

Paradise Meadows Loop Trail

Boardwalk Trail with Steps: 1.75 km (3.5 km total return)



20 [past the junction] Stunted Trees

Trees have a difficult life due to weight of snow and winter winds, which dry out exposed parts above the snow - when roots are frozen, winds kill the foliage above snow line. Tree growth is marginal & disappears altogether in the alpine zone higher up.

21 [at bridge] Corner Bridge

This stream flows off Mt Washington. Shrubs such as **Sitka alder** are found here in the woods.

22 [at bench] Trout Bend

Cutthroat & Rainbow Trout were stocked (beginning in 1929) in all the plateau area lakes. Adults are 4 - 6" long.

23 [at bridge] Paradise Creek Bridge

An old trail here is used by Mt Washington residents.

Butterwort is sometimes found on the banks of the creek.

24 [stream crossing] Battleship Lake Trail junction: Hanging Gardens

In spite of steep slopes, the ground holds water because of peat buildup & slow snow melt. **Deer cabbage** is in the terraced ponds.

25 [old tree] Old Man of the Meadows

This **mountain hemlock** is several hundred years old. Note the lines of **sapsucker** holes.

26 [at bench] Subalpine Birds

Gray Jays (Whiskey Jack), Steller's Jay, juncos & woodpeckers are some of the subalpine resident birds.

27 [at stream crossing] Sundew Pond

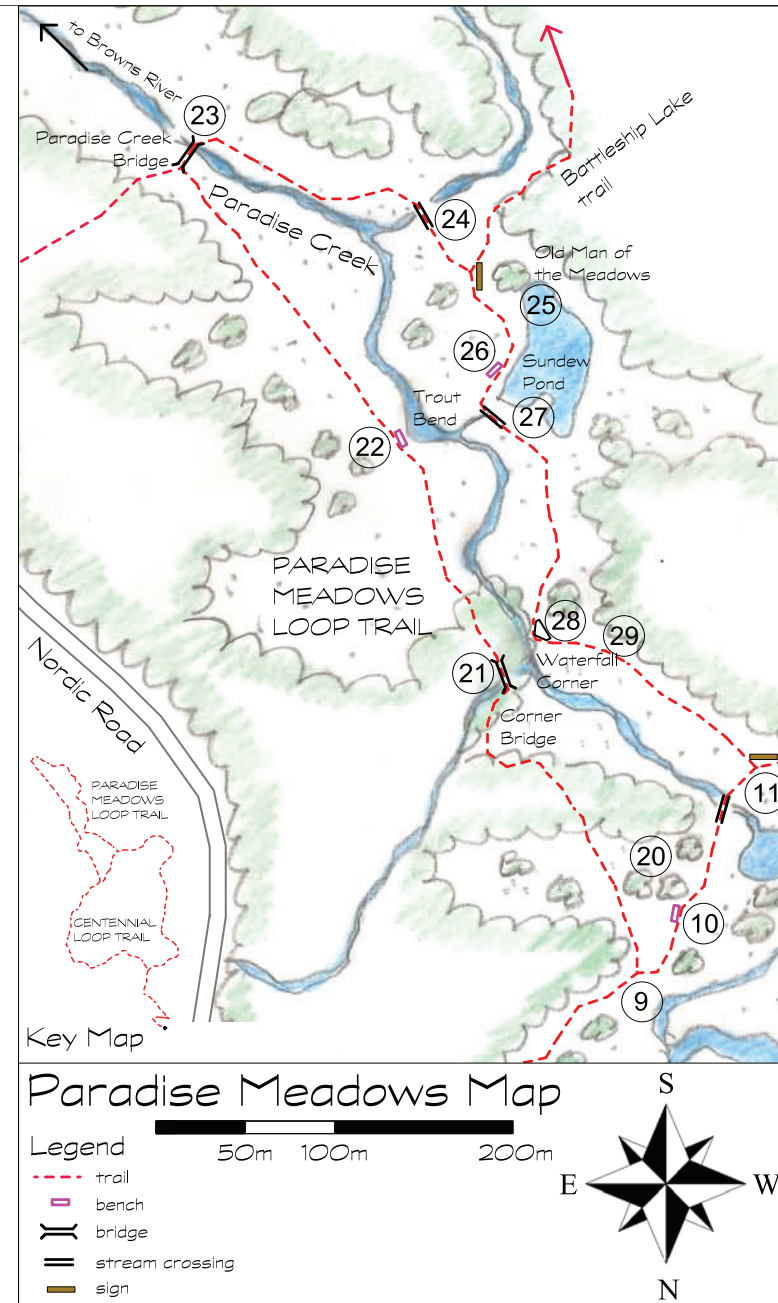
Sundews (found at the edge of the pond) generally grow in seasonally moist or constantly wet habitats with acidic soils and high levels of sunlight.

