

# Wild Lands Advocate



The Alberta Wilderness Association Journal

June 2003 • Vol. 11, No. 3

<http://AlbertaWilderness.ca>

[awa@shaw.ca](mailto:awa@shaw.ca)

## DEBATE FLARES OVER COALBED METHANE IN ALBERTA

By Andy Marshall



Some environmentalists and rural landowners view with growing scepticism the confident energy industry assertions of how environmentally benign the development of coalbed methane can be in Alberta.

As growing numbers of companies gear up to exploit the huge potential reserves here of this unconventional gas, the skeptics raise the spectre of widespread surface damage, loss and contamination of vital underground water, increased flaring, the industrialization of rural landscapes and further desecration of the province's natural areas. They

point to extensive problems associated with coalbed methane in the United States and they want a voice in the setting up of provincial rules for the industry, which they say has so far been denied them.

Although most of the more than 400 active coalbed methane wells already built in the province are located in the plains region, where the gas is cheaper and easier to access, much of Alberta's mammoth coal reserves are in the foothills and in the southern Eastern Slopes.

"As the price of gas goes up and this coalbed methane becomes more economical to produce, we could be in for a whole new onslaught of drilling across the province," says Alberta Wilderness Association director Vivian Pharis. AWA has not yet taken a formal position on the issue.

Caroline area rancher Don Bester, a member of the so-called Butte Action Committee, which was set up four years ago to limit the uses of water in conventional oil and gas production and that is now dedicated to protecting landowners from the negative impacts of coalbed methane extraction, says it's time for ranchers and environmentalists to work together to make sure adequate regulations are in place to prevent the potential damage.

He warns that the industry and the Alberta government are indulging in a propaganda campaign with their suggestions that the controversial U.S. experience with coalbed methane, or CBM as it's commonly called, is not transferable to this province because of our considerably different geological features.

"This is a mythology to get into Alberta, get coalbed methane developed and make it too late to make objections," says Bester, a former oil company reservoir and pipeline engineer for 25 years. The Butte Action Committee is among at least seven Alberta landowner groups urging the province to better regulate CBM production.

One of the other groups, the Rimbey and District Clean Air People (RADCAP), has called for a moratorium on any CBM development "until the regulatory side catches up to the potential hazards," according

### INSIDE

Untapped Wealth of Alberta Awaits Development By Rob Gardner .....	4
Determined Activist Carries a Powerful, Scientific Stick - A Profile of Dr. William A. Fuller .....	5
<b>Alberta Wilderness Watch.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Rebuilding The Castle .....	7
New Gas Battle Looms at Whaleback .....	9
Our Public Lands Need an Intergrated Policy .....	11
Firm Opposition to Milk River Dam .....	12
Bighorn Monitoring Project 2003 .....	13
FSC Certification .....	14
Game Farming Disaster .....	15
Weyerhaeuser's Public Consultation Lacks Credibility .....	16
Impressions From My Chinchaga Life.....	16
Control Project Targets Cormorants .....	19
Deer Mice: Lords of The Wilderness .....	20
Zoë Preston: The Lady Behind The Bear .....	21
Alberta's Trumpeter Swan Needs Your Help .....	23
<b>Association News .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Climb For Wilderness .....	24
Jerry Hall: A Caring Canadian.....	25
Tom Maccagno Wins Award .....	25
Alberta Wilderness Watch .....	26
New Staff Profiles .....	28
Letters to The Editor .....	29
Open House Program .....	30
Readers' Corner .....	31



S. Bray

Wellsite



to spokesperson Tom Hegan.

Mary Griffiths, an environmental analyst with the Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development, urges the government and industry to recognize the need to learn from the U.S. experiences, even though conditions may be different here. She wants clearer rules to regulate CBM drilling in Alberta and, in a paper for the Institute, urges the government to allow broad, meaningful public input into its planned consultation process on CBM.

