

WILDLIFE

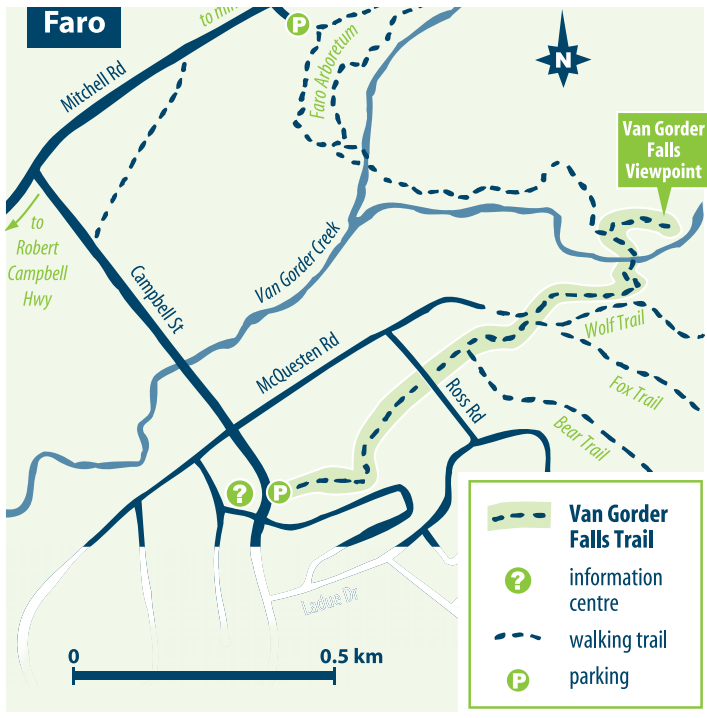


VIEWING

Van Gorder Falls Trail



Interpretive Trail Guide
Faro, Yukon



This is a self-maintained trail, so take the litter but leave the flowers. The beauty of this area can be shared with others if it is left undisturbed.

**Trail length: 1.5 kilometres
(1 mile) one way
Estimated time: 1 hour return**

WELCOME to the Van Gorder Falls Interpretive Trail

Van Gorder Creek and Falls are named after Del Charles Van Gorder, a pioneer, goldpanner, and trapper who lived in this area in the early 1900s. Van Gorder was the manager of the Taylor & Drury trading post at Pelly Banks from 1910 to 1944 and managed the post in Ross River between 1944 and 1949. This leisurely trail takes you into wilderness in the heart of Faro.

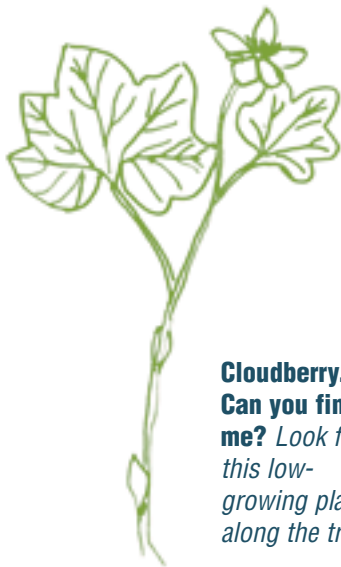
Remember to be alert for bears and other wildlife. If you see sheep, view them from a distance and move away if they become agitated.

Hummocky Ground

As you leave John Connelly RV Park, the trail winds through an area surrounded by Paper Birch and lumpy, or hummocky ground.

This area has poorly drained soil that remains moist throughout the year.

The thick layers of moss that thrive in this moist environment insulate the ground from the daytime heat. As a result, the ground freezes and thaws unevenly creating the hummocks.



Cloudberry.
Can you find me? *Look for this low-growing plant along the trail.*

Willow Grove

Yukon is home to 38 species of willows.

Some can be found only on high alpine slopes, others like dry forests or wet riverbanks. Along this moist section of the trail at least four species can be found.

Learn more about the vegetation of this area at the Faro Arboretum.



Felt-leaf Willow
Salix alaxensis



Scouler's Willow
Salix scouleriana



Gray-leaf Willow
Salix glauca



Blueberry Willow
Salix myrtillifolia



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Swainson's Thrush

On the Trail of Birds

You will be passing through many different bird habitats. Near the beginning of the trail, amongst willows and birches, small but colourful warblers and kinglets can be found. In the upland forests and old burn areas, listen for the melodious songs of the Hermit or Swainson's thrush.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Black-capped Chickadee

In May and mid-August to late September you may see and hear huge flocks of Sandhill Cranes flying high overhead.

For a complete list of birds to be seen, pick up *A Birder's Checklist for the Faro & Ross River Region* available at the Campbell Region Interpretive Centre.



