this is a beautiful route and worth the time it takes. You will paddle 30.5km, which took us 7.5 hours (including 1 hour of breaks) in Sept. You will also paddle through the confluence with Meeting Creek.

This section is named for John Pearson, a tall man with a big voice from Donalda. John was a BRWA board member who passed away in 2019. Be sure to tell a big story after you get back!

Know Before You Go

Like most of the Battle River, there is no cell phone reception in the valley. If you need to make an emergency call, climb to the top of the hills.

The Battle River Generating Station lies just downstream of Big Knife, and because of this the water flows extra slow in the second half of the stretch. As you near Big Knife it feels more like paddling a lake.

Towards the end be careful to follow the river- it could be easy to head into the lake-like cattail marshes and get off track. This would be very difficult in the dark- give yourself lots of time!



Plant and Animal Life

This is the perfect route for paddlers looking to enjoy the watershed at it's most raw and unrefined, with a lush riparian area providing excellent wildlife habitat. We saw a great blue heron and many king fishers. Moose and mule deer have been spotted near shore looking for a drink. As the sun set the beavers got very active- it was fun to see them swim back and forth across the river and slap their tail as we neared. Golden and Bald eagles are also found in the park, so keep your eyes on the skies!



Local Attractions

Big Knife Provincial Park

See our Big Knife Paddle guide for more details about this park. There is lots to explore and enjoy at the end of your journey. The highlight being the Hoodoos on the River Flats Trail. Also in the area is the Diplomat Mine Interpretive Site, just off the highway adjacent to the plant.



Local Taverns

Depending on what direction you are heading after your paddle, there are (at least) three great pubs to grab a bite; east to the Donalda Tavern (don't miss seeing the world's biggest oil lamp!), North to Big Willy's Bar at the Heisler Hotel, or south to the Halkirk Hotel. The authentic charm of these places is a reason to love these small towns. Call ahead to make sure they are open.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: PETER FIDLER ROUTE

South of Bittern Lake to Ross' Flats at Duhamel (Hwy 21)

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Why Go?

This could be a short, easy, and fulfilling route, or put in further upstream and have a full day. Close to both Camrose and Wetaskiwin, the area is easily accessible, as are the put-in and take out points.

We put in at the RR 215A Bridge, where the Peter Fidler Monument is. It took about 2 hours to go the 8km to Ross' Flats on Hwy 21. For a longer journey, start upstream at Twp Rd 462 A. The bridges are within sight of each other, but add 8km to the journey.

There are no obstacles on this route and it offers beautiful views of the valley. The south valley slope is a continuous forest, which helps you recognize which direction you are heading along the meanders.



Bridge at RR 215 A

Know Before You Go

Wear rubber boots to get in and out of the water. The banks are muddy and you might sink in. Be respectful of the farmers field at Ross' Flats. There is a gate opening which allows you to access the river from the field.



Plant and Animal Life

During our paddle in late April, the spring migration was in full swing and we saw thousands of snow geese flying in their great flocks heading north. We also saw multiple pelicans, great blue herons, ducks, and muskrat. The banks are high along much of this reach so you don't get a full view of the surrounding landscape until you climb up onto land. We were also lucky to find crocuses in bloom. Spring is a wonderful time to Paddle the Battle!



Local Attractions

Peter Fidler Monument

European surveyor and map maker Peter Fidler is said to have crossed the Battle River here in November 14, 1792. There is a nice little monument for him on the RR 215A bridge. Have a read and imagine what the valley would have looked like over 200 years ago. Can you see the Bison?



Ross' Flats Campground and Historical Bridge

In 1910, the Grand Trunk Pacific made one of the worlds tallest and longest wooden trestle bridges across the Battle River. Details about it and the town of Duhamel are on the interpretive sign at this Campground. Although fairly basic, the campground provides washrooms, picnic shelter, fire pits and unserviced camp sites.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: CAMROSE SOUTH

Ross' Flats at Duhamel (Hwy 21) to Aberhart Bridge

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Why Go?

This is a must do for everyone who wants to Paddle the Battle. The route is about 18km, which we did in 3 hours (including breaks) during spring runoff. There are no obstructions along the route and no rapids (small ones do occur other places) so this is also a great route for families.



Aberhart Bridge

Know Before You Go

This is a good route to do in the spring when the water is flowing. Having some current to help push you along will help during the twists and turns. Although you are somewhat sheltered from wind, a strong wind can feel difficult to paddle into, so try to go out on a calm day.

