

Site Name:	J.J. Collett
Site Type:	Natural Area
Status:	Order-in-council (OC)
Subtype:	Education
PASite ID (Map Ref #):	145
O.C. No. (Land Ref. Manual):	519/95
Site # (Parks Website):	448
Reserved Area:	0.00 ha. (0.00 ac.)
Designated Area:	257.00 ha. (635.05 ac.)
Total Area:	257.00 ha. (635.05 ac.)
Additional Protected Areas:	none
Lat/Long Co-ordinates:	52.5578231005 N, -113.639410259 W
Natural Region:	Parkland
Natural Subregion(s):	Central Parkland
2nd Natural Region:	
2nd Natural Subregion(s):	
IUCN Classification:	II
Operated By:	Parks Division
Info Phone:	403-340-7691/403-783-7090
Steward(s) Aug2002:	Volunteer(s) 1
Steward(s) Aug2003:	Volunteer(s) 1
Steward(s) Dec2011:	yes
Petroleum & Natural Gas Surface Access Aug2002:	No Surface Access
Day Use Site(s):	J.J. Collett
Recreation Activities:	cross-country skiing, hiking - front country

Access:

Notes: J.J. Collett Natural Area contains (2.6 km²) contains stabilized sand dunes and black spruce peat lands. Rolling landscapes support a variety of plant communities, mainly shrublands, aspen stands and meadows. A small stream fed by wetlands winds through the area to form a pond. Small stands of white spruce grow on the area's moist, shady hillsides, prairie crocus grows on grassy hillsides and in open woodlands, and the area is home to numerous bird species as well as deer, coyote and porcupine.

This site lies in the Parkland Natural Region, Central Parkland Sub-region. Fourteen level 1 and 63 level 2 natural history themes have been identified to describe the environmental diversity of the Central Parkland. Full representation of five of the level 1 themes has been achieved, but the remaining level 1 themes are not well represented within the parks and protected areas network. There is some representation of most level 2 themes within the network (Alberta Parks web site, 2012).

For more information visit the site website at www.jjcollett.com.

Six members enjoyed a day at the J.J. Collett Natural Area, led by Sylvia Glass with able assistance from Eileen Ford. This natural area is an interesting mix of shrublands, aspen stands, meadows, wetlands, and stabilised sand dunes. We had not gone far before we found low milkweed (*Asclepias ovaliflora*) in flower, but no monarch butterflies, which had been reported previously. Another rare plant, American water-horehound, (*Lycopus americanus*) was also observed, but was not yet in flower. These are only a couple of the interesting species to be found at the J.J. Collett, and more time was spent looking for some rare lichens and fungus. It's not only plant life there that is interesting - Adam had a busy time chasing butterflies with his net, which were too numerous to mention. Where would we be able to enjoy all the diversity of species in Alberta, if it was not for our few precious Natural Areas and other protected Special Places? And of course, the dedicated Stewards who are essential to ensure their survival! (SAPAA Newsletter 27 June 2004)

JJ Collett Natural Area is one of the few remnants of native parkland in central Alberta. Lacombe Co. wants to widen the road east of the Natural Area, taking a 5 m strip within the fence and more at a large sand hill in the way. The road connects a proposed subdivision to the county line road to the north and to Milton Road to the south, so much more traffic is anticipated in the future. Parks Planning intervened with easement requirements at a hearing about a year ago, so perhaps the county and the developer shouldn't be surprised that the road widening could pose problems. Mr. Lodemeier, the Operations Manager, has said that the road is in poor condition, and is somewhat dangerous due to dust and washboard. He feels that the County is in a tough spot, not knowing whether to proceed. Lacombe County did a rare plant inventory, which was forwarded to the JJ Collett Foundation. CRD gave the go ahead for the road widening, but Parks rescinded this. Parks wants proof that the widening is needed.

We stewards always seem to be the last to hear about projects like this, and we've been relegated to a watch-only position. What, if anything, can we do about the rare plants and communities. We have the report, but we need to speak to it with first hand authority. Does anyone have time for a little field trip? Gail Hughes (SAPAA Newsletter May 2010)

J.J. Collett Natural Area consists of 635 acres of Aspen Parkland habitat underlain by ancient sand dunes. More than 18 km of maintained trails wind through the mosaic of shrub lands, aspen groves, white spruce stands on moist shady hillsides, wetlands and meadows typical of the region.

The Natural Area is located in rural central Alberta near the hamlet of Morningside, between Ponoka and Lacombe. It is used by the general public for educational activities, exercise and recreation. Because of its proximity to Highway #2, one of the fastest growing corridors in Western Canada, it is of utmost importance that we preserve this ecologically diverse land.



View of the new boardwalk



Entrance to the wetland, prior to completion of the boardwalk; note pilings for future boardwalk in the distance

The J.J. Collett Natural Area Foundation (JJCNAF) was established in 1985 and consists of 11 volunteer directors who lease the area from the Provincial government. These Provincial Stewards are responsible for the maintenance and preservation of the area. In 2003 they were presented with the Outstanding Group Steward Award and in 2010 they received the Service Excellence Award from Parks Alberta.

The JJCNAF goals are to protect and preserve the land and its animal and plant communities, to instill environmental values in the community, and to establish an Endowment Fund for future sustainability.



Release of a rehabilitated hawk at JJ Collett Natural Area by Medicine River Wildlife Center staff (fall walk Sept. 2013)

A current program organized by the JCNFAF involves Grade 6 Environmental Education. Each year about 450 students from the Wolf Creek School Division tour the area and instructors assist students with plant identification and discuss environmental issues following the Alberta Grade 6 Curriculum.

Local organizations, schools, post-secondary institutions, First Nations and fitness groups use the J.J. Collett Natural Area for studies, orienteering and field trips. Guided walks are held each spring and fall, and guest speakers are provided at annual meetings. In recent years, with the expansion of the trail system and improved maintenance, use of the area has risen dramatically. Summer weekends are the busiest time for the area with about 250-300 visitors. In winter, both walking and cross-country ski trails are groomed for recreational use. A conservative estimate is that 10,000 to 11,000 people visit the area annually.



Grandparents and their treasures enjoying a fall day at JJ Collett Natural Area

Each year the JCNFAF take on at least one major project. Last year, with money acquired through donations from corporations and businesses, grants and the sweat equity of the board members, a 212-foot boardwalk costing \$32,000 was completed across a wetland. Its installation provided full access to a trail that had been cut off because of the wet summers in the last several years. The boardwalk also serves as a bridge for the maintenance vehicle and mower.

This year The Board have chosen two projects: purchase of a new lawn mower for trail maintenance, and rebuilding or repair of approximately 1 ¼ miles of perimeter fence, much of which is through wetland.

Over the course of the last few months a new website has been constructed and is now up and running. Please visit us at jjcollett.com. The galleries section provides a visual tour of the natural area, with images of the flora and fauna and much, much more. Roger and Flo Stewart -(SAPAA Newsletter Aug 2014)

Images:





