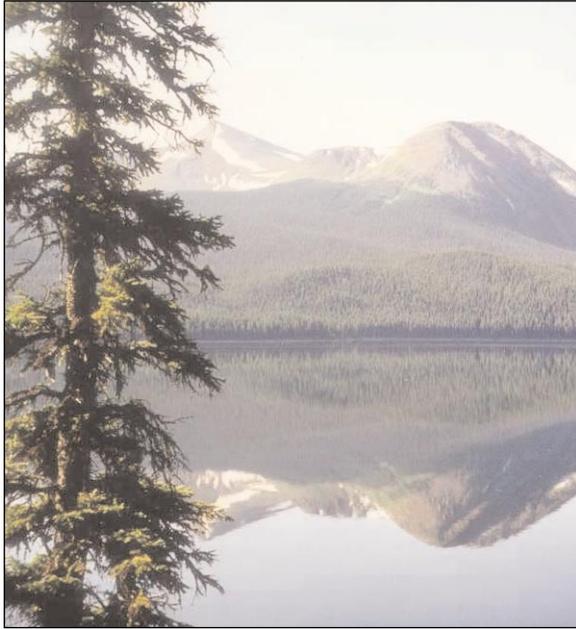




Wapiti Lake

PROVINCIAL PARK and Wapiti Onion Hiking Trail



W

elcome to Wapiti Lake

Provincial Park and the Wapiti Onion Hiking Trail. Nestled in the Rocky Mountains, Wapiti Lake Provincial Park with its fast flowing rivers, crystal clear lakes and surrounding mountains provide outstanding scenic viewing, fishing and wilderness camping opportunities. The park area protects 16,837 hectares and is bisected by the Wapiti Onion Trail. The 30 kilometre Wapiti Onion hiking trail is located on the east slope of the Rocky Mountains and traverses river valleys and alpine habitats.

Peace Region

BC Parks Shelter

The BC Parks shelter, located at KM 19.2, was constructed in 1995 by the BC Forest Service. This is a public shelter built to provide emergency cover for those venturing into this wilderness area.

If you use the shelter:

- ▶ Keep it clean.
- ▶ Remove your litter.
- ▶ Leave a supply of firewood.
- ▶ Stay for a maximum of 2 nights.
- ▶ Sign the guest book!

Campfire Safety

Most campsites along the trail have rock fire rings. Use existing fire rings for your campfires.

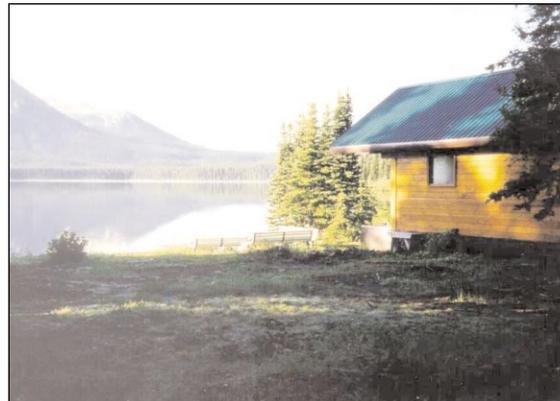
Open fires are allowed for cooking or warmth if you follow these rules:

- ▶ Remove all combustible material down to mineral soil for about 30 centimetres in every direction.
- ▶ Keep fires more than three metres from any log, stump, snag, slash, wooden structure or tree.
- ▶ Keep fires under one metre in diameter and in height.
- ▶ Extinguish all fires before leaving so that the ashes and any unburned material are no longer warm.