As you near the end, you will see a few houses (named Ferlow Junction) on the north slope, and cross under a railroad bridge. Here you are at the confluence of the Stoney Creek into the Battle. Once you see the Aberhart Bridge, you still have about 1 hour to paddle. There are large meanders here!



Plant and Animal Life

In the spring the river tends to flood over the land upstream of Aberhart Bridge, and large flocks of geese land here, especially in spring and fall during migration. In addition, pelicans are often spotted in the area, as well as the stunning and graceful trumpeter swan. As you paddle watch



for beaver lodges made into the sides of the bank, and muskrat houses in the cattails. We have also found bones along here, once bringing home a deer skull!

Local Attractions

Migratory Birds

Between the Aberhart Bridge and the city of Camrose are two lesser-appreciated bird watching hot spots that provide unique habitat for our feathered friends: the lagoon and the landfill. Both of these locations are known by local birders as a great place to find less common species in the watershed.



Dried Meat Lake

Just past Aberhart Bridge is the beginning of Dried Meat Lake. Check out our Guide to that paddle for more details.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: PONOKA

Battle River: Hwy 2A to Town to Bobtail Rd

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Why Go?

Despite crossing several highway, train, and walking bridges, and traveling through both the town of Ponoka and farmland, this stretch of the river is very peaceful and a beautiful paddle. The riverbanks, especially along the top half of the stretch, are steep, forested, and in excellent health. This reach crosses several beaver dams and shallows, but it still relatively navigable even when the river is low during midsummer.



Plant and Animal Life

The healthy riparian areas provide habitat for a variety of animals. Ducks and geese raise their young along the river and swallows live in the riverbanks and under the bridges. The forest surrounding the river is a good place to spot deer and also provides food and building material for beavers. Beavers also build dams that Battle River canoeists become accustomed to crossing. Leeches, though not overly prolific, will attach to one's feet as you stir up the riverbed during the paddling divergences. Check between your toes! At certain times of year, you might also see large, pinkish clouds in shallow water. These are copepods, a small crustacean that is an important food source for fish.

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Local Attractions

Historic Dam

The remnants of the C.P.R. Dam can still be seen in the Battle River river at certain times of year. This dam has served many purposes: including transporting timber from Pigeon Lake, and at one time was even the hot spot for Northern Pike fishing and swimming. The remnants of this historic dam can be found adjacent to Chipman Avenue in Ponoka.



Ponoka Stampede

Ponoka is known for being the rodeo hot spot in the watershed, and if you plan your paddle for the Canada Day long weekend be sure to take part in all the festivities they have to offer! From concerts, to a carnival midway, farmers market and of course, rodeo events of all kinds!

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Know Before You Go

As with many places along the Battle River, the flow rates are only significant in early spring, tapering off around mid-June. Beaver dams and man-made obstacles exist along this stretch. Past 50 Ave, the water gets much shallower as it nears Bobtail Road, so you may be required to walk through the water and pull your canoe behind you.

Keep in mind that trash and other household objects tend to litter the riverbed of streams that run through cities- always keep your eye out for hazards.

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: FERRY POINT REACH

Battle River: Edberg Weir (Hwy 56) to Ferry Point Campground

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Why Go?

There are very few meanders along this section of river! If you want a "straight-forward" paddle, this is as good as you will get on the Battle. The river is wide and maintains a good level of flow long into the summer. The reach is about 12km long, so plan to be on the water for 3-5 hours, depending on the flow. The shuttle between put-in and take-out is only about 15 min.



Plant and Animal Life

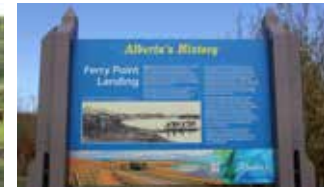
The weir at the start of this stretch changes the aquatic ecosystem in just the right way to create a birdwatchers paradise! Unlike a dam, the weir allows some water to pass by, creating fast flowing water that freezes later than other parts of the river. For this reason, fishing birds like bald eagles frequent this spot for an easy spring or fall meal. In the summer, fish begin traveling through the river to spawn, and sometimes encounter a lineup at the fish ladder- their only entrance into Dried Meat Lake. This attracts birds galore! A great blue heron is known to frequent the weir, can you spot him?



