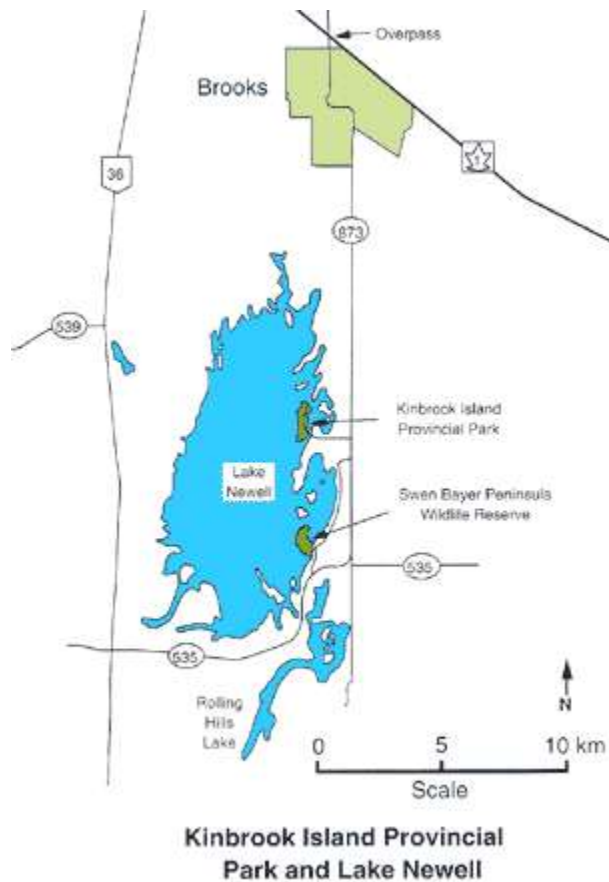


**Kinbrook Island Provincial Park and Lake Newell** *by Harold W. Pinel(1993)*

Kinbrook Island Provincial Park is situated on the eastern shore of Lake Newell and is approximately 200 km southeast of Calgary by road. After travelling east on the Trans-Canada Highway to Brooks, turn south on S.R. 873. The park is sign-posted at this exit. Drive south on S.R. 873 for 13 km, then turn right (west) onto the park access road. When visiting the park for the day, drive past the campground registration booth, take the first turn on the left and park in the visitors' parking lot. If camping in the park, the southern campground sections are much better for birds.



The park is relatively small. The overall impression is of a developed island with parking lots, beach areas, campgrounds and cottages. There are large lawn areas with ornamental trees and shrubs, especially in the campground and cottage areas. Native trees and shrubs, particularly willows, form peripheral vegetation in some areas. The island is bounded on the east by a marsh complex containing areas of open water, dense cattail and bulrush beds, mudflats, grassy areas and clumps of willow. The park access road bisects this marsh complex on a causeway. The remaining shoreline looks out over large expanses of Lake Newell.

Birding can be productive from April to November when there is open water, but the greatest diversity occurs between May and September. At this time, in addition to species

inhabiting the aquatic environments, a number of summer resident passerines are found in the wooded areas of the island. The lawn and wooded areas near the campgrounds and cottages are best birded in the morning. Avoid weekends, if possible, during the summer months.

Common summer residents in the wooded areas include: Mourning Dove, Western Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Common

Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole and American Goldfinch. Large numbers of Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds feed on the lawn areas and amongst the trees. During migration the trees on the island act as an oasis surrounded by grasslands and water. Species drawn to the park at these times have included Purple Martin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart, and White-throated Sparrow.

Looking over the open expanses of Lake Newell during the summer, the birds most frequently observed are American White Pelican; Double-crested Cormorant; Franklin's, Ring-billed and California Gulls; and Common Tern. During migration, rafts of geese and ducks can be seen on the lake, as well as Common Loon and Homed, Rednecked, Eared and Western Grebes.

A number of species nest in the marsh complex including Pied-billed, Homed and Red-necked Grebes; Canada Goose; a variety of ducks; Northern Harrier; Sora; American Coot; Killdeer; Spotted Sandpiper; Common Snipe; Wilson's Phalarope; Black Tern; Marsh Wren; Common Yellowthroat; and Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Some birds such as Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron feed in the marshes and then fly back to their colonies. Willet, Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit breed in the adjacent native grasslands and also feed in the marshes. During spring and fall migrations a variety of shorebirds are attracted to the marsh complex.

After birding at Kinbrook Island, an alternative to returning the way you came is to continue south on S.R. 873 (gravel-surfaced). If road conditions are good, turn right after 1.8 km onto a minor gravel road. McCown's Longspur has occurred in this area. The road parallels the shoreline, allowing further views of the lake and some of the islands. The Swen Bayer Peninsula Wildlife Reserve is reached at 5.3 km. Species to be expected in this small area of trees, shrubs and marsh are similar to those at Kinbrook Island; the passerine migration can be excellent here in May. The road joins S.R. 535 after 7.4 km. (When S.R. 873 turns west it becomes S.R. 535). Several dirt roads head north across the grasslands from S.R. 535, giving access to parts of the southern shoreline. Continue west on S.R. 535 until Hwy 36 (paved) is reached. Go north on Hwy 36 for 24 km to reach the Trans-Canada Highway. This optional route, especially the gravel road sections, allows you to drive slowly and scan the adjacent grasslands for species such as Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark, and McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. Mammals that you may see include Coyote, American Badger, White-tailed Prairie Hare, Richardson's Ground Squirrel and Pronghorn.

Kinbrook Island Provincial Park has flush toilets, showers and a concession serving snack foods during the summer months. Both powered and

unserviced campsites are available. Gas and meals can be obtained at the junction of S.R. 535 and Hwy 36. Full tourist facilities are available in the town of Brooks.