



All trails are open year round to the public under the posted guidelines for use and following trail ethics. For Discovery Kits, trail tours or access to the gate code for horseback riding the southwest trail call 780-672-3099 or email canadiannorthern@telus.net. Motorized vehicles are not permitted on the trails. For outdoor recreation use for hiking, horseback riding, cycling, wagon treks, picnics, skiing and snowshoeing. The flora and fauna change with the seasons: come often and enjoy! We encourage visitors to enjoy related attractions that central Alberta has to offer—visit Tourism Camrose for more information.

TRAIL LOCATIONS: Visit the map interpretative sign near the elevator for directions to the trails. The trailhead developed by the Alberta East Central Natural Linear Park Society northwest of the station is located across the paved road leading into Meeting Creek. Stop and read the signs before you enter the stile. An outhouse and picnic tables are located 2 km down the 4 km trail (one way). The southeast Grassland Trail developed by the Canadian Northern Society begins at the map sign near the restored elevator. This 2 km (one way) trail has interpretive signage throughout the park site and along the trail to highway 56.

While on the Trails:

- Respect others on the trail and use trails at own risk.
- Stay on the trail and respect adjacent landowners by not trespassing.
- Keep pets on a leash and clean up after.
- Do not use or carry alcohol or drugs on the trails.
- No motorized vehicles permitted.
- Respect the environment and do not interfere with wildlife or livestock.
- Become part of the projects success by volunteering and sharing ideas.
- Keep the trails clean and take all garbage out with you or dispose in garbage cans on site.
- So that future visitors can enjoy wildflowers, and so that the flowers themselves and native grasses continue to thrive, picking is not permitted.
- Wear suitable shoes and clothes for hiking, carry water, sunscreen and bug spray.
- Sign out and return all items in Discovery Kits after use.
- Call 780-672-3099 or 403-742-3997 to report any inappropriate activities or adverse trail conditions.

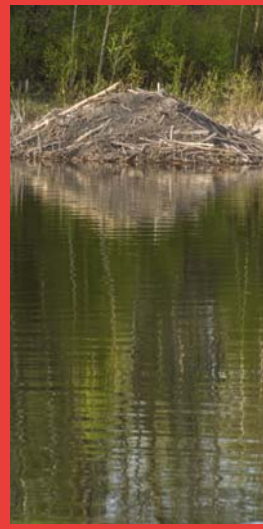
All visitors and volunteers on Canadian Northern (Meeting Creek) Historical Society property and Alberta East Central Natural Linear Park Society property enter, work and visit these sites and trails at their own risk. We are not responsible for any accidents, injury, or liability occurring on these premises.



NORTHWEST TRAIL (Approximately 3 hours, station starting point)

Take the road to the trailhead located across the paved road coming into Meeting Creek. Note the willow and aspen trees. These trees are important to the web of life in this ecosystem. Carefully cross the road and read the signs at the trailhead before going through the stiles. As you begin your trail experience imagine what it would have been like riding on a steam train along this trail and how beautiful the scenery must have been.

ROCK DISCOVERY: A short distance down the trail watch for a large stone covered with lichen on the north side of the trail. How do you think the stone got there? Read the geological information in your kit. How many coloured rocks that match the colour patches on the kit can you find on your way down the trail? The rocks on the trail were put there from a gravel pit as ballast to hold the rails in place. They did not occur naturally like the ones off the trail along the right-of-way beside the trail.