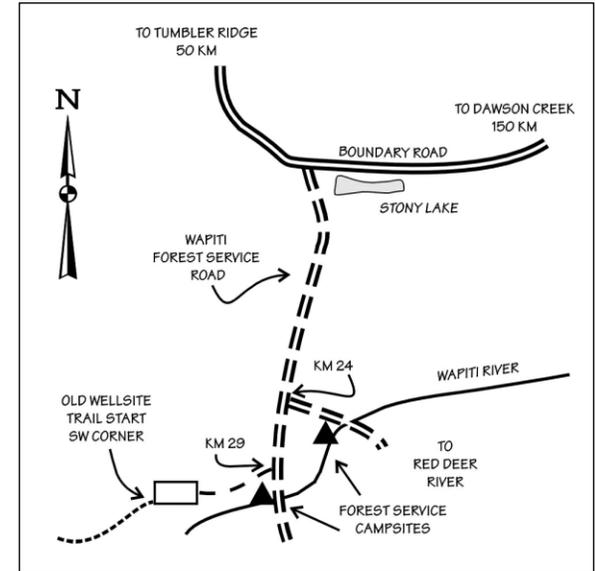
Alpine Areas

Campfires damage the fragile alpine environment. Avoid lighting fires while in the alpine. Carry and use a camp-stove for cooking.

Keep fires small. Do not ignite when winds are strong enough to spread sparks or other burning material.



How to Get There



For More Information

BC Parks

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>



Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection



History

Wapiti Onion trail development has a rich and long history. First Nations were the earliest people to access this area and have trapped in the Wapiti for many years. In the early 1960s, a local helicopter pilot built the original cabin at kilometre 19.2. The pilot's cabin eventually became porcupine feed and was replaced in 1995 with the BC Forest Service shelter. In the late 1960s, a Catholic priest prepared a retreat area where spiritual restoration could be obtained. The priest and many others made numerous treks into the solitude of the Wapiti. In 1983 the BC Forest Service and a "Katimivik" youth crew upgraded many kilometres of trail. The area was recommended for park status in the Dawson Creek Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process and on June 26, 2000 it was established as a provincial park. Today, BC Parks is working to ensure that the trail is maintained.

Wapiti Lake

The first 19 kilometres of the trail to Wapiti Lake follows the north side of the Wapiti River and the shores of a few smaller lakes. Scenic views are plentiful, especially while along the lakeshores. There is a short side trail (200 metres) to Wapiti Falls at seven kilometres. A reasonable goal would be to reach Wapiti Lake in day one. Backpacking time to Wapiti is variable and depending on your experience allow six to nine hours for the one way trip to kilometre 19.

Onion Lake

The trail from Wapiti Lake to Onion Lake ascends steeply into the alpine. The two kilometre climb above Wapiti Lake has an elevation change of 1,000 metres. Between 24 and 25 kilometres there is a terrific view of both Wapiti Lake to the south and Onion Lake to the north. At this point the trail descends 500 metres to Onion Lake. Allow seven to 10 hours for the trip from Wapiti Lake to Onion Lake.

Caution

This is a mountainous wilderness area. Terrain is rugged and weather can change quickly. Expect minimal or no contact with people. Other than the shelter at 19.2 kilometres there are no facilities. Those venturing into this area should be experienced backpackers. Be prepared for an extended stay if necessary. Advise friends or relatives of your trip duration.

Wildlife

An abundance of wildlife can be viewed in the Wapiti Onion area. Moose and caribou are often seen ungulates. Both black and grizzly bears wander throughout. Mountain Sheep climb about Bone Mountain. Wolves, coyotes, lynx and many small mammals pass through or make this area their home.

Moose are tall, dark-brown animals with greyish legs and, at a distance, appear black. A pendant of hair-covered skin call a "bell" hangs from under the throat. At birth a calf moose is a helpless nine to 16 kilograms, an ungainly copy of its mother. The calf is initially reddish brown, but by midsummer acquires a dark brown coat. Throughout the winter the moose live on twigs and shoots from trees and brush, consuming 12 to 18 kilograms per day. In the



summer, moose also eat leafy vegetation and aquatic plants.

Watch for moose along the shores of Wapiti Lake.

