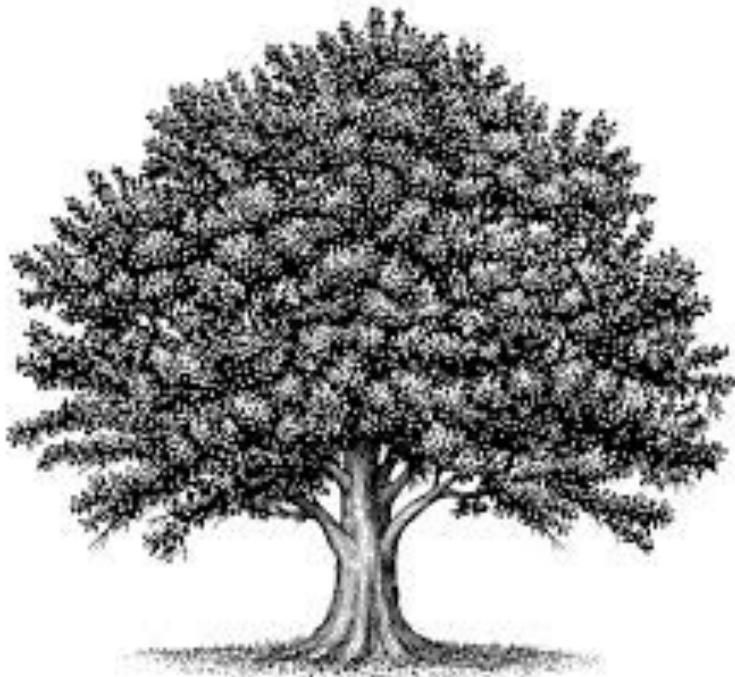


# The Old Oak



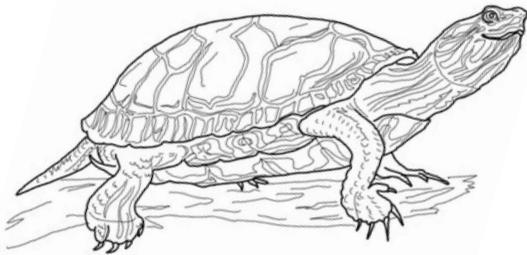
# Trail

**Lake Metigoshe State Park**

**Est. 1974**

## 1. Western Painted Turtle

The Western painted turtle is probably the most commonly found turtle species in North Dakota. Take a few minutes to slowly walk closer to the shoreline or out onto the dock to catch a glimpse of a few of them basking in the warm sun before they retreat into the protection of the water. These turtles can be seen, especially on sunny days, from late March through October. They become most active in May and June as they are nesting and laying eggs. Their plastrons are very colorful having a large black patch mottled with yellow on a red background. Western painted turtles' heads and necks have distinctive yellow stripes.



## 2. Red-necked Grebes

Breeding plumage of a red-necked grebe is characterized by a dark body, thick red neck, white cheeks and black crown. Red-necked grebes are commonly found swimming and diving, they are rarely seen in flight. They are known for their frequent raucous calls. Their nests are made of plant matter anchored to aquatic vegetation in open water, to the lake bottom or submerged logs. Keep an eye out for other common aquatic bird species including pelicans, kingfishers, great blue herons, cormorants, Canada geese and various waterfowl species.



## 3. Sights, Sounds and Smells

A deeper awareness of the forest and its creatures can be yours if you use all of your senses. Perhaps you may see a chipmunk, its cheeks stuffed with seeds scampering up a tree. Nearby, a wood frog may hop into the brush for safety. Listen for a beaver's tail slapping the water, a warning sign of your approach. The musical tones of the yellow warbler, northern oriole and robin float down from the treetops. When walking through moist, low places out into sunny meadows, you can distinguish the smells of stagnant water, rotting wood, fragrant flowers and fresh air. Enjoy feeling varied textures of bark and leaves.

## 4. School Section Lake

School Section Lake is surrounded by Lake Metigoshe State Park land. Motorized boats are not allowed, but you are encouraged to use canoes or kayaks to explore the lake. This lake is not stocked with fish; it is too shallow to support a fish population. On occasion, smaller fish, such as perch, get into School Section Lake from overflowing lakes on years with a lot of precipitation. School Section Lake, like the other lakes in the Turtle Mountain Region, was created about 15,000 years ago when glaciers receded. Melting glaciers deposited unsorted sediment called glacial till in addition to large ice chunks. As large ice chunks melted, the land shifted and collapsed, creating depressions and eventually many small lakes.