POND DISCOVERY: Stop at the small pond on the south side of the trail next to a junk pile located behind the south fence and listen for the boreal frogs in early spring. This pond sometimes dries up completely in the summer. What plants are growing around this small pond? Use the magnifying pail and your Pond Life and Plant Field Guide to determine what kinds of water bugs are present in the water. Even though the pond dries up the frogs come back. Where do you think they go? If this pond is dry you may want to take water from a shallow edge of the next south pond. Can you find a large beaver house in this pond? The beaver may change location from year to year. Watch for a beaver and a smaller animal resembling a beaver. Who do you think this animal could be? His name is spelled backwards here (tarksum). Watch for places along the trail where the beaver has been cutting down the aspen trees to build their houses and stock up for food during the winter. Using your Pond and Plant guide note the aquatic plants along the edge of the ponds and the ducks and grebes that are nesting or migrating through in spring and fall. What part do the plants surrounding and growing in this pond play in protecting and supporting wildlife including birds in this area? Suggestions written backwards here: (gnitsen) (doof) (gninaelc retaw) (noitcetorp morf srotaderp).

HOODOO DISCOVERY: Beyond the ponds and behind the fence you will see an area on the north of the trail where the railway was carved out of the land. Imagine horses and equipment cutting through the land to build this railway over 100 years ago in 1911. What signs of erosion can you see? Why have the banks eroded to hoodoos? When land is disturbed weeds grow on the top of the soil. How is this helpful to the land? Rub between your fingers some of the clay coloured soil you see. What does it feel like? This bentonite soil is the same type of soil found in the badlands. It becomes very slippery and muddy when wet and is known for its healing qualities. When layers of decaying plant life break down and form nutrient-rich loam on top of bentonite soil, it can foster growth of diverse plant life.



WATERSHED DISCOVERY: As you walk down the trail you will see pasture land that has never been plowed. Meeting Creek winds around the valley on the north side of the trail and you will see the creek on the north near the trestle bridge in the pasture land on the south. At one time the creek was much larger than it is now. Much of the snow and rain from the upper valley runs into Meeting Creek. The ponds along the linear parks are called riparian areas and very important to the watershed and need to be saved as Meeting Creek flows into Battle River. These linear parks help buffer pollution along the way to the creek. The trees along the rail line help to hold the moisture for the diverse plants along the trail as well as supply homes for many insects, birds and wild life.

TRESTLE DISCOVERY: The trestle has platforms where track workers could safely go when a train went by. Note a windmill high on a hill at a farm on the north side of the trail. What were windmills used for? Answers here: (retaw gnipmup) and (gnitareneg yticirtcele).