28 [at platform] Waterfall Corner

Shrubs such as **arctic willow & black twinberry** (at right side of platform) grow in the woods. Note the fine grained, rot resistant **yellow cedar** wood is 115 years old and still sound.

29 [on trail] Heather Trail

Both **pink & white heathers** are found here. Note the damage done by past hiking off trail - the slow-growing plants take many years to recover.



Whiskey Jack



About Us

The **Strathcona Wilderness Institute** was founded to promote sensitive and enjoyable use of the remote and natural Strathcona Provincial Park, which is located in the center of Vancouver Island, on the West coast of British Columbia, Canada.

Vision

The **Strathcona Wilderness Institute** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire awareness, appreciation and stewardship of the natural world through education and participation.

The Institute embraces the goals of the **Strathcona Park Master Plan** to protect the natural beauty of the park while at the same time promoting public enjoyment and respect for integrity and completeness of the wilderness.

Strathcona Wilderness Institute believes that by facilitating wilderness experience it will help keep the human spirit in balance in our ever-changing society.

For more information:

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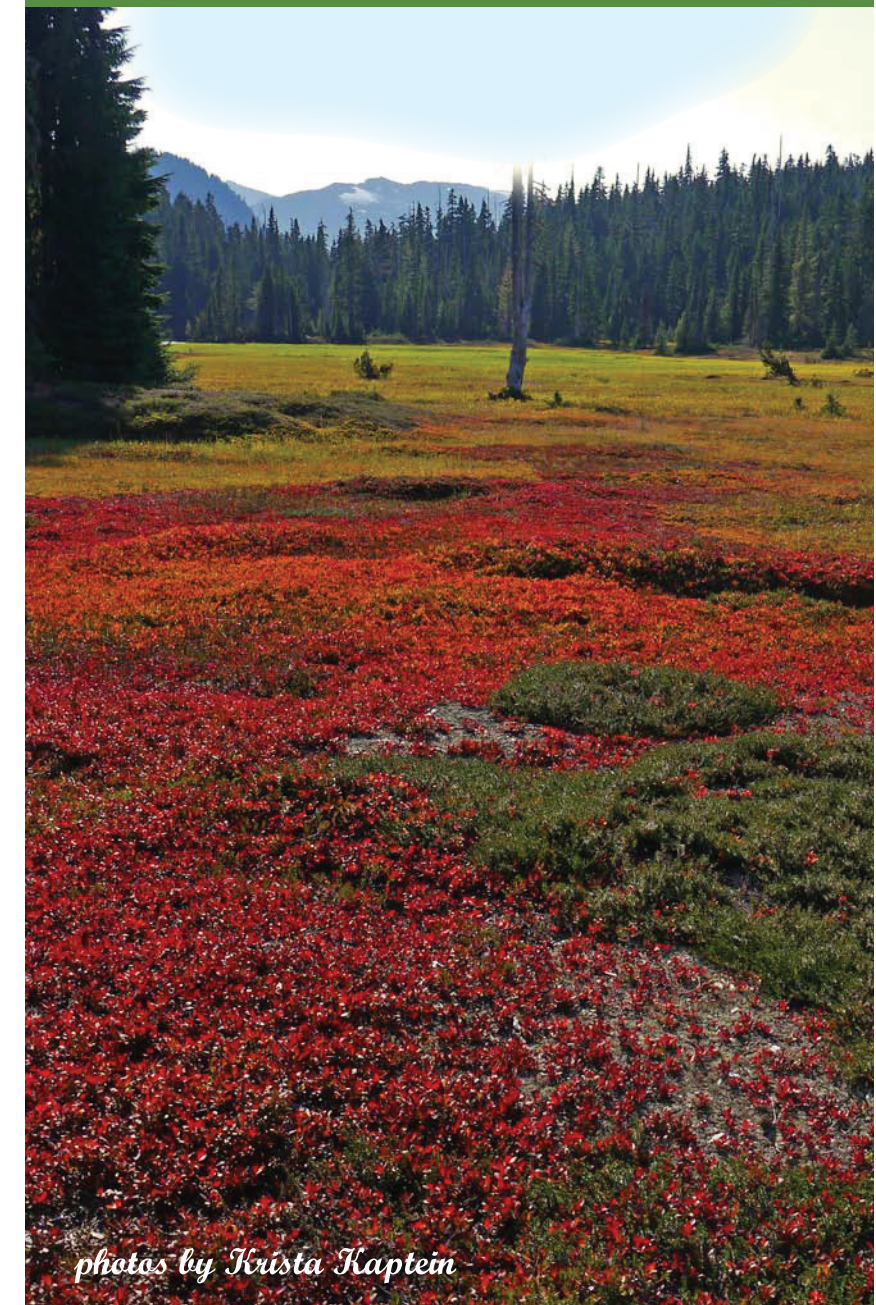
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Paradise Meadows Interpretive Nature Walk



