

# Nose Hill Park

*Nose Hill Natural Environment Park lies in the northwest part of the city, surrounded by twelve residential communities. The park was created in 1980 and covers over eleven square-kilometres. There are stories that the hill got its name from the fact that, from certain locations and with a little imagination, it looks like a nose.*

## History

Nose Hill is one of the only remaining examples of the high plains which once covered our city. Ancient rivers, successive glaciers and their run-off have eroded the landscape producing the surrounding valleys and lowlands. The most recent glaciers left behind "glacial erratics". One such erratic is on the east side of Nose Hill and was once a part of Mount Edith Cavell in Jasper National Park.

The park contains significant archaeological sites, including stone circles. The hill was also a sacred place used for ceremonies and burials. European settlers began using the area in the late 1800s for farming and ranching. In the 1980s, much of the park was destined for residential development. However, vigorous citizen action saved the land for the magnificent park we have today.

## Wildlife and Plant Life

The trees, shrubs, and wildflowers in the coulees are very different from the species found in the fescue grassland. Apart from the native grasses, one of the dominant species in the park is the trembling aspen. Aspen and willow trees occupy the north-facing slopes of the coulees and provide a refuge for many of the wild animals living in the park.

Large mammals such as deer and coyotes can be seen roaming the grasslands and coulees. The park is home to porcupines, pocket gophers, ground squirrels, and several species of mice and voles. These smaller mammals are the main prey for hawks and other birds of prey, which are often seen in the skies above the park.

## Did You Know?

Rough fescue grass is not only an important endangered prairie species, but is also Alberta's provincial grass. Only 5% of Alberta's fescue grassland remains, and as one of North America's largest municipal parks, Nose Hill plays a vital role in conserving this sensitive ecosystem.



# Nose Hill Park Study

## Overview

These activities provide the opportunity to study Calgary's largest natural environment park, promoting civic responsibility through engaging in hands-on learning activities. Nose Hill Park's grassland habitat supports some of the last remaining native fescue grasslands in the world. This prairie field study will enhance your students' ability to identify local biodiversity and appreciate the cultural significance of the land. Enjoy exploring one of the most unique and diverse parks Calgary has to offer!

## Activity 1: What is a Grass?

Focus on the grasses in your schoolyard and compare different species to become familiar with their features. Choose a good specimen of 'wild grass' and remove a portion of it. Back in the classroom record your observations, using sketches and labels, of the various parts of the grass. Discuss the locations where grasses grow and why some locations are more suitable than others. Compare these observations with those made at Nose Hill Park. **Please do not remove any grass from Nose Hill Park, as it is a protected natural environment park.**

## Activity 2: A Prairie Field Study

One adult volunteer per student group is ideal for this activity. Investigate a one square-metre area of prairie at Nose Hill Park. Make detailed observations of the site, including the number of different species and amount of each species present (include weather conditions, time of year, sounds, smells, and other factors that may influence what is found).

Observations can then be used to create a species mural or poster back in the classroom for others in your school to learn from. Returning to this site multiple times throughout the year will allow students to observe seasonal changes in the area. Graphs can be created to reflect seasonal changes in Nose Hill Park.

This activity showcases a cumulative record of knowledge, which is developed as the students explore the park. To incorporate mapping skills, enlarge a map of Nose Hill Park and post it on the wall beside the mural/poster. Note the various locations visited and any unique observations.

Finally, create a food web based on students' understanding of the species found at Nose Hill Park. Consider what would happen if a significant plant or animal was removed from food web (due to extinction, extirpation, etc.).

*Optional* - Graph observations by the number of invertebrates, grasses, flowers, shrubs, etc. Students can graph one or several areas within the habitat (south vs. north slope, pathway vs. undisturbed area, etc.).

## Activity 3: Stories of the Grassland

To reflect on the experiences in the park, students can create a story detailing their learning journey. The story can be a poem, narrative, or multimedia presentation using photography. This provides students an opportunity to be creative and highlight their understanding of Nose Hill Park in a unique way. Students should incorporate empathy into their story. This could be completed through considering past uses of the land or how our changing climate may impact its future. Further to this, students should reflect on what they can do to protect the land and share their knowledge of the space. An example would be to have students present their knowledge of the park to another class in the school.



# Visiting Nose Hill Park?

What you need to know.

## Park Etiquette — [Click here for bylaws related to parks and pathways](#)

- Stay on designated trails at all times, unless otherwise posted. This helps to protect the habitat of plants and animals that live in the park.
- Use quiet voices. Running and yelling will scare away wildlife and reduce the opportunities to view these species.
- Do not disturb or feed wildlife, including birds.
- Look but do not remove vegetation (including flowers and berries). These plants could be food, nesting material, or a rare native species.
- Do not litter. Place all garbage, recycling, and compost in appropriate bins or take them back to your school.

## Nature Kit Information

Calgary Parks would like to encourage you to explore the amazing features and landscapes of Nose Hill Park. To enhance your experience, we have a free learning kit available for you to use which includes:

- A map of the park or region
- Biofacts (bone clone mammal/bird skulls, track and scat molds, egg replicas)
- Bird plushes with audio of bird call or song
- A tree cookie (cross section from a known tree species)
- Alberta natural history field guides and booklets relevant to the topic of the kit
- Printed resources to supplement the park study activities
- Various laminated photographs and information on local plant and animal species
- Nature BINGO activity page

## Renting a Nature Kit

- Kit is available for a one-week duration FREE of charge.
- User is responsible for picking up and dropping off the kit at the designated location.
- If the kit is not returned, or materials are missing or damaged, the user will be charged a replacement fee.