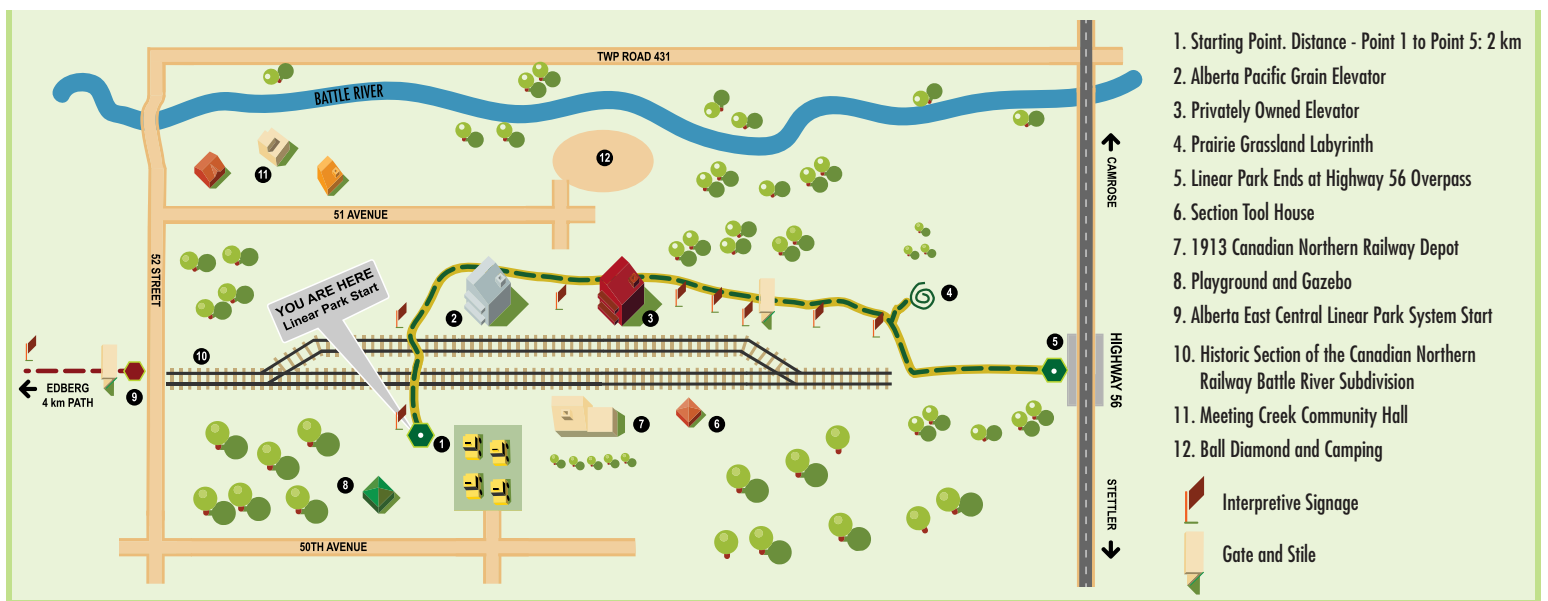
BIRD DISCOVERY: Walk quietly along the trail past the trestle to hear the birds. Bohemian wax wings and eastern kingfishers nest here. Try to find the name of the shrubs and trees along the trail. It is in these shrubs you may find some species of small song birds. Listen for the chip, chip, chip of the chipping sparrow and the buzz, buzz, buzz of the clay coloured sparrow. Sparrows also like to perch on fences or large rocks in the pasture. As you walk the trail in the spring and summer months listen for the sound of the meadowlark. Meadowlarks like wide-open spaces and may be singing perched on a fence or rock in the pasture north of the trail. Look up and across the valley to watch for hawks, eagles, and prairie falcons. Near the far end of the trail you may see turkey vultures soaring. What animals do you think the large birds would be hunting in this valley? Suggestions written backwards (selom, selov, srehpog, stibbar).

RAILWAY SIGNS: You will see an old warning sign along this trail. The railway used signs extensively to warn the train crew about dangers, to let the train know where they were as indicated by mile signs, and to indicate crossings.

WATERTANK LOCATION: Before the first gate watch on the right side of the trail to see 12 concrete pillars that were the foundation for the Canadian Northern Railway water tower. Read the interpretive sign. The tender behind the engine would be filled with water here. Why do you think they did this? (To produce steam) The trees would have been cut down during the early days of steam railroading but are now growing back, and have only been trimmed to reveal the foundations of the watertank. Steam engines were replaced by diesel in the 1950s.

PLANT AND BUG DISCOVERY: Use your pocket guides to help identify butterflies, bugs, plants and flowers as you walk along the trail. You will see the silver sage growing along the trails and in the adjacent pastures. If you have the Medicinal Plant kit you may follow the instructions to correctly harvest a small piece of the sage. Along the trail in the late summer and fall you will find raspberry, saskatoon and chokecherry bushes. Stop at the picnic tables for a break before the second gate and enjoy the beauty of this unique prairie valley.

DISCOVERIES NEAR THE SECOND TRESTLE AND BEYOND: When you reach the second railway bridge you will see why the water runs off the hills into Meeting Creek. Look for another large rock beside the trail covered with lichen. The bird boxes you see under the trestle are for bluebirds. If they have nested, take care not to disturb them. Please record in the bird journal if you see bluebirds. In spring, summer and early autumn, you may see different types of butterflies. Along the pond areas you will often see large dragonflies. On the north side of the trail in midsummer, you may see a wonderful show of pink bergamot and prairie sunflower. The south sun shines on this area for these sun-loving plants. On the south side of the trail in late summer you can see Licorice plants blooming and during the winter you will see the seeds of the licorice plant still hanging from its branches.



