



KANANASKIS VIEWPOINT: IT'S GOING DOWNHILL FAST

By Andy Marshall



Kananaskis Country, once a prime jewel among the province's assets, is losing its luster for many Albertans. Plunging budgets and declining staff have led to a lower maintenance commitment and a growing sense from users that the park is becoming run down and falls far short of the standards set when it opened more than a quarter of a century ago.

The possibility of user fees within a year for cross-country skiers and, perhaps, for hikers, and the likelihood of increasing reliance on corporate and private donations to maintain even minimal standards have prompted dismay on the part of some Albertans.

With the added aggravation over government plans to allow expanded commercial development in the Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area inside Kananaskis Country, fears are widespread that the vision behind the opening of the park in 1977 is losing its sparkle.

Facing the immediate impact of the changes are ten of thousands of local cross-country skiers, unhappy with the current state of trails and other basic services in K-Country.

"Your park and our park is certainly not what it used to be, and we are concerned that the deterioration will only increase in the future," says a recent letter from a coalition of seven Calgary seniors' outdoor clubs to former provincial premier Peter Lougheed.

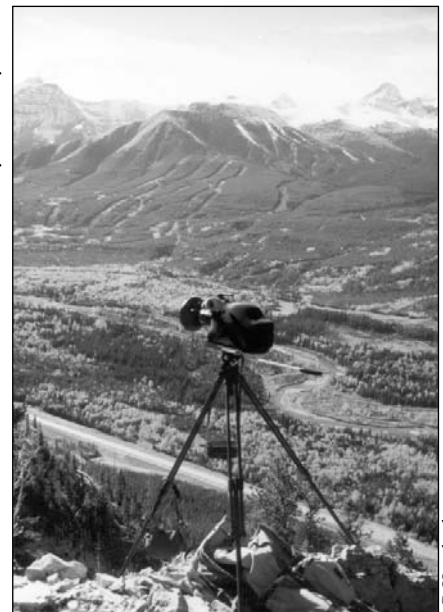
Lougheed is credited with being a prime mover behind the formal designation of Kananaskis Country in the late 1970s and has a provincial park there named after him.

"As the visionary who helped bring the K-Country concept into being, we hope that you find the time to devote some of your great prestige and influence into bringing the present deplorable situation to the attention of those who can provide long-lasting remedies," the letter to Lougheed concludes. An assistant to Lougheed said the former leader was out of Canada at the time this article was written and would not be able to respond.

"We are very disturbed by what is happening in the park," says Ward Neale, interim secretary for the coalition, representing more than 1,200 actively skiing seniors. "The government is depriving a park of money that pays such wonderful dividends in people's good health."

GOVERNMENT FUNDING DOWN

Government figures show overall funding this year for K-Country is two-thirds what it was 10 years ago—\$8.3 million, compared to \$12 million then. This is despite rising costs and government estimates that day use in K-Country is going up about five per cent a year.



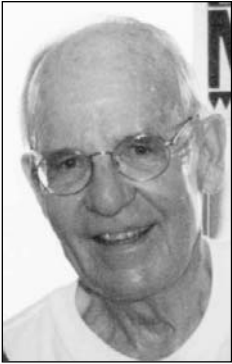
Mt. Allan, Evan-Thomas Area

G. Hornbeck

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Ward Neale

Remarkably, says Linda Vaxvick, secretary for the long-established Foothills Nordic Ski Club, the annual capital budget for all of Alberta's provincial parks is just \$1.2 million. Upgrading the sewer system at William Watson Lodge alone would take up half of that.

In the same period, the number of full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) has dropped from 97 to 78. This is only in part explained by the fact that campgrounds were privatized and other service delivery methods introduced.

"Reduced budgets have also reduced maintenance and repair of some infrastructure," acknowledges Kathy Telfer, a spokeswoman for Community Development Minister Gene Zwozdesky, who is responsible for the park.

Aside from the budget cuts, another blow to the upkeep of K-Country was the closure more than a year ago of the Minimum Security Facility in the Kananaskis and the subsequent loss of the inmate crews doing a lot of basic maintenance work there.

"There is no doubt that the closure...has affected how we manage some of our work now," says Telfer. Areas impacted include maintenance and cleaning of some day-use sites, fire hazard reduction programs and firewood production, highway-right-of-way cleanup, some painting projects, and some snow and ice removal.

TRAIL GROOMING CUTS

While the department is trying to keep up grooming efforts to previous standards, "given our budget constraints, there may be reductions in trail grooming in some less frequented areas," Telfer says.

Provincial figures show that all official hiking and skiing

of Highway 40 for two days a week are cited as other examples of the drop in services. An unforeseen sprinkler system failure resulted in the closure of the day lodge at William Watson Lodge since December, with no immediate prospect of being fixed, further exacerbating the situation.

A park employee, who asked that his name not be used, estimates that there are just six full-time people left to do maintenance throughout the 4,200-square-kilometre K-Country, with a \$400,000-a-year budget for winter grooming and summer trail maintenance. Activities such as repairing handrails on footbridges, removing fallen trees, fixing washouts, and sign painting are not covered.

BUDGET SHORTFALLS

Increasingly, staff say, they have to make proposals to the Friends of Kananaskis or the Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation to secure even basic tools, rather than obtain the needed funds through their own department budgets. The two groups are regularly asked to make up a budget shortfall through their reliance on private and corporate donations and a percentage of fees levied against commercial activities in the Kananaskis, including movies shot there.

With no new capital in the past decade or so, William Watson Lodge also has had to raise about \$750,000 to meet the soaring demands on the facility, set up to accommodate people with disabilities.

More popular than ever, "it has an aging infrastructure that needs to be replaced," says manager Ross Watson. "Many of the conditions [in K-Country] have failed compared to previous standards," he adds, noting a similar decline in most "people" programs throughout Alberta.

Yet tourist operator advertising continues to tout the commitment of K-Country to "world-class grooming."

Park staff believe that private sponsorship of a specific trail,

as has occurred, for example, at Lac Des Arcs, will be the way of the future, leading to such potential scenarios as the Pengrowth Ribbon Creek Trail.

USER FEES EXPECTED

At the same time, park staff are convinced fees are on their way. Zwozdesky, speaking in the Legislature last November, said his staff is reviewing a proposal for a user fee or pass system "in order for cross-country skiing to be continued." There is "considerable warmth" to that idea from the public, he added.

Spokesperson Telfer says no decision has been made. "However, if fees were implemented, we would certainly consider a senior's rate, a day-use rate, a weekend rate or an annual single, senior or family rate to reduce costs."

Aside from encouraging the involvement of further volunteer labour for keeping up the park, the department "is exploring



William Watson Lodge

Community Development, Government of Alberta

trails in K-Country amount to 1,500 km. The total of regularly groomed trails is 200 km. The estimated number of cross-country skier visits alone is between 60,000 and 100,000 in one winter.

The lack of washroom facilities throughout the region and the closure of the one remaining visitors' centre at the north end



a number of ways to enhance partnerships and sponsorship arrangements as a means of maintaining and enhancing its public programming,” she adds.

For Neale and many other seniors, the prospect of charges are frightening. Fees at the Canmore Nordic Centre and in the federal parks have clearly deterred people from going to those places, he says. The \$10 fee for the bus trip is all many of them can afford on a regular basis. “It seems ridiculous to think of charging in such a rich province,” says Neale.

For employed middle-class people, a fee is not a burden, particularly if the money goes back into the facility, says Vaxvick. But, for seniors and low-income families, the prospect is daunting.

Although the Alberta Wilderness Association has not yet established a position on fees, president Cliff Wallis points out that user fees are common in the United States. “While I have a philosophical aversion to user fees, the practical side of me thinks that it gives us more power than the vested interests when user fees are charged.”

Speaking personally, rather than as an AWA director, Heinz Unger suggests charging for access to wilderness areas has some advantages. Placing an economic value on the natural environment sends an important message to all people and particularly to businesses wanting to exploit it for industrial purposes.

“If we pay for something, whether it be for trail grooming or cleaning a campsite, then in theory we should be able to demand it is kept in top shape and is well managed,” he adds. At the same time, he would like to minimize hardships for seniors, students or low-income families.

Because Off Road Vehicle (ORV) use in the Ghost-Waiparous area is currently a hot topic, Unger proposes a fee structure based on the level of impact, meaning the average cross-country skier or hiker should pay a lot less than the ORV driver.

This prompts a warning from Wallis, though: “I am probably in favour of a system of public land access fees . . . but I think we need to decouple the ORV part. The worst possible system would be one that comes up with access fees only for ORVs and doesn’t deal with public access fees/use/management of public lands generally. This would give ORV users a leg-up on other users, just as hunting and fishing permits have given hunters and fishermen a greater say in decisions on public lands than the general public.”

EVAN-THOMAS CHANGES

A renewed battle is brewing over the Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area in the Kananaskis Valley, the site of last June’s G-8 summit. The province’s draft management plan would allow for an expansion of the Nakiska skill hill, summer use of the ski hill, and a 20-per-cent expansion of the floor space of commercial facilities currently there, as well as the development of additional accommodation in the area.

Environmental groups fighting the proposal cite surveys of Albertans before the setting of the Kananaskis Country Recreation Policy in 1999. These surveys showed that a huge majority of respondents were in favour of protecting wildlife, even if it meant limiting human use of the area. As a result, Premier Ralph Klein announced a moratorium on more commercial development in the Kananaskis. The province now says it had already endorsed the inclusion of some expansion room for Nakiska when the area was first developed in 1985-86.

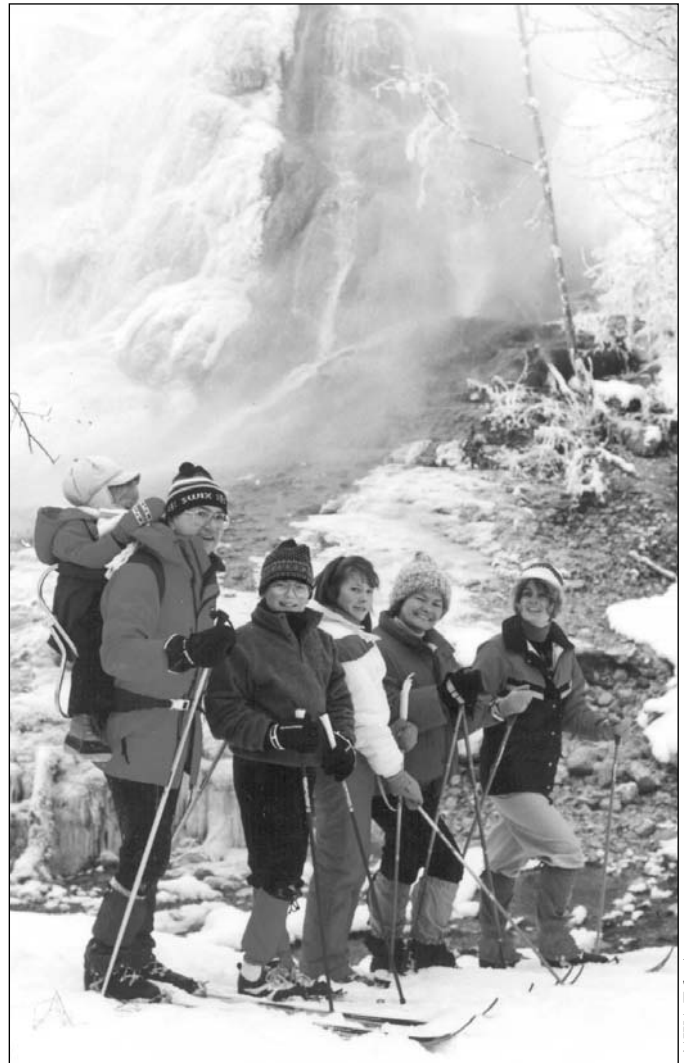
Conservationists call this part of the Kananaskis an ecological hot spot. Although no specific plans are on the table, they argue that the expansion of Nakiska would intrude on valuable elk and bighorn habitat and that summer use of the ski hill would conflict with animals such as grizzlies.

The targeted areas at the base of Nakiska and adjacent to Kananaskis Village are critical movement corridors for bears, wolves, elk, moose and sheep, says AWA spokesperson Tamaini Snaith.

Although the province defends its position by saying any future development will be close to existing commercial facilities, and the number of new lodges will be few—unofficially government staff have suggested five or six up-to-15,000-square-foot lodges—Snaith warns that no cumulative effects studies have been done. Additional access roads, more traffic and more people will have serious effects throughout the valley.

“Albertans have said again and again they are against any more development,” she says. “The primary value of the Kananaskis is the wilderness, and that has to be maintained.”

Maureen Wills, president of the William Watson Lodge Society, sums up the feelings of many Albertans toward the Kananaskis. “It’s my holy place where I can go and relax.” Like others, she sees the declining financial commitment from the government and the incursion of commercial interests. “When you start a project like that, you have to maintain it,” she says. ❁



Cross-country skiing in K-Country

(AWA Files)



ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

KEEP THE MILK RIVER WILD – NO DAMS!

By Shirley Bray, WLA Editor



Another dam project is being proposed on the Milk River as part of a larger study on water management in the Milk River Basin. The study will look at off-stream and on-stream storage. The first component is to examine the feasibility of building a dam and water supply project on the Milk River. The second is to examine off-stream alternatives.

The proposed dam would be near the forks of the north and south Milk Rivers in the internationally significant grassland of the Milk River Ridge area of southern Alberta. The dam would be located in the Twin River Heritage Rangeland Natural Area—a fabulous native prairie grassland, home to numerous endangered species that was protected by the government in 1999 as part of Special Places.

“Our members are outraged that, once again, Alberta’s Environment Minister, the Hon. Lorne Taylor, is proposing a project in a provincially protected area, this time the Twin River Heritage Rangeland,” said AWA President Cliff Wallis. “At a time when we are severely cutting funding for new schools, health care and environmental protection, the Minister seems ready to squander hundreds of millions of dollars on a project that would benefit only a handful of individuals.”

This is the second time a dam on the Milk River has been proposed and studied. The project was reviewed in the 1980s but shelved due to financial constraints and concerns raised by Friends of the Oldman River and the Alberta Wilderness Association. The current proposed dam would be constructed upstream of the town of Milk River near the North and South

forks of the Milk River, corresponding probably to Site 2 on the map.

Garry Buckarski of Alberta Environment is administering consultant contracts and plans to implement a process similar to that used for the Meridian Dam feasibility study. Klohn-Crippen Consultants of Calgary is responsible for the engineering aspects, Marv Anderson and Jim Barlshen will do the cost-benefit analysis, Axys will do the environmental assessment, and Equus will handle public consultation.

According to Dennis Magowan of Alberta Environment in Lethbridge, the feasibility study is considering demand (whether there is there a need for storage for irrigated agriculture, municipal supply, or needs in Montana), hydrology, water supply options and engineering aspects (on-stream or off-stream storage), environmental implications (fisheries, water quality, riparian, protected area) and economics.

Wallis says a dam would provide water for low value irrigation projects and damage a high value conservation area at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to the Alberta taxpayer. “It is unconscionable for a minister who is

charged with protecting the environment to repeatedly attempt to undermine existing protection. The grasslands are severely underrepresented in the provincial protected areas system as it is. We need ministers who are strong advocates for environmental protection, not proponents of its destruction.”

The dam will be used primarily to capture water coming from the St. Mary River in the United States and will allow Alberta to retain more of the water for its use. Water storage is proposed to expand irrigation and provide water for towns like Milk River. Allocation of the water is controlled by the International Joint Commission agreement, so the Government of Canada would have to be involved in any review of the project.

Alberta Environment spokesperson Robert Moyles said that the government did plan to formally launch the study and advertise public input sessions. However, AWA found out about the contract for the feasibility study and broke the news to the public on January 20. AWA is calling for a halt to the study and for the government to shelve any ideas for building a dam on the Milk River.