## 5. Storm Damage

As you look around, notice the evidence of past storm damage on either side of the trail. Trees were snapped in the mid-section and many large branches now lie on the ground. Strong winds and branches can cause damage to the forest, along with other natural disturbances such as insects, disease and soil erosion. The forest can lose hundreds of trees each year due to epidemics and natural disturbances, but death and destruction are all part of the natural environment.

## 6. Poison Ivy

Many people have suffered from poison ivy. Everyone should be able to identify this common plant that forms large patches in woods and brushy areas. Its three glossy green leaflets change to brilliant hues of yellow and red in autumn. Yellowish clusters of green flowers appear in early spring and produce white, waxy berries that remain throughout the winter. The oil secreted by the plant causes an itchy rash. Some people are more sensitive to the oil than others. Remember “leaves of three, let it be!”



## 7. Wildlife Tracks

Look for wildlife tracks all along the Old Oak. To identify tracks you’ll need to factor in the overall shape, size, presence/absence of claws and the number of toes.

Some common mammal tracks found include deer, moose, raccoon, coyote and squirrel.

Front	Hind	Extra Info	Family/Species
Two toes	Two toes	Hooves	Deer
Four toes	Four toes	No Claws	Cat
Four toes	Four toes	Claws	Dog
Four toes	Four toes	Claws; large, rear feet	Rabbit/Hare
Five toes	Five toes	Claws; small heel pads	Weasel
Five toes	Five toes	Claws; flat-footed	Raccoon/Bear
Four toes	Five toes	Claws	Rodent

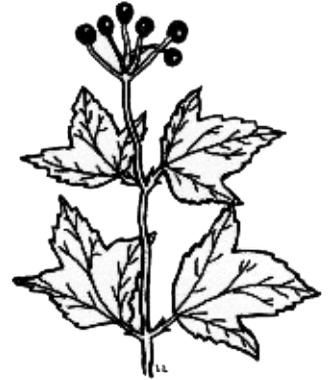


## 8. Wildlife Scat

You may encounter wildlife droppings, also known as scat, along the trail. Avoid handling scat as diseases may be contracted through dust borne particles. To assist in identifying the critter it came from you’ll need to factor in the length, width, form or any identifying characteristics, such as food particles or hair. Common wildlife scats often found along this trail include coyote, deer and moose.

## 9. Highbush Cranberry

This tall shrub can be found throughout the Turtle Mountains. In the spring and early summer, it is dressed in large, showy clusters of white flowers. Its distinguishing leaves are long, three lobed and slightly red. Though not a true cranberry species, the highbush cranberry bears a similar fruit in late summer into autumn that is bright red, tart and high in Vitamin C.



## 10. Woodpecker Holes

Look for a dead standing tree with much of the bark removed towards the top. Notice a few holes in it? These holes were made, more than likely, by downy and/or hairy woodpeckers. Woodpeckers peck trees to establish territories, attract mates, search for food or to excavate a nest cavity.



### 11. 2005 Flood Line

Take a good look at the trees in this area, especially the ones across the bridge on Oriole Island. Take note of the two-toned bark where the bottom appears to have a light gray wash. Above it is darker gray with colored patches. The point at which the color changes marks where the water level was in 2005, a flood year.

### 12. Balsam Poplar

The balsam poplar is a fast growing, medium sized tree. Found in the northern U.S. and Canada, its range is similar to the aspen, but the balsam poplar is much less common in the Turtle Mountains. It furnishes timber and pulpwood for commercial use. The balsam poplar's large, sticky buds have a distinctive pungent odor. The amber-colored balsam is called "Balm-of-Gilead" when used in cough syrup.



### 13. Beaked Hazel

Beaked hazel is the most abundant understory species in the Turtle Mountains. By late summer, the hazelnut develops its long, beaked husk containing a nut. Squirrels, chipmunks and other rodents feast on these nuts while deer and rabbits browse on the twigs and leaves. Hazelnuts are a delicious treat for humans. Feel free to give one or two a taste. You'll notice they are good, but somewhat bland as they are not roasted or salted. Please do not collect them per the ND Parks & Recreation Department rules. If you are able to collect off-site, know that the nuts from the beaked hazel work well in cookies and other treats.



