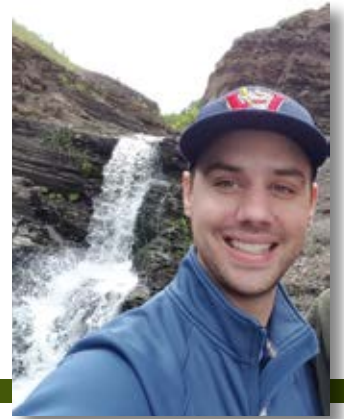


# Camping For My Job



By Nick Pink, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

**H**ello, my name is Nick Pink and I have the pleasure of being the new guy at the Alberta Wilderness Association. You know... the fellow who may not always be sure about everything he's doing but is trying hard. He's long on want and enthusiasm, shorter on experience.

Long before becoming the new guy, I studied at the University of Calgary where I graduated with a BSc in Ecology. I once had ideas of becoming a veterinarian or doctor but, when I realized I had an idealized view of those professions (when have you gone to see a doctor and been interested in being on the other side of that interaction?), I decided to switch course and look towards working in the environmental sciences. Why the environmental sciences, you may ask? Well, speaking of being overly idealistic in my youth, I honestly thought it would be fun to go camping for my job.

Things have worked out well so far. My first job was with the Calgary Zoological

Society where I spent a summer researching northern leopard frogs. We were camping for 10 days at a time throughout southern Alberta and I was living out my dream, although some shifts were dreamier than others.

This one episode always sticks out in my mind. We were camping near Claresholm in early May, before the campground was even officially open, and... out of nowhere – a blizzard hits. Our tents were covered in half-frozen, half-melting snow and it was clear that they weren't going to keep us dry that night. The camp bathrooms offered the only nearby shelter. What were we to do? It was probably time to get a hotel, right?

Not on our budgets. No, we took our sleeping gear to the bathrooms and slept on the floors. Relative poverty trumped pride in this situation. I convinced myself this was the correct choice by imagining that a waterlogged bear likely would be more than happy to sleep in a heated campground bathroom on a night like that

one. Nonetheless, this wasn't exactly what I thought living my dream would look like.

When I started my next job with a pipeline company my "camping during work" days ended. Hotels, comfortable beds, hot showers – that's what went with working in the field there. The same was the case when I moved on to work with an environmental consulting company. My dream of "camping for my job" was further and further away.

And now...the dream has a new life! I'm happily working as the new guy with hopes that my field work with AWA will give me a few more opportunities to go camping for my job – hopefully without the spring blizzards. Like my colleagues, whether I'm camping or not I hope to be a positive force in the conservation community, to protect what cannot protect itself. Dreams of camping – whether on the job or off the job – demand wild spaces and I look forward to making more of them a reality in Alberta. 🌲