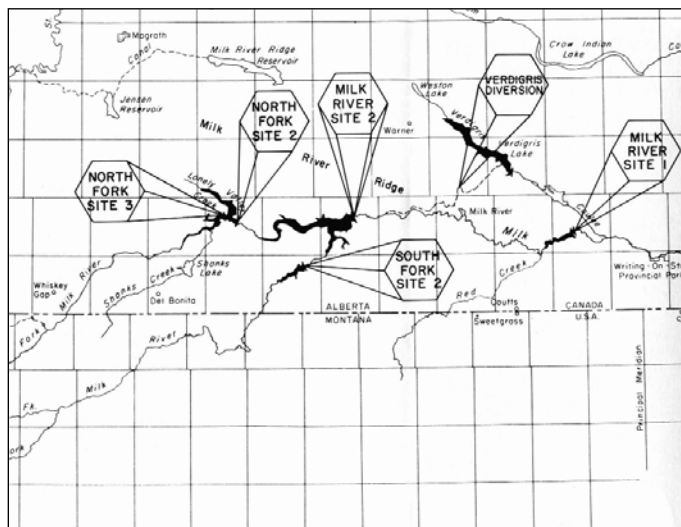
Information should be available on the government’s website by mid-February, and public input sessions will be held mid March. We will keep you informed on these via our e-newsletter and our website. The feasibility study will be completed by the end of June.

We have a webpage on the Milk River Ridge (under Issues) and a current Action Alert. Let Premier Ralph Klein know what you think. The Milk River is still a wild river – let’s keep it that way!



Milk River Ridge

(C. Wallis)



Map showing the 5 proposed dam sites in the Milk River Basin Study, 1980



The Milk River Dam in Review

Has anything really changed from the first proposal of the Milk River Dam until now?

1942: A water development committee proposes that the gap near the Milk River Forks (the confluence of the North and South Milk Rivers) would be a good place for a dam. Pursuit of this option is not followed due to such reasons as hilly terrain, lack of local interest and potential international implications.

1977: The Milk River Water Users Association, a group of ranchers and farmers, are concerned about the serious shortage of water for stock and irrigation uses. This group asks Alberta Environment to examine possible alternatives for ensuring adequate water supply, largely for irrigation, along the Milk River.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) undertakes a study of potential water storage sites in the Milk River Basin. Any control of water supply would require a dam and reservoir, or off-stream storage in a tributary valley. Of the five potential reservoir sites identified, Milk River Site 2 would hold the most amount of water for the least cost.

1980: The Milk River Basin Studies Environmental Overview Study concludes that “any future modification to the river’s regime would have to be assessed not only in terms of impacts upon the local area directly affected by inundation and the application of abstracted water, but also in terms of the whole basin. Thus potential benefits to land use practices generally and economic development as a whole at the west end of the basin must be assessed not only against local cost, but against benefits and cost accruing to the basin as a whole. The matter is important because land uses elsewhere in the basin, particularly along the course of the river, may be affected; because the river supports a riparian habitat that is scarce in the basin; and because certain aesthetic attributes of the river, particularly in the eastern portion of the basin, may be affected. There may also be implications for land use practices in the United States.”

1981: The Milk River Basin Studies Socio-Economic Analysis of Water Supply Alternatives concludes that “all of the proposed projects have a benefit-cost ratio of less than unity, at least suggesting that none of the projects can be justified solely on the basis of the direct agricultural benefits they would generate.” Secondary benefits, which are expected to be large, possibly making the dam more economically viable, would include regional construction spinoffs, revenue generated from irrigation equipment sales, and savings to farmers who will be able to grow their own cattle feed.

But the analyses are admitted to be inherently subjective with an element of uncertainty. University professor Terry Veeman says, “Economists remain leery about justifying any project on the basis of secondary benefits.” He adds

that better soil and water management practices would be more cost-effective than dams.

The cost-benefit ratio depends in part on crop prices, which are falling, making the proposed dam more expensive. However, the study notes that it makes no allowance for the desirability of developing agriculture rather than some other sector of the economy. It is also impossible to accurately forecast what the value of river flows would be to Canadians in 50 years. “Will the real value of this natural resource climb vis-à-vis other values?”

The study on soil and geology says that the soils “are not generally economically productive because they form on unstable material that is easily eroded.”

1983: The Milk River dries up during the summer drought. Some Milk River seniors describe the drought as the worst one in memory.

1984: In June, still suffering from drought, farmers are cut off from using Milk River water for irrigation because Canada “has used up its share of water this year.” The PFRA says that the project would require no ditches or auxiliary construction.

1985: The Alberta Government approves a 31 m high irrigation dam on the Milk River, about 16 km west of the town of Milk River, with construction to begin in 1987, at a conservative estimated cost of \$30 million of taxpayer money to irrigate 8,100 ha of land owned by 40 farmers. There was no public input. Montana also approves the dam. Environmentalists react “with anger and disbelief.”

1988: Drought-affected communities hope for an early announcement of the dam. It is noted that the Milk River almost runs dry during the fall, making it an unreliable source of water for municipalities.

1989: The Milk River dam is postponed indefinitely because of a withdrawal of federal monetary support.

1997: A South Country Protected Areas Report states that “the proposed Milk River Dam and reservoir, if constructed, would flood significant portions of riparian range in the valleys of the north and south forks.” The Milk River Basin Studies estimates that flooding would extend about 30 km upstream from the confluence of the north and south Milk Rivers.

1999: The Twin River Heritage Rangeland Natural Area is protected as part of Special Places. It encompasses the confluence of the north and south Milk Rivers. This site “marks a milestone in conserving Alberta’s wilderness and natural heritage...,” says Environment Minister Gary Mar. “[This site contains] important plant and wildlife habitat that bring greater diversity and ecological integrity to our growing network of protected areas.”

Ron Hierath, MLA for Cardston Taber-Warner says, “The new Twin River protected area is a win-win situation for



all Albertans. Ranchers who have used the area for years will maintain their livelihood, while responsible grazing and land-use practices will preserve the grasslands for generations to come.”

The Order in Council for the Heritage Rangeland was approved without the removal of a Water Resources reservation/notation on the Land Status Automated System (LSAS), the Public lands land registry system. Technically this reservation/notation, which would allow the building of a dam, should have been removed as LSAS designations do not apply to areas under Community Development's legislation. The local committee, assuming the prospect of a dam was very unlikely, indicated to Environment Minister Ty Lund that the reservation/notation was not a major issue.

2002: The St. Mary, Chin, Milk River Ridge, 40 Mile Coulee and Waterton reservoirs are almost empty in March, and the Oldman reservoir is much below normal. A severe

drought has affected southern Alberta for two to three years. The Milk River Water Management Committee, concerned about uneven supply of water, wants to explore options to even out the levels, and begin the Milk River Water Study. They meet with Alberta Environment Minister Lorne Taylor and the Lieutenant Governor of Montana to discuss mutual interests.

2003: A water moratorium is imposed on new applications for water allocations from rivers in the Oldman Basin. “That we have reached an environmental limit with respect to water withdrawals is a hard truth that all residents of the Oldman River basin must finally face...,” writes Cheryl Bradley in response to an article in the Lethbridge Herald. “If the old cry of “more storage” sounds again, it will indicate we have not yet come to terms with living in a dry land with limited water resources.”

Studies show that glaciers in Glacier Park, MT, the headwaters of the Milk and St. Mary Rivers, are melting and will be gone within 50 years. ❄️

Milk River and Ridge Facts

The Milk River Ridge is an internationally significant grassland, home to several species of rare or endangered fish, amphibians, birds, and plants, and provides important habitat for deer, as well as nesting areas for several birds of prey and Sharp-tailed Grouse. It is one of six large blocks of grassland left on the glaciated plains of North America. The provincially protected Twin River Heritage Rangeland (190 km²) represents the Mixedgrass subregion and includes much of the diversity of this subregion.

The Milk River rises in western Montana, meanders through 160 kms of southernmost Alberta, then loops back into the United States. Eventually, the waters that pass through this dry, rugged basin reach the Gulf of Mexico, the only Canadian river to do so. The St. Mary River also has its headwaters in Glacier Park but flows north and stays within Canada.

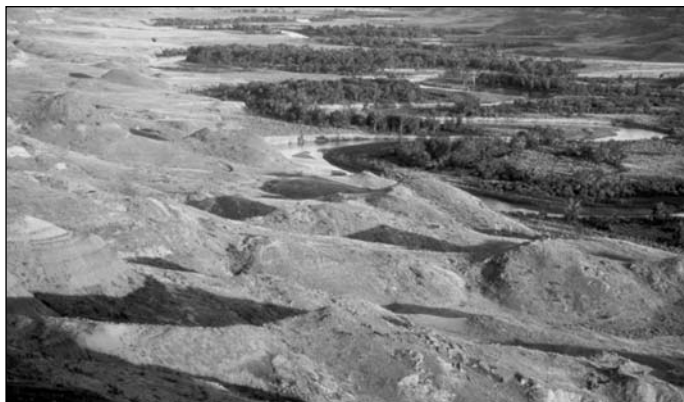
The flow of the Milk River is shared by Canada and the United States under a 1921 international agreement. Natural flow is divided equally in the winter. During irrigation season (April 1 – Oct. 30) the U.S. receives three-quarters of the natural flow of the Milk River and Canada three-quarters of the St. Mary River. In times of higher flow levels, the water is equally shared. Most of the Canadian Milk River share has flowed into the United States because there are no storage reservoirs in Canada to hold the spring run-off (Milk River Basin Studies, Fact Sheet # 3, 1980).



Pronghorn antelope

C. Wallis

River valley habitats are very important for wildlife on the Great Plains. They provide relatively scarce water and shelter. Riparian cottonwood forests of the Great Plains need spring flood and silt deposition to create habitats suitable for cottonwood seedlings. Over 60 per cent of bird species use these forests for nesting, feeding or stop-overs during migration, and several mammals find shelter for rearing their young. The Prairie Conservation Action Plan (1989) described prairie riparian habitats as “some of the most threatened ecosystems in arid and semi-arid regions of the world.” It is predicted that, without remedial action, cottonwood habitats may disappear by the end of this century.



Milk River

C. Wallis



Riparian cottonwood forest, St. Mary River

S. Road



EVAN -THOMAS DEVELOPMENT ANOTHER SACRIFICE OF K-COUNTRY WILDERNESS TO PROFIT

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist

The government released a Draft Management Plan for the Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area. This plan will allow new development in Kananaskis Country. These decisions are clearly contrary to the wishes of Albertans, and will endanger the wilderness and wildlife values that makes the Kananaskis so special.

The plan allows for expansions of existing facilities, new commercial developments and associated roads, expansion of ski hill, summer use of the ski runs, and new trails. These developments are unacceptable in this area. The cumulative effects of additional small-scale developments, expansions of existing developments, and associated increased human use have the potential to seriously affect the wildlife of the area. Of particular concern is summer use of ski runs, as these slopes have important summer foraging value for the bears of the area.

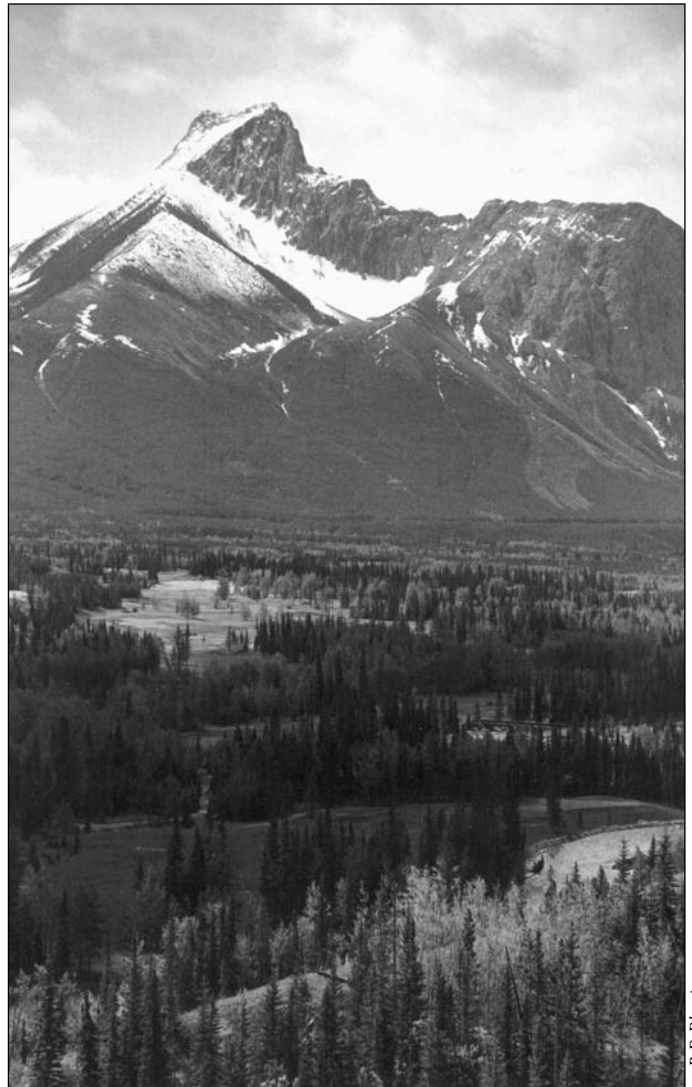
We are very concerned that the direction provided by this management plan will lead to environmental degradation, is not in the spirit of the Kananaskis Recreation Policy, and does not comply with the clearly stated wishes of Albertans.

Public-opinion surveys have consistently found that people are overwhelmingly in favour of wilderness protection in the Kananaskis and do not support development at the cost of damage to wildlife and watershed. Albertans do NOT want new development in the Kananaskis.

Due to the considerable importance of the Evan-Thomas area to regional wildlife viability, its value as a movement corridor, and the presence of important watershed and wetland values, any further development is likely to pose a serious threat to wildlife and wilderness values and should not be allowed.

Given the clear public sentiment and scientific evidence, the current plan is absolutely unacceptable. There should be no further development in the Evan-Thomas.

AWA made a written submission to the government requesting that the plan for the Evan-Thomas be immediately revised to conform with public opinion and to ensure the maintenance of the wildlife and watershed values of the area. There should be no new development in the Evan-Thomas. ✍



R.P. Pharris

Evans-Thomas Creek



© Tom Hunter



GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO LETTERS ON BIGHORN MISLEADING

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist

I have been receiving lots of calls from members who want to know how to deal with the confusing, ambiguous and evasive letters they have received from various government departments in response to their concerns about the Bighorn. Below is a copy of the response I sent to Minister Cardinal in response to his letter, which was full of misleading information. We have yet to receive a satisfying response from anyone in the government with respect to these issues.

October 27, 2002

Dear Minister Cardinal,

Thank you for your letter of September 17, 2002, which addressed our concerns about the use of ORVs in the Prime Protection Zone. I have a few questions regarding some of the statements you made in this letter.

You claim "the Bighorn Backcountry continues to be supported by A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes (Revised 1984) and the 1986 Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan." You support this claim using a number of excerpts from these documents. AWA believes that you have misrepresented these documents in your explanation. We believe that you have made additional misrepresentations in your communications with MLAs, and these have been passed on to a number of Albertans.

You state that page 13 of the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy "allows for the establishment of designated vehicle access routes in all zones if deemed appropriate under subsequent detailed planning initiatives." You use this to support the recent designation of OHV trails in the Prime Protection Zone. Your argument is not valid for two reasons.

- The phrase "designated vehicle access routes" does not imply vehicle use for recreational purposes, but rather vehicle access for transportation from one point to another.
- This provision, as stated, is subject to "subsequent detailed planning initiatives." In this case, the 1986 IRP was the subsequent detailed planning document, and this IRP reinforced the prohibition on motorized recreation in the Prime Protection Zone.

You quote from page 15 of the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy, which says, "These activities are only representative of the range of activities that occur in the Eastern Slopes. For these and any other activities, the possibility of whether they should or should not take place in a particular area must always be measured against the fundamental management intentions for that zone. Since economic opportunities are not all known in advance, site-specific developments may be considered in any zone. As integrated resource plans are completed and approved, this table and the regional zoning maps will no longer apply." Again, this provides no support for the designation of motorized routes in the Prime Protection Zone.