■ SOUTHEAST GRASSLAND TRAIL (Approximately 1 hour)

Begin your trail experience at the parking lot of the Meeting Creek Station. Take a tour of the station and elevator, review the interpretive map sign at the walkway to the elevator and follow the directions walking north around the elevator and turn east. Read the interpretive signs for information on the area along the trail. Note the aspen grove of trees on the north side of the road. These trees need to be conserved as they contribute to the web of life in this area.

The Meeting Creek railway station was built by the Canadian Northern Railway in 1913 to its standard third-class station plan. Today it represents one of the few remaining examples of this design, and is unique in Alberta, being preserved on its original site by the Canadian Northern Society (www.canadiannorthern.ca), with both a portion of the original railway together with a classic prairie grain elevator. The station has been wonderfully preserved and houses photographs and artifacts pertaining to life in the prairie railway depot. With the abandonment of the railway serving Meeting Creek in 1997, Central Western Railway donated a portion of the original main line and elevator track to the Canadian Northern Society. The Alberta Pacific Grain elevator at Meeting Creek, built in 1917, is a classic example of a wood-cribbed prairie grain elevator. Perhaps more than any other building, these distinctive structures have come to represent western Canada to the world.

GRASSLAND TRAIL AND LABYRINTH: Enter through the style and walk along the mowed trail reading the signage. Enjoy a stroll through the labyrinth. As you walk through the grassland use your Discovery guides to identify the different ecosystems and plants. In the drier areas notice various grasses, flowers, and sage bushes; invasive species in areas of disturbed soil; and sedges in wet areas. This area is going through the stages of reclamation to transform it back into the pre-settlement ecosystem. The grassland remediation is a long-term project as the soil is built over time and invasive species are dealt with without herbicides. Native grasses such as prairie wool have been replanted to choke out weeds and other invasive plants.



TRAIL TO HIGHWAY 56 UNDERPASS: Follow the trail in the grassland to the abandoned rail line and right-of-way. Observe the many wild flower species growing to the east of the trail as you ascend to the abandoned railway line where the track ends. Using the nature guides for plants and wildlife, identify flowers, plants, butterflies and bugs. On the abandoned rail line look up into the trees and the sky on the south side. This is a special area for raptors such as hawks and eagles. Listen and look for prairie song birds in the tree and shrub areas especially in spring and early summer. In June note the beautiful fleabane growing in the south pasture. The riparian areas along the trail catch much of the drainage from springs and run off these hills into Meeting Creek which is a major tributary to the Battle River.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The Meeting Creek Natural Linear Park Trail has been completed by the Canadian Northern Society, which was founded in 1986 with a goal to preserve the 1913 heritage railway station here at Meeting Creek. The Society takes its name in honour of the old Canadian Northern Railway, which originally constructed the railway branch that linked Vegreville with Drumheller via Meeting Creek, Donalda, Stettler, Big Valley, and Rowley. Operated by volunteers, the society is a not-for-profit registered charity.

Over the years the activities of the society have grown and evolved from the initial preservation of the depot. Today, its primary focus is the preservation of three distinct heritage railway depots and adjacent community parks (at Big Valley, Camrose, and Meeting Creek, Alberta), a classic prairie grain elevator (at Meeting Creek), and a host of artifacts related not only to the railway but also to certain connected aspects of rural western Canada's history. The society is also actively engaged in educational programs, historical research, and documenting history. For more information on the society or to volunteer please visit www.canadiannorthern.ca.

Special thanks are also due to the Battle River Community Foundation (www.brcf.ca); Canada 150 (www.canada.ca); Augustana University Community Service Students (www.ualberta.ca); Bernice Kadatz – soil specialist EYWA Remediation; and the Wild Rose Outdoor Club (www.camrose.ca).