photos by Krysta Kaptein

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Centennial Loop Trail

Flat, accessible Trail: 2.4 km return



1 [at trailhead] Geology

Mt Albert Edward & most of **Forbidden Plateau** are volcanic, older rocks, with a few mineral deposits including small amounts of gold, silver & copper. **Mt Allan Brooks** is more recent sandstone, shale & conglomerate. **Fireweed** & **pearly everlast-ing** characterise the disturbed area of the trailhead. **Engelmann spruce**, non-native to Vancouver Island, has been planted here.

2 [at stream crossing] High Elevation Ecology

Between 600-1000 m above sea level, the ecology changes from temperate to sub-alpine. For every 1000 m elevation gain, the temperature drops an average 5° C. **Hellebore** & **deer cabbage** are found in the wet stream areas.

3 [at traffic counter] Hemlocks

At the 1100m elevation of the meadows there are examples of both **western hemlock** & **mountain hemlock** - look for the different cones.

4 [at the junction] Watersheds

The meadow ponds drain in both directions when snow accumulates. Just beyond this junction is a height of land: right (west) drains to **Oyster River** watershed & left (east) drains to **Browns/Puntledge Rivers**. **Shootingstar** & **marsh marigold** are abundant here in early summer; **subalpine daisy** by mid-summer.

5 [at bench] Fen

The meadows are actually a fen, not a bog: they receive surface water and/or ground water – whereas a bog receives only direct precipitation. Both accumulate peat & are very acidic. **Bracted lousewort** is notable in this area.

6 [at bench] High Elevation Trees

The clump behind this bench illustrates four typical high elevation species, most not found at lower elevations: **yellow cedar** (rather than redcedar); **mountain hemlock** (rather than western hemlock); **amabilis fir** (rather than Douglas-fir); **white pine** (the pines are also found at low elevations). In a clump to the left, is **subalpine fir**.

7 [at bench] Mt. Regan + Jutland Mtn. view: Snags

Note the snags in flat wet areas – tree growth is reduced as the terrain gets wetter. Just beyond are examples of both pines: **shore pine** has two needles; **white pine** has five needles. **Deer cabbage** & **bog-orchid** are found in the wet areas.

8 [at bench] Jutland Mtn. view: Blueberry Meadow

Bog & **dwarf blueberries** carpet this area, and turn different shades of red in the fall.

9 [at the junction] Acidic Soils

Paradise Meadows Loop Trail joins here!

Acid-loving plants in the Ericaceae family thrive in the fen: **blueberries**, **rhododendron**, **pink** & **white heather**, **bog-laurel** bloom in summer.

10 [at bench] Tree Islands

Because of the shorter growing season, and poorer soils (poorly drained except on slopes) trees grow only on the best sites. When one tree establishes, others can take hold in its protected area, forming groups or islands.

11 [at the junction] Beaver Crossing

Paradise Meadows Loop Trail joins here!

Beaver is unusual in the meadows: one was dam-building here in 2011. Signs of **muskrat** have also been noted in the meadows; muskrat was introduced to Vancouver Island pre-1940's.

Cottongrass is common in the wet areas.

12 [at bench] Watershed Reservoir

The meadows act as a sponge - slowly releasing water so rivers downstream always have water even in summer drought. They have a critical role in the hydrology of the watershed.

13 [at bench] Subalpine Birds

Birds such as **goldeneye** & **bufflehead** use these subalpine ponds during breeding season. **Butterwort** can be found at the pond edge.

14 [at bench] Big Pond +Mt Washington view

Historically found on the south slope of Mt Washington, **marmots** have been reintroduced, with the aid of the breeding facility nearby.

15 [at the junction] Lichens

The presence of lichen indicates the air is clean, as most species cannot tolerate air pollution. The depth of snow can be estimated by how far up the tree the **hair lichens** grow. They cannot survive long under snow.

16 [at bench] Dead Trees

Note the dead snags, usually **yellow cedar** which is naturally rot resistant & stands longer than fir or hemlock.

