

Riding Mountain National Park of Canada

Climate

The climate of Riding Mountain National Park is characteristic of the continental climate of the Canadian prairies. The summers are warm due to prevailing air masses from the south and southwest. Winters are characterized by cold fronts moving from the north and northwest. Turbulence generated by the Manitoba Escarpment, combined with the abundance of lakes and other wetlands, contributes to increased convective cloud and shower activity in the warmer months. The warmest months are July and August respectively. Mean daily temperatures peak in July at 15.6°C. The corresponding mean daily maximum and minimum temperatures for July are 8.3°C and 23.9°C. Therefore, although daytime temperatures may be hot, evenings are generally quite cool. January is the coldest month in the year with a mean daily temperature of -20.6°C. Mean daily maximum and minimum temperatures for January are -13.8°C and -27.3°C.

Geology

The Manitoba Escarpment forms the eastern boundary of the park and is a nationally significant landform, rising some 475 m above the lowlands along the northeastern border. Most of the park is hummocky, with rolling moraines and outwash plains, all features of prairie pothole country. A plateau occurs at the west end of the park. Shale bedrock contains numerous fossils, and relict beach lines, glacial meltwater channels, and rounded depressions are scattered throughout the park. Its elevation gives it slightly cooler temperatures than the surrounding landscapes, and contributes to the park's ecological diversity.

Location

Riding Mountain National Park is located in the southwest part of Manitoba about 225 km northwest of the city of Winnipeg. The 2976 km² area is one of Canada's older national parklands, having been established in 1929. The park sits at the confluence of three natural regions: Canada's Southern Boreal Plains and Plateaux Natural Region, the Manitoba Lowlands Natural Region, and some of the Manitoba Escarpment. The townsite of Wasagaming can be found inside the park on the shores of Clear Lake. An international Biosphere Reserve has been recognized within the park. Riding Mountain is located in the Boreal Plains Ecozone.



Vegetation

Three overlapping vegetation zones exist in Riding Mountain National Park: grasslands, boreal forest, and mixedwood forest. The rough fescue grassland communities in the central and western portion of the park represent the easterly limit of this species in Canada. The escarpment slopes in the east are the northern limit of the deciduous forests, comprising of oaks, ash, elm, and others, that prevail in southern Ontario's Great Lakes area. The park's upland areas consist of aspens, jack pine, balsam fir, tamarack and spruces, species typical of the more northerly boreal forests.



Wildlife

Wildlife thrives in the diverse habitats of the national park. Major mammal species include elk, wolves, lynx, the endangered cougar, black bears, moose, coyotes, beaver, and white-tailed deer. A small herd of plains bison was re-introduced to the park shortly after its creation. Martens and fishers have also been re-introduced into the park. Bald eagles and ospreys are significant birds of prey that reside in the park. Clear Lake contains northern pike, walleye, perch, whitefish, and lake trout.

Activities

The park is open year-round. Visitors can enjoy camping in six campgrounds with over 700 sites, fishing, horseback riding and hiking trails, both downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, boating, swimming, golf, and tennis. There are 297 hotel, motel, and cabin units in Wasagaming. The park has a Visitor Centre and office in the town, and offers a full interpretive program to help visitors understand the park's unique and special features.

For more information, contact:
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