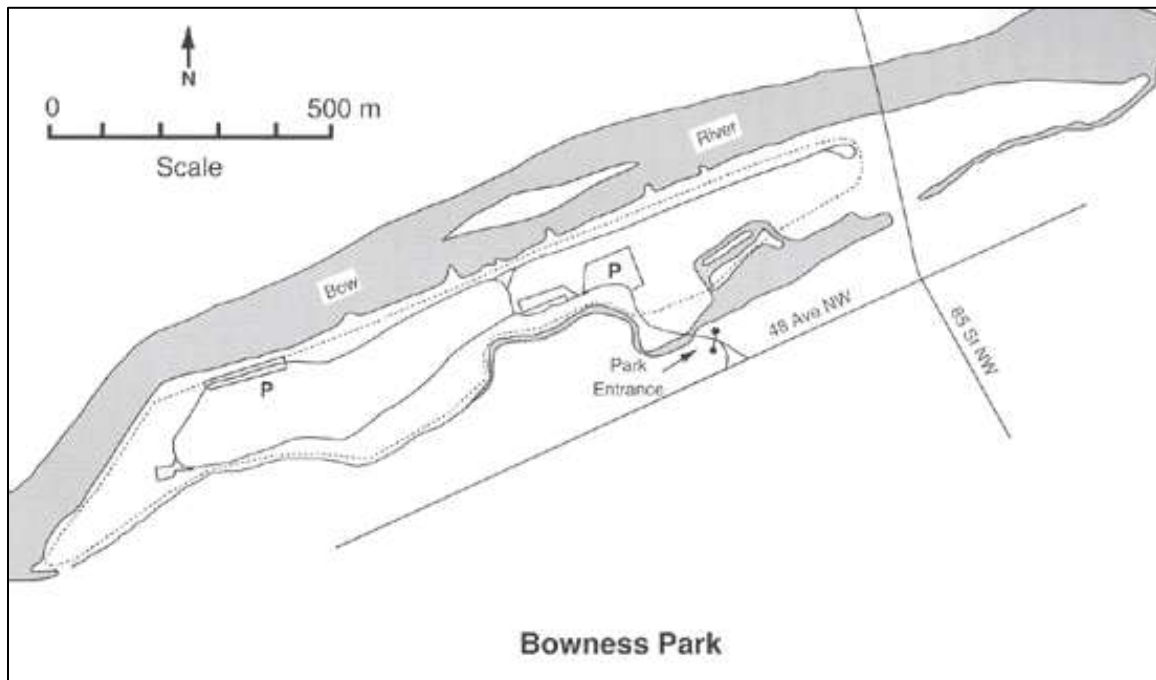


Bowness Park – by Richard Thomas, 1993; revised Sep/2012

Two features make this very popular, urban riverside park of interest to birders: the north-facing escarpment with its dense cover of mature White Spruce and Douglas Fir encourages species diversity; plus the park's location, which helps to intercept migrant passerines moving down the Bow River Valley. May, June, August and September are the most rewarding months for birding; it can also be a good winter location.

Easiest access to the park from most of the city is via the Trans-Canada Highway. From the interchange with Sarcee Trail in northwest Calgary drive 1.3 km west to the Bowfort Road traffic light (Canada Olympic Park is on your left). Turn right and follow the winding road to the stop sign at 85 St. NW (signed for Bowness Park). Go left and continue to the three-way stop at 48 Ave. NW; turn left here and proceed to the park entrance on your right. An alternative route for visitors from the northern part of the city is to use westbound Crowchild Trail. At Nose Hill Drive turn left (south), head downhill, before the intersection of Stoney Trail and Nose Hill Drive take a left turn at 87th St. NW and then



turn left onto Bearspaw Dam Road which will change again to Nose Hill Dr. and 85 St. NW, cross the Bow River and go right at the three-way stop at 48 Ave. NW to the park (as above).

[Park maps](#) may be found on the City of Calgary website.

There is now a footbridge across on the north end of the Park; also the new Baker Park across the river. You can do a good loop walk: Bowness Park, across the footbridge, back down through Baker Park then back across the river on the 85th St bridge.

Bowness Park is best explored on foot. Just south of the main parking lot, a red-shale, wheelchair-accessible pathway parallels the narrow backwater channel. At times in fall, the clumps of Red-osier Dogwood, willow and other shrubs by the bridge and flanking the path, can be alive with migrant warblers and sparrows.

From the main parking lot via this path it is about 900 m to the western portion of the island, where a grove of tall conifers interspersed with Aspens dominates the "floodplain". This area consistently provides good birding and should be covered thoroughly. Tucked beneath the spruce-clothed scarp, in late afternoon this area is noticeably cooler and loses its light earlier than most other birding locations within the city. From the western tip of the island scan for waterfowl and then follow the riverbank path downstream. Check the outfall across the river for ducks and gulls.

If driving the loop, stop in the lot located 0.9 km from the park entrance. Walk southwest from this lot for 150 m (parallel to the road) along an embankment (which can provide excellent, less neck-stretching views of treetop warblers) to join the red shale path.

Downstream (east) of the amusement rides area, beyond the 85 St. bridge, is a 750 m stretch of Balsam Poplar woodland with an understory of wild rose, River Birch and dogwood. This is worth checking during migration periods and in summer when the bulk of the park is overrun with people.