Lodgepole Pine
Pinus contorta



White Spruce
Picea glauca



Trembling Aspen
Populus tremuloides

Fire History

In 1969, fire swept through this area dramatically changing the look of the landscape and the types of plants and animals that live here. Fire doesn't always burn evenly and will create patches of unburned forest. Fire benefits some species. Trembling Aspen can grow quickly by producing shoots from unburned roots. Lodgepole Pine needs fire to release the seeds in its cones. White Spruce, however, takes longer to recover. As you travel along this trail look for signs of where the fire burned and islands of vegetation that were missed.

Aquatic Monsters

Some of the creatures that live in Van Gorder Creek usually go unseen. But if you look closely you will find insects that look like something out of a monster movie, but in miniature. They may look scary but it is good news to find these species living in the stream. They are indicators of good water quality.

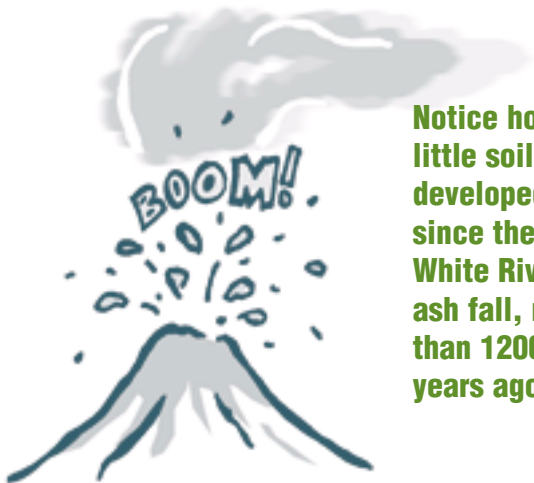
Stonefly and Mayfly nymphs are not tolerant of low levels of dissolved oxygen and therefore prefer cold, swift-moving

streams. Their streamlined, flattened bodies ease their movements in the rocky streambed and rapid currents. They are often found clinging to rocks where they graze on algae and other organic material, like dead leaves, found on the stream bottom.



An Explosive History

Just beneath the ground surface is a layer of white sediment called the White River ash. This material erupted from Mount Churchill, Alaska about 1200 years ago. This now-extinct volcano is about 25 km west of the Alaska-Yukon border near the headwaters of the White River. The volcanic explosion sent a large dust cloud kilometres into the air. The ash gradually settled over most of Yukon as it drifted east with the prevailing winds.



Notice how little soil has developed since the White River ash fall, more than 1200 years ago.

Sage Slopes

After you cross the bridge you will begin climbing up through dry pine forest.

The grass tufts you see are Purple Reedgrass. This grass is an indicator of dry, well-drained calcareous (containing large amounts of calcium carbonate), and alkaline soils.

You will also find Pasture Sage here, a preferred winter food of the local Fannin Sheep population.



Pasture Sage

Artemisia frigida



Purple
Reedgrass

Calamagrostis purpurascens



Red Squirrel track



Grey Wolf track

Tracking on the Trail

Yukon is home to 68 species of mammals and about half of them live around Faro. Some are loud and obvious like the Red Squirrel. Others are less conspicuous like voles and shrews.





Look for signs that a Lynx or Grey Wolf has crossed the path.

Can you find tracks?

Can you find signs that a Porcupine has been gnawing or a Snowshoe Hare nibbling?



Lynx track



Mouse track



THIS STORY ROCKS! HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF YEARS IN THE MAKING

Picture an inland sea hundreds of millions of years ago.

Fine mud and sand slowly accumulate as river sediments fall to the bottom. The mud mixture hardens to rock over thousands of years as the pressure of kilometers of overlying sediments squeeze out the water. The mudrock is later invaded by molten rock minerals rising along cracks from deeper in the earth's crust. Some of the molten rock spreads laterally where it cools slowly and solidifies, forming lighter layers in the surrounding dark mudrock. Over time the sea dries up, the buried rocks return to the surface, and the softer mudrock erodes away to expose the lighter rock layers. These rocks now form the Van Gorder Creek Falls.

Erosion continues even today. For instance, a large rock recently broke away from the wall.

Can you spot it below?



Learn more about wildlife viewing opportunities or walks and hikes around Faro.

Campbell Region Interpretive Centre:

Location: Campbell Street

Phone: 867-994-2288 (seasonal) or 867-994-2728.

email: cric@faroyukon.ca or info@faroyukon.ca

www.faroyukon.ca

Environment Yukon

Wildlife Viewing Program, V5N

Location: 10 Burns Road

Box 2703, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Toll-free (in Yukon): 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8291

wildlife.viewing@gov.yk.ca

www.wildlifeviewing.gov.yk.ca



ISBN 978-1-55362-557-5
November 2011



Printed on recycled paper.