### 14. Crooked Tree

Nature offers many oddities, one of which is now before you. All the other aspen trees here are tall and straight. Why is this one crooked? The trunk may have been hit by lightning. Maybe another tree fell on it years ago bending it over. What do you think?

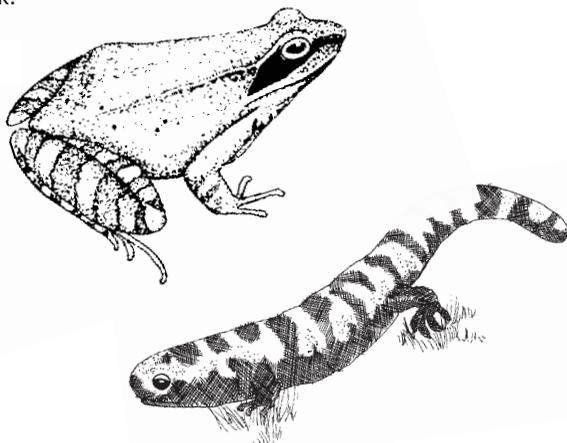
### 15. Beaver Lodge

Beaver lodges are constructed of mud, logs and stones and are where beavers live. An average lodge houses four to six beavers. Their dome shaped home may be up to 20+ feet in diameter. Walls as much as three feet thick keep the interior snug in the winter and cool in the summer. Two or three underwater entrances allow them to escape if a predator enters. Near the lodge is usually an underwater food cache that is made up of logs and sticks that are anchored to the bottom.



### 16. Reptiles and Amphibians

Several species of amphibians and reptiles can be found in this area. Amphibians have smooth, moist skin, are cold-blooded and have young which pass through a larval gill breathing stage. Common amphibians you may see are the wood frog and tiger salamander. Wood frogs are brown with a black mask-like marking around its eyes. Tiger salamanders are known for their spotted coloration and are very active in August, especially after a rain. Reptiles have scales, are cold-blooded and lay shelled eggs. The most common reptile here is the garter snake. This snake can be characterized by its yellow and black stripes along its back.



## 17. Beaver Cuttings

The many beaver cuttings here show us that beavers are very active in School Section Lake. Beavers have large, chisel-like teeth that continue to grow throughout the animal's life and are sharpened by the beaver's constant gnawing on trees. Beavers come ashore to gnaw on trees and retreat back to the water for protection if they sense danger. After the tree is down, the beaver will eat the young, tender bark. The beaver may then cut the tree into shorter pieces for construction of a dam or lodge.



## 18. View of Beaver Pond

Look directly across School Section Lake from this vantage point and you'll see where beavers have a tendency to dam up the water flow between the beaver pond and School Section. Lake research has shown that the feel and sound of running water triggers beavers to create a beaver dam to stop that water and then build a beaver lodge.

## 19. Wild Flowers

Along the trail you may have noticed many species of wild flowers. Violets, false Solomon's seal and wild strawberry bloom early in the spring. Golden rod, fireweed and tall coneflowers bloom later in the summer. Insects such as bees and butterflies are attracted to brightly colored flowers which invite them to gather nectar and pollen as food. Gathering nectar and pollen assists in pollination. Please leave wild flowers where they grow so those who walk this trail after you may enjoy them too.

Violet



Wild Strawberry

## 20. Green Ash

Green ash seeds resemble canoe paddles, but twirl like helicopter blades when falling. These seeds feed finches and grosbeaks in fall and winter. Beaver and porcupine nibble on the bark. Deer and rabbits chew on the twigs. Green ash wood is often used to make items that we use, such as garden tool handles, baseball bats, guitars, oars, snowshoes and skis.



## 21. Half-Way Point

At this point, you are near the east edge of the Maid O' Moonshine Campground. If you do not wish to continue for the entire trail length, you may enter the campground and loop back to the Warming House by accessing the multi-use trail near campsite #23.

## 22. Wild Sarsaparilla

Wild Sarsaparilla, which has five leaflets, is often confused with poison ivy. Three umbrella-shaped clusters of white flowers appear in early summer. By autumn, there are many dark purple berries. Sarsaparilla is very abundant in the Turtle Mountain woodlands. Chippewa Indians and early settlers believed that sarsaparilla had medicinal attributes. Roots were dried and pounded, then applied to wounds to help them heal. Roots also made a stimulating tea used for curing coughs and purifying blood.



