

The establishment of the park sets aside the first representative portion in North America of the original short-grass prairie and ensures that a remnant of the prairies, the majority of which have been cultivated, has been preserved as a national park so that present and future generations can experience its grandeur, beauty and solitude as they were when the first settlers viewed it with awe.

The mixed prairie vegetation in the Val Marie-Killdeer area supports a rich variety of fauna. Species ranging from the pronghorn and Richardson's ground squirrel or "gopher" to the rare and endangered prairie falcon; ferruginous hawk and sage grouse can be found here. The black-tailed prairie dog also resides within the boundaries of the park. Their colonies can be observed along the international Frenchman River Valley, the only place in Canada where this prairie rodent can be seen in its natural habitat.

The rolling landscape of the park is broken by the weathered landforms of the Killdeer Badlands. It was here, in 1874, that Sir George Mercier Dawson made the first recorded discovery of dinosaur remains. There is also a "sinking hill", a fault-like formation 200 feet wide (60.96 m) and 35 feet (10.66 m) deep which is believed to be sinking one foot (30 cm) a year.

The area's human history is similarly interesting and colorful. Remnant teepee rings, projectile points and other artifacts indicate that the Plains Indians roamed here in search of bison. Sitting Bull and his Sioux followers took refuge in this area from the U.S. Army after the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

Also associated with the general area of the Grasslands National Park are the Wood Mountain North West Mounted police, the Jean Louis Legare Trading Post, and Fort Walsh-Wood Mountain Trail, north of the Killdeer component of the park.

A few homesteaders moved into this region during early prairie settlement. They found it difficult and frequently impossible to survive in farming and moved on, making way for flourishing ranching operations. Ranching has added to the local history of the area. The land in the park has not been broken by the plough, but it will be surrounded by ranching operations.

This cultural history will form an interpretive theme of the park.

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## NEWS AND NOTES (CON'T)

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EARTH SHAKING NEWS. Shortly before 9 AM on Saturday, January 9, 1982 Maritimers were jolted by an earthquake registering 5.5 on the Richter scale. During the following week several more tremors were felt, some approaching or equalling the initial quake in strength. All shocks had their epicenters located in the remote Jack's Lake area of northern New Brunswick about 100 km north of Fredericton and 80 km west of Newcastle. The Catamaran Fault, of undetermined age and origin, runs through the area. Current speculation attributes the cause of the quakes to slippage of the earth's crust. Meanwhile scientists continue to prowl the area in an effort to learn more about the nature and cause of the quakes.

SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS. A Society of Canadian Ornithologists is at present being organized. At a preliminary meeting in Edmonton in August 1981 a Constitution Committee and an Editorial Committee were appointed. The first newsletter is now in circulation and the fledgling society is seeking new members. Anyone interested in joining should write to Henri Ouellet at the National Museums of Canada in Ottawa. A major impetus in the formation of the new society and what is expected to be its first major undertaking is the hosting of the International Ornithological Congress in 1986.