Be Bear Aware

Bears usually avoid people, but they can be attracted to human food and garbage. For your own safety, take the following precautions:

- ▶ Avoid all contact with bears. Never feed or approach bears or other animals. Do not try to get too close for that perfect photo!
- ▶ Dogs can annoy bears and bring them back to their owners. It's best to leave your dog at home or keep it on a leash.

Be Camper Smart

- ▶ Never store food in tents.
- ▶ Store all food in a sealed container and hang from a branch at least four metres above the ground and more than one metre from the tree trunk.
- ▶ Sleep at least 50 metres from the area where you store and cook food. Pitch your tent away from dense bush, lake shores, stream banks and game trails.

- ▶ Keep clothes and gear free of food odours, and dispose of dishwater at least 100 metres from your campsite.
- ▶ Do not cook strong-smelling or greasy foods. Burn out tin cans after a meal, if you have a fire.
- ▶ Keep your campsite clean. Put all garbage in sealed containers and pack it out. Never bury garbage; bears can dig it up.
- ▶ Clean fish in running water. Dispose of fish entrails by burning them in a hot fire or dropping them in deep or rushing water after puncturing the air bladder.
- ▶ Do not use or pack strong smelling, or herbal scented perfumes, deodorants, shampoos, etc.
- ▶ Use extra caution if you are menstruating in bear country.

Do Not Surprise Bears

- ▶ Carry a bell, sing, talk or make noise along the trail to avoid startling bears. Never hike alone or after dark.
- ▶ Never come between a female bear and her cubs. Stay clear of occupied bear habitat: berry patches and avalanche chutes. Leave an area the way you came if you see fresh signs of bears such as tracks, droppings or diggings.

If You Are Attacked

How you respond should depend on the species of bear and the circumstances. Black bears and grizzlies behave differently and may have different motives. Aggressive bears are usually defending their territory, their food or their young. Predatory bears, on the other hand, are looking for food.

Grizzly Bears – It is best to play dead. Struggling will encourage attack. Drop, curl your knees up to your chest and place your hands behind your neck.

Black Bears – Fight Back! Use everything you've got, sticks, rocks, hands and feet. With predatory black bears your best chance is to fight them off and chase them away.

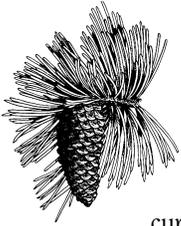


Trees and Plants on the Trail

White Spruce is a large tree with a narrow crown that can grow to 40 metres tall. The needles are whitish-green, four sided (you can roll spruce needles between your fingers), sharp and stiff, and are arranged spirally on the twigs. The bark is loose, scaly and greyish-brown. Seed cones are light-brown to purplish and hang from the upper branches.



Spruce cone

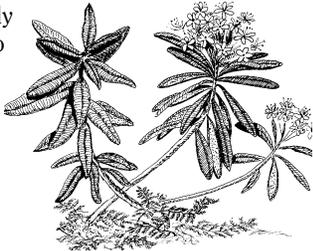


while in trees and will open in fires or heat to release seeds.

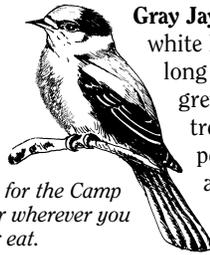
Lodgepole Pine is a tall slender tree. The needles occur in bunches of two, and are dark green. The bark is thin, orangey-brown to grey. Seed cones are egg-shaped to slightly curved. Cones are rock hard



Labrador Tea is found mostly in spongy bogs and grows to a height of 50 centimetres. Leaves are lance-shaped, evergreen and usually curled along edges with dense rusty hairs beneath. Leaves can be used fresh or dried to brew tea.



Nodding Onion grows to about 30 centimetres. The flower head is bent, or nodding, and has up to 12 pink blooms. A few slender grass leaves grow from a thin bulb just under the ground surface. Leaves have a strong onion smell and have been used for cooking. The Gitskan name for the onion plant literally means Raven's-underarm-odour. Look for the onion plant along lakeshores in exposed areas.