### 23. Sapsucker Holes

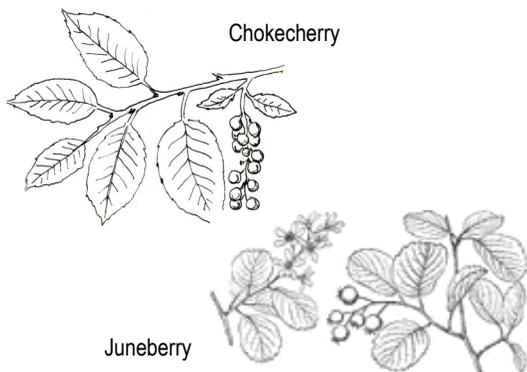
Look for a nearby dead standing tree that appears to have small, methodically placed holes drilled into it. This is the work of a yellow bellied sapsucker, a member of the woodpecker family. Sapsuckers bore neat rows of quarter inch holes spaced closely together. These holes fill with sap and the sapsuckers use their specialized, brush-tipped tongue to eat it.

### 24. Juneberry and Chokecherry Shrubs

Juneberry and chokecherry shrubs can be found throughout the Turtle Mountain Region. Juneberry is a hardy, medium to tall, suckering shrub with one to two inch leaves that have rounded tips and bases. Juneberry's white flowers appear in late May-early June and bear fruits that are dark purple to black. Juneberries are tasty off the tree, in pies or made into syrup and jelly.

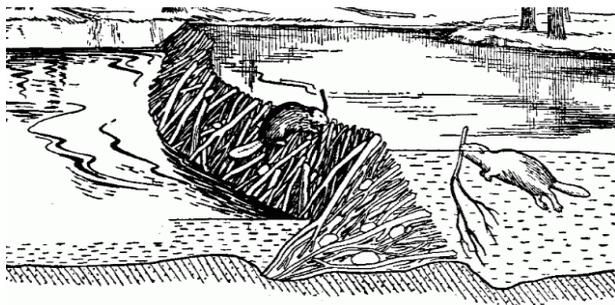
Chokecherry leaves are one to four inches long and are dark green and glossy on top and lighter underneath. The bark can be gray to reddish-brown. As it matures, the bark turns darker. Chokecherry flowers are creamy white and aromatic. The flowers appear in June or July with fruits forming a couple of months later. Chokecherry flowers are formed in cylindrical racemes about three to six inches long. Chokecherries are dark red to purple-black when fully mature. Chokecherries are commonly used for jellies and jams.

You are welcome to pick enough to taste these edible fruits, but please do not collect within the state park.



### 25. Beaver Dam

Beavers need two to three feet of water to ensure their underwater entrances to their lodge won't get blocked with ice during winter months. If the water level is too low, or they hear the sound of running water, they start building a dam. The average height of a beaver dam is 6 feet tall. The thickness is often around 5 feet or more. Beavers will vary the type of dam and how they build it by the speed of the water's flow. In fast-moving water, dams tend to be curved while straight dams are created where water is slower moving. Logs and branches are driven into the mud to create a base. Then sticks, bark, rocks, mud, grass, leaves, masses of plants and anything else available are piled on top.



### 26. Willow Cone Gall

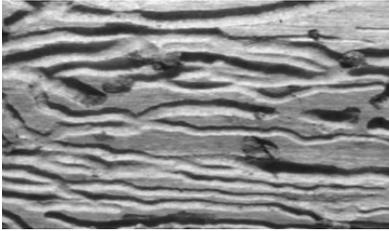
Willow cone galls look similar to pine cones. They are caused by tiny gnat-like insects called midges. In the spring, females lay their eggs on the tips of the willow branches. The larvae hatch and feed on the plant tissue. Some substances in the insects' saliva cause the plant cells to enlarge and multiply. Soon, the midge larvae is surrounded by thick layers of plant material which provide protection as well as food. The larvae are full grown by fall, but they remain in the gall over the winter.

You may have seen other insect galls. Each species of gall-forming insects produces its own kind of gall and always selects the same plant species.



## 27. Tree Borers and Worms

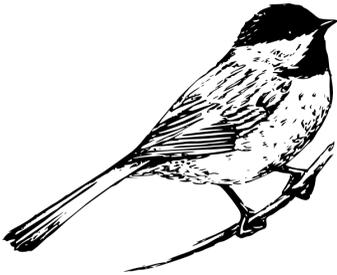
When bark separates from a tree, you may notice interesting lines and holes on the wood that is exposed underneath. These are caused by various worms and tree boring insects. Most of the time you will see these lines and holes on older trees that are starting the decaying process or on trees that are affected by an infestation.



