

## **Trail 12: Tilley Area**

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The Tilley area has many reservoirs and sloughs within its boundaries, which are replete with waterfowl and during appropriate periods, with a wide variety of shorebirds. The undisturbed grasslands have good populations of sparrows and longspurs.

This area can be explored using either Brooks or Medicine Hat as a departure site or conversely one can stay in the well appointed campground in the Tillebrook Provincial Park just off Hwy 1. Birding sites in the area include: Kininvie Slough, Tilley A (Campbell) and B Reservoirs, the Tillebrook campground, and a number of other internal water storage sites and natural sloughs.

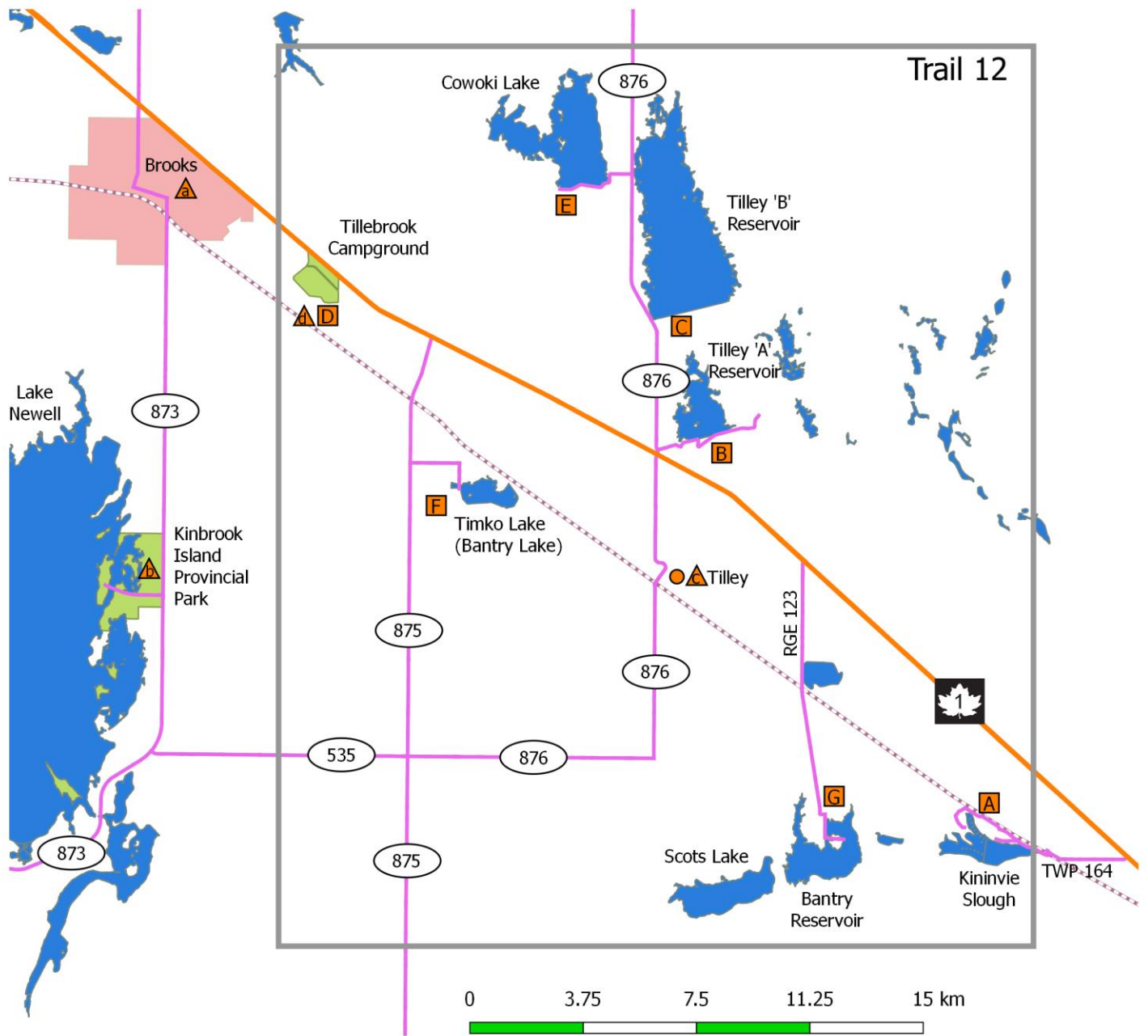
An easy way to access Kininvie Slough (A) is to take TWP RD 164 west from the Trans Canada Highway. Follow this road to the old highway and then across the railway tracks. Turn right onto a dirt track. (Gate may be closed and if so make sure to reclose it behind you.) As you drive west you will come to a dugout which is the beginning of Kininvie Slough. You can proceed westward along the northern edge of the slough turning left onto a two-wheel track used by oil well servicing personnel. By following this track you will come to an embankment impounding an even larger slough. In very dry conditions you can proceed across the dyke and follow the road east along the south side of Kininvie back to where you started. Be very cautious when accessing this site and following the trails, as in wet conditions they can be very slick and one can easily get stuck. Also be very cautious when attempting to cross supposedly dry alkaline areas as often the underlying soil can be saturated, waiting for unsuspecting vehicles to fall into their trap.

Depending on water levels, Kininvie can produce a wide variety of shorebirds as well as waterfowl. The surrounding prairies can host a wide variety of passerines. Species of interest include: Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, American Bittern, most if not all the grebe species, Black-crowned Night-Heron, many duck species, Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wren. The prairies play host to Western Meadowlark, Savannah and Vesper Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Horned Lark. This area has also produced a number of rarities including Great and Snowy Egret, and unusual herons. The old Highway 1, either east or west from the Kininvie turnoff, has produced Burrowing Owl and Long-billed Curlew.

Tilley A (B), can be accessed by travelling directly north of Tilley (Hwy 876) from Hwy 1 turning immediately right (east) into the gravel stock pile, skirting the pile on the right and following the tracks to the impoundment dyke. Again, caution must be exercised when following the trail, particularly in wet conditions and when on the dyke as it is impossible to turn around. One must proceed to the end (east side) before retracing your steps. Depending on water levels this reservoir can also produce a wide variety of shorebirds and waterfowl.

Tilley B (C), further north along Hwy 876, is a large impoundment and is readily evident from the highway. You can access it by driving onto the embankment at the south end, or via several trails along the reservoir's western side. This is not a good site for shorebirds but the reservoir does host a variety of waterfowl. Other internal storage lakes in the area include Cowoki Reservoir (E), and Timko Lake (Bantry Lake) (F) and Bantry Reservoir (G). These reservoirs host species similar to those already mentioned.

The Tillebrook campground (D), particularly during spring and fall migration can host a wide variety of passerines. During the May long weekend, this site is the centre of activity for the Brooks May Species Count, which encompasses an area within an 80 kilometre radius circle. Many birders from all over Alberta participate in this count and either stay at the campground or in Brooks. This count produces thousands of Black-bellied Plovers often with interspersed Red Knots. Whimbrel may also be present. This count on average tallies about 160 species.



### Trail 12: Tilley Area

■ Observation Points

■ A Kininvie Slough

■ B Tilley A

■ C Tilley B

■ D Tillebrook Provincial Park

■ E Cowoki Lake

■ F Timko Lake

■ G Bantry Reservoir

▲ Amenities

▲ Brooks: all amenities

▲ Kinbrook Island Provincial Park: camping restrooms and store\*

▲ Tilley: meals

▲ Tillebrook Campground: camping and restrooms

\* Some light snacks; not open all the time.

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