Gray Jay or Canada Jay – grey with white head, black nape and fairly long tail. The young are sooty grey. The Gray jay sails from one tree to another and will follow people who have food. Its call is a whistled *wheoo*. Nicknames are “Whiskey Jack” and “Camp Robber.”

Watch for the Camp Robber wherever you rest or eat.

Backcountry Ethic

Backcountry ethic means minimum impact use. Unspoiled backcountry areas are decreasing. Treat the Wapiti Onion area as a fragile environment so it remains unspoiled for the future.

- ▶ Stay on established trails. Use established campsites.
- ▶ Use only dead and downed trees for firewood. Do not cut live trees or branches.
- ▶ Use fire safely! Ensure campfires are fully extinguished. Respect fire closures.
- ▶ Do not construct buildings or structures.
- ▶ Leave the trail tidy. Litter barrels and garbage pickup are not provided. Pack out all garbage.



Backcountry Horse Use

Horseback use in the backcountry is an exciting and rewarding experience. As demand for this activity continues to grow, especially in areas of high use, careful management of horses is necessary to lessen the impact of this activity. The following are guidelines for horse use in the backcountry.

Planning Your Trip

Familiarize yourself with the area you intend to travel.

“No Trace” Techniques

On the trail and in camp, employing no trace techniques allows you to enjoy the backcountry while you minimize change or damage. Maintain the following techniques:

- ▶ Stay on existing trails. Avoid wet areas if possible.
- ▶ Locate camps at least 50 metres away from nearest water, trails and meadows.
- ▶ Use only natural materials for essential camp improvements and construct in a primitive style so changes may be easily removed.
- ▶ Dispose of human waste in a 10 centimetre “cat-hole”. Burn waste in the cat-hole when there is no fire hazard. When in doubt, bury the waste.
- ▶ Dispose of waste water at least 50 metres away from the nearest water source.
- ▶ Confine stock at least 70 metres from streams, lakes trails and camping areas. Rotate your stock throughout the area in order to reduce trampling and overgrazing. Place a picket line between two 15 centimetre trees over hardened ground where vegetation damage can be avoided. Use a highline or hobbles to restrain stock and prevent trampling of tree roots.
- ▶ Pack out your trash. Return the site to its natural state. A little effort at this time will reduce evidence of people and protect the integrity of the area for future use.



Trail Guide

The trail guide will help you identify features and determine your location along the Wapiti Onion trail. Yellow and black aluminium kilometre markers were placed in the fall of 1996. Feature locations and distances are estimated from KM markers.

- KM 0.0** Trail starts at the southwest corner of old well-site.
- KM 0.3** Small stream crossing.
- KM 1.4** Start ascent up small hogback. Mature spruce forest changing to young pine.
- KM 2.4** Bridge over small creek.
- KM 2.5** Old trail visible to the left (south).
- KM 2.6** Bridge over small creek.
- KM 3.5** Viewpoint.
- KM 4.0** On a slight rise above Barber Lake, catch a glimpse of lake through trees.
- KM 4.2** Short trail to lakeshore. Good rest spot.
- KM 4.8** Trapper's trail to Wapiti River.
- KM 5.3** Meadow and often wet ground.
- KM 5.4** Wet area with crossing logs.
- KM 5.5** Trail ascends to pine hogback.
- KM 6.0** Ridge trail. Stay along ridge to avoid wet areas.
- KM 6.1** Meadow.
- KM 6.3** View of Wapiti River from ridge.
- KM 6.4** View of Wapiti Falls.
- KM 6.6** Take fork to left (south).
- KM 7.0** Trail to Wapiti Falls viewpoint (south). The five-minute walk to the falls viewpoint shouldn't be missed! This is a great spot for photos and a snack.
- KM 7.2** Gravel creek bed. Trail stays on right side of bed.
- KM 7.9** Creek. View of Wapiti River. Can be very wet.
- KM 8.0** View of Mountains across Wapiti River. Wet area.
- KM 8.3** View of Wapiti River. Existing campsite.
- KM 8.6** Trail along Duke Lake. View of mountains along the lake.
- KM 9.0** Along Duke Lake. Mixed spruce and pine forest.