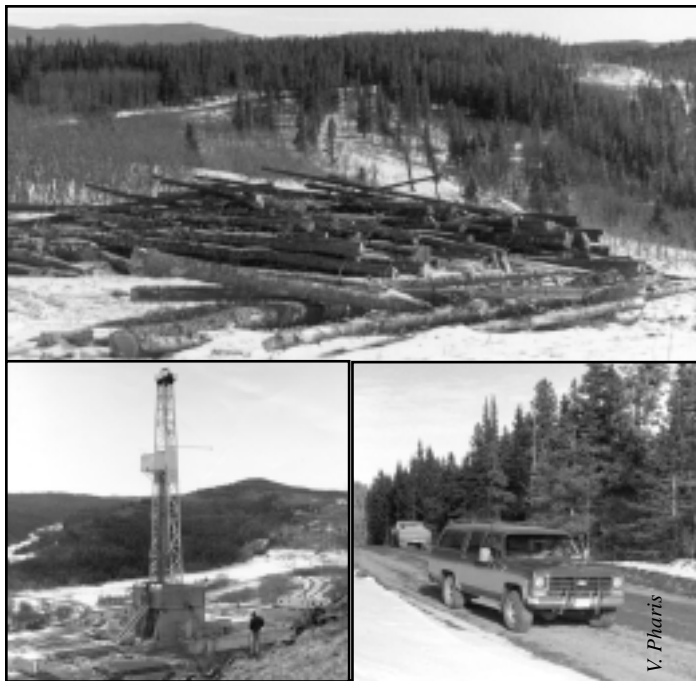
The environmentalists' and landowners' concerns centre on two main issues:

- **Surface disturbance.** U.S. experiences indicate it may be necessary to drill CBM wells closer together – as many as eight wells per section. A provincial CBM task force pointed out 10 years ago that closer well spacing means construction of many more access roads, pipelines, compressors and other production facilities. Without careful planning, this "could put additional stress on natural ecosystems," the task force said.
- **Production and disposal of formation water.** Coalbed methane is the natural gas found in coal deposits. Water is generally associated with the coal seams. The first step in producing the methane is to release or produce the water from the coal's cleat system that holds the methane. The production of formation water, which can be fresh or saline, may seriously impact fresh water aquifers.

Representatives of well-organized U.S. lobby groups fighting what they consider to be the drastic impacts from CBM drilling, were to tour Alberta in June, appearing at several public meetings to recount their experiences south of the border.

A coalition of landowners and environmentalists launched a lawsuit in early May against the approval by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for 40,000 new CBM wells in the Powder River basin of Wyoming and Montana, which they say will create, among other impacts, 40,000 kilometres of new roads, 85,000 kilometres of new pipelines and 300,000 acres of soil loss.

Michael Gatens, chair and CEO of MGV Energy Inc. of Calgary, a



*Porcupine Hills - With the introduction of drilling for coalbed methane, the cumulative effects of logging, drilling and roads in this area over the years is of even greater concern.*

Society for Unconventional Gas, he is keen to counter what he describes as the negative and false statements propagated by some environmentalists and landowners.

"We want to make people aware of what we're really dealing with in Alberta so that they're not alarmed by things that aren't occurring here and may never occur here," says the former Texas resident. He outlines three different conditions or characteristics relevant to Alberta's CBM operations.

The first, and of particular significance, has been the surprising discovery in large sections of the Western Canada sedimentary basin of dry coalbed methane. This has been the experience for MGV and other companies operating in the Palliser Block east of Calgary – an area running from Drumheller to almost Brooks. As a result, no "dewatering" processes are necessary and the CBM can be developed "almost identically as you would conventional gas," according to Gatens.

Because of technological advances during the past decade in conventional gas operations, "minimal disturbance drilling" is now possible, he says. Smaller drills that eliminate the need to remove the topsoil and build large production facilities, and the possibility of multiple wells from one pad, help reduce the physical impacts. With 16 wells per section already in place for shallower, conventional reserves and up to eight per section for CBM drilling, "we're looking at well densities that, at the highest end, are not as high as existing gas plays in this region," explains Gatens.

