



of year. Bulls are more common in June, as the cows are at the calving grounds, but the cows and calves return to the valley by the end of August. Arctic foxes, arctic hares and lemmings can be seen at any time of year, and wolves are sometimes seen. Polar bears are not common, but are seen in the valley, so knowing bear safety practices is essential.

Some 35-40 species of birds nest in or pass through the area on migration. Rock ptarmigan, snowy owls and ravens remain through the winter, and the rest migrate but return in the spring. Canada geese and brant geese nest in wetlands along the river, and snow geese pass through in spring and fall. Peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons hunt throughout the valley. Snowy owl populations are tied to lemming population booms; sometimes they are common, and sometimes absent. Small tundra nesting birds include snow buntings, Lapland longspurs, horned larks, and northern pipits as well as semipalmated plovers and several sandpipers. Red-breasted mergansers nest along the river and in small lakes. Red-throated and Pacific loons nest on lakes near the coast, and arctic terns can be seen along the river or at the coast. Seabirds include thick-billed murrets, black guillemots, and several gulls.

VISITING AN ANCIENT LAND

Because of this abundance of wildlife, the area has always been a prime hunting area for Inuit. Evidence of the Dorset culture, dating back some 4,000 years, can still be found along the coastal region near Kimmirut. In a warming period between 800 and 1,000 years ago, the Dorset were replaced or overrun by the Thule people, bowhead whale hunters who lived in large permanent villages. When the climate cooled (between 1650 and 1850) and there were not as many bowhead whales along the coasts of Baffin Island, the Thule were forced to change their hunting patterns, relying more on the smaller sea mammals, and hunting caribou as part of their yearly cycle. They became the modern Inuit.

The geology of **Katannilik Territorial Park** is equally fascinating, with outcrops of crystalline limestone, and Precambrian metamorphic and igneous rock. The land has been sculpted by several ice sheets, leaving behind glacial landforms and deposits, glacial erratic boulders, and glacial polish and striations in the bedrock. There are deposits of mica, flat shiny crystals in thin flakes, pewter-coloured graphite, tiny dark red garnet crystals, fossiliferous limestone, and deposits of marble or carving stones. The park also contains a rare deposit of blue lapis lazuli which is found on Inuit Owned Lands, so you will require special permission from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association to visit the site.

In **Katannilik Territorial Park**, there are numerous falls on the side streams flowing into the Soper River and of course, Soper Falls in the lower part of the river, beautiful rock outcrops, deeply incised caribou trails, interesting glacial landforms, superb shows of wildflowers, and much more. On the lower Soper, where the river widens into a lake,

there is a set of “reversing falls” at the seaward end. Here the 10 metre tides on Pleasant Inlet cause the river to actually reverse at high tide, and salt water flows into Soper Lake (also called *Tasiujajuaq*).

Hiking along the river or up into side valleys is endlessly rewarding. Whether you spot an incredible patch of wildflowers, discover a peregrine falcon nest on a cliff, or watch an arctic fox playing with kits at a den, each experience is like a precious jewel in the setting of the arctic summer. Combined, the park strings together these experiences into a memorable necklace.

TRAVELLING TO THE PARK

For those planning to hike into **Katannilik Territorial Park**, a printed guidebook called *The Itijjajiaq Trail* is indispensable. It provides detailed information on the routes, landmarks, and survival shelters, as well as foldout strip maps that are of great use to hikers. This 120 kilometre trail runs through a natural, unmarked landscape; it is not a prepared or signed surface, so map-reading skills and the proper maps are essential.

The Soper is not a technically challenging river, so can be enjoyably canoed, kayaked, or rafted by even novice paddlers. The great variety of side hikes and wildlife watching opportunities make it an excellent 5-7 day trip. The lower section of the river is level and slow, so it is also possible to fly to Kimmirut where you can rent canoes and gear for a trip upriver. Operators will take paddlers to the Soper Falls or Falcon Bluffs, and will pick paddlers up at Soper Lake for a 3 kilometre drive into Kimmirut. The flow of water in the river is sufficient for paddling from early July through the end of August. The Soper River guidebook provides detailed information about rapids, takeout spots, campsites,

and park structures along the route, and information as to how to arrange for drop-offs and pick-ups in the park.

Hikers, canoeists or rafters generally fly in by chartered aircraft to landing sites at Mount Joy or at Livingstone Falls, and paddle the river or hike the trail to Kimmirut. Outfitters in Iqaluit will also take hikers by boat to the trailhead across Frobisher Bay, and the start of your hike across the peninsula along the Itijjagiq Trail. The hike is rugged but beautiful, and takes 5 to 7 days from Frobisher Bay to Mount Joy, where hikers may pick up their canoes and paddle the rest of the river, or continue hiking into Kimmirut.

Traveling through **Katannilik Territorial Park** is equally rewarding in spring. This is the season for snow travel, and all the thrills and challenges of dogteam, snowmobile or ski travel on the land, all possible on your own, or guided by operators from Iqaluit or Kimmirut. Snow and ice create incredible natural sculptures, and you can follow animal tracks, or see landscape features that are not as evident in summer. Cross-country skiing in the park is like moving through a wondrous landscape, a symphony of white and blue with fantastic shapes and textures all around. Dogteaming is more intense, an adventure in cooperation

between species. And snowmobiling, much faster, is all about the rush and thrill of carving lines in the crystal landscape.

At the Kimmirut end of the park, the Katannilik Park Centre and the Soper House Gallery, located in the historic Dewey Soper house, offer interpretive exhibits and displays of local art, plus frequent opportunities to meet the artists and purchase local treasures to remind you of your trip. The staff at the visitors' centre keeps track of visitors to the park and will also help arrange drop-offs and pick-ups in the park. They will also help visitors arrange for home-stay accommodations in Kimmirut. The new **Taqaiqsirvik Territorial Park** campground provides a place to camp in Kimmirut.

A trip to **Katannilik Territorial Park** is not a casual day outing; it is necessary to plan carefully to avoid problems with weather or polar bears. You are also required to register with Nunavut Parks before your trip. For help in planning a trip, visit the Nunavut Territorial Parks website at www.nunavutparks.com. Operators from Iqaluit and Kimmirut and outside Nunavut offer organized trips into this park, and it is an increasingly popular destination for independent travellers who hike the valley, or canoe the river on their own. Using the services of a guide/outfitter



reduces the risk, and experiences are always better when done with a guide who knows the land, the stories, and the wildlife.

For more information on licensed operators providing access services or guide services in the park, check the Nunavut Parks website at www.nunavutparks.com, or call the Unikkaarvik Visitors' Centre in Iqaluit (867.979.4636) or the Katannilik Park Centre in Kimmirut (867.939.2416) for assistance or recommendations.

For more information on **Katannilik Territorial Park**, the Itijjagiq Trail, the Katannilik Park Centre and **Taqaiqsirvik Territorial Park** campground, check the Nunavut Parks website at www.nunavutparks.com, or call Nunavut Tourism at 1-866-NUNAVUT to request the Nunavut Travel Planner, which lists all licensed tourism operators, accommodations and services. ■

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