

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
Birds Hill Provincial Park, August 20, 2016

With its close accessibility to the City, Birds Hill Provincial Park is well-known for its recreational opportunities such as cycling, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and camping. It is less well known for its wide variety of natural habitat including prairie, sandilands, and various types of forest that encourage the amazingly diverse communities of plant and animal life found here.

The park is named after the Bird family who settled in the area in the late 18th century. James Curtis Bird was a Chief Factor of the Red River District for the Hudson's Bay Company. When he retired he received a land grant of 1215 hectares on the east side of the Red River which stretched to what is now the western boundary of the park. His youngest son, Curtis James became a doctor and prominent member of the settlement and in 1870 was the first Speaker of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

During the great floods of 1826 and 1852, many families from the Red River settlement camped on the high ground with their livestock. Land further east was settled by European settlers in the 1800s. In the 1900s the hill's massive sand and gravel deposits were mined (and are still being mined) to build the city of Winnipeg. The park was established as a provincial park in 1964 as part of a provincially-sponsored centennial program.

The Heatherdale Road Trail is an ATV trail that follows the south boundary of Birds Hill Provincial Park. The habitat is very sandy and dry and we will walk through pleasant prairie meadows punctuated with oak savannah and trembling aspen copses to find a variety of late summer wildflowers including the delicate Agalinis and the endangered Western silvery aster.

Nimowin is a Cree word meaning peaceful or quiet. Here we will walk through a sandy upland area before walking down a shady trail to a large pond (marsh). Along the way we will see gumweed, carrion flower (a vine), wild plums, showy milkweed with pods, and the American bittersweet, a vine that wraps around trees and can eventually kills the tree.

SPECIES LISTS

Heatherdale Road Trail:

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| Bouncing Bet (<i>Saponaria officinalis</i>) | Canada goldenrod (<i>Solidago canadensis</i>) |
| Sunflower (<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>) | Purple prairie-clover (<i>Petalostemon purpureum</i>) |
| Pasture sage (<i>Artemissia frigida</i>) | White prairie-clover (<i>Petalostemon candidum</i>) |
| Pink-flowered onion (<i>Allium stellatum</i>) | Western silver aster (<i>Aster sericeus</i>) |
| Gray goldenrod (<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>) | |
| Stiff goldenrod (<i>Solidago rigida</i>) | |

Dwarf milkweed (*Asclepias ovalifolia*)
Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*)
Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
Smooth aster (*Aster laevis*)
Poison-ivy (*Rhus radicans*)
Prairie sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*)
Meadow blazing star (*Liatris ligulistylis*)
Dotted blazing star (*Liatris punctata*)
Agalinis (*Agalinis aspera*)
Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)
Black poplar (*Populus balsamifera*)
Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)
Choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*)
Pin cherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*)

Nimowin Trail

Gumweed (*Grindelia squarrosa*)
Meadow goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*)
Showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)
Beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*)
Giant hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)
Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*)
Red osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)

Saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)
Common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*)
Spreading dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*)
American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*)
Common juniper (*Juniperus communis*)
Common bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)
Sandcherry (Prunus pumila or P. depressa)
Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
Big blue stem (*Andropogon gerardii*)
Upland white aster (*Oligoneuron album*)
Hairy goldenrod (*Solidago hispida*)

Gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)
White lettuce (*Nabalus alba*)
Thistle-like plant w. blue flowers
Common burdock (*Arctium minus*)
Climbing bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)
Showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Description by Peggy Bainard Acheson (Reference: Manitoba). Species list by Peggy Bainard Acheson and Richard Reeves.