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Middle Lake 2.5 km loop

An easy stroll through flower meadows and forest of all kinds with much opportunity for idleness by the lake. Come in early summer when the western wood lilies are blooming, and bring binoculars for viewing ducks.

Start: Highway 1X at Bow Valley Provincial Park. Follow the park road to Middle Lake parking lot.

At the trail sign keep right. The trail wanders through beautiful flower meadows with western wood lilies being the star attraction .

At an intersecting trail detour right. Interpretive signs overlook Middle Lake. Through the Gap you can see the Three Sisters.

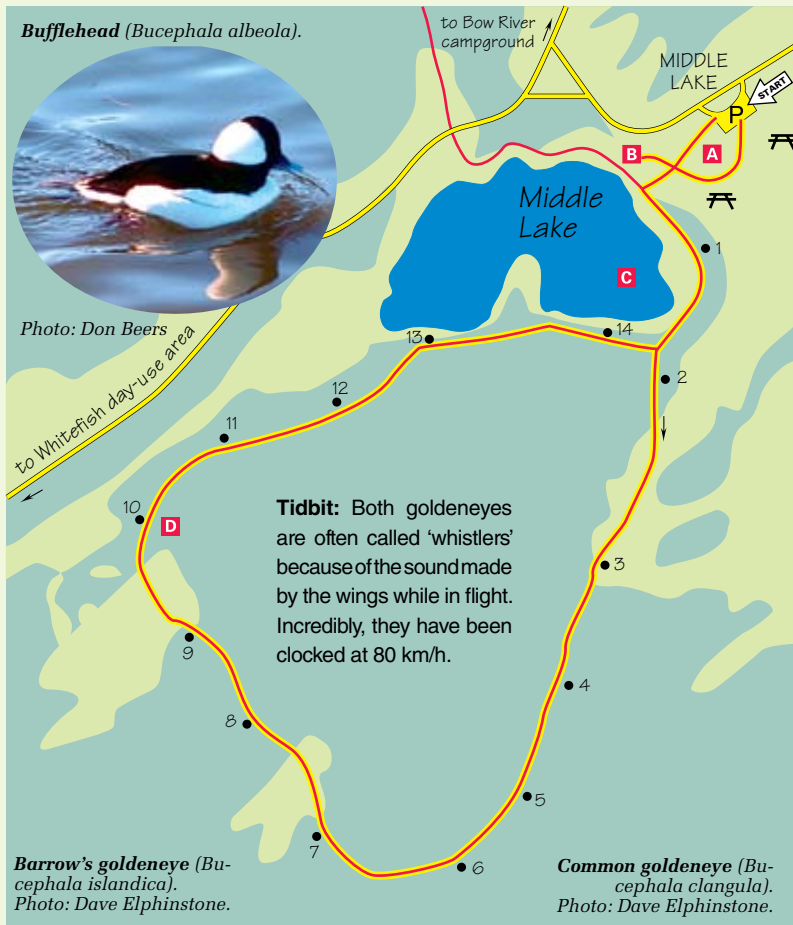
Middle Lake from the interpretive signs.

*early spring
summer
late fall*

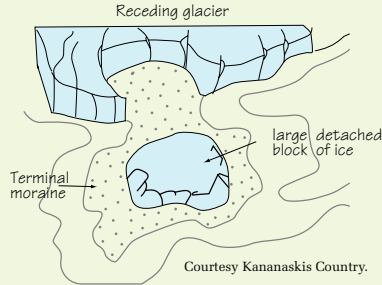
C Diving ducks arriving in April

On arrival, goldeneye females fly through trees looking for nesting sites. First year females don't breed but search for potential holes anyway. Bufflehead females often return to the place where they were raised and nest year after year in the same hole. Not easily flushed, they are sometimes killed in a takeover by the larger and more aggressive goldeneyes which results in a mixed clutch. The young of all three jump-float out of the nest hole to the ground and follow the female to the lake. Learning to fly takes about two months. During egg laying, it's the males you see hanging around in the water.





A Colourful western wood lilies are worth a yearly pilgrimage to Bow Valley Provincial Park around mid June. *Lilium philadelphicum* (Saskatchewan's floral emblem) grows everywhere, both in the open and in sunny woodlands. Don't even think of picking this flower; the whole plant will die as the bulb cannot generate another set of leaves that season.



B Kettles

A long time ago when the glaciers finally retreated from this valley, a large block of ice got left behind. It melted and left a depression in the surrounding moraines. Sand, clay and small rock particles washed down into the bottom of the hole, plugging up the holes in the rubble so the depression could hold water. Actually, the lake bottom is not entirely waterproof. Water seeps very slowly underground.

Return to the main trail. Turn right. At the lakeshore turn left. Keep left. Going clockwise, you follow the loop through clumps of aspen, then spruce forest with a mossy understory and remnants of a Douglas fir stand. Logged at turn of the century, all that's left are the stumps.

Ultimately, you circle back to aspen forest at the south shore of the lake. Watch for trees with clawmarks. Hardly off the prairies and there's bears around? Two benches on either side of a small promontory offer superb views of Yamnuska.

Turn left. Turn right at the lakeshore. Turn right at the intersecting trail. A smaller trail wanders past picnic tables back to the parking lot.

D Logging

Over 100 years ago in 1883, a station along the new CPR line called Kananaskis was used as a supply depot during ongoing survey for the difficult section through the mountains. Entrepreneurs took advantage of its location to open up new businesses like the McCauleish Lime Kilns and the Colonel James Walker Sawmill which had become Walker's under the terms of his resignation as Cochrane Ranche manager. He commuted via train back and forth between Kananaskis and his home in Inglewood, Calgary, wintering his horses over at Soapy Smith's place which is now Rafter 6 Ranch.