- The quotation clearly calls for activities to be measured against the fundamental management intentions for the zone. According to page 22 of the IRP, the intent of the Prime Protection Zone is to "preserve environmentally sensitive terrain and valuable aesthetic resources." For both scientific and aesthetic reasons, OHV use is overwhelmingly incompatible with the intent of the Prime Protection Zone. OHV use is extremely damaging to the sensitive terrain characteristic of the Prime Protection Zone, as has been demonstrated in scientific studies.
- Trails that cross dozens of kilometers, loops, and frolic areas for motorized recreation cannot be considered "site-specific" developments. By their very nature, they are intended to cover ground, not to be restricted to one site. In addition, scientific studies have demonstrated that the negative effects of a motorized trail extend for tens of meters on either side of the trail, decreasing the habitat value of a significant strip of land.
- The last sentence indicates that the table of compatible activities will no longer apply once the IRPs are completed. I would like to draw your attention to the table in the 1986 IRP, which, as you suggest, supercedes the table in the 1984 policy. The 1986 IRP table of compatible activities prohibits motorized recreation in the Prime Protection Zone by listing "off-highway vehicle activity" as a "not permitted use."

Letters from MLAs to their constituents provide the following information, which they obtained after consulting your office. A letter from Richard Magnus claims that "Local and provincial committees...reviewed the Bighorn area under the recently completed Special Places 2000 program... The committees did not recommend protected area status for the Bighorn."

- We have documentation showing that the provincial committee for Special Places 2000 recommended immediate protection for the Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area.
- The local committee did recommend that park protection was not necessary because the area was sufficiently protected as Prime Protection Zone. The current changes to downgrade the protection offered by Prime Protection Zone directly undermines the decision of the local committee.



NEW PUBLIC PROCESS USED IN GHOST-WAIPAROUS ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist



The department of Sustainable Resource Development is conducting an access management planning process for the Ghost-Waiparous area. Although some of the issues are the same, the process is quite different from what happened in the Bighorn.

A different consulting company has been retained to do the public consultations, and they seem to be doing a better job of asking

the public what they want.

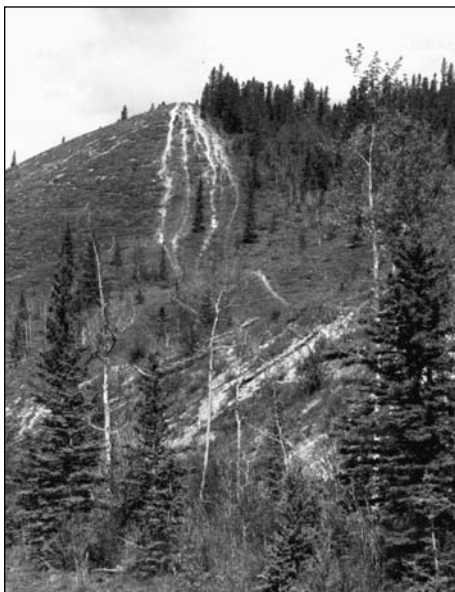
More importantly, the issues surrounding OHV recreation are significantly different. Whereas in the Bighorn, OHV users were lobbying for (and were given) access to the Prime Protection Zone, the Ghost-Waiparous area is mostly zoned Multiple Use, with some areas of Critical Wildlife Habitat.

The recreational use of the Ghost-Waiparous area must be planned carefully so that wilderness, watershed and wildlife values are not compromised.

AWA supports the safe and responsible use of OHVs on designated trails in appropriate zones. We recognize that the Ghost-Waiparous area has become a popular destination for off-highway vehicles, and that some of the area is zoned to allow this

use. However, we have a number of specific concerns about the area, the negative effects of OHVs and random camping (particularly their impact on watershed and wildlife values), conflicts with other recreational users of the area, and future measures for monitoring, enforcement and restoration.

AWA made a written submission and participated in a stakeholder meet-



ATV damage in Upper Ghost Creek

R. P. Pharris

ing. Our position is that OHVs must be carefully regulated, permitted only on designated trails in appropriate zones; that there must be no motorized access to Critical Wildlife Habitat; that appropriate stream crossings must be built; and that surrounding lands require appropriate protection. ☞

To read about the process and make comments go to <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/regions/southwest/ghost/>

A public survey questionnaire is available at <http://www.praxis.ca/gw/GWSurvey.pdf>

The City of Calgary's Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA)

CITY OF CALGARY RECOGNIZES IMPORTANCE OF ITS WATERSHEDS

By Heinz Unger, AWA Director and Philip Clement, AWA Conservation Biologist

Committee (chaired by the Mayor) dealt with the Spray Lake Sawmills (1980) Ltd. (SLS) 2001 20-year forest management agreement (FMA) in the upper Bow River sub-basins at a meeting on Dec 5, 2002 at the Calgary City Hall. The IGA passed a motion that "Council direct the Administration to provide input into the Detailed Forest Management Plan to be prepared by SLS."



Clear-cut logging in Maclean Creek, Kananaskis Country

AWA Files

Vern Hart, a city planner with the planning commission, had invited AWA to attend the meeting. He also prepared the background information contained in the Executive Report to the IGA Committee. The background information also contained a copy of a letter sent by AWA on July 10, 2001 to the then-Alderman David Bronconnier; this letter expressed serious concerns for the Bow River watershed in the light of the FMA about to be signed by the Alberta government and SLS.

SLS was represented at the IGA committee meeting by Gord Lehn, their Woodlands Manager (and current president of the Alberta Forest Products Association). He reported that the Public Advisory Committee (PAC), as required by the terms of the FMA, has been established and its members have been selected. However, no representative of the City of Calgary was included. In light of the impacts that forest management has on Calgary's water supply, it is imperative that Calgary be involved in forest management planning.

It was of great concern to the IGA members, and should be of concern to the City Council, Calgary residents, and Bow River Basin Council (BRBC) members, that there are no representatives of the city (specifically from City Waterworks and Environmental Management) on the main PAC. In fact the PAC did not include any representatives of any entities downstream of Cochrane, nor any agencies or individuals concerned with good management of the upper watershed.

Heinz Unger of the BRBC and AWA suggested to the IGA committee members, some of whom wanted to pass this matter on to the Operations and Environment committee, that good management of the city's watershed will continue to be a matter of great interest for the IGA committee since the area of the watershed is under the jurisdiction of the provincial government (and their "agreement holders"), and to a lesser degree of rural municipalities.

"This is a critical test case," said Unger, "since we're dealing here with the implementation of the first major FMA in southern Alberta covering important upper watershed areas." ☞



KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BOW RIVER BASIN

By Heinz Unger



As AWA's representative on the Bow River Basin Council (BRBC), I participate in their quarterly meetings, which are very important and useful for information sharing and networking with the many different stakeholder representatives from the basin. The BRBC is a good forum for raising issues of concern with regard to the Bow River, such as last March when I gave a presentation on the environmental and water quality threats from unregulated OHV activities to the Ghost-Waiparous area.

The most recent BRBC project, in which I participated as co-project manager, is an urban stormwater management website, which can be found at <http://www.urbanswm.ab.ca/>. There may be no apparent connection between urban stormwater and wilderness areas; however it was found that, although most human and industrial wastewater along the Bow River has been taken care of through sewage collection and treatment systems, urban stormwater continues to be a major source of water pollution. It carries not only sediment and silt, road salt, oil, and grease (from city roads), but also herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer (from lawn treatments), and bacteria (from pet waste). Most of it reaches the river in shock loadings after heavy storms or chinook snowmelts and can have serious impacts on the river ecology.

The new website is intended to assist the smaller municipalities, developers, consultants and contractors to identify and adopt best management practices—which are often simple to implement—to prevent or mitigate pollution from reaching the storm sewers and the river. The site also has education and communication resources and links to other relevant information sources and good practice examples. The website highlights an important conclusion and also a recommendation, namely that (urban) development is best planned and implemented on a watershed basis and that natural areas (wetlands, ponds, streams and floodplains) are best left undisturbed for better urban stormwater management.

In late 2002 the BRBC started work on a *Report on the State of the Bow River Basin* (more information on <http://www.brbc.ab.ca/issues2.asp>). It is intended to follow up on *Preserving Our Lifeline: A Report on the State of the Bow River* published in October 1994 by the Bow River Water Quality Council (the forerunner of the BRBC).

The 1994 report provided an overview of water quantity and water quality related issues on the main stem of the Bow River. The purpose of this initiative was to establish some "baseline" data and analysis to assess future changes in the river and determine whether or not those changes were positive or negative. The format of the report included an assessment of a number of significant water quality parameters on a reach-by-reach basis. The eight most prevalent types of water use were considered, ranging

from contact recreation, irrigation, and drinking water supply to aesthetics and cool- and cold-water ecosystems.

The new report, which is scheduled to be available by the end of 2003 or early 2004, has been titled *Nurture, Renew, Protect: A Report on the State of the Bow River Basin*. While the approach to data gathering and analysis will be similar to the earlier report, there will be greater emphasis on the entire river basin and the potential impacts on water quantity and quality of activities and decisions (such as land use) anywhere in the basin. The importance of stewardship by all and better management will be stressed. The stated main objectives of the new report are the following:

- to improve the overall understanding of the Bow River Basin through the analysis of data, current information and trends;
- to facilitate decision-making for water issues in the Bow River Basin; and
- to engage the general public, stakeholders and resource managers in discussion, and through these discussions, make meaningful recommendations for future improvements.

In the future the report's data and analyses may help us, not only to identify wilderness areas and/or surface waters requiring action, but also to promote better protection for areas critical to

water quality and quantity, especially the upper watersheds. I represent AWA (and all other environmental stakeholders) on the steering committee, which will direct the work of a group of consultants recently engaged by BRBC for the detailed preparation of the report. Any concerns or suggestions for data collection (as well as queries on any of the other BRBC activities referred to above) are welcome and should be directed to Heinz Unger at (403) 851 7632 or heinz.unger@3web.net.

Better than contacting me, I would advise members and friends of AWA to get involved directly and thereby have their concerns heard and make their contributions in their local regions. Such involvement could be either in one of the larger river basin organizations, such as for the Oldman, Red Deer and North Saskatchewan River, or in one of the many

local watershed groups that have sprung up all over the province (see <http://www.albertawatersheds.org/> for more details).

These smaller groups—supported by various levels of government, industry, and academe, as well as individuals—do very important work for the protection and improvement of local streams and creeks all over Alberta. Very often it is the farmers and ranchers who increasingly come forward as good stewards of the land and water and take the initiative to start and support a local watershed organization. There are great opportunities for all friends of the wilderness (and of good quality water) to get involved, speak up and work for water and the environment.



Bow River southeast of Calgary

S. Bray



SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN ENTERS PHASE II

Since 2001 I have been a member of the Bow Basin Advisory Committee (BAC) to provide inputs to Alberta Environment for the Bow River portion of the preparation of the South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan. Preparations for the Red Deer, Oldman and South Saskatchewan Rivers are proceeding in parallel, and more information on all of these can be found at

<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/regions/ssrb/>. Phase I was completed last year. It dealt with transfers of water allocations. Very few transactions have taken place since the plan was adopted, and it is too early to assess the merits and functioning of the transfer system.

Phase II, which started in late 2002, is of much greater interest and importance for our natural waterways since it deals with water management policy (i.e., flow allocations), and a strategy for the protection of the aquatic environment. The latter will involve the following:

- (i) a review of the current status of the environmental conditions of the rivers concerned, including the riparian vegetation;
- (ii) a scientific determination of technical instream flow needs for the full health and protection of the aquatic environment;
- (iii) recommendations for water conservation objectives (WCOs) as defined in the new provincial Water Act; and
- (iv) identification of land uses that could be affecting the aquatic environment and preparation of recommendations on how to deal with such land uses.

Instream flow needs are the first stage in this exercise, and a report on them is now being prepared by a government technical working group. The report will be subjected to an independent peer review. The instream flow needs are based on four essential components: water quality, fish habitat, riparian vegetation, and channel structure. Each of these elements requires successively higher flows. The last two are needed periodically for channel forming and flushing flows, with the latter also helping to improve water quality.

Water quality is determined based on dissolved oxygen, temperature and ammonia, and fish habitat is based on water depth, velocity, substrate, and cover per species and life stage. Although the instream flow needs may often be lower than the natural flows, they are an indicator showing that if instream flow needs are not met, there is an increasing risk to the natural environment.

The next, and most important, step of Phase II will be the establishment of WCOs, which, according to the Water Act, means “the amount and quality of water established by the (regional Alberta Environment) Director ... to be necessary for the (i) protection of a natural water body or its aquatic environment ..., (ii) protection of tourism, recreational, transportation or waste assimilation uses of water, or (iii) management of fish or wildlife, and may include water necessary for the rate of flow of water or water level requirements.”

Hidden amidst all the legal language is a real concern for the health of the aquatic environment, but it will be up to the “the Director” (Alberta Environment) to ensure that there’s enough water left in a given reach of the river for aquatic health.

However, at times the WCOs may be a compromise between actual water use and the instream flow needs.


In such cases the established WCOs may become a target to be achieved over time. This is where the BAC and later the public come in, since all of us have to make sure that the rules and procedures for water management agreed to by the government will be adequate for the protection of the aquatic environment and that the government assigns a high priority to this objective, right below essential human uses.

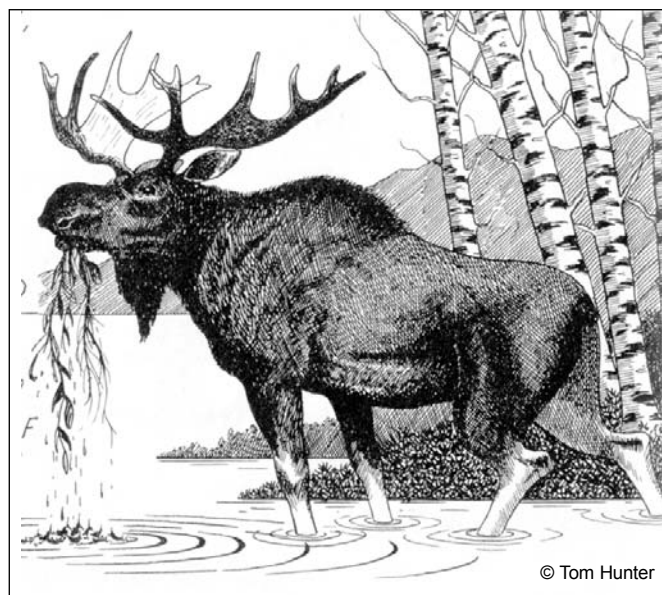
There will be public consultations on the preparation of Phase II of the water management plan. The BAC has stressed the importance of wide advertising, provision of sufficient information and adequate time for responses from the public.

An important tool to be used for the eventual establishment of WCOs will be the development of a number of water management scenarios that have been agreed upon in a joint meeting of all South Saskatchewan River Basin advisory committees. These scenarios allow for the existing allocations, licences and commitments, and they then make reasonable assumptions (forecasts) about increased or decreased consumption, such as through 20 per cent conservation by all users.

Some scenarios also allow for providing the full or at least partial (water quality and fish habitat) instream flow needs as determined by the technical working group. There was discussion about including a climate change scenario, but eventually it was agreed that in case of a catastrophic drought, contingency plans rather than flow allocations would have to be used.

Although Alberta Environment had more ambitious plans for completing Phase II, they have realized the importance of doing it right through more in-depth research and background work and by getting advice and inputs from key stakeholders and the public. Completion of the final draft plan is now scheduled for early 2004.

Throughout my participation in the BAC activities, I have had the impression that there is serious intent by the government to protect and enhance the quality of our rivers, but we always have to be watchful—through our active participation in the process—that they do not compromise quality for the sake of political expediency. 



WHALEBACK GAS EXPLORATION GAMBLE TURNING SOUR?

