

Field Notes

Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre

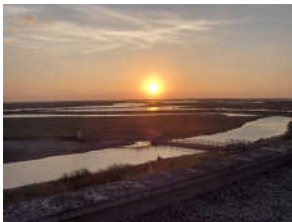
January 2006



History of Oak Hammock Marsh

The original marsh that existed at this location was called St. Andrews Bog. It extended north from the edge of present-day Winnipeg to Teulon, Manitoba and covered approximately 47,000 hectares (470 square kilometers or 116,139 acres or 181 square miles).

St Andrews Bog became part of the first Drainage District established in Western Canada in 1896. The original wetland was reduced to 60 hectares (0.6 square kilometers or 148 acres or 0.2 square miles) with the construction of ditches that were dug by hand at first and later by steam- and gas-powered dredges. During the last century, 80% of the wetlands in southern Manitoba were drained for agriculture and urban development.



Did you know?

That 296 species of birds have been seen at Oak Hammock Marsh.



That between 15 and 20 thousand muskrats call the marsh home.



That the habitats found at Oak Hammock include: wetland, tall-grass prairie, lure crops, nesting cover, wet meadows, aspen/oak forest, willow bluffs, and creeks .



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History cont.

Ducks Unlimited Canada became interested in restoring a part of St. Andrews Bog as early as the 1930's. The "Oak Hummock" Project was planned but was not completed. Between 1940 and 1945, the area was used as a practice bombing range for the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. During the early 1940's, hundreds of smoke bombs were dropped on painted targets that were set up in the marginal farmland that was once a vibrant wetland.



In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Provincial Government acquired 3,450 hectares of land from local landowners with financial help from the federal government's FRED program (Fund for Rural Economic Development). In 1972, with the assistance of Ducks Unlimited Canada, Manitoba Conservation began constructing 22 kilometers of earth dykes to restore a small portion of the original marsh. When construction was complete in the spring of 1973, the restored marsh and surrounding upland areas were officially designated as Oak Hammock Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA is 3,581 hectares or approximately 3600 hectares (36 square kilometers or 8,896 acres or 14 square miles) in size. It is one of 77 Wildlife Management Areas currently operated by Manitoba Conservation. It has 1,865 hectares of wetlands and 1,716 hectares of upland habitat.



How did Oak Hammock get its name?

The name "Oak Hammock" dates back to the early 1870's when settlers from Lower Fort Garry and St. Andrews gathered for community picnics on an oak-covered knoll bordering "The Bog." Its owner - Adam MacDonald - called the heavily treed knoll "Oak Hammock" and eventually the name was adopted for the whole area when the Oak Hammock post office was opened and used until the early 1900s. It is uncertain if the settlers ever actually relaxed in hammocks between the oak trees during their picnics.

However, they may have done so during times of flood if they were forced to camp on these drier oak-covered knolls for several weeks until the floodwaters receded. A less romantic theory is that the name has nothing to do with hammocks - it simply derives from "Oak Hummock" - a term that is sometimes used to describe a raised stand of trees. Whatever the origin of the name, the area became known as Oak Hammock.

Oak Hammock Marsh Tidbits!

- ◆ Designated as a RAMSAR site in 1987 (wetland of international significance)
- ◆ Originally divided into 3 large compartments. In 1983, the large central compartment was divided in half and two smaller interpretive cells were created - resulting in a total of six cells (4 large, 2 small).
- ◆ Approximately 30 km of trails
- ◆ Approximately 80 nesting islands
- ◆ Approximately 50 artificial nesting structures
- ◆ Most of the water in the marsh is derived from local snow melt and rainwater, supplemented by surface runoff and flow from Wavey Creek, plus artesian springwater
- ◆ Drains into the Red River via Wavey Creek, Parks Creek, and Dewar Drain
- ◆ Interpretive Centre opened in 1993



Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is a joint project of
Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Province of Manitoba