As well, efforts to "co-mingle" drilling for CBM and conventional gas could further reduce overlapping activities and facilities, he adds.

He estimates between one third and one half of all current CBM work is focused on these dry formations, which have generally not been found in the U.S.

The second drilling characteristic occurs in the deeper Luscar Manville formation, making a wide swath across central-south Alberta into British Columbia and expected to attract even more activity than the dry coalbed seams. Drilling in this formation produces brine or saline water before the methane can be extracted.



*Porcupine Hills*

Canadian subsidiary of Quicksilver Resources and one of the most active companies in Alberta drilling for CBM, has a different perspective. In his corporate capacity and as chair of the Canadian



Provincial rules have governed the co-production of brine with conventional natural gas for a couple of decades in Alberta. The water is re-injected into deep zones with virtually no problems. Again, says Gatens, this is quite different from the U.S. experience, where the disposal of saline water has not been regulated in the same way.

The third and potentially more controversial characteristic involves the co-production of fresh water from the coal. Less than five per cent of current CBM activity in Alberta occurs in this type of formation. But "some operators are starting to evaluate it," says Gatens.

Current Alberta Environment regulations prevent the full-scale drilling of coal seams containing fresh water, but the industry is calling for studies to evaluate what the impacts might be. "We have no interest in going forward with any kind of activity that would be detrimental to usable water supplies," says Gatens.

However, he notes the State of Alabama is among jurisdictions that might offer a model for new Alberta regulations on the disposal of fresh water. He is also bullish on the potential advantages for drought-plagued Alberta through the co-production of water with methane. "The province needs to manage that process, but this could add to the water supply," he says.

Such statements are danger signals to groups like the Butte Action Committee, which fears the province will relax its regulations and endanger the health of underground aquifers.

A private consultant's report done for Alberta Energy heightens this suspicion. Current water regulations "pose significant obstacles and potentially are CBM project breakers," says the 2001 report by Heath & Associates. It then hoists this red flag: "This suggests that policy changes are required to allow for the dewatering of non-saline aquifers as well as consideration of surface discharge."

Alberta Energy spokesman Gordon Vincent says the Heath report does not reflect government policy. Since the release of that report, the department launched a review, to include external consultation later this year, to determine whether existing regulations and policies are appropriate for CBM development.

"The consultation will lead to a series of working groups that will ensure landowners, ranchers, industry and Aboriginal, agricultural and environmental stakeholders have an opportunity to comment on issues and develop ... appropriate strategies that will balance development issues with environmental considerations," Vincent says.

Pembina's Griffiths warns the freshwater drilling could become the number one issue in the future. "We have to be adamant about protecting our water," she says. However, she notes that almost all the current CBM activity in Alberta is occurring in the dry coal seams or is producing saline water. This early activity has, so far, been relatively

problem-free.

She acknowledges, though, that fragmentation of the landscape from the higher-density infrastructure required for CBM drilling and the noise associated with compressors are two of the biggest concerns at present. "In a natural habitat, the fragmentation could make it very difficult to replace the damage," she says, "while on farmland, CBM activity reduces the productive land area and increases the complexity of operations." Her Pembina paper says the province should examine the cumulative impacts of large-scale CBM developments and recommends a new impact assessment process.

The industry is wary about the impact assessment proposal or any new rules for current activities. "We're not going to be very keen on new requirements," says Gatens. A spokesperson for EnCana Corp., also among the most active companies here in CBM development, was reluctant to comment on possible rule changes. "It's up to the government," says Florence Murphy. "It's in their best interest to secure the resource, but it's also in their best interest that it's done in an environmentally friendly fashion."

Maverick energy executive Ed Wolf warns, meanwhile, that depleting conventional reserves and the immensity of the potential for CBM will boost the pressure on the Energy Utility Board to smooth the way for more development. "The regulators are so captive to the industry, I wouldn't expect too much ... it's almost beyond comprehension," he says.