By James Tweedie



A year ago, Polaris Resources initiated their public consultation process for a sour gas play in the Whaleback area. Polaris is acting as the lead partner of a joint venture consortium of oil and gas speculators that includes Knight Petroleum and Rick's Nova Scotia Ltd. (from Oklahoma, lest you think otherwise), having acquired the freehold subsurface mineral rights for the half section of land (Section 32-Township 10-Range 2-West of the 5th) that borders the Bob Creek Wildland and the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. These rights were established in 1999 under Alberta's Special Places program to fulfill "this government's promise to protect the exceptional landscape of Alberta's Whaleback region" (Premier Klein, May 11, 1999).

The neighbouring ranching community of Maycroft was suitably outraged, and about 30 interventions were immediately filed with the AEUB to express concern over this apparent threat to the area that would jeopardize the hard-won community decision-making process that had seen the creation of the Special Places protected areas.

Polaris secured title to these mineral rights from Richfield Oils in September 2001. While the sale price of this deeded title remains confidential, it is worth noting that in 1998 Richfield Oils bought a five-year lease on this land from the Montreal Trust Company for a mere \$8,000. In the early 1990s Amoco Canada had paid the Alberta Treasury over a million dollars for its oil and gas leases in this same area. Clearly Polaris is into high risk gambling, especially given that all the adjacent mineral rights are held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada as part of Amoco's "environmental legacy."

According to the joint press releases made at the time by Premier Klein, representing the Government of Alberta, and John Lounds, Executive Director of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the public was led to believe that "this exceptional landscape" (Premier Klein), "this extraordinary landscape" (Hon. Ty Lund, then Minister of the Environment), "the largest undisturbed montane landscape in Alberta's Rocky Mountain Natural Region" (Premier Klein) was to be protected as an environmental legacy for all time.

"We fully appreciate the national significance of this area. We are extremely proud to have played a role in ensuring that a living legacy, the Whaleback Area, will forever benefit future generations. Creating this environmental legacy is the right thing to do," said Joseph H. Bryant, President of Amoco Canada. The Nature Conservancy's press release stated, "The Nature Conservancy of Canada will hold the mineral interests until they expire in 2004. At which time, the mineral interest will revert to the Province of Alberta and never be resold."

In light of these statements and the regulations of the AEUB that require a sour gas operator to hold a full section of subsurface rights for exploration, it appears that Polaris has been attempting to fast track this exploration before the 2004 deadline, even though they would like to argue that only the leases contained within the protected areas will be held to that commitment.

In a letter in the summer of 2000, the Nature Conservancy

made it quite clear to both Polaris and the AEUB that they are not interested in participating in any exploration activities in this area, nor are they prepared to negotiate away this conservation achievement that "all Canadians should be proud of" (May 11, 1999 press release). The organization still holds to that position today.

Having failed to secure their cooperation, Polaris has now applied to the AEUB to exercise its powers to establish compulsory pooling ("forced pooling") that would require the Nature Conservancy to become a "partner" in Polaris's exploration and production activities or face a 200 per cent costs penalty. Should the AEUB take this route, they will be stepping over a threshold of credibility as the public regulator and arbiter of the public good that all participants in the industry should be alarmed by, not just the local Maycroft ranching community, who remain as adamant in their objections to this project as they were a year ago.

Although Polaris had hoped to have their application approved last June, the AEUB is still in the process of reviewing it and no formal deadline has yet been set for letters of objection and intervention. If you care about this spectacular landscape as much as Premier Klein and the Hon. Ty Lund do, please write to them to let them know that you expect them to uphold the commitments made in 1999. Your support for the Nature Conservancy's position would also be welcomed by its local beleaguered executive director, Larry Simpson. ✂

*Letters of intervention to the AEUB can be sent to Mr. Paul Forbes at the Applications Division:
Paul.Forbes@gov.ab.ca or fax (403) 297 7336.*

Premier Klein:#307, 10800-97th Ave., Edmonton, AB T5K 2B7
ph: (780) 427 2251, fax: (780) 427 1349.

The Hon. Dave Coumts, MLA Livingstone-Fort Macleod:
#203, 10800-97 Ave., Edmonton AB T5K 2B6
fax: (780) 415 4853, email: Livingstone.Macleod@assembly.ab.ca.

The Hon. Lorne Taylor, Minister, Alberta Environment:
#423, 10800-97 Ave., Edmonton AB T5K 2B6
ph: (780) 427 2391, fax: (780) 422 6259.

The Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, Minister
Alberta Community Development:
#229 10800-97 Ave., Edmonton AB T5K 2B6
ph: (780) 427 4928, fax: (780) 427 0188.

The Nature Conservancy: Larry Simpson
602 - 11 Ave., Calgary AB T2R 1J8.



Douglas fir savanna in Whaleback

C. Wallis

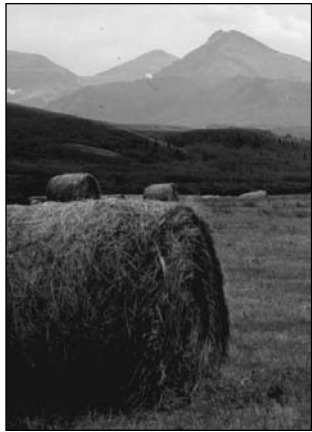


WATERTON SUBDIVISION GOES AHEAD

By Cheryl Bradley, SAEG

Requests for an environmental review of the proposed Garner subdivision under section 48 of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) has been denied. In the letter, dated October 28, federal environment minister David Anderson states that "the scope of a review under CEAA would be too narrow as it would address only this one project's effects on Waterton Lakes National Park" (WLNP), and that "what is needed is a broader investigation of the implications of possible changes in land use and other regional development pressures on the Park's lands and resources."

The letter identifies "other initiatives which are under way or planned, which should help in managing the effects of outside development on national parks." These are 1) Nature Conservancy of Canada ongoing efforts to acquire lands around WLNP; 2) a regional



East of Waterton Lakes
National Parks

sustainable development strategy for southern Alberta proposed by the Government of Alberta; and 3) proposed amendments to the CEAA that would make specific mention of the need to consider impacts on the ecological integrity of national parks when projects are proposed on their boundaries.

Meanwhile Jim Garner has subdivided 100 acres into 23 lots, sold five of these, and built roads on the parcel adjacent to the Park's eastern boundary between Highway 5 and the Waterton River.

With this move, the federal government has joined the Province of Alberta in washing its hands of this situation. It is irresponsible for government, at all levels, to allow such a controversial project to proceed without a full and open assessment of the environmental, social and economic consequences for the region and for our national heritage. There is a clear need for regional land use planning, involving all interests, before any further subdivision is considered along the Waterton Front.

The Southern Alberta Regional Strategy, which includes lands adjacent to Waterton Lakes National Park, is currently in the initial information-gathering phase. Public consultation appears to be some way off. It remains to be seen whether this strategy will address in sufficient detail planning of land use in the fringe of Waterton Lakes National Park, and whether Cardston County Council will participate. Information on the Strategy can be found at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/regions/southern/strategy.html>.

Threats to the ecological integrity of Waterton Lakes National Park and Glacier National Park, including subdivision on the parks' borders, are documented by the U.S. National Parks Conservation Association. On Nov. 14 they released the first-ever comprehensive assessment of natural and cultural resource conditions and trends at Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. They conclude: "haphazard development of nearby landscapes and inadequate funding for basic park operations threaten the natural and cultural resources that make the Peace Park so extraordinary." Report highlights and the full downloadable report are available at http://www.npca.org/across_the_nation/park_pulse/glacier.

Thank you all for your support and action in dealing with this issue. I only wish the outcome was more positive. ✍

NAVIGO ENERGY ABANDONS TWO OIL WELLS IN HAY-ZAMA WILDLAND PARK

By Cliff Wallis, AWA President



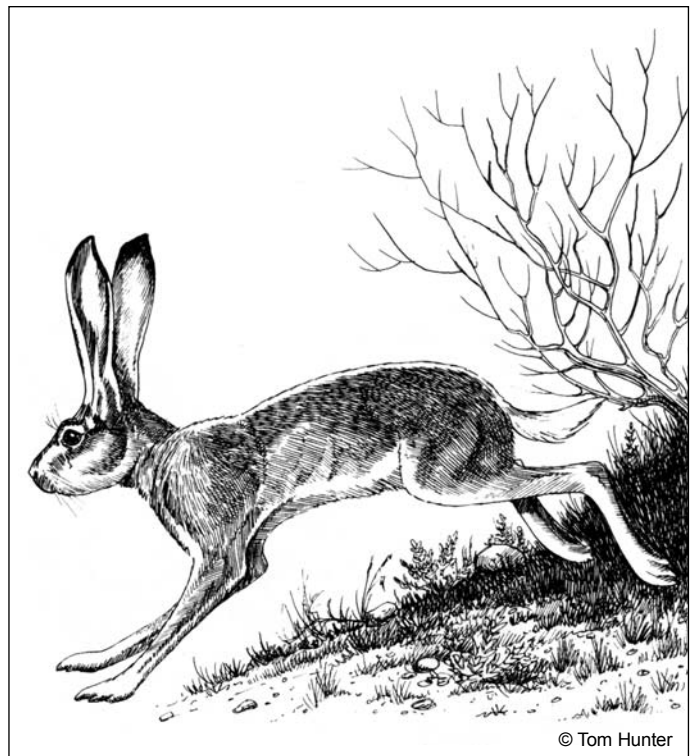
Following consultation with environmental groups, Dene Tha' First Nation, and Alberta Community Development (Parks and Protected Areas), Navigo Energy has agreed to abandon two additional oil wells in the Hay-Zama Complex and to surrender some subsurface leases that it recently had acquired. The oil wells will be phased out over the next year.

Navigo is in the final phases of exploration and development in the Hay-Zama Complex and is using 3-D seismic to better define oil-bearing structures that it can access from existing well-sites.

In recognition of Navigo's environmental performance and their offer to abandon two oil wells well in advance of the target date, the Hay-Zama Committee recommended allowing additional surface access for seismic so that Navigo could gather essential data. The information will assist in the orderly phase-out of energy production activities in the complex.

Navigo continues to demonstrate its environmental leadership in the Complex and has willingly agreed to complete all drilling activities by 2005 from existing well pad footprints.

Navigo continues to be a leader among energy companies. It has met or exceeded AWA's expectations for environmental performance and for the phase out of petroleum production in this internationally significant wetland complex. We are hopeful that the Hay-Zama Committee process might serve as a model to guide the phase out of non-conforming uses from other proposed and existing protected areas in Alberta. ✍



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MCCLELLAND LAKE WETLAND COMPLEX WINS REPRIEVE

By Shirley Bray, WLA Editor


The McClelland Lake Wetland Complex (MLWC) has won a temporary reprieve from destruction by the deferral of TrueNorth's Fort Hills oil sands project. The MLWC is an internationally significant site. AWA strongly believes that the MLWC is a priceless part of the province's natural heritage and must be protected.

"This decision by TrueNorth represents an important opportunity for everyone concerned about the fate of the wetland complex to push for a development which does not affect the MLWC," said Dr. Richard Thomas, who represented AWA at the EUB hearings in June 2002. "AWA believes full formal protection of the MLWC should be built into any future project."

TrueNorth intends to continue with the project once it finds a partner to share in the financial risk. The company has cancelled the funding to Linda Halsey for a five-year boreal wetland research project. Halsey produced a report for TrueNorth saying that McClelland Fen was merely representative and not unique, as it had been described in the past. Dr. Diana Horton wrote a critique of this report in the October 2002 issue of *Wild Lands Advocate*.

In a subsequent interview, Halsey told Mark Lowey of *Enviroline* that there hasn't been enough research done on similar wetlands in the region to say that McClelland Lake is rare. Dr. Horton responded, "If that's true, then we don't know enough to say whether it's 'representative' either."

During Energy and Utility Board hearings to review the project, community, environmental, health and First Nation groups raised numerous serious ecological and social concerns over the Fort Hills oils sands project. Concerns included the cumulative ecological effects of the project and the planned destruction of the McClelland Lake Wetland Complex.

Mark Lowey has written an excellent comprehensive update on this issue that can be found on our webpage for Fort Hills-McClelland Lake. 

EUB REQUIRES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT INFORMATION FOR REVISED CHEVIOT MINE PROPOSAL


By Philip Clement, AWA Conservation Biologist

Since our last Cheviot update, the parent companies holding the coal leases for the proposed Cheviot mine, Luscar and Consol, have reached an agreement to merge with Fording River Coal, the largest coal company in Canada. Although the parent companies will now have more alternatives, the ramifications of the merger for the Cheviot mine are unclear.

A letter sent to Lorne Taylor, Minister of the Environment, by AWA, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Canadian Nature Federation, Mining Watch Canada, Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development, Environmental Resource Centre of Alberta, Toxics Watch Society, Sierra Club-Prairie Chapter, Jasper Environmental Association, and Ben Gadd requested the completion of a thorough assessment of the potential impacts of the haul road application and the entire satellite mine proposal on fish and fish habitat of the McLeod River system.

In response, Lorne Taylor wrote, "I am of the opinion that

an environmental impact assessment report is not necessary due to the nature of the proposed activity. I am satisfied that the existing regulatory process can effectively and efficiently provide for public consultation and the collection of all necessary information to properly assess this application. Therefore, I will not direct Cardinal River Coal to prepare and submit an environmental impact assessment report."

However, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) requested that Cardinal River Coals Ltd. provide information on all potential environmental impacts of their revised proposal for the Cheviot coal mine and not just the industrial haul road the company has applied for. As the EUB requested a revised EIA, it is possible that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) will conclude that a revised EIA of the new mine proposal is required under CEAA as well. 

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON FORESTRY IN SOUTHWESTERN ALBERTA


By Philip Clement, AWA Conservation Biologist

The provincial government has been consulting the public on a new Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the C5 Forest Management Unit. The C5 Forest Management Unit is located in the southwest corner of the province and includes the forested land between Waterton Lakes National Park and Kananaskis Country. Special areas of concern that will be affected by the management plan include the Whaleback, Livingston-Porcupine, Castle Wilderness, and the Waterton Parkland.

The government states that the FMP's goal is to "define a desired future forest state for the C5 Management Unit that demonstrates sustainability of the forest ecosystems, diverse social and economic benefits, today and tomorrow, through operational forest management systems and adaptive management."

While on a tour of the C5 Forest Management Unit, AWA staff observed several user's footprints on the landscape, including random camping sites, oil and gas seismic lines, coal-bed methane test wells, forestry clearcutting/roads, and abandoned coal mines.

We were also surprised to see a modern snowmobile hut built in the name of "safety." The "safety" hut (a hexagon about 30 feet wide) contains picnic benches, a fireplace, various other items, and a garbage receptacle (which was mostly filled with beer cans). It is of concern to AWA members that such huts can be built in backcountry areas by snowmobile interests. It sets a dangerous precedent for building other infrastructure and detracts from the wilderness experience of the area.

AWA is concerned about the impacts of forestry within the C5 Forest Management Unit and will be asking the government to stop all industrial scale logging. We would like to see more compatible uses of the landscape, such as smaller-scale "post and pole" logging operations and ecotourism, that consider ecological values (i.e., water purification and wildlife habitat). Further, AWA believes that motorized recreation should not be present in sensitive wilderness areas and should be restricted to designated trails. 

If you would like to learn more about the C5 Management Plan, contact AWA or visit the Government of Alberta website at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/regions/southwest/c5/abo.html>.



USING FINANCIAL MARKETS AND CONSUMER PRESSURE TO REALIZE CONSERVATION GOALS

By Philip Clement, AWA Conservation Biologist




The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America held a public workshop titled “Investing in North America’s Future: Innovative Financing for Sustainable Development” on December 9, 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico. The workshop highlighted the power of using financial markets and consumer pressure to realize conservation goals.

The workshop also illustrated the importance of understanding the link between financial markets and sustainable development, something which, although it has tremendous implications, needs significantly more research. Speakers discussed activities on understanding investment and environmental linkages in North America, and financing environmentally preferable goods and services.