Local Attractions

Ferry Point Campground

A ferry boat to transport people and goods across the river was established here in 1902. There was a small but vibrant community here, until the railway boom drew people to towns along rail lines. There is a small campground with a playground, picnic shelter, washrooms, and campsites available seasonally.



Meeting Creek

The Railway Station and Grain Elevator are both historical landmarks and volunteers have worked hard to maintain their original charm and create exhibits. Call 780-672-3099 for guided tours. There is also the Linear Park Trails, 2 km trail surrounded by native prairie complete with a labyrinth and interpretive signs.

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Know Before You Go

There is a No Boating sign at the weir. We've checked with the GOA and have approval that people are able to put in here, just do not try to go over the weir (or even go near it!)

The BRWA did a riparian restoration program along here in 2014 to support landowners in keeping cattle out of the river. Although many folks participated, you will still see a lot of cows drinking from the water. Try not to splash it in your mouth and wash your hands before eating.

If you need to get a bite to eat after you take-out, try the Double Dam Golf Course!

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: STONEY CREEK REACH

Stoney Creek: Camrose to Battle River

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Why Go?

Avid paddlers will love this technical and challenging route! Easily accessible from Camrose it has lots of put-in and take-out options, making it scalable for your time and energy. We did the 10km route from the Pump House to Ferlow Junction in 4 hours, including lots of breaks. Others have done it in 2-3 hours.

*This route is not for beginners

It is fun seeing the City from the water, and then quickly entering the valley full of coniferous trees and some badlands. The water moves quickly in the spring and the never-ending turns keep you on your toes.

Put-in/Take Out

Put-in: In Camrose you can start anywhere along the creek. Popular locations are from Jubilee Park, the Stoney Creek centre, or from the "Ring Road" on Camrose Drive. Our preference is to start at the "Pump House" just north of the water treatment lagoons on Twp Rd 464. There is ample parking here, but it is a bit of a hike from the gate down to the creek.

Take-out: You can take-out in Camrose or at Ferlow Junction culvert, just before the Stoney meets the Battle River. Or for an extra hour (or more) of paddling, go all the way to the Aberhart Bridge. **Check our webpage map for details.**



Plant and Animal Life

We may have been too busy navigating the curves of this creek to notice much of the biodiversity! However we did see a lot of signs of muskrat and beavers and scared-up ducks downstream of us. There are sometimes Great Blue Herons on the creek. Also watch for fresh-water springs which run out from the valley sides. Don't drink from them, especially while below the lagoons and landfill!

You will be passing through Happy Valley, once a ski hill and motor cross spot, now used for mountain biking. You may see mountain bikers or back-country runners along these trails. Another great use of this beautiful valley!

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Know Before You Go

This route has a lot of obstacles. There are trestle bridges to go under, often with only one clear route. There are also low bridges for the biking trails, some of which you can go under, many you have to portage around. You may also have to portage around beaver dams and culverts. Be very careful of a old ski T-bar post that has fallen into the river. There are also two barbed wire fences and a fallen tree "sweeper" crossing the river. When approaching obstacles, pull over, get out, and take a good look before attempting to pass.



Wear sturdy shoes that you can wet. Take extra food, water, and warm clothes and socks, just in case!

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: MAGICAL MAPLE ROUTE

Battle River From Ferry Point to Hwy 854 (S. of Rosalind)

#PaddleTheBattle



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Why Go?

Although this stretch of the Battle River has a lot of big meanders, its calming beauty makes it highly recommended. Throughout the trip you will enjoy seeing beautiful badlands formed thousands of years ago by glaciation and made more distinct by water and wind erosion. Manitoba Maples line the river along the final $\frac{2}{3}$ of the route. In April 2020 the river was high enough that we could paddle into the maple groves and be amongst the trees. It was magical.



Local Attractions

La Prairieaire Eco Tourism

Local farmer and historian Forrest Hagen runs tours and/or overnight stays on property along this route and in the area. This unique operation is a fantastic way to get to know the area, from the dinosaur bones found here, to First Nations hunting and ceremonial sites, to early settlers and modern day farming. You can even arrange to stay at a campsite on route! Visit www.laprairieaire.ca for details.