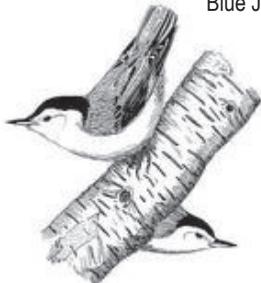
## 28. Woodland Birds

As you walk deeper into the forest, look for black-capped chickadees fluttering about as red-breasted nuthatches climb up and down tree trunks looking for insects. Listen for downy and hairy woodpeckers drilling into trees. Keep an eye out for large blue jays as they forage what is left of nuts and seeds. All of these species are abundant and live here year-round.

Black-Capped Chickadee



Blue Jay



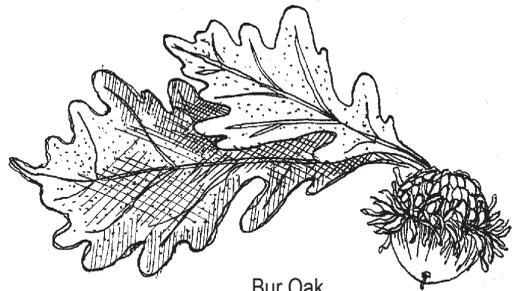
Red-Breasted Nuthatch

## 29. The Old Oak

This trail is named for this bur oak, a sturdy tree, believed to be over 200 years old. Imagine the young seedlings at the time of our country was declaring its independence. Its thick bark and deep tap root enabled it to survive the fires and drought of the past. The acorn and the deeply indented leaves are trademarks of the oak, along with its rugged trunk and crooked limbs. Oaks provide valuable timber and are often referred to as the “kings of the forest.”

Oak trees produce acorns in late summer, providing many forest critters, such as squirrels, deer, wild turkeys and blue jays with food. Every two to five years, oaks produce an overabundant amount of acorns, which is referred to as masting. This is to ensure its survival as a mast year is sure to produce uneaten acorns that are left to grow new oak trees.

Feel free to take some time to relax under the shade of the Old Oak before continuing on the trail.



Bur Oak

### 30. Fire Line

To the left is an emergency response road used for access to the more remote areas of the park. It also serves as a snowmobile trail during the winter. Miles of snowmobile, snowshoe and cross country ski trails are within the park. Trails provide access to the snow-covered woods and attract many winter visitors to Lake Metigoshe State Park. Continue to the right to continue along the Old Oak.

### 31. Wild Hops

Hops can be found in several places throughout the Old Oak Trail, including this area. Look around for this climbing, herbaceous perennial that is probably most famous for an antibacterial effect and flavoring beer. Hops are used to balance out the sweetness of the malt with bitterness and contributing to desirable flavors and aromas.

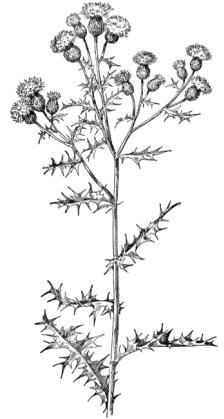


### 32. Conks

The aspen forest, that Lake Metigoshe State Park is located within, is considered an older growth forest. Many of the aspen trees within the park are approaching the end of the life cycle and are starting to show signs of trunk rot, a fungal disease, which causes decay of living aspen trees. Most of the symptoms of this disease are internal, but for the fruiting bodies, conks, that form on the outside of the tree trunk. Conks are shaped like a hoof and have smooth surfaces with horizontal bands around its perimeter. Many people assume they are soft, comparable to a mushroom, when conks are actually tough and corky. Historically, conks were utilized for medicinal use having been used to cauterize wounds, as a styptic to stop bleeding, a diuretic, a laxative and a primitive antibiotic.