Socially responsible investing was also discussed at the workshop. According to Micheal Jantzi Research Associates Ltd., in 1989 socially responsible investment mutual fund assets in Canada totalled about \$102 million, a number that increased to \$3.8 billion by the end of 1999. This represents a growth rate of more than 3,700 per cent during the 1990s. Further, a survey done by a Montreal pollster revealed that 53 per cent of Canadians are interested in ethical mutual funds, even if they provide a lower rate of return.

Investors and mutual fund managers need information about the investments they recommend. To this end, Albertans for a Wild Chinchaga, CPAWS—Edmonton Chapter, and AWA recently sent a letter to over 50 investors letting them know that “Alberta’s forest policy and practice must be changed to provide a sustainable industry for the long-term benefit of our forests, forest industry and forest dependent communities. Endangered forests need to be protected to meet the demands of many retailers. Forest management needs to be improved to meet the certification standards of FSC. These measures will ensure more secure investment opportunities.”

John Ganzi, the executive director of the Financial Institute for Global Sustainability, discussed the increasing potential of “shareholder activism.” For example, AWA and its members could purchase stocks in a company and attend shareholder meetings where decisions on the management of the company are made. As shareholders, AWA and its members would be able to directly voice opinions about specific issues and topics of concern to company management (i.e., do not drill in the Bighorn or the Castle).

The CEC was established by Canada, Mexico and the United States to build cooperation among the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners in implementing the North American Agreement for Environmental Cooperation, the environmental side accord to NAFTA. The CEC addresses environmental issues of continental concern, with particular attention to the environmental challenges and opportunities presented by continent-wide free trade. 

ENCOURAGING INVESTORS IN ALBERTA’S FOREST INDUSTRY TO KNOW RISKS AND TAKE ACTION

The following letter was sent by Helene Walsh on behalf of Alberta conservation groups to investors in Alberta’s forest industry.

As conservation organizations, one of our primary objectives is the maintenance of biological diversity in the forested lands of Alberta. Through our research into alternative approaches to forest management, it has come to our attention that many of the current forestry practices that threaten the sustainability of wildlife populations also threaten the sustainability of the forest industry in Alberta. Practices that threaten both the ecological and economic sustainability of forestry operations represent a risk to your investment. Because of this, we expect that you would be interested in finding out more about the specific problems and solutions and bringing these to the attention of the management of the company you have invested in or may be advising others to invest in.

Key issues for investors in the Alberta forest industry:

- *Assumptions of forest growth in Alberta are largely borrowed from other jurisdictions. We have a poor understanding of how fast trees will actually regrow after harvesting, and this places the Alberta forest industry at risk in the longer term. Indications are that currently used estimates of forest growth seriously overestimate regeneration rates.¹*
- *The volume of timber harvested in relation to the amount that can be sustained by annual tree growth has been maximized, leaving no margin for error.²*
- *Removal of wood by fire and the activities of the petroleum industry are substantial, but are not included in Annual Allowable Cut calculations. Therefore, a timber shortage is predicted for the Alberta forest industry.^{3,4}*
- *The size of tree available in Alberta is declining as old-growth is harvested unsustainably. The Alberta sawlog industry is particularly at risk.⁵*
- *Many retailers world-wide have made commitments to avoid purchasing wood products that originate from endangered forests.⁶ The lack of forested protected areas combined with the intensive industrial development in Alberta is causing the international conservation community to consider Alberta’s forests to be endangered.*
- *There is a growing trend to forest certification—if the Alberta forest industry cannot meet ecological standards, they will be denied access to markets.⁶*

Alberta’s forest policy and practice must be changed to provide a sustainable industry for the long-term benefit of our forests, forest industry and forest dependent communities. Endangered forests need to be protected to meet the demands of many retailers. Forest management needs to be improved to meet the certification standards of FSC. These measures will ensure more secure investment opportunities.

We urge you to raise the issues outlined in this letter with the management of the company you have invested in or may advise others to invest in. It would also be useful to write to the Premier of Alberta, as provincial government policy currently presents a barrier to the implementation of improved forest management.



THE PRICE OF BACKYARD BIRDFEEDING

By Jason Rogers

Most of us probably wouldn't readily associate backyard birdfeeding with the destruction of natural heritage, but it behooves us all to take a closer look at this seemingly innocuous hobby.

The spectacular diversity of birds we see on Earth today is the product of over 50 million years of evolution and is an irreplaceable legacy. It exists in large part because birds have been very successful in filling the ecological niches within their environments.

Up until about 500 years ago, these environments were essentially natural. Today artificial ones, of which feeders form a significant component, dominate many areas. As birds attempt to fill the niches we've created, they are changing from products of a natural environment into those of an artificial one. Consequently natural heritage is lost forever.

With fully one quarter of the adult population feeding wild birds, it is difficult to imagine how this could not be happening. Indeed we are beginning to see signs of change in feeder-going species. A number of authors attribute changes in migratory behaviour to feeding. Hummingbirds that defend feeders appear to experience reduced lifetime productivity. A study has found that feeder foods may replace as much as a quarter of the natural ones in a black-capped chickadee's diet. Feeders have likely facilitated the house finch invasion of southern Alberta. Breeding Bird Survey data suggest that Alberta populations of several feeder species are being inflated. And in a startling find by researchers, eastern house finches appear to be evolving larger bills, possibly in response to their heavy use of feeders.

With these changes comes concern over how they are reverberating through ecosystems. Are less competitive species being displaced? Is species hardiness being compromised? Are

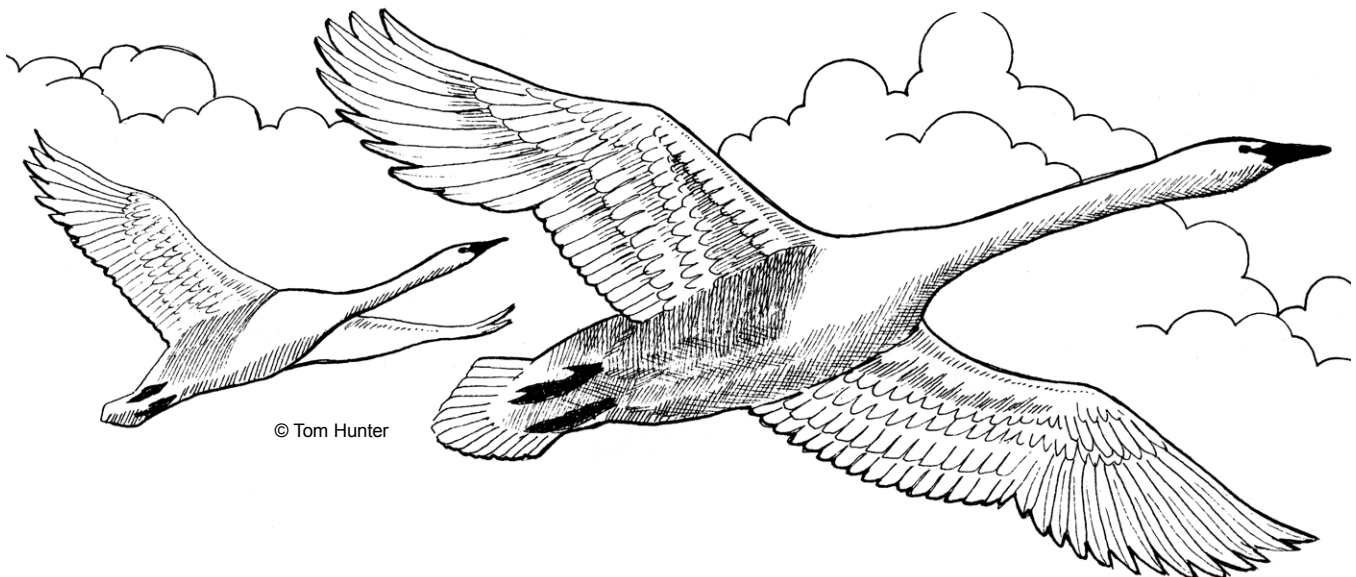
natural relationships disintegrating? It may be decades before we can answer these questions, and by then, irreparable damage may have been done.

The indirect effects of birdfeeding are just as worrisome. The endangered mountain plover is threatened most by agricultural methods used in the production of commercial birdseed. And West Nile virus, which some now believe may be spread by house sparrows at feeders, is devastating a variety of species, some with very small, vulnerable populations.

Much of the blame for these problems can be laid on the perception, held by many, that by using feeders and related paraphernalia to create backyard utopias for a handful of "desirable" species, we are somehow manufacturing natural habitat. Even if this could be accomplished in an urban setting, the habitat would be so fragmented as to be of little use to most species. As Dr. Richard Thomas put it, "We cannot replicate natural ecosystems. Protected areas are internationally recognized as the most efficient way to maintain biological diversity." Just think of what could be achieved if all of the money spent on birdfeeding (which, in the U.S. alone, may total \$3.5 billion a year) was instead channeled into wilderness conservation!

The time has come to disassociate backyard birdfeeding from legitimate conservation work and recognize it as purely a form of recreation that, like many other forms of recreation, is enjoyed at the expense of the natural world. 🐦

[On December 27, 2002 *The Wall Street Journal* featured, on its front page, a lengthy article that provides a critical examination of the backyard birdfeeding phenomenon. Another even more comprehensive one appears in *Alberta Naturalist* issues 31(4) and 32(1).]



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Game Farming Class Action Lawsuit Goes Ahead

In our last issue we mentioned that the Alberta Elk Association (AEA) had made some comments about the claim being put forward in the class action lawsuit that were unsubstantiated. Specifically, the AEA suggested that there was no evidence to support the possibility of disease transmission to domestic livestock, wildlife and humans; that game farmers who joined the class action would be at personal risk; and that claims of this nature had been tried before and lost. Lawyers for the case demanded a retraction and the publication of a letter (see below) that clarified the issues raised by the AEA, both of which were published in the Alberta Elk November 2002 newsletter. More than sufficient numbers of game farmers have now joined the class action. ✍

Potential Class Action: The Real Story

By Clint G. Docken, Q.C.

There are three key facts game farmers should know regarding the pending class action lawsuit concerning the alleged negligence of the CFIA and the importation of Cervids from the U.S. to Canada. The three facts concern the following issues:

1. Scientific studies evidencing the transmission of various diseases among the Cervid populations;
2. Costs awards in Saskatchewan class action legislation; and
3. Success of class actions in similar circumstances.

Scientific Studies: Numerous studies published as early as the 1970s documenting the risk of disease transmission to domestic livestock, wild life and humans from infected cervids; for example:

- Libke, K. G., and A. M. Walton. Presumptive paratuberculosis in a Virginia white-tailed deer. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*. 1975. 11.4:552-3.

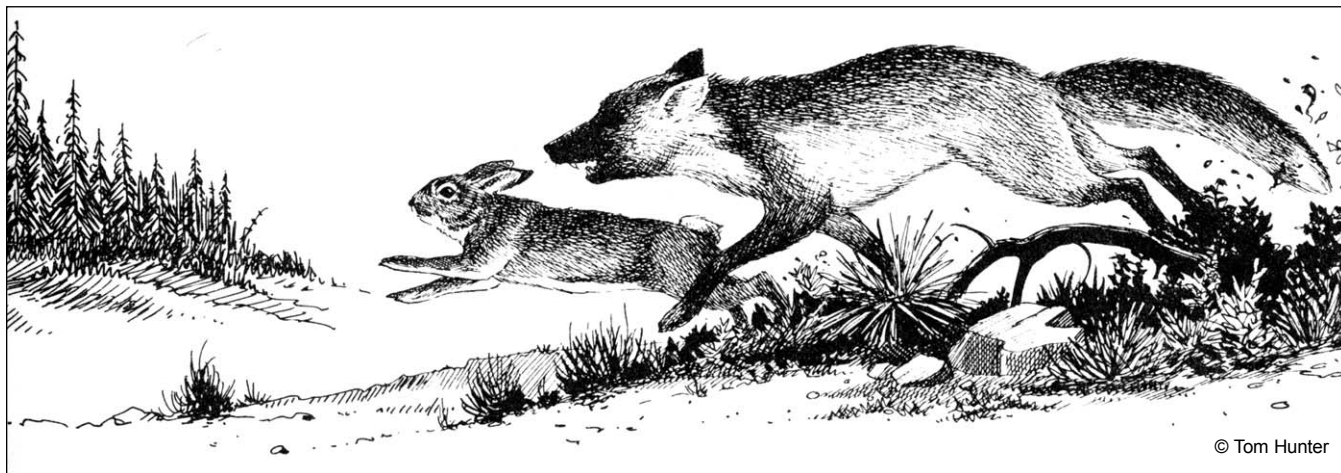
- Williams, E. S., and S. Young. Chronic wasting disease of captive mule deer: A spongiform encephalopathy. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*. 1980. 16:89-98.
- Williams, E. S., and S. Young. Spongiform encephalopathy of Rocky Mountain elk. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*. 1982. 18:465-71.
- Tessaro, Stacy V. The existing and potential importance of brucellosis and tuberculosis in Canadian wildlife: A review. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 1986. 27:119-24.
- Fanning A., and S. Edwards. Mycobacterium bovis infection in human beings in contact with elk (*Cervus elaphus*) in Alberta, Canada. *Lancet*. 1991. 338:1253-5.

The Saskatchewan Class Actions Act: The proposed claim is a class action to be filed in the name of a single representative plaintiff in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Class Actions Act does not subject the representative plaintiff to costs except if the judge determines the lawsuit was frivolous and vexation. No representative plaintiff has ever had costs awarded against them under this act. Individuals who are members of the class, but not named in the Statement of Claim, cannot be subject to any court ordered costs award.

Successful Class Actions: The proposed claim is based on the same legal cause of action against the federal government (namely its failure to fulfill its duties) as was advanced in the Hepatitis C litigation. This class action resulted in a successful settlement of the claim for an amount in excess of \$1 billion. The settlement of the Hepatitis C class action concluded within two years from the date it was filed. ✍

For further information regarding the proposed class action contact:

Docken & Company,
640, 840-6th Ave. S.W., Calgary, AB T2P 3E5
Phone: (403) 269 3612 Fax: (403) 269 8246
Email: info@docken.com
Clint G. Docken, Q.C.



TRACKING THE FOREST CARNIVORES

By Jonathan Wright



The forest carnivores—marten, fisher, lynx, and wolverine—are finally beginning to receive some attention for their intrinsic value as the vital, stunningly beautiful living art-forms they are. This has not always been the case, and still isn't entirely. Traditionally they have interested primarily trappers: those involved in the process by which the price of the vanity of a people alienated from the natural world is inflicted upon innocent, sentient beings struggling to survive against already harsh odds, with the cost being intense suffering and populations annually reduced to relicts. Some biologists still believe that the pertinent issue is not the animals themselves but how they relate to the sustenance of the fur trade.

I am going to drone for a while here on the subject of, and subjects related to, two of our forest carnivores, the wolverine and the fisher.

You can learn a lot by hanging around and observing those who are smarter than yourself. In this way I have learned much from (for instance) lizards and possums. It was a raven, however, who showed me my first fisher.

I was driving along a winter road in the wilderness known as Chinchaga. It was my second winter tracking forest carnivores and other beasts as part of an industrial wildlife monitoring program. I was staying in a dwelling nearby on the Alberta/British Columbia border at fifty-seven degrees north, kept warm by a diesel generator that only failed when it got to minus forty, when you needed it most. It was a fine afternoon, and I was heading in for some... I can't remember that part. I remember the raven sitting in the little spruce beside the road. He obviously wanted something, and whatever it was, he was looking for it. It was a snowshoe hare. I spotted it under a bough at the verge of the road.

Suddenly, it, the hare, spurted across the road in front of my truck, the raven after it. Ravens will catch hares and a good many other things if they can—things that you may not read about. Other things catch other things, too. But we're not talking about those things. Only for a moment. Like, I remember reading so many ornithologists saying that a kestrel is hard pressed to take anything larger than a sparrow, and should really be called the grasshopper falcon. Sure. Except that I have numerous times witnessed the taking of healthy mourning doves by little male kestrels overwintering in southern Ontario. Have you ever noticed that many a scientist's definitive statement of today is tomorrow's rubbish?