- KM 9.9** Trail narrows and leaves the lakeshore.
- KM 10.0** Dense, mature pine and spruce forest.
- KM 10.3** Trail back along river. View of mountains.
- KM 10.8** Trail ascends ridge above Wapiti River.
- KM 11.5** Trail along Wapiti River. Campsite Junction with old Onion Lake trail. This route to Onion Lake is not marked and recommended for experienced wilderness hikers only.
- KM 11.9** Creek bed. Often dry.
- KM 12.0** Old trappers shelter.
- KM 12.2** Creek.
- KM 12.5** Creek. Trail follows shore of Lost Moraine Lake, named for the gravel moraine visible just under the surface and running the entire length of the lake. Scenic view of mountains across the lake.
- KM 12.8** Campsite.
- KM 13.3** Trail crosses scree slope.
- KM 13.6** Trail leaves Lost Moraine Lake and crosses ridge away from lake.
- KM 13.8** Wapiti Lake Provincial Park boundary.
- KM 14.0** Spruce, pine and poplar forest.
- KM 14.1** Creek bed. Often dry.
- KM 14.9** Trappers cabin.
- KM 15.0** Trail along shore of Fellers Lake. Scenic view of mountains across lake. Trail rises to rocky ridge above Fellers Lake.
- KM 15.3** View of Fellers Lake inlet and gravel bar.
- KM 16.0** Wapiti Lake view. Well-used campsite.
- KM 17.0** Short, steep ascent to ridge.
- KM 17.3** Trails descends to Wapiti Lake shore.
- KM 17.5** Well-used campsite. Trail leaves lake and travels through mature forest, wet spots and ridges.
- KM 19.0** Trail descends to lake level. Catholic shrine visible on knob to north of trail.
- KM 19.2** BC Parks shelter. Campsite and scenic view of Wapiti Lake.
- KM 20.0** Creek bed. Often dry.
- KM 20.3** Spring.

- KM 20.4** Beaver dam. Willow flats. Flat terrain.
- KM 20.6** Small creek crossing. Wet areas.
- KM 21.4** Small creek and spring. Last good water before climb.
- KM 21.5** May be wet sections along trail.
- KM 21.8** Meadows and willow.
- KM 22.0** Begin ascent. Spruce, pine and fir forest.
- KM 22.8** First view of mountain slopes to left.
- KM 23.0** View of mountains and valleys to west. Trees are sub-alpine and much shorter.
- KM 23.4** Alpine meadows. View of ridge to north east.
- KM 23.6** Alpine meadows and creek. Ascent continues.
- KM 24.0** Trail leaves forest and enters alpine meadow.
- Note: trail not well defined through alpine areas. Stay to the east.**
- KM 24.4** Spring. Trail heads slightly to east (does not follow creek until KM 25.3).
- KM 24.9** View of Onion Lake.
- KM 25.3** Trail meets creek. Alpine campsite. Follow left side of creek (while travelling downstream).
- KM 26.1** Trail heads to left, stay high to avoid drop.
- Note: Descending trail. Do not follow too close to creek. Steep rocky drop at KM 26.2.**
- KM 26.4** Trail crosses creek (now on east side).
- KM 27.0** Trail re-crosses creek (now on west side).
- KM 27.4** Trail re-crosses creek to northeast side. Follow the right (east) downstream bank toward lake.
- KM 28.0** Onion Lake visible.
- KM 28.1** South end of Onion Lake.
- Note: Choice of trails; either follow east lakeshore or continue through timber.**
- KM 29.0** Timber trail dips down towards lake. Terrain is variable with plenty of ascent and descent but is mostly dry.
- KM 30.0** North end of Onion Lake. End of Wapiti Onion hiking trail.