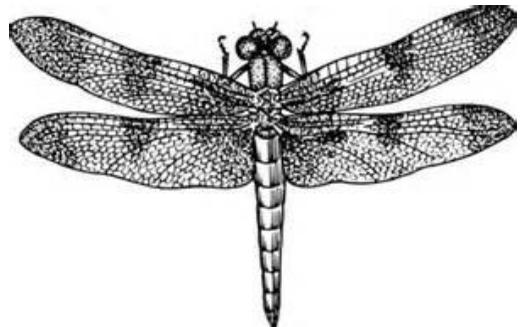
### 33. Exotic Plants

Exotic plants grow quickly, have high seed production, and good seed viability. Exotic plants are often larger and very tolerant which makes it difficult for native species to compete with exotics for sun, water and nutrients. Some exotics, including Canada thistle, have deterrents, such as spines or thorns to ensure they are left alone.



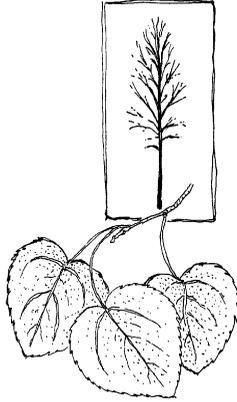
### 34. Insects

All insects have three main body parts to include the head, thorax and abdomen. They also have three pairs of legs, are cold-blooded and have two antennae. You have probably seen a variety of insects already! In the summer months, many dragonfly species can be found in the area. Adult dragonflies have exceptionally acute eyesight and are strong, agile fliers. Dragonflies are almost exclusively carnivorous; eating a wide variety of insects including mosquitoes, butterflies, moths, damselflies and smaller dragonflies. On cool mornings, dragonflies can be found basking in the sun or vibrating their wings in an attempt to warm up their flight muscles. Many dragonflies have brilliant iridescent or metallic colors making them conspicuous in flight. Dragonflies hold their wings horizontally both in flight and at rest.



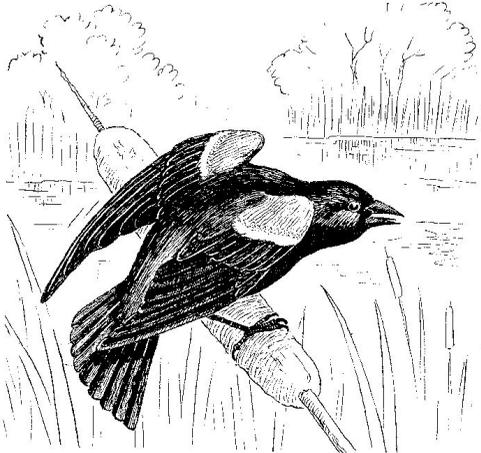
### 35. Quaking Aspen

Aspens can be found all along the Old Oak Trail. They are characterized by their tall, straight trunks with smooth, white bark having black horizontal scars and prominent knots. Their glossy leaves are dull beneath and turn yellow in the fall months. Quaking aspens are the most widely distributed tree species in North America and are named for their quaking or trembling leaves in the wind.



### 36. Red-Winged Blackbird

Red-winged blackbirds are often found perching amongst cattails. Males are easy to identify, having an all black body with red and yellow shoulder markings. Red-winged blackbirds are aggressive and will defend their territory from other animals. They are omnivores, feeding primarily on plant materials but also insects. There have been claims that the red-winged blackbird is the most abundant living land birds in North America.

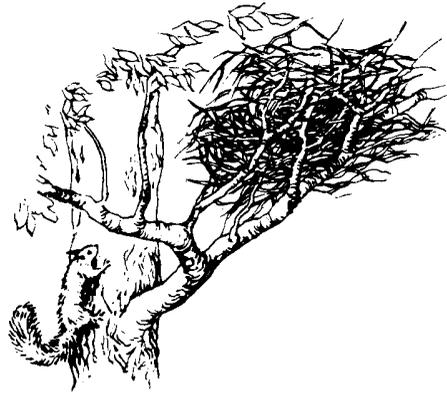


### 37. Marsh Area

During the years of heavy snowfall and abnormally high rainfall, this area fills with water. Notice the past water levels indicated by the lines on the tree trunks. The vegetation here is different. Most of the grass-like plants are sedges. You can distinguish them from grasses by their solid, triangular stems. Grasses have round, hollow stems.