Who knows the things that go on, the dramas that we never see? Who knows what happens there, anyway, in those other places with god knows what creatures involved? Well, no matter—I was in another place seeing this: the raven swooped and missed the rabbit and flew up, swearing. I stopped the truck and turned it off. Obviously, some third party was involved. The rabbit never would have braved the raven unless some furtive beast was on his trail. I got out and checked the dusting of snow on the road. Sure enough! The tracks of a large fisher.

Fishers make a science out of eating porcupines, where the two occur together. They dart in and out slashing with their teeth at the prickle-pig's face, agile as a Spaniard. When porky gets weak they end it by perhaps ripping at the throat. They start eating from underneath, and like the organs first. When they are finished, the porcupine has been nearly skinned-out from beneath, and in this way the fisher minimizes contact with the quills.

Fishers around Peace River like to eat housecats. Witnesses

I was familiar with these tracks. I had been seeing them at Chinchaga, and had seen them years ago at Algonquin Park, where an acquaintance of mine said he saw one. At the time I didn't want him to have seen one because I had never seen one, and I didn't like him very much because he was overly liberal with opinions that I didn't agree with and yet made more sense than my own.

Never mind—with any luck, I was about to see one. I crouched at the verge with my camera poised, 80-200 zoom focused on the spot at which I expected him to emerge. And then he was there, the least known beast of the forest: *the fisher!* He paused at the verge. He was unusually silver in the forward half of his lush pelage. He paused at the side of the road. He was going the wrong way. Oh well, he'd work it out, or find another hare trying. Maybe that's why he had paused, to do some mental calculations. I was glad he did. It was the perfect opportunity for a picture.

Excited to the point of drizzles, I knew I would have only one chance to get a good one. When he heard the shutter, he would bolt. I pressed the little button that trips the shutter. *Cha-think!* It boomed in the subarctic stillness. The fisher reacted instantly. It came bounding right up to where I crouched, put a paw on my foot briefly and sniffed my knee. (I managed to get a shot of him as he bounded at me, but it's blurred—I wasn't prepared for such confiding behaviour!) He sniffed only a brief moment and was off, not like a rocketing pheasant, but just at a casual lope. I had many opportunities to observe this beast close at hand in the ensuing weeks. His territory was apparently centred in the second-growth pine and spruce fens that surrounded my dwelling.

The fisher—a giant species of marten, the largest in the world—is the least known animal in the Canadian woods. The wolverine is undoubtedly far less often witnessed, but the fisher is a mystery beast, and even those who see it rarely know what it is they have seen. In fact, many people who see many things have no idea what they have seen. I had a fellow report to me a black panther. I checked out the tracks: wolf. I had another guy report a Siamese cat. This is in the boreal wilderness, 200 kilometres from a town, mind you. I checked those tracks out: marten.

At Chinchaga, I would often get reports of wolverine sightings. With one exception, the tracks left behind revealed the animals in question to have been fishers. This is far more understandable. In fact, a fisher's track is nearly identical to a wolverine's track, at about three-quarters size for a large male fisher.

Fishers around Peace River like to eat housecats. Witnesses



Fisher

J. Wright



of successful predations remark how the cat didn't even have a chance to respond to the attack before it was over. One recent report from that area recounts how a fisher killed every one of over two dozen barn cats over the course of a winter. This is amazing, when you consider that a fisher weighs about the same as a cat and a cat is formidably armed. I mean, you—you—who are many times the size of a cat, try killing a feral one with your mouth. You'll never need another Halloween mask. In this way fishers do a great service—feral cats are a bane of the countryside



Wolverine

in their predations of birds and other small creatures.

Fishers are also apparently competent predators on raccoons.

Picture tying a greasy rag to the end of a long, lank rope. You throw the end of the rope without the rag

over a high branch of a tree, close to the trunk. Then you get someone very quick, yourself perhaps, to yank on the end that has been flung over the branch while you watch the rag. It shoots up the tree like a dusky arrow! This is how a fisher goes up a tree. It defies gravity, ascending in leaps you would have believed possible only on the horizontal plane.

Now, the wolverine.

The wolverine, as it lopes on snowshoe feet through the wisps of mist along the spine of some remote ridge is reminiscent of an outlandish, spaniel-sized marten mixed with equal parts bear, badger, and perhaps a dash of wolf. It looks decidedly ice-aged, and its marvellous pelt—thick, coarse and luxurious down to the end of its bushy tail—is reminiscent of an over-fertilized mink. It is a beast like no other.

The wolverine wrote the book on elusive. They say even seeing the tracks of one is a rare event, even for the wilderness traveller. I am fortunate to have spent numerous days and many kilometres tracking wolverines through the boreal forest. Virtually nothing is known of them there. What studies have been done have been done in cordilleran landscapes. Features of the habitat like avalanche slopes and alpine zones, important to the wolverine in mountains, are absent in the boreal. So how do they live there? Where do they have their young, cache their food? Where are their resting sites? Why do they seem to prefer the densest of stands? We didn't know much about these things until I got out there on their trail. Consequently, we still know next to nothing. But that's not my fault. Why don't you ask the Canadian Field Naturalist why they don't pull their thumb out and publish my papers? They've been sitting on them for well over a year. Jeez. Until they do, I'm not divulging anything else. You shouldn't have missed my talk. You managed to make it to Karsten Heuer, no?

Where was I? Oh yes. In these days in which cumulative effects are the ecological issue of most urgency, we can perhaps look for no better indicator of forest integrity, no better umbrella species than wolverines. They are acknowledged as being indicative of wilderness values on par with the grizzly. Only they're better because they don't den up over the winter; they are barometers of year-round effects.

As an indicator, they likely leave the woodland caribou—Alberta's sacred cow and a great political boon to cash-strapped biologists—far in the dust. Evidence suggests that the habitats needed to support healthy wolverine populations in the boreal are also important to myriad other life forms, entire imperilled sylvan communities in fact. Protect the wolverine and you've protected wilderness values in general. The caribou, on the other hand, survives the long term by purposely isolating itself in habitats unsuitable for other creatures, like peat bogs. Protect the caribou and you've protected...the caribou. That this is true is being borne out in the mountains of British Columbia, where the caribou is disappearing from habitats otherwise utopian in supporting healthy populations of deer, elk, moose, cougar, wolves, grizzlies, and yes, wolverine. We've pontificated so laboriously and expensively on caribou at the expense of other creatures, like the wolverine (the taxpayer and the industrialist), because we are still the victims of the archaic reductionist thought processes that have long been the mainstay of science. This type of thinking is how a committee of our best thinkers recently arrived at the decision to advise industry in the Chinchaga area to try to limit their activities to upland landscapes important only to the entire old-growth community—but not caribou.

Wolverine eat caribou on an opportunistic basis. Incredibly, a female wolverine in the Selkirk range of British Columbia that weighed in the neighbourhood of 23 pounds learned to kill bull caribou. Even more incredible is evidence suggesting that these mustelids can bring down moose! Moose, in fact, are far more important to wolverine in the boreal than caribou—not as prey, but rather as remains to be scavenged after having been killed by wolves. Wolves are probably very important to wolverine too.

Wolverines can crush moose bones. I have documented cache sites that consisted of nothing but bone shards. Apparently, in a harsh winter, wolverines can live off of nothing but.

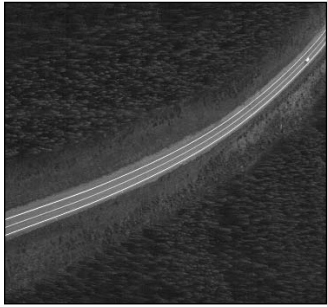
The wolverine possesses incredible power, stamina and determination. It is not entirely the ferocious beast of legend, however. Recent studies show wolverines to be much more sociable than was once thought, and also very playful. I've tracked them travelling through the forest in pairs, and had a pair render an entire frozen hindquarter of a buck mule deer in under an hour at one of my camera stations. They are gentle when raised in captivity, but that doesn't mean I'd want to lie around naked and smeared in bacon drippings from my breakfast with one.

Wolverine are believed to be in decline in Alberta. My findings suggest that this is the result of the decimation of old growth boreal forest more than anything else. Trapping certainly doesn't help, as it is impossible to enforce quotas, and wolverine pelts have retained value while other fur prices have plummeted. What we need is a moratorium on the killing of this species.

We need it now. *EH*



GRANDE CACHE WILDLIFE DEFENDED BY PERSISTENT ADVOCATE



C. Braun

Highway 40 to Grande Cache

which provides a good background on the issue, was written June 15, 2002.

Over several years, Darcy Handy, a Grande Cache dentist and trapper, has written to government, groups and individuals concerning the plight of wildlife and fisheries in the Grande Cache area. His perseverance is impressive as he continues to press the government to take meaningful action. The following letter,

I am writing this letter to express my concerns about the inevitable extinction of the woodland caribou and native fisheries in the Grande Cache area due to industrial development and habitat loss.

The woodland caribou in the Grande Cache area is classified as a threatened species, with certain herds in danger of extirpation. There are three main herds in the Grande Cache area—the Little Smoky, A-La-Peche, and Prairie Creek/Redrock herds. The Little Smoky herd is the most vulnerable, with the A-La-Peche and Prairie Creek/Redrock herds also in serious trouble.

These caribou are dependent on large untouched tracts of old growth forests for a food source and as a defence to escape predators. Every portion of the forest that is lost—by seismic activity, oil and gas activity, road or pipeline construction and definitely by logging—has negative consequences on these caribou. The cumulative effects of these activities add up to habitat loss, which results in decreasing caribou numbers.

Since 1980, many changes have occurred in the caribou range. In 1980 the hunting season was closed and the sawmill constructed in the Grande Cache area (presently Weyerhaeuser).

Since this time, there has been extensive study and management of the caribou herds. These include wolf studies regarding caribou mortality and numerous caribou collared for habitat utilization and migration patterns. The most recent of these studies involved two collared cows from different groups showing critical ranges and habitat areas north and east of Willmore Wilderness Park. This shows that the caribou are now spending the majority of the year in the old growth forests north and east of Highway 40, between the Muskeg and Berland Rivers. If this critical habitat is lost, so will be the caribou.

Over the years, the caribou have been forced into smaller and smaller areas as their habitat is lost, and this area is basically their only untouched habitat. All studies showed that fragmentation of habitat was detrimental to the caribou movements and mortality increased when linear disruptions (roads, pipelines and cut blocks) were present.

Due to the presence of caribou along some of the major logging roads in the area, (the roads went through traditional migration areas), Fish and Wildlife, in the early 1990s, developed Road Corridor Wildlife Sanctuaries along these roads and along Highway 40 between the Muskeg and the Berland Rivers. This was to prevent incidental native harvest as, even though the caribou is a threatened species, natives are still able to harvest caribou for their own consumption.

Also, because in the winter the caribou are drawn to the road salt along Highway 40, many were being hit by vehicles. Fish and Wildlife developed the “caribou cowboy” program to chase caribou off the highway in the peak time of November to December. This program was successful and resulted in a significant reduction of road-killed caribou since its implementation.

In 1996 the West Central Caribou Standing Committee (WCCSC), developed guidelines for resource extraction within the caribou zone. These were implemented to reduce the damage to the caribou habitat when industry was at work. These included timelines for oil/gas activity (Dec. 31 deadline for oil/gas wells, Jan. 15. deadline for seismic/pipeline activity), no permanent roads developed in the caribou zone, with frozen ground access being the allowable road system.

I can tell you that this is not what is happening in the Grande Cache area. The last remaining critical range of the caribou is presently under siege by logging/oil/gas companies. There has been extensive seismic activity (huge 3-D and 2-D) over all the caribou range, with more planned. Gas well development, major pipelines and numerous tie-ins are virtually non-stop.

The gas companies are creating roads and access into the caribou range and into critical fishery areas (Copton, Little Smoky, and Muskeg Rivers). Weyerhaeuser and Weldwood have continued to build high-grade year round roads into the most remote areas of the caribou zone to log the old-growth forests. They are being allowed to develop and place these roads even though they contradict the guidelines of the WCCSC.

The logging companies also know that once the roads are in place, any oil/gas development in the area will use the same roads and pay them large royalties for the privilege. Once again the habitat is being sacrificed, guidelines are being ignored, and the caribou are being impacted—all for the economic gain of foreign logging companies (and royalties to our government).

The government position on the development in the caribou zone has been derived from numerous letters written and replied to by the minister. The government position basically states that

- 1) a caribou recovery plan is being developed;
- 2) there is frozen ground access only—any deviation from this will be the exception;
- 3) no permanent roads are permitted as they are bad for the caribou.

This raises many questions. How long until this recovery plan is in place? What happens in the interim? Who ensures these guidelines are being followed?

Weyerhaeuser is currently planning numerous activities in the caribou zone. They have extensive plans to go up the Copton Creek drainage with a high grade, permanent 40-year road to the headwaters of Copton Creek. In addition, numerous loop roads are being planned off of the Sheep Creek and out the Copton/Beaversdam Roads.

This will produce bridges over Copton Creek (a Class A stream), which is only catch-and-release fishing, as it is a critical bull trout and grayling spawning stream. The cut block plans in this area are huge (3 km x 2 km). This raises huge issues with the caribou winter range, grizzly den areas, wolverines and loss of watershed (fishing).



All of this development is in direct contradiction to a 1998 government letter received by Ray Nibert from then Environment Minister Ty Lund. The letter stated that the Copton Creek was a critical habitat area and the watershed was of paramount importance and, as a result, no permanent roads would be allowed, only frozen winter access on temporary roads. The minister (in 1998) stated the Copton valley was critical for wildlife/fisheries, etc. and that's why there can't be permanent roads and development in this area. Why now, only four years later, can it be allowed when it is even more critical as less habitat remains?

Weyerhaeuser plans another 40-year high grade road up the Muskeg River, past A-La-Peche Lake and looping around to Victor Lake, effectively placing 30 to 40 km of new roads in remote habitat right up to Willmore Wilderness Park. This is a huge issue with fisheries—the Muskeg River is intensively managed for bull trout and is a high priority river. This area is critical range for the threatened A-La-Peche caribou herd, and this will effectively log a large portion of their range.

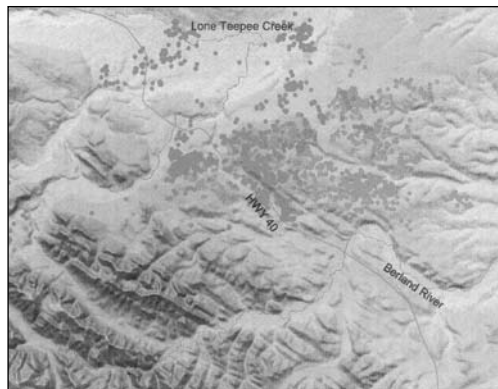


Caribou crossing road

R. Burglin

The local natives here in Grande Cache are upset and are debating hiring a lawyer to try to get a court injunction to stop this Muskeg River development, as it threatens their tradition, culture and lifestyles. The areas to be logged in this area include Mt. Louie, which has special significance to the natives.

The previously mentioned map of the collared caribou (the "dot map") shows the critical habitat north and east of highway 40. Anyone looking at this map should easily realize this is the crucial habitat of the caribou and it should be protected from industrial development (especially logging). Weyerhaeuser has numerous plans for this area (in addition to the Muskeg River area). There are numerous roads being developed along the Huckleberry Tower Road, Smoky Mainline, Highway 40 (Burleigh Creek Mainline, Saskatchewan Drive), and around the Little Smoky River. These logging roads are all into this remaining critical caribou and fisheries habitat.



"Dot map" of collared caribou locations and critical habitat

Weldwood also has plans to log the Big Creek/Cabin Creek area, which is critical habitat and well represented on the "dot map" for the collared caribou. They are also planning to develop up the Berland River and log Moon Creek right up to the boundary of Willmore Wilderness Park. All of these areas are involving the little remaining critical range the caribou have left.

These logging plans that will impact the caribou and the native fisheries in the area are being done without any environmental impact assessments. They are all huge plans accessing the most remote habitats and the headwaters of the remaining fisheries, and therefore environmental impact assessments should be mandatory before anything is initiated.

