Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area contains forests, pastures and wetlands. It is a multiple use area that supports a variety of activities, including agriculture, wildlife management, natural gas extraction and outdoor recreation. Summer recreational activities include hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. Active wildlife management programs in the area have created a wide range of habitats that support numerous wildlife species. As a result, there are excellent wildlife viewing opportunities along the area’s trail systems.

Seven pairs of nesting trumpeter swans have nested in the area since 2012. The trumpeter swan is the largest and rarest swan in the world. In Alberta, it is listed as a vulnerable species. If you come across the swans or their nesting sites, please do not disturb them. Trumpeter swans are a protected species in Canada and it is illegal to kill them.

There are also approximately 85 km of hiking trails originating from four staging areas. Low areas may contain water during spring runoff and wet weather. There are several shelters, privies and a few bus stop shelters located along the trails.

Blackfoot Lake (25.5 km): largest equestrian trail in the area. Connects Waskehegan and Blackfoot Staging Areas. Cutoff (5.0 km): connecting trail between Blackfoot & Waskehegan trails. Continues into Elk Island National Park. Equestrian use is not permitted north of Elk Island boundary fence. Detour (5.1 km): shortens Waskegan loop, following un gated fence on the inside. Don’t Miss (5.7 km): runs along boundary fence from Spruce Hollow to Waskehegan junction. Used in winter for the mini-Bike. Ed’s Way (2.7 km): runs along the boundary fence from Siklaka to Waskegan/Detour junction (used for the full Bike). Flattail (5.1 km): named for the beavers that live in the area (and sometimes drop trees along the trail). Grouse (1.2 km): named for one of the area’s bird species. Hare (0.8 km): watch for snowshoe hares along this connector between Siklaka and Lost Lake trails. J.U. (5.9 km): begins at gaga in northwest corner near Range Rd 210. Connects into Blackfoot Trail. Lost Lake (14.9 km): connects Islais and Waskehegan Blackfoot Areas. Longest hiking trail in the recreation area.

Meadow (0.8 km): short connector with views of grazing fields. White-tailed deer & moose are sometimes seen along this road. Neon Lake (1.6 km): an easy trail that circles the western edge of Neon Lake. Siklaka (4.0 km): remote trail in hilly terrain, with numerous beaver ponds. Moose are sometimes seen along this road. Spruce Hollow (5.4 km): passes through some of the few spruces untouched by the forest fires in the early 1900’s. Swan (0.7 km): named for the swans that live in the area during summer months. Trumpeter swans near on Running Dog Lake near this trail. Wanisan (4.5 km): part of this trail runs near Wanisan Lakes east shore. This main portion of the trail is located outside the ungulate fence and is not regularly maintained. Waskehegan (0.3 km): connects forests north and south of grazing fields. Equestrian use permitted north of junction with Central-Alleways. Winter (3.7 km [South 2.4 km; North 1.3 km]): excellent wildlife viewing. South portion is for skiing, north portion is for both equestrian use and skiing.

Safety
Travel on recreation area roads can be hazardous. Weather can change quickly. Many of the trails are remote and are not patrolled on a regular basis. It is important that you are prepared by carrying the following in your pack or saddlebag:
• first aid kit
• rain gear
• extra warm or summer jacket and socks
• extra food & drinks
• lighter or matches
• pocket knife
• whistle
• map and compass
• extra food or water (equestrian riders)
• cell phone – there is cell coverage in most areas of Blackfoot.

To obtain assistance in an emergency, use the pay phone at the Heritage Interpretive Centre to contact site staff. Use (780) 644–3880 for area emergency or call 911 to reach police or other emergency help. Be prepared to give a detailed description of your incident and your location.

Blackfoot Staging Area
Most trails in the Blackfoot Lake sector are multi-use and are signed to identify use restrictions.

Buck Run (2.3 km): good wildlife viewing along this trail, especially for white-tailed deer. Elk Island (3.5 km): the large e-constant trail in this area is named for can be viewed at the Waskehegan administration office. Faraway (5.2 km): the equestrian portion of this trail is located in the northeast corner between the Blackfoot Staging Area access road and Blackfoot Trail junction, southeast of Elkem Trail. Horses are not permitted west of the entrance/Blackfoot Staging Area access road. Horon Hollow (2.1 km): short connector across Norris Creek to Elk island boundary. Blue heron colony in vityity. Middle (3.3 km): long loops can be made using this trail and equestrian trails in the Blackfoot sector. Morningside (1.5 km): follows former gas transmission line. Provides access to loops of varying length. Nightside (3.1 km): longer loops can be made using this trail and equestrian trails in the Blackfoot sector.

Norris Ridge (2.1 km): generally Norris Creek to north boundary of access road. Once can be seen in this sector. Outpost (1.6 km): provides access to the southwestern boundary of Elk Island National Park and along aldered corner of this Blackfoot sector. Moose are sometimes seen in this sector. Wild Site (1.0 km): access to the ungulate fence from the Blackfoot sector. Winter Park (1.5 km): watch for the blue heron colony. Blackfoot Lake. Be on the lookout for white-tailed deer along this route.

Islet Lake Staging Area
Highline (2.4 km): mainly follows ridge crests. Excellent for bird watching. Middle (1.3 km): allows several loops of varying lengths to be made in the Blackfoot Lake area. Moose Lake (3.8 km): Islet Lake trail can be accessed from Central Staging Area using this trail. Named for unusual moose antler found along the route. Antlers are on display at the Heritage Interpretive Centre office.

Porcupine (0.8 km): named for the frequent porcupine sightings in the general vicinity. Porcupine Hollow Staging Area.

Edmonton to Calgary:

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Web: albertaparks.ca
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October–April
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Toll Free: 1–866–427–3582
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Fire Bans in Alberta
Web: alberta.ca
Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance) Phone: 911

Disclaimer
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