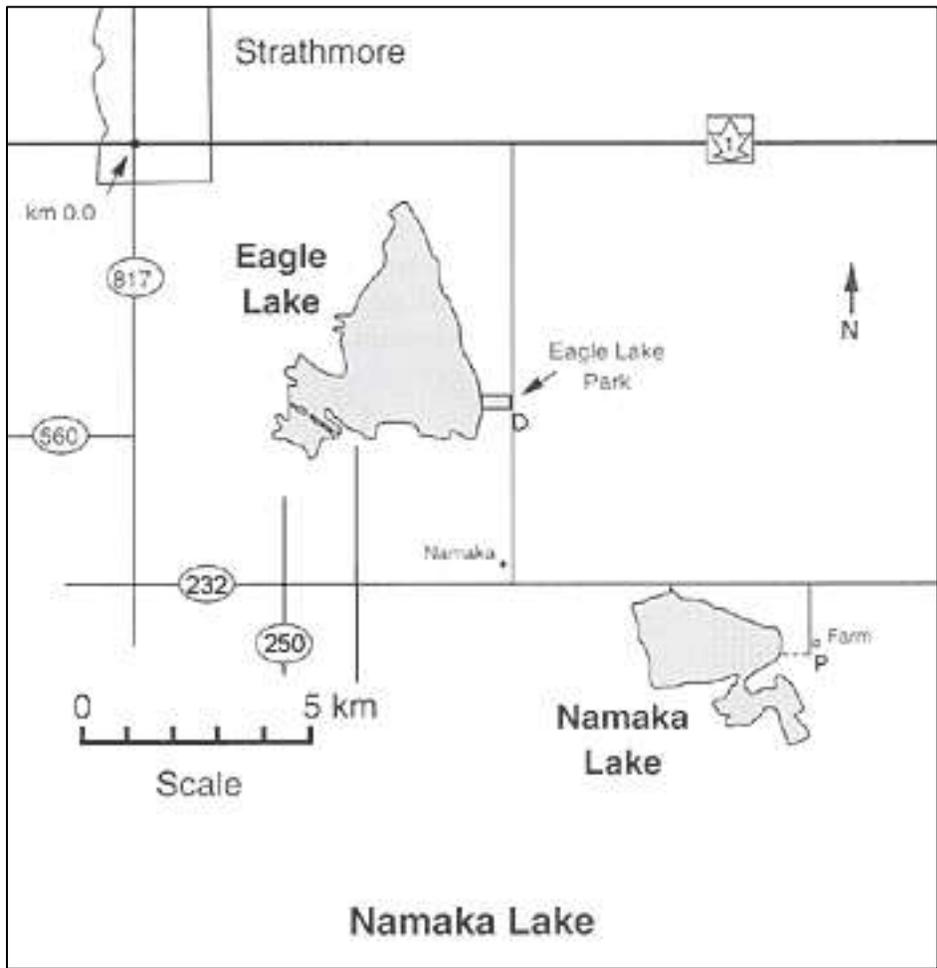


Namaka Lake by Harold W. Pinel – revised Sep/2012

Namaka Lake is located approximately 50 km east of Calgary. It is one of the best locations for both waterfowl and shorebirds in the Region. In both spring and fall migration periods, the numbers and variety of waterbirds can be truly spectacular. It is a large, shallow, open body of water with the general overall appearance of two lakes connected by a narrow channel. The main patches of emergent vegetation are concentrated along the northwest shore and the borders of the lake south of the narrow channel. The land surrounding the lake is a mix of cultivated fields, fallow fields and pasture. A few scattered willows and poplars along the roads, and shelterbelts around nearby farmsteads are the only wooded habitats in the area. To date, 175 species of birds have been observed at Namaka Lake and in the surrounding fields.



Namaka Lake is a good half-day trip from Calgary, requiring from four to six hours for a return trip. If an all-day outing is planned, a visit to Namaka Lake could be combined with anyone or more birding locations in the area such as McElroy Slough, Bruce Lake,

Langdon Reservoir, or Wyndham-Carseland Provincial Park.

The starting point for directions to Namaka Lake is the junction of the

Trans-Canada Highway and S.R. 817 in the town of Strathmore. Drive east on the Trans-Canada Highway for 8.2 km and watch for a large sign that says "EAGLE LAKE PARK". After you turn south, Eagle Lake is to your right. Drive south for about 10 km to a T-junction. Turn left and proceed east for approximately 2 km, where you will see a small brick building to your right. A short stop here may reward you with some good views of waterfowl. As you continue east you will see Namaka Lake on your right. Approximately 1.5 km from the last stop there is a gateway to the lake on the south side of the road, just west of the cattail beds and a small bridge over a drainage channel. Note where this access point is in case you would like to stop here on the way back, but for now continue east another 3 km before turning south on a gravel road. This road goes through a farmyard but is for public use. South of the buildings the road is earth, not gravel, and can be extremely slippery after rain or in early spring. Continue to the end and park in the parking lot.

As you walk westwards along the trail to the lake you will cross disturbed land consisting of cultivated fields, fallow fields and some grassland.

On reaching the shore it is advisable to scope the lake - many species of waterfowl can be observed from here. Depending on where you see good numbers of birds, you can either walk north along the lakeshore or head south; generally, a walk to the south is more rewarding. It is advisable to stop every few hundred metres to scan the lake and its shoreline. You will notice that the lake narrows near its southeast end and opens into a bay that is lined with dense stands of rushes, bulrushes and cattails. This is a good vantage point for observing grebes, gulls, waterfowl, phalaropes, terns and blackbirds. From this point, you may either return the same way or take a direct route back across the fields to your vehicle. If you cross the fields, stop and listen in the lower areas where the grasses are taller, for grassland sparrows. If you return the way you came and have the time available, stop at intervals to scope the lake again; this persistence is especially recommended during the spring and fall migration periods.

During spring and fall migration, the lake and adjacent fields attract loons, swans, geese, hawks, cranes, a variety of shorebirds, and swallows. In the fall, hunting may occur in the area seven days a week; please use caution.

Gas, food and washrooms are available in Strathmore.