Not to be left out, there are numerous gas companies also pressing further into the caribou range. Devon Canada, Husky,

RioAlto, Conoco, CNR, Talisman, and EIPaso are all into heavy development and exploration into critical habitat areas. Many of these developments are done right; but in many areas, the guidelines set down by the WCCSC are not being complied with and/or allowed to be broken by LFS land managers (who OK the permits for the developments).

As an example, Husky got approval for pipeline construction along the South CTP road in March 2002, when guidelines state pipeline construction has to be done by Jan. 15. During this construction, a bull caribou was struck and killed along the Smoky Mainline by an industrial vehicle. I am not sure the caribou's

death was a direct result from the pipeline construction, but with the increased traffic along this road for the construction, it's likely it was. This shows how important these guidelines are, and how ignoring the guidelines can have devastating effects for the remaining caribou.

The South CTP road itself has been considerably upgraded with road beds, culverts, pit run and permanent bridges over Horse Creek. Not bad for a temporary road.

The gas companies are now wanting to access the remotest critical areas, and it is imperative that the guidelines be followed and enforced or all will be lost.

The Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has said to the public that there will be a caribou recovery plan. When?

How can we continue to allow all this development before the plan has been finalized? Once the habitat has been lost, it doesn't really matter what kind of plan is in place. The time to start protecting the habitat is now. There needs to be a moratorium on continued development in the caribou zone until we have a plan in place and know what needs immediate protection.

No permanent roads are supposed to be constructed; yet Weyerhaeuser and the numerous gas companies continue to make them, contrary to the caribou conservation guidelines. The government

says this isn't allowed; yet it continues to happen. There must be some accountability. Why does LFS continue to approve these things contrary to the Minister's direction?

As you can see, there are many concerns evident here in the Grande Cache area. Between the industrial companies destroying the habitat, the government changing its position on development up the Copton Creek valley, the delayed implementation of a caribou recovery plan, the lack of enforcement on existing guidelines, and the concerns of the local natives against Weyerhaeuser, the remaining habitat continues to be in serious jeopardy.

These are some serious concerns. If the woodland caribou and the remaining fisheries are going to survive, the industrial development has to be done properly or the remaining habitat will be lost forever. This remaining habitat needs your help and protection because once the damage has been done, the caribou will be doomed, the fisheries lost, and many other species adversely affected. ✍️



ARTIST'S BOOKS BRING CREATURES TO LIFE

By Andy Marshall



In Tom Hunter's wildlife drawings the wolf pursues the deer, ears pinned back, jaws open in frenzied anticipation of the catch. A moose stands in a lake, water pouring from the plant it has just picked up to chew on.

No passive, sentimental view of nature for this British Columbia artist, featured in the current *Wild Lands Advocate*. The drama and dynamism of the natural world inform many of Hunter's thousands of pen and ink drawings over the past two decades or more.

Too many artists make their creature subjects look stuffed, Hunter, 75, says from his Langley, B.C. townhouse. "I try to show them doing something . . . I want them to at least look alive," he adds.

Most of Hunter's wildlife work is contained in five different published volumes, the latest of which was printed in 2000 and has been distributed across North America with the title *Critters for Kids*. After the success of his first major venture, *Wildlife of Western Canada*, published in 1986 and still available at stores, tourist attractions and magazine stands throughout western Canada, the former prison guard and parole officer produced a three-volume series called *The Canadian Wildlife Activity Book*.

Sales for the first wildlife book, 126 pages of exquisitely detailed drawings of anything from butterflies to buffalo interspersed with easily read, small blocks of hand-written commentary, have hit 20,000. The activity series, incorporating many of the drawings from his first publication into puzzles and exercises for young people, or old folks for that matter, has soared past combined sales of 50,000.

It was the popularity of the activity book that prompted his publisher, Heritage House, to ask him to add creatures found south of the border—anything from armadillos to jaguars—so the *Critters* version could be sold in the United States and Mexico. And, true to his imaginative form, it doesn't contain colouring or join-up-the-dots-type activities. Instead, Hunter has made it more like "help the pica find its way through the rock maze" or "which of the 12 identical-looking ducks has different markings?"

Impressive numbers for a man who still calls the whole venture "just a hobby," who left school early and who learned about wildlife from his own experiences and from the 2,000 natural history books collected over the years and now crowding his home.

Teachers, seeking to instill in their students understanding and excitement about our natural surroundings, are, not surprisingly, among his biggest fans.

Born in Powell River, B.C., Hunter was just one when his family moved to downtown Vancouver, about 225 kilometres further south. He showed a passion for drawing as soon as he could hold a crayon. When other kids were out playing soccer, young Tom would more than likely be on the kitchen floor, laying out his creations on the back of used inspection sheets his grain-inspector father brought home from work.

Although the family home was in East Hastings, Tom recalls many idyllic summers at his great-uncle's place, out in the coun-

try east of Langley. It was there that he developed his fascination for wild critters. He also kept up his drawing. "No matter where I was, I drew," he says.

Life in the east end, in the thick of urban hustle, undoubtedly toughened Hunter, who still has a pair of boxing gloves on his wall from his early involvement in the sport. Maybe it was inevitable he would eschew Walt-Disney-type sentimentality in his later artwork. He learned to see life in the raw.

Bored with school, he quit in Grade 10. At age 15, he joined the merchant navy in 1943. The Second World War was well under way, of course, and the young Hunter worked on a converted vessel carrying U.S. troops to Alaska. That was followed by an apprenticeship with a Vancouver sign company, painting outside advertisements. A 12-metre-long display for Domestic Shortening featuring a huge piece of cherry pie particularly stands out in his mind.


His appetite for art took him for three years to the Vancouver School of Art (now the Emily Carr College of Art), followed by nine years doing black-and-white-wash drawings in flyers and advertising for Woodward's Department Stores. One summer during art school he spent working on the last wood-burning steam boat on the Yukon River, further fueling his interest in wildlife.

With his new bride, farmer's daughter Isobel, Hunter later moved to Port Moody and then to Langley. In the meantime, he completed his high school and then an education degree at the University of British Columbia. When he was told he'd have to teach math as well art and when the long commute to Vancouver to pursue a freelance art career proved too arduous, he became a prison guard at the Haney Correction Centre, Maple Ridge. Among the convicts he came in contact with, he recalls a "tough little nut" called Clifford Olsen, later to be one of Canada's most notorious mass murderers. Hunter went on to become a parole officer, but he never let up his drawing.

In fact, for 15 years he did regular pen-and-ink features for the *Northwest Digest*, later the *B.C. Digest*. That began a connection with the publisher Heritage House, which led to the publication of his drawings in *Wildlife of British Columbia* and to his later books.

Since the death of his wife and companion of 44 years in 2002, Hunter has cut back on his nature drawings. However, he still draws a cartoon three days a week for the *Langley Times* with the same painstaking, dramatic style of his other work. The vagaries of B.C. politics provide lots of subject matter, he laughs.

In the meantime, he maintains contact with his three daughters and five grandchildren, the latest of whom was born early in 2003. One daughter has apparently inherited his artistic genes, working as a graphic artist and immersing herself in computer-assisted design.

"I have mixed feelings about the technology," says Hunter. "It's marvellous what computers can do, but I still feel like it's cheating. I prefer the drawing to flow directly from my eyes and hands." This explains the connection with his subjects that his art conveys so well. 

(Inquiries about Tom Hunter's books may be sent to Heritage House, Unit 8, 17921 55 Avenue, Surrey, B.C., V3S 6C4.)



ASSOCIATION NEWS

PROMOTING CHILDREN'S ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THEIR WATER

By Ursula Derflinger



In September of 2002, I started my first week in the Master of Teaching program at the University of Calgary. Along with about 500 other first-year students, I eagerly anticipated finding out where I would be placed for my school and community workplace practicum. I was delighted to learn that my five-week community workplace practicum would be with the Alberta Wilderness Association and that I would be developing a presentation on watersheds to take out to Calgary-area schools. But my delight was tinged with a bit of apprehension. How much did I know about watersheds?

Along with seven other first-year M.T. students, I found myself in the AWA offices at the end of October. I had six weeks practicum experience in an elementary school under my belt, so I felt more confident about doing the actual presentations. I viewed the opportunity to develop a presentation to take to schools as paralleling a teacher's role of preparing a lesson-plan to teach in the classroom. We students met with Nigel Douglas and Vivian Pharis, who shared with us the history and mission of AWA and a wealth of information about watersheds.

Some of the information I knew already, like how much of the world's fresh water Canada is blessed with. I also pride myself that I keep up with current events and was aware of the water-related news stories of the past months. But I felt that I had been naïve about the stressors our watersheds are under. When I was in school, we learned that clear-cut logging was an ecological disaster. Surely that was not still going on in our wilderness areas? Septic fields are known to contaminate ground water. Surely housing developments use septic tanks or are on sewage systems? I had never considered that free-range cattle could be a stress on the watershed. As a future educator, I was learning a lot of new information.

After our crash course on watersheds, my M.T. partner Paula and I had to decide how to present this information to the junior high students of the schools who had booked with AWA. We decided to start our presentation with a discussion on water: how much there is on the planet and how little of it is fresh and accessible. We went on to talk about what a watershed is, and then what the stressors are on the watershed. We decided to focus on the Elbow River, because we felt this was relevant to students as most of Calgary's drinking water comes from the Elbow River. We concentrated specifically on the areas from Bragg Creek to Calgary, because we felt most of the students would probably have driven along that road sometime in the past, and would probably remember seeing some of the things we were talking about.

Another important aspect of our presentation was that we did not want it to be in a lecture format. We ensured we had hands-on demonstrations. We included a rotting log, and moss to show how these absorbers of water acted like sponges to gradually release water into the watershed system. We included a demo to show how the roots of plants act as "glue" to fold soil together and prevent erosion. We included discussion points in our presentation, to get the students thinking about what we were saying.

We included a game at the end through which we would gauge how much the students had learned.

But it wasn't enough to just talk about stressors on the watershed; we also needed to empower the students with ways in which they could help reduce the stress on the watershed. The main way students can do this is through water conservation, so we discussed ways in which they could help conserve water. Again, I found I had been naïve about what students learned in the schools about water conservation. While some of them knew about simple things like turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, the number of students who still did not do that, and had no idea it was so wasteful of water, surprised me.

What I found most gratifying while doing the presentations was the interest the students showed in the subject matter, and how enthusiastic they were about participating in our discussions. During one of our discussions, after I had made a point, the students were completely still and silent for a few seconds. There was no moving or fidgeting. We could tell they were really thinking about what I had said. Then they all started talking again, wanting to add to the discussion.

The teaching experience offered to me through AWA was invaluable. I felt my confidence increasing with each presentation. We constantly assessed, both during and after each presentation, what was working and what we could improve upon, much as a teacher does when giving lessons in the classroom. I enjoyed the experience so much, I have offered my services to AWA to continue doing the presentations over the winter and spring. ✍

(During AWA's partnership with the University of Calgary's Master of Teaching program in 2002, 13 teaching students presented to 27 schools, 77 classes, and 2,098 children.)



Masters of Teaching students, Fall 2002



Masters of Teaching students, Fall 2002



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR


The following letter is in response to an article on ecotourism in WLA June 2002. The placement of the photo relative to the text was purely coincidental.

Dear Editor,

I am writing in relation to an article in the Wild Lands Advocate issue for June 2002 entitled "Cloudy Future for Alberta Ecotourism" by Andy Marshall.

I own and run an outdoor adventure company called Inside Out Experience. On page 2 of the article is one of our rafts on the Kananaskis River. It shows the name "Inside Out Experience" on the front of the raft under which Carol Patterson states, "As for the white water rafting operations, they don't generally do a good job on environmental interpretation."

This is completely false in relation to Inside Out Experience. As a member of the Alberta Wilderness Association I am offended by this statement with our photo above it. Inside Out Experience has full interpretive tours for all our rafting trips and we take PRIDE in developing these with Kananaskis interpreters and authors in the area giving guest talks (such as Ruth Oltman) to our staff. We employ many graduates from the Mount Royal ecotourism course and the University of Calgary outdoor pursuits course.

I agree with a lot of information in the article, yet I am disgusted by this statement below our picture. Inside Out Experience is perhaps one of the few that does interpretation of the local flora, fauna, geography, history and weather. We employ locals and use local business. The final irony is that I was selected to be a judge for the Travel Alberta Alta Award in 2002 for the Eco and Sustainable Tourism Award. 

Sincerely,

Andrew Pratt
DIP Teach B.P.E. (ODPU) U of C
Inside Out Experience Inc.

AN ESSAY ON FUR TRAPPING FOR THOSE IN THE DARK... (AGES?)

By Jonathan Wright

It seems everywhere I turn these days, that moribund beast fur-trapping is rearing its disgraceful old head and receiving not the finishing blows it has long deserved, but of all things, accolades and sympathy. Most lately, trappers were given a soapbox on which to sing the subjective blues in no less prestigious a forum than National Geographic. And now, of all places, I find myself reading about the "proud tradition of Canadian trapping" in none other than the Wild Lands Advocate.

Having caught this prime cliché in my philosophical leghold, I am going to do my best to beat it to death before it chews its foot off and escapes, free to limp into the next writer's hackneyed oxymoron. And I don't care if I ruin its pelt.

I am not going to go into great detail about what it is that apparently ails trappers and trapping these days. From a subjective standpoint, their laments may appear to have some merit. But their arguments rely heavily on our subscribing to some prevailing mythologies. So let's look at a few of these favourite trapper's myths...

Myth #1: "I am the embodiment of an environmentally sound tradition originating with the indigenous peoples."

Even environmentalists are regularly duped by this one. I mean, it recently made its way into the Advocate, right? Yes, indigenous peoples trapped fur for utilitarian and ceremonial purposes. What the European culture did was exploit this tradition by turning it into a capitalist venture. They provided a mass-market where one did not exist, and this is a pretty important distinction. There is on public record at the offices of the National Energy Board in Calgary a reference by a Chinchaga area trapper relating how in a good season he could catch 150 to 200 lynx.

Ask yourself this: what use would a single indigenous man or woman, living sustainably on the land, have for 150 to 200 lynx before the white man came along to demand them? See where I'm going here? This is not the same situation! Oh, and don't forget what it was our "proud Canadian tradition" so often provided in return for these furs, these myriad lives...

Myth #2: *Trapping is as "green" a livelihood as... (Modern farming? Cod fishing? Logging? Hmmm... perhaps you better fill in this blank - I'm obviously having a tough time with this one.)*

Now ask yourself this: what effect do you think the removal of 150 to 200 high-order carnivores from a single trapline would have on the area's ecosystem? Take a guess—that's what our fur managers do. The fact is, your answer to this question is likely as good as anyone's, because—surprise! we've never known the answer. But hey, let's not let that stop us! Oh yes, and remember, this is just the number of lynx he might have killed. You can bet he wasn't just trapping lynx.

Myth #3: *Trappers target only those species that can withstand the trapping pressure.*

Of course they do. They put little signs by their traps that say, "Warning: Only Highly Fecund, Resilient Furbearers May Respond to this Bait."

Every trapper catches plenty of creatures in the course of a season that he didn't intend to. He may or may not claim these "incidental" captures. In fact, in some cases, it may be in his best interests not to. For instance, in Alberta, the quota on wolverine is one per trapper per year, because wolverine are believed to be in decline in this province. This is not, by the way, the number that we know we can sustainably harvest. It's just another guess. But guess what?

Wolverine are one of the few species that have retained any market value, especially as mounted "trophies." Guess what else? These quotas are, like virtually everything else a trapper does in the wilderness, impossible to police, to enforce. Do you see where I'm going with this? "Black market incentive" is the term that springs to my mind. And there is indeed a black market for wolverine in Alberta, as the fur managers themselves tell me.



Myth #4: "I'm a 'Humane Trapper."

