

GRAHAMS ISLAND STATE PARK

NATURE

Devils Lake is located in the heartland's prairie pothole region. As the glaciers retreated some 10,000 years ago, they left thousands of small depressions, sometimes called potholes, "kettles" or sloughs, that collect water. These wetlands are prime waterfowl habitat, providing viewing areas for snow and blue geese, ducks and grebes. Woodland birds unique to North Dakota settings are abundant, such as warblers, flycatchers, Baltimore orioles and woodpeckers. Other bird species worth looking for are the common goldeneye, red-necked grebe, Forster's tern, cormorants and northern waterthrush.

Although mixed grass prairie is the predominant natural vegetation of this region, the woodlands associated with Devils Lake make up a large portion of Grahams Island's natural vegetation. The densely wooded landscape of Grahams Island supports bur oak, northern hackberry, green ash, American elm and boxelder. North Dakota's state flower, the prairie rose, blooms in abundance at Grahams Island. Some of the wildlife found in the park include red fox, raccoon, squirrels, white-tailed deer, coyote and beaver, as well as wild turkeys.

DID YOU KNOW

Devils Lake, North Dakota's largest natural lake, is home to Grahams Island State Park an 1,122 acre park on the lake's west side. The lake is a closed drainage basin, marked by periods of fluctuating water levels.

The Sioux called the lake "Mini-Wakon," thought to mean "Spirit" or "Holy Water." Influenced perhaps by Indian legends of drowned warriors and massive waves, early explorers translated the phrase as "Bad Spirit." The name later became Devils Lake.

The first known white settler was Captain Duncan Graham, who arrived shortly after the War of 1812. The Scot trader and trapper, for whom Grahams Island State Park was named, married Hazah, twin sister to Sioux Chief Way-A-Given Agee.

In 1839, the U.S. Government sent Joseph Nicollet and John Charles Fremont, "The Pathfinder," to make topographical

maps of the area. Fremont wrote in his journal, "Enchanted Waters is a beautiful sheet of water, the shores being broken into pleasing irregularity by promontories and little islands."

The lake supported commercial fishing with pickerel caught by pitchfork and "stacked like cordwood in wagons and shipped east." Grahams Island was permanently settled by the 1880s. Chief sources of island income were from wood and cattle. Other communities sprang up around the lake. In 1882, the city of Devils Lake was founded by H.M. Creel.

The lake served as a means of transportation for settlers. In 1833 a Mississippi River steamboat operator, Edward Heerman, launched a small sidewheel steamer, the Minnie H, on Devils Lake. His boat provided transportation between the north and south shores for several decades. From 1883-1886, Irvine Church operated a flat-bottomed ferry across Mauvais Coulee. The town of Churchs Ferry takes its name from this short-lived business venture.

In 1988, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department assumed management of a system of state parks and recreation areas on Devils Lake. Rising lake levels necessitated the closure of the Narrows State Recreation Area in 1995 and Shelters Grove in 2004.

TRAIL INFORMATION

Hiking Trail: The 2.1 mile hiking trail at Grahams Island is open to hiking and biking. The trail meanders through ash/oak woodlands which provide an opportunity to bird watch, photograph waterfowl and wildlife, and view 130 different plant species that are native to Grahams Island.

Cross Country Ski Trail: There are approximately 3 miles of Cross Country Ski Trails. These trails are maintained for winter activity. The snow conditions determine availability of trails. Trails are groomed weekly in the winter and are ready to ski.

(701) 766-4015

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