17 [at the clearing] Hanging Ponds

Banks of ponds are often raised in ridges to form a lip higher than the surroundings – possibly by the force of expanding ice. **Rhododendron** & **bunchberry** are notable in the woods.

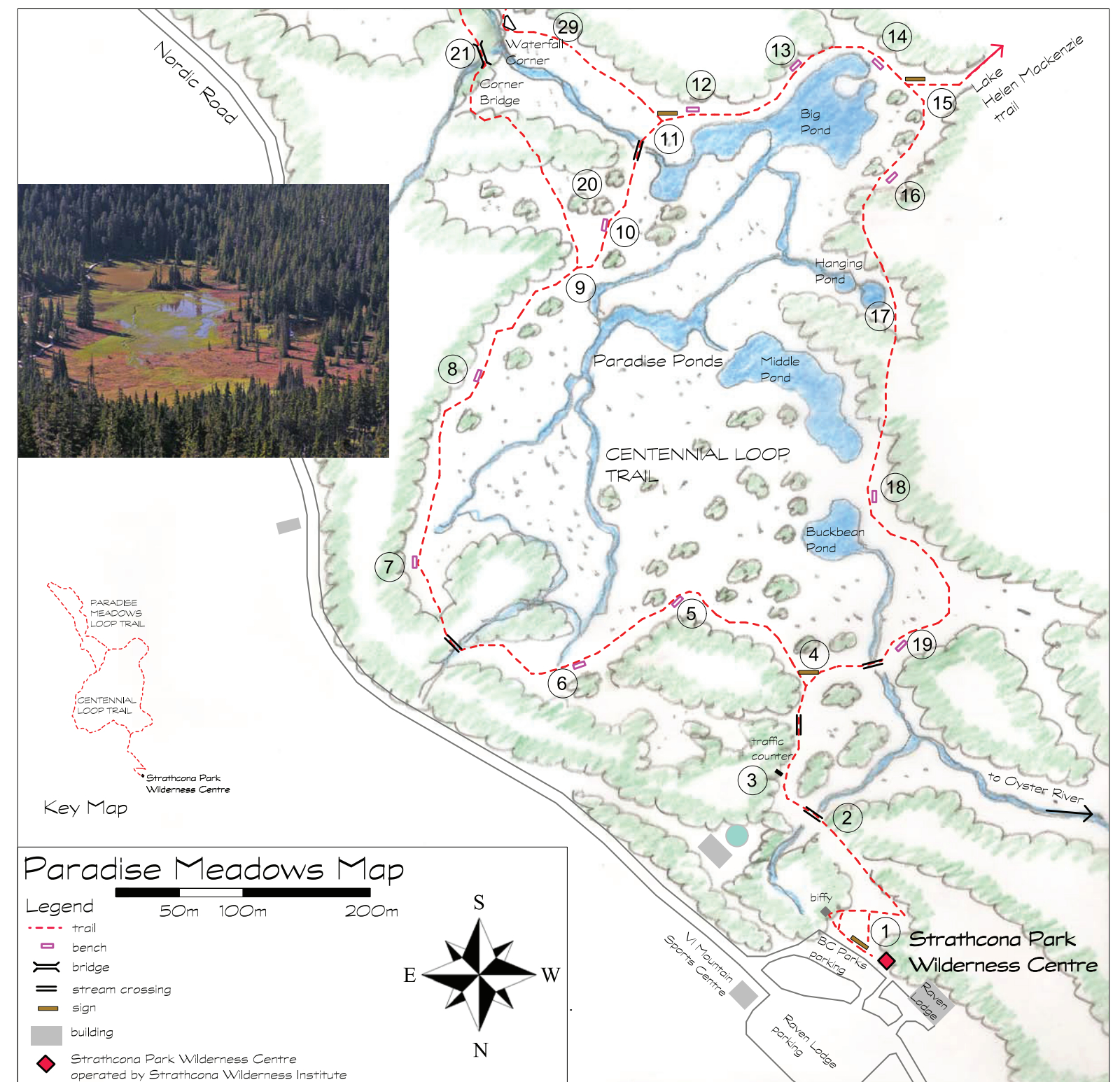
18 [at bench] Middle pond + Buckbean Pond:

Aquatic Plants

Between these ponds is the height of land between north & south watersheds. The north pond fills with **buckbean** by the end of summer. Two species of tiny **goldthreads** are found here in spring. **Gentians** found here are one of the last blooms of the year.

19 [at bench] Subalpine Flowers

False asphodel, **Menzies' burnet** and **lupins** are notable here.



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Paradise Plants ID Guide online



Steller's Jay