Plant and Animal Life

Manitoba Maples (*Acer negundo*), also known as Boxelder, were the star of this route. Although native to Canada they are introduced to our region. They are unique from other maples because of their compound leaves. Naturally, they prefer moist soils such as riparian areas that could flood seasonally. Their multiple limbs spread wide and horizontal to the ground and make for beautiful photos. They are often found on farm sites and backyards as they are tough and adaptable and they grow quickly so could be used for windbreaks,

Also listen for the beautiful song of the meadowlark, and for the deep thumping sound of a Ruffed grouse mating display.

www.BattleRiverWatershed.ca

Know Before You Go

The total distance is about 20km, quite a long paddle. Go in the spring when water levels are highest, usually mid-late April and early May. The trip took us 5.5 hours to complete, including two breaks, during high flow,

There are two excellent options for put-in locations. The Ferry Point Campground offers amenities such as places to camp and park, rustic outhouses, and has easy access to the water. Secondly is the RR 184 bridge, just north of the campground. Park on Twp Rd 435A on the south-west side of the bridge. There is a gentle slope leading down to the Battle.

There are no alternative take-out points if you get tired. Start early and plan to be out longer than expected. You may notice a private dock on the river, this is about the halfway point on the route.



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BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Sponsored by the Battle River Community Foundation

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: PIPESTONE CONFLUENCE

Pipestone Creek (S. of Gwynne) to Battle River (S. of Bittern Lake)

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

Confluences - where two waterways meet - often hold great historical, cultural, and spiritual significance. To experience a confluence is something special, even when it's the meeting of two small prairie waterways like Pipestone Creek and the Battle River. It was wonderful to paddle on both in one day. We also had the chance to hike up the valley hills and explore the small patches of native prairie that thrive there. We are always amazed at the diversity of plant life in these places!

This ~17km route offers enough variables to keep it interesting but is easy for any level of paddler. On June 2, 2020 this route took us 6 hours, including about 2 hours off water.

Local Attractions

Coal Lake South Park. Operated by the City of Wetaskiwin this park has lots of space for camping or day use. There are washroom facilities and picnic areas. Power Boating is allowed on the lake, so watch for the wakes of larger watercraft.

Pipestone Creek- Edmonton & Area Land Trust: Once privately owned, this land was bought to be maintained in its natural state. There are 5km of trails open only to foot traffic. Visit their website for details: www.ealt.ca/pipestone-creek



Plant and Animal Life

The tall grass prairie along Pipestone creek is a beautiful habitat for birds and other animals.

We saw and heard many sparrows, including Clay-coloured, White-throated, Vesper, LeConte's, Savannah and Song. There were also species we don't often see; the beautiful Baltimore Oriole and the Bobolink, whose song is a series of exuberant beeps and buzzes. We also saw a porcupine and plenty of beaver and muskrat.

Being close to Coal Lake, you may also see birds who fish, including divers such as Cormorants, and Western grebe, as well as Pelicans and Great Blue Herons.

www.BattleRiverWatershed.ca

Know Before You Go

We accessed the Pipestone Creek just south of Gwynne on Hwy 822. The slope on the south west side of the bridge made for a pretty easy put-in point. This creek has lots of tight turns and you may need to duck to avoid some shrub branches. The confluence with the Battle River happens around 8km in.

We took-out Twp Rd 462A, on the south-west side of the Bittern Lake South bridge, but crossed over to the east side of the bridge to pull up the boats. Watch for stinging nettles- they were abundant here.

The shuttle between these two points is less than 15 minutes. You could also extend the route by starting further upstream on the Pipestone (try the Coal Lake South campground), or going further down the Battle to the bridge on RR 215A (See our Peter Fidler Route Guide for details)

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BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Sponsored by the Battle River Community Foundation

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: GALAHAD GRAIL ROUTE

Battle River from Hwy 861 (S. of Galahad) to Hwy 36 (Alliance)

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

Did you know that Galahad is named after a knight of King Arthur's Round Table? This wonderful stretch of the Battle is close to being our own Holy Grail!

The put-in and take-out points are easy to access, and the shuttle between them is only a 12-minute drive along beautiful country roads. When we paddled at the end of April 2020, there was a good flow in the river. The 20km route took us 3.5 hours including a long lunch, so about 2.5 hours of relaxed paddling. Expect it to take longer later in the year.



Local Attractions

Alliance Valley Ski Hill. Although we doubt you can paddle and ski the same day, you should definitely come back here in the winter! This club demonstrates community spirit at its finest. The hill is larger than expected for being in the prairies and you get a fantastic view of the valley. There is a full-service lodge, rental shop, ski school and more. The hill is closed in the summer.