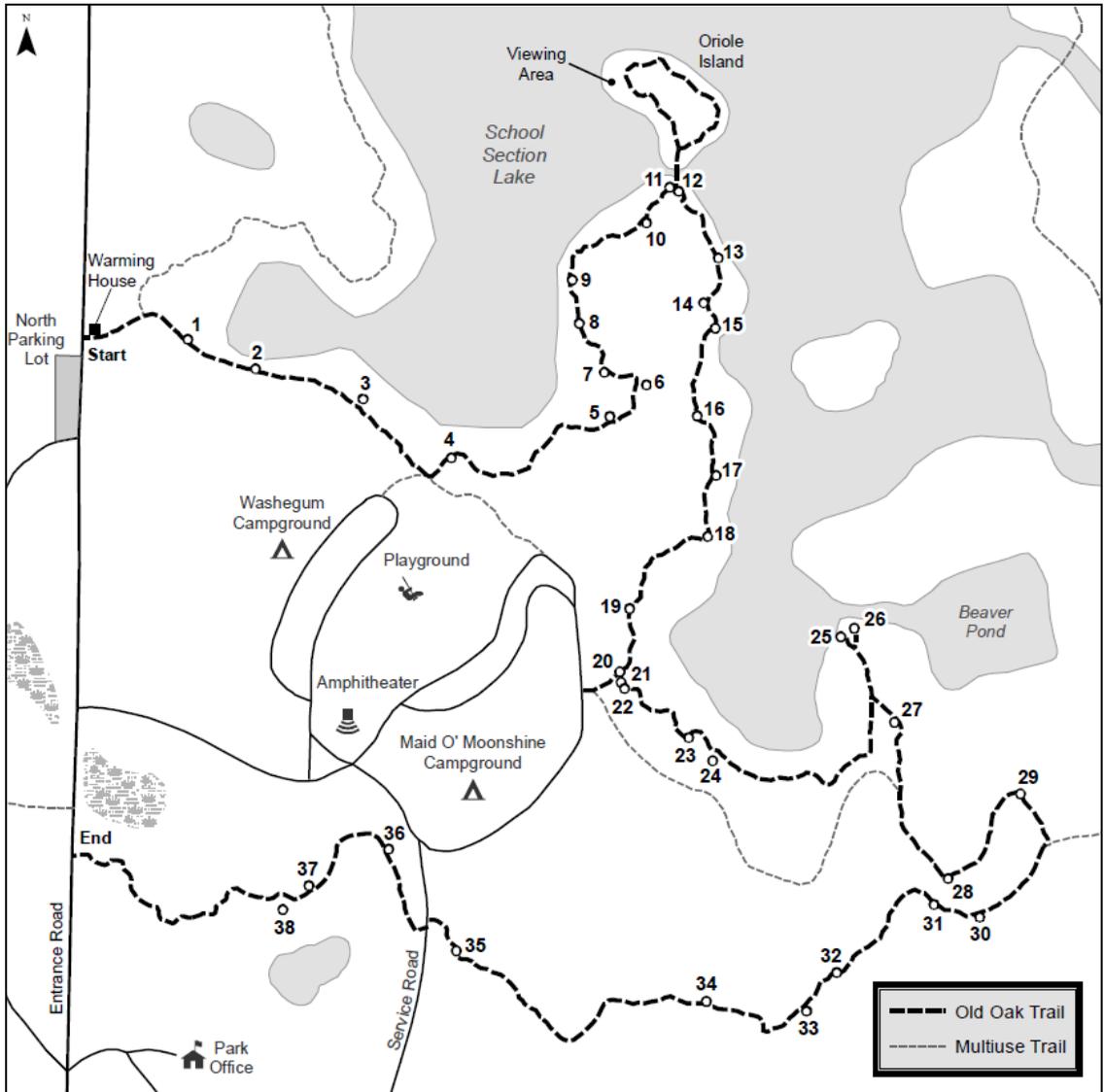
### 38. Animal Houses

The red squirrel makes its home in hollow trees or in tree crotches. Keep your eyes open for bird nests tucked between branches. A porcupine home may be in a tree, a clump of brush or a small cave among the rocks. Muskrat homes resemble those of the beaver, but are built of cattails or rushes instead of logs and branches. Can you think of other places animals might live? Why have they chosen to live where they do?.



The Old Oak Trail is North Dakota's first National Recreation Trail. It was built by the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) in 1974 and was dedicated by Governor Arthur Link in 1976.

The Old Oak Trail is approximately three miles long and will take about two hours to hike. The trail is divided into two sections leaving you the option to choose a shorter or a longer hike. This brochure will serve as your guide. Simply match the numbers in it with the numbered posts on the trail to find out a little more information about what you'll discover along the way. Take time to explore interesting things you find, but please leave those things behind for others to discover as they enjoy the Old Oak Trail.



