

Tombstone Territorial Park Information Sheet – Nature



While Tombstone Mountain is the best-known landform in the park, it is not the most unusual. The park contains a variety of seldom-seen permafrost landforms such as pingos, palsas and patterned ground. Broad, tundra-cloaked valleys form a stunning backdrop in this area. While the scenic beauty of Tombstone Territorial Park is immediately obvious. The biological significance is more subtle.

Tombstone's unique collection of vegetation and wildlife is linked to the special geology and geography of the region. The diversity of rocks and minerals in the area has created a variety of soils which support a wide range of plant communities. The variety of plants, in turn, provides habitat for many animal species. The elevation and shape of the land funnels cold arctic air through the broad valleys, influencing the plants as well as the permafrost landforms.

The arctic tundra environment, which is normally found several hundred kilometres to the north, reaches its southernmost extent at the north end of the Tombstone area. Here, the vegetation and terrain is almost indistinguishable from the high arctic - a treeless, windswept area of shrub tundra and ground-hugging plants.

At the south end of the park, dense boreal forests reach up the valleys of the Klondike and Chandindu rivers. Small, isolated stands of spruce trees are scattered throughout the rest of the area - islands of trees in a sea of tundra.

The variety of vegetation and habitats in Tombstone Territorial Park supports an unusual density of wildlife. Five large mammals make their home here. The Porcupine Caribou Herd winters at the north end of Tombstone while the Hart River Herd uses the region year-round. Moose are found in the major valleys and use the Blackstone Uplands in the fall. Dall sheep lambing areas and important habitats are included within the park boundaries. Grizzly bears and black bears both find suitable habitat in the area.

Tombstone Territorial Park is also rich in bird life, providing habitat for over 137 species. Raptors like Gyrfalcons and Golden Eagles live in the park. Both arctic tundra and boreal species nest within the park. Arctic tundra breeders reach the southern limit of their distribution in the park while boreal species are at the northern limit of their range.

Chinook salmon spawn in the Chandindu and North Klondike rivers on the Yukon River side of the park while arctic char and grayling spawn on the Mackenzie River side.