Plant and Animal Life

Being early in the spring we did not see a lot of animal life along this route. However we are sure they are out there, in the sky, on the ground, and in the water!

The Battle supports a variety of fish including white suckers, northern pike, lake chub, trout-perch, walleye, minnows, and the once common Goldeye. In an extensive 2007 *Index of Biological Integrity* study, only 7 Goldeye were found in the whole river, 6 of them within the CFB Wainwright Base. That study concluded the Battle had a biological health score of 42%, meaning that the river has level of poor fishing/species of concern, and levels of no fishing/species at risk.

Know Before You Go

We put-in on the South-east corner of the Hwy 861 bridge, south of Galahad. On the map there appears to be a side road which also crosses the river west of the highway. We didn't see a clear road on the north end, and on the south side we got our car stuck. Probably best to just stay on the highway-be sure you pull way onto the shoulder.

To take out, we pulled off near the entrance to the Alliance Valley Ski Hill. There is lots of parking here, at the intersection of Twp Rd 400A and Twp Rd 400C, which leads to the hill. The river bends in towards Twp Rd 400, and you will see a bridge which crosses Paintearth creek.. Turn upstream at this confluence and take out on the west side of the bridge. There is a bit of bush to whack though, but it is a gradual slope and you don't have to carry your boat very far to the road. To extend your paddle by a few bends you can also take out on the Hwy 36 bridge, however we did not test the access here.

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WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Sponsored by the Battle River Community Foundation

www.BattleRiverWatershed.ca

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: PEACEFUL VALLEY ROUTE

Battle River from Battle Lake to Range Road 10 (Westerose)

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

Any true Battle River Paddler must paddle the headwaters at least once! You will pass through rich riparian areas and wetlands, spruce and birch forests, wide valleys and farm fields. In all, this is a beautiful trip!

The total route was 19.5km and took us 6.5 hours, including a 1.5 hour break for lunch and a hike to the Peaceful Valley Day Lodge. The shuttle is about 20 minutes to drive.

If you are looking for a shorter day, consider starting

Local Attractions

Peaceful Valley Day Lodge: This beautiful lodge overlooking the Battle River Valley provides a peaceful retreat for people who are terminally ill or disabled. The land and building is held in private trust after being donated by brother & sister, Bob & Kay Wark.

The Village at Pigeon Lake: Conveniently located to get a meal or ice-cream after your paddle, the Village is a fantastic place to visit. The Eco Cafe and Village Pizza and Sub are staff favorites, and the Chef N' Restaurant is also excellent! You may want to book yourself in for a night at the Inn- there is also a spa to treat your weary muscles.



Plant and Animal Life

This stretch of the Battle is one of the few spots where you will be in the Boreal Forest, which skirts along the north-west edge of our watershed.

Yellow Pond Lily was a common sight along the first half of this paddle, although it is rare in other places of the river. This floating plant has large, heart-shaped leaves and ping-pong ball-sized yellow flowers.

You may also see wild mint, which grows along the river bank. Like all mint it has a square stem and tiny purple flowers. Break off a leaf to smell or taste (if you're sure it is mint!) or harvest a few stems (if the plant is abundant) to make tea.

www.BattleRiverWatershed.ca

Know Before You Go

This trip was two parts: Battle Lake to Hwy 771 was ~8.5km. There were a few beaver dams and narrow turns but the sights were gorgeous. The hill up to the bridge at 771 is steep but manageable.



Bridge Crossing

Part 2 was slightly more difficult. The distance was about ~11km to Range Road 10 but the river bends increased and 3 bridges forced us out of our boats to cross. Just past Hwy 771 there was also one fence- the canoe got stuck but the kayakers could easily get over. The river is working at streamlining its flow and there are a few "short cuts" we could get through to skip a meander.

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BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Sponsored by the Battle River Community Foundation

BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: RAPID RUN ROUTE

Battle River from Haultain Rd to Bethany House Rd, S of Gwynne

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

This fast flowing stretch was full of class 2 and 3 rapids and tight turns. This was no lazy river-we had to stay paddling to avoid rocks and sweepers on the bends. There is a 45ft elevation drop between our put-in and take-out points, keeping the water moving fast!