And I specialize in new-age torture devices. This one should be in the dictionary as the very definition of "oxymoron." There have been all types of attempts to "improve the image of trapping" by inventing "humane traps." (Notice that it's the image of what's being done that they've decided needs improving here, not necessarily the reality. I mean, once the thing is approved, who other than the trapper is going to witness the actual results?) And in specific instances, the animal is killed humanely, I guess.

We've come a very little way from the days of those bear traps with the spikes on them. But the humanity of what occurs on the trapline must be examined on an instance-by instance level, trap-by-trap, capture-by-capture. For example, when I was a fur trapper (did I neglect to mention that I was a fur trapper for a number of years?), the law required that I must use a killing-type trap for raccoon, as their marvellous little feet are the pinnacle of tactile sensitivity.

But other creatures, like squirrels and weasels and mink, sometimes ignored my, "Raccoons only, please" signs, and blundered into the traps. The trap that was designed to close around a raccoon's neck, would instead clamp on the mid bodies of these other creatures, and there they'd hang for a day or so, still alive, with their guts mashed around their spines (I had a smallish line, so could check every trap every day—an exception rather than the general rule).

And then there were the raccoons that were caught "properly" in the "proper" traps, and yet somehow managed to pull the traps from their moorings and run two or three hundred meters, even though they were of course, "killed instantly." And then there were the raccoons who inconsiderately stepped with their tender foot into an adjacent leghold trap legally set for fox. And then there were the raccoons...

Every trapper has legions of stories like this that he'd rather not tell anyone, even himself, if he wants his conscience to allow him to keep on trapping. Lucky for them they work in

solitude. It's the only way, I am convinced, that this "proud tradition" has managed to survive. More than that, I am convinced it's the only way they manage to delude themselves about what it is they're doing to living creatures.

Myth #5: "I own this land."

This one's for the trappers. In the Advocate's recent article on "trapline abusers," a trapper was quoted as saying of wilderness areas, "There's a lot of people sneaking in there who have no business being there" (italics mine). I see. And who, pray-tell, is to decide who has legitimate "business," "sneaking into" our Crown wilderness areas? The trappers? And tell me this, am I the only one who sees something wrong with allowing people like trappers to go into "protected areas" and kill wildlife, as they are indeed allowed to? Is calling an area where this is allowed to occur "protected" not a gross misrepresentation to the public? Is a guy who drives through the wilderness on an all-terrain vehicle more destructive than a guy who kills 200 lynx (or ten lynx, for that matter) in a winter?


Trappers, repeat after me: "I do not own this land, I do not own this land, I do not own..."

I watched with intense relief as the bottom fell out of the fur market over the past couple of decades and many trappers hung-up their traps. I felt a swelling sense of well-being thinking about how, for the first time in perhaps over a century, the marvellous, sentient beings that inhabit our wild areas would actually be free from the bloody gauntlet they had been forced to run for the sake of the vanity of a people alienated from nature. Let us be very careful of the portrayal we paint of fur-trapping.

My days spent as a fur-trapper were a by-product of the blindness of youth. Once I became cognizant of what it was I was actually doing, who it was I was serving, I quit. Immediately.

I am not proud to have been a fur trapper.

But it does come in handy sometimes... 




Celebration
Wilderness
Spring 2003

You are invited to a spring celebration of Wild Alberta

Join us for an evening of fine drink, good food and exciting entertainment


Swing to great music



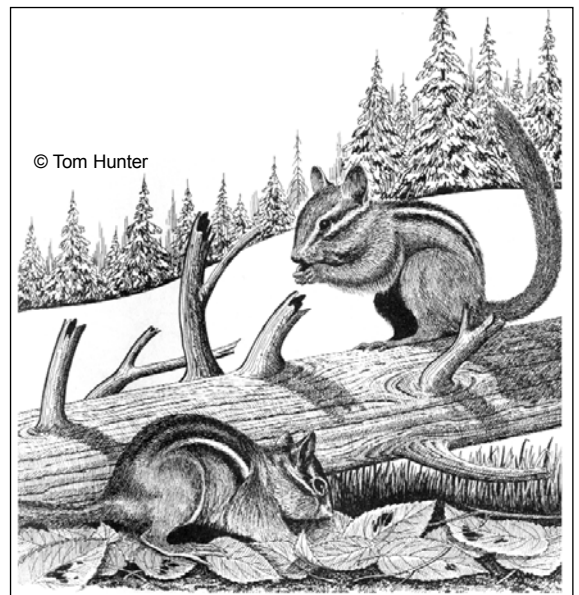
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www.AlbertaWilderness.ca



March 8, 2003
Auction viewing
6:30
Entertainment begins 7:00
Royal Glenora Club,
Edmonton
Tickets \$75.00



WHY DID I CLIMB THE CALGARY TOWER?

By Polly Knowlton Cockett

Inspired by long-time tower climbers Ward and Roxie Neale, the Cockett family has been ascending the Tower for Earth Day for the past four years.

Grayson has twice set a record for the number of climbs by a youth and challenges all young climbers to chase his 2002 record of 24 climbs at age 16, before he is faced with trotting upwards in the adult category.


Rowan, tying with Grayson at 16 climbs in 2000, now prefers to check out the displays and booths in between his leisurely dozen or so climbs, and he returns home with myriad posters, stickers and interesting environmental facts.

Ever striving for personal bests, Audrey Lane started out at two climbs the first year, then seven, then eight. Last year, she went for 10 at age 10, but somehow ended up climbing 12 times (perhaps aided by the helium balloons given away at the top?), and she still ended up with a few posters and stickers from the displays.

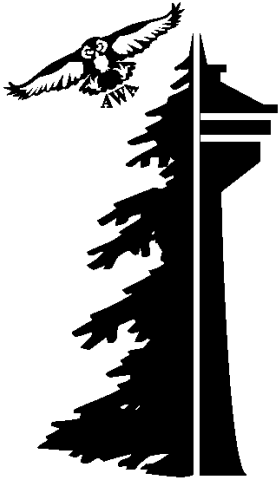
Mom and Dad, who used to wait for the kids to catch up, are now hard pressed to catch up with the kids, but enjoy meeting neighbours, friends and colleagues in the stairwells, and earning that panoramic view at the top

Our favourite story from last year's climb is about Richard and Louise Guy. Both in their young eighties, they thought they'd drop in and make their annual AWA donation in person, and do a climb while they were at it, just for fun.

On the way up, Louise ran into Phyllis Hart, the famed eldest woman climber, and was so inspired she and Richard thought they might just do another climb. Invigorated by the festive spirit of the occasion, they stepped gaily along, though later became separated in the stairwell. They kept on looking for each other ... by making another climb! "Well, if s/he's doing another climb, I might as well..." Seven climbs each later, they reunited at the top, and Richard took the title of oldest male climber away from Ward. Perhaps there should be a new prize for the oldest couple!

The Tower Climb has evolved into our family's annual Earth Day outing, and we look forward to stepping up to it again this year. When the environment wins, we all win, and we might as well be having fun while supporting it. 

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION PRESENTS




CANADA LIFE
CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS

APRIL 19, 2003 AT THE CALGARY TOWER


Climb 802 Stairs or
Running Room Run for Wilderness
Run 2km & Climb 802 Stairs

Environment Fair / Entertainment / Prizes
A Fun Day at the Tower

Pick up or download an entry / pledge form
www.climbforwilderness.ca



Saturday March 15, 2003

Paint the  Calgary Tower!

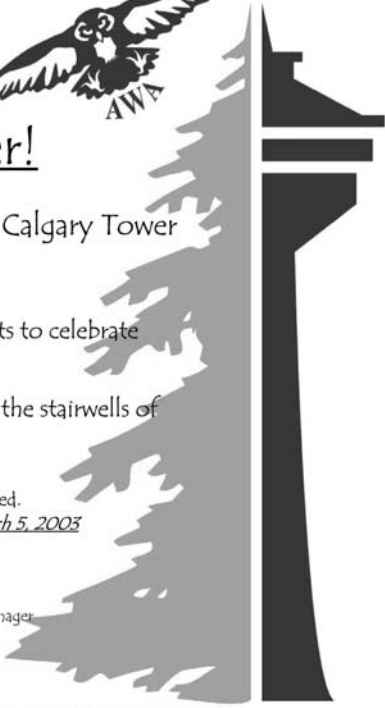
Join us for the first ever Calgary Tower Mural Competition!

- Bring your creative talents to celebrate Alberta wilderness.
- Create a lasting mural in the stairwells of the Calgary Tower.

Guidelines and Registration are attached.
Deadline for entry is Wednesday March 5, 2003

Contact: Ann Marie Barnhill,
Climb for Wilderness Event Manager
Phone: (403) 285 2025
events@albertawilderness.ca
www.climbforwilderness.ca

CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS




(Polly Knowlton Cockett climbed with the Unitarians #1, part of a group of 4 teams of 42 climbers from the Unitarian Church, including 14 youth, and sponsored by many more enviro-supporters from the church and community.)



Share Your Enthusiasm for Alberta's Wilderness at an AWA Display

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

Displays are an essential part of AWA's outreach work, giving us the opportunity to talk to a variety of people in a whole range of different places about Alberta's wilderness.

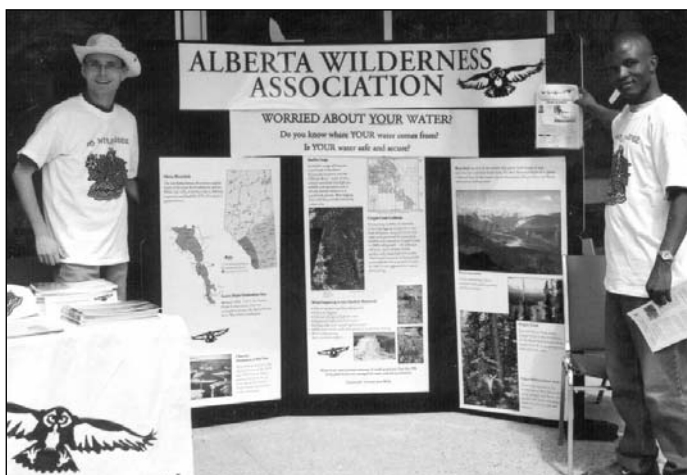
We are now looking for volunteer helpers who might be able to spare anything from a couple of hours to a whole day helping to staff an AWA display. You don't need any experience at this sort of thing: we will provide training on AWA, its history, and campaigns and current issues. All we ask for is enthusiasm and commitment of a piece of your valuable time.

Throughout the year, we expect to hold displays at a variety of venues, from camping stores such as Mountain Equipment Coop to conferences and visitor centres.

These are some of the venues that we currently have booked, but there will certainly be more!

- **Sat., March 22:**
Council of Canadians Water Awareness Day, Red Deer
- **Sat., April 19:**
Climb for Wilderness Environment Fair,
Calgary Tower (8:00 – 3:00)
- **Sat., April 26:**
Calgary Outdoor Council Gear Swap, U of C Olympic Oval,
Calgary (12:00 – 3:00)
- **Mon., May 5:**
Destination Conservation Saving Alberta's Spaces
& Species Student conference,
Edmonton Odysium (12:15 – 2:30)
- **Mon., May 12:**
Destination Conservation Saving Alberta's Spaces
& Species Student conference,
Calgary Science Centre (12:15 – 2:30)

If you would like to volunteer at our displays, please call Nigel at (403) 283 2025; awa@shaw.ca.



READERS' CORNER

Mister Dress-Up by Andrew Nikiforuk, National Post Business, Dec. 2002 (nationalpostbusiness.com)

Here's the perception: Ralph Klein is Canada's leading neo-conservative revolutionary, whose small-government and free-market policies have brought unparalleled prosperity to Alberta. Now here's the reality...

OPEN HOUSE TALKS PROGRAM — FALL 2002

CALGARY

Location: The Hillhurst Room,
AWA, 455 12th St NW

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5.00 per person

Contact: 403-283-2025 for reservations

Pre-registration is advised for all talks

Tuesday, March 25, 2003

NatureScaping — Creating and Caring for Wildlife Habitat at Home

With *Myrna Pearman*

Myrna Pearman has worked as a biologist at the Ellis Bird Farm near Lacombe since 1987. She is currently working to establish the Bird Farm as a demonstration backyard wildlife habitat site, using many of the principles laid out in her NatureScape book. Myrna received the 1991 Loran L. Goulden Memorial Award from the Federation of Alberta Naturalists and a Nature Educator of the year award from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History in 1992.

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Bumblebees in Alberta

With *Dr. Robin Owen*

Robin Owen is a dedicated and enthusiastic biologist, a full-time member of the Department of Chemical, Biological & Environmental sciences at Mount Royal College in Calgary, and a professor of biological sciences at the University of Calgary. He has had a long-term interest in bumblebees and their biology and ecology, and has also "dabbled" with leaf-cutter bees and sweet bees.

OPEN HOUSE HIKES PROGRAM - SUMMER 2003

Saturday, May 17, 2003

Elk Island: A Guided Hike

With *Dr. Graham Griffiths*

Once again, AWA will be running a full hikes program this summer. Highlights will include hikes in the Whaleback, the Porcupine Hills, the Beehive and the Cypress Hills. Details will be in the next Advocate. Meanwhile, for a quick taster, the first hike of this summer's program will be at Elk Island.

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MRC Document Services

Web Host: qbiz.ca
Please direct questions
and comments to:
Shirley Bray
Phone: 270-2736
Fax: 270-2743
awa.wrc@shaw.ca
www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

Editorial Disclaimer: The opinions expressed by the various authors in this publication are not necessarily those of the editors or the AWA. The editors reserve the right to edit, reject or withdraw articles submitted.



"Our quality of life, our health, and a healthy economy are totally dependent on Earth's biological diversity. We cannot replicate natural ecosystems. Protected areas are internationally recognized as the most efficient way to maintain biological diversity"

- Richard Thomas

The Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is dedicated to protecting wildlands, wildlife and wild waters throughout Alberta. Your valued contribution will assist with all areas of the AWA's work. We offer the following categories for your donation. The Provincial Office of the AWA hosts wall plaques recognizing donors in the "Associate" or greater category. Please give generously to the conservation work of the AWA.

Alberta Wilderness and Wildlife Trust - an endowment fund established with The Calgary Foundation to support the long-term sustainability of the Alberta Wilderness Association. For further details, please contact our Calgary office (403) 283-2025.

Membership - Lifetime AWA Membership \$25 Single \$30 Family

Alberta Wilderness Association	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Circle	\$2500 - \$5000
<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropist	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	_____

Alberta Wilderness Resource Centre	
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron - greater than \$1000	
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Partner	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$100



Cheque Visa M/C Amount \$ _____

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Name: _____

Address: _____

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I wish to join the Monthly Donor Programme!

I would like to donate \$ _____ monthly. Here is my credit card number OR my voided cheque for bank withdrawal. *I understand that monthly donations are processed on the 1st of the month (minimum of \$5 per month).*

The AWA respects the privacy of members. Lists are not sold or traded in any manner. The AWA is a federally registered charity and functions through member and donor support. Tax-deductible donations may be made to the Association at: Box 6398 Station D, Calgary, AB T2P 2E1. Telephone (403) 283-2025 Fax (403) 270-2743 E-mail a.w.a@shaw.ca Website http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

BE A WILDERNESS STEWARD

By Tamaini Snaith

AWA is pleased to announce our new initiative, the *ALBERTA WILDERNESS ACTION COMMITTEE*. This committee is designed to provide meaningful opportunities for enthusiastic volunteers throughout the province. We have a number of projects waiting for your input and assistance.

One of the exciting opportunities for Committee members will be to take part in *ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH*. We introduced you to *ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH* in the June 2002 issue of the *Advocate*. We're just starting to get our stewardship and monitoring programs off the ground. We have hired Rob Ronconi to help us develop our initial plan for monitoring wilderness.

The objective is to monitor the status of wilderness in Alberta, document negative effects of human use, and find practical and creative solutions to protect wilderness from degradation through inappropriate use.

Please contact me if you are interested in joining the *ALBERTA WILDERNESS ACTION COMMITTEE*.



© Tom Hunter



The Alberta Wilderness Association

Box 6398, Station D
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1