Steven Kennett, a research associate with the University of Calgary-based Canadian Institute of Resources Law, adds another cautionary note on the EUB approval process. Its mandate only allows it to approve projects on a case-by-case basis, he explains. At the same time, it doesn't have the appropriate policy and planning framework to deal with the increasingly intense development of CBM. As a result, the cumulative effects are not taken into account. "There is no wider context to put development in," Kennett explains. "There is no good guidance on the intensity of land use or access management."

His conclusion is two-pronged. If CBM development does not produce a lot of water, if the well heads are smaller and don't have to be serviced as often as conventional wells, if there's not a lot more linear disturbance and the industry can still produce virtually pure methane – which is pretty clean relative to other fossil fuels – "then there are some environmental pluses here," says Kennett. "But, if there are more intense, longer-term developments in areas like the Eastern Slopes, you can see the problems."

With the government promise of broader input, the debate over CBM in Alberta is expected to heat up in the years ahead. 🍁

### COALBED METHANE FACTS

Estimated recoverable conventional gas reserves left in Alberta	43 -94 tcf
Annual domestic consumption in Canada	1 tcf
Annual exports of conventional gas to the U.S.	5 tcf
Estimates for recoverable coalbed methane in Western Canada	100-135 tcf
Alberta's share of Canada's total coal reserves	70 per cent
Percentage of CBM in the total U.S. natural gas output	7 per cent
Current CBM production in Alberta for one year	3.6 bcf - 5.5 bcf
Projections for annual CBM output in Canada	400 bcf -1.3 tcf
Tcf= trillion cubic feet	Bcf=billion cubic feet
Sources: Alberta Energy Utilities Board, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Butte Action Committee, Canadian Society for Unconventional Gas, National Energy Board	



# UNTAPPED WEALTH OF ALBERTA AWAITS DEVELOPMENT

By Rob Gardner

Is our glass half full or half empty? Our personal answer to this question can reflect our attitude toward life. At a provincial level, our collective responses can summarize Alberta's approach to economic life.

Some industries claim that our half-empty glass means we are living in desperate times, needing to grasp at every resource to squeeze out the maximum return. Or is it half full as we enjoy the fruits of an excellent social system in a resource-rich country that is the envy of virtually every other nation?

Perhaps our province's glass is, in fact, far more than half full. Calls for resource development may be from shareholders concerned with declining non-renewable resources. The rest of us have the time to carefully assess our options while planning for our long-term benefit. We don't need to rush into new and potentially disruptive activities.

Albertans are now contemplating the balance between extractive industries and the more sustainable land uses. Businesses based on resource extraction will forever employ nomads who move from boom to boom, their lack of community roots offset by high hourly rates of pay.

Some workers find this an acceptable tradeoff, but others seek a stronger social fabric. They take a more thoughtful approach to development, working and planning to ensure the resources last longer. There can be no doubt that industries with low impact on the resources must, in the long run, be more able to support a stable economy, and therefore, a stable community.

In fact, mankind's most resilient resource is ingenuity. Some countries live in prosperity supported by few natural resources, while other nations with material wealth remain war-torn and desperately poor. Iceland and Congo provide modern examples of these situations, respectively.

The truth of the matter is, the difference between prosperity and poverty is quite small. Despite shrill cries from the news media, the large majority of people are making a good living, and will continue to do so.

Rather than focussing on natural resources, perhaps we should remember that Albertans have a wealth of untapped personal resources that await development. We have been suppressed by "experts" insisting we need more experts, when many people have the knowledge and experience to solve their own problems.

More importantly, Albertans have been convinced that mega-projects are the main economic engine, in spite of all evidence to the contrary. Repeated surveys show that most employment comes from small businesses, but the emphasis remains on mines and mills. Alberta still has, in many ways, a colonial economy, but this does not need to continue.

To see the truth of this, look no farther than Canmore. When walking down the crowded