Nestled in the scenic Turtle Mountains on the shores of Lake Metigoshe, Lake Metigoshe State Park is among North Dakota's most popular year-round vacation spots. The park was constructed in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. New Deal programs put many to work during the Great Depression and post war times. The programs provided food, shelter, clothing and medical care in exchange for work.

With approximately 1,530 acres, the park contains a variety of natural habitats. These include aspen woodlands, a variety of wetlands and lakes, streams and open meadows. The entire park is a wildlife sanctuary and harbors an abundance of woodland creatures. Visitors may occasionally see moose and white-tailed deer along with a variety of small mammals including squirrels, woodchucks, beaver, mink, chipmunks, muskrats and almost 175 bird species.

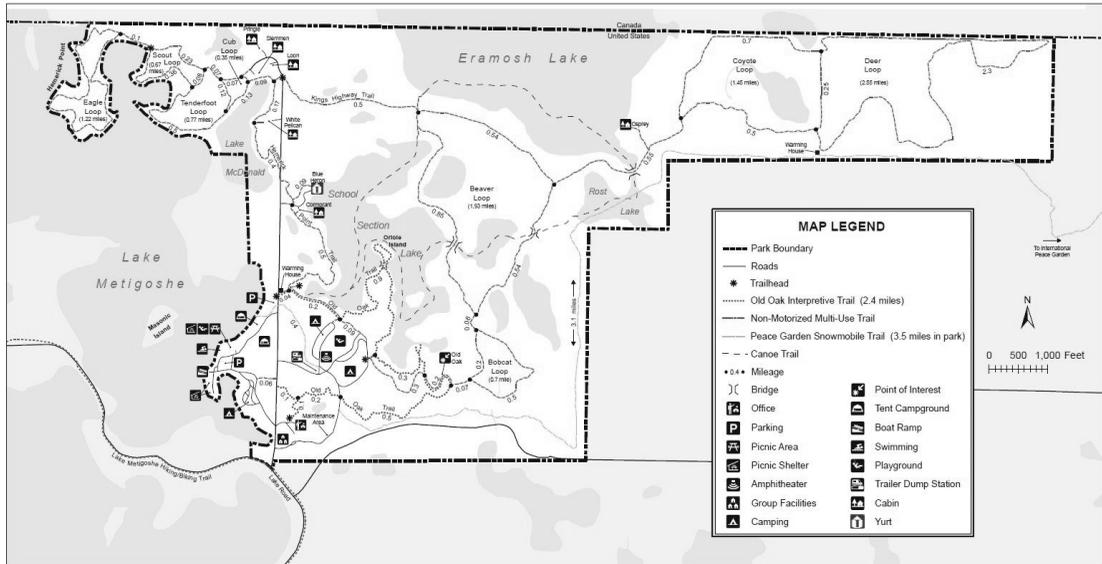
The park has modern and primitive camping, a boat ramp, geocaches, a designated dog area, picnicking areas, fishing docks, canoe/kayak rentals and a beach with swimming area. Group facilities are available to rent and include dorms, a kitchen and a dining hall. There are also year-round, full-service cabins, primitive cabins, yurt and a hike-in back country cabin available for rent.

Winter opportunities at the park include cross-country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing and ice fishing. Cross-country ski and snowshoe rentals are available at the park. The snowmobile trail goes through the park, making the park a great access area.

Lake Metigoshe State Park's multi-use trail system consists of about 13 total miles. Visitors can hike, bike, cross-country ski and snowshoe the trails. Trails throughout the system have manageable grades with a few steeper sections. The majority of the Old Oak Trail is hard-packed and single tracked.

When utilizing the trails, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Please check with park staff for current trail conditions.
- Pets must be kept on a leash and under physical control while on the Old Oak Trail.
- Leave no trace. Pack out all garbage.
- Enjoy watching wildlife and birds from a distance. Please do not climb on beaver lodges or dams.
- Collecting artifacts, wildflowers or any other natural, historical or geological feature is prohibited.
- Report any hazards or trail damage to park staff in person or by calling the Lake Metigoshe State Park office at 701-263-4651.



## Lake Metigoshe State Park

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Visit us on the web at [www.parkrec.nd.gov](http://www.parkrec.nd.gov)

The mission of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department is to provide and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities through diverse parks and programs that conserve the state's natural diversity.