The put-in point is about 15 minutes south of Gwynne. The shuttle is about 10 minutes to the end point on Twp Rd 462. If you want a longer route, continue to the confluence with the Pipestone Creek and the Twp. Rd 462A bridge take-out. See our "Pipestone Confluence" guide for more details.

Local Attractions

Chickadee Trail: Near the Gwynne ski hill is a lovely 3km trail known for its friendly chickadees. Bring some unroasted, unsalted sunflower seeds to feed the birds out of your hand. They are especially friendly in the winter! The trail does not receive a lot of maintenance. It starts (and ends) off Range Road 231 (52°59'03.9"N 113°13'14.6"W).



Plant and Animal Life

We were excited to find a colony of Cliff Swallows living true to their name. This insectivore has traditionally built their jug-shaped nests in great colonies on the sides of banks or cliffs. However



they now usually nest on bridges. The Cliff Swallow is more colourful than other swallows with a pumpkin coloured rump and neck-line and a square shaped tail.

Bank Swallows also live on the sides of rivers, but nest in holes they dig into the bank. They have a dark back and white undersides, with a dark stripe across their chest. Memory trick: Bank Swallows live "in the hole" (like a student's bank account!) and wear a banker's vest!

Know Before You Go

This route is 15km long, which took us 4 hours (including 1 hour for scouting and then tipping, and 1 hour for drying clothes and lunch.) In higher flows without stopping you might finish closer to 2 hours.

We put-in off the Haultain Rd 454 bridge on the north-east side. The bank is quite steep. It's a busy road so park back from the bridge and pull way off.

The river bluffs are high in places and there have been some significant slumps of soil falling into the river. One slump seemed to have happened very recently and caused the water to reroute over the land on the inner bank. As always, be sure to have everything tied down and have your safety plan in place before going through turbulent waters.

The route ended on the Twp Rd 462 bridge, on the south-east side. There is evidence of people gathering here, and a ATV trail leads up to the road. There have been some problems in the area with hunting or partying on private property. We met landowners who stopped to inquire about our visit. They were happy to have paddlers enjoying the river. Just be considerate and honest about your intent and you shouldn't have any trouble.

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BATTLE RIVER PADDLE GUIDE: BURMA BENDS ROUTE

Battle River from Burma Park (N. of Brownfield) to Twp Rd 405A

#PaddleTheBattle



@BattleRiverWatershed

Why Go?

Being in the far south-east reaches of the main stem of the Battle River gives a beautiful perspective to how the watershed changes across its wide span.

This route is ~29km long. It took us about 4.5 hours of paddling time. In total we were on the water for 6.5 hours to include lunch and snack breaks and a big hike. You pass under transmission line approx 8km in.

Locals call the large hill at approx 15-18 km in "The Butte". It is a worthwhile viewpoint,



Local Attractions

Burma Park, on the banks of the Battle River is a picture-perfect campground. The site features plug-in and non-powered camp sites, baseball diamonds, a playground, flush toilets, and shower facilities. There is free firewood and a camp kitchen. You will be well looked after by the caretaker Hughy. Call 403-578-4040 for bookings.



Plant and Animal Life

This route is a prairie birders dream. We saw or heard 50 bird species on our trip (we were with a biologist. an untrained ear may not ID as many).

The Spotted Sandpiper was a regular sight. They stand on the sandy banks to find and eat invertebrates. We also saw a variety of waterfowl, Great Blue Herons, swallows, sparrows, warblers, hawks, and at least two Bald Eagles. The take-out bridge has a huge Cliff Swallow population.

We saw a lot of beaver activity including some of their broad behinds as they splashed into the water - one even making a belly flop from a high bank. Beaver runs (where they bring their food to the water) was a common sight. Watch for their lodges, hollowed into the bank and covered with branches.

www.BattleRiverWatershed.ca

Know Before You Go

To complete the route, leave a vehicle on Twp Rd 405A (from Twp Rd 410). On Google Maps there appears to be an earlier bridge on Range Road 94A, however that access road does not reach all the way to the river and is not visible from the water.

The banks along this whole stretch are sandy/muddy. Getting in and out of your boat can be a challenge as you sink into the mud. Be prepared to get your shoes or feet dirty. You can always rinse them off once you're in your boat!

There is a water monitoring station at the put-in location. To find out real time water levels and flow, check the Government of Canada site wateroffice.ec.gc.ca. Click "Real-time hydrometric data" and search by map or station number 05FC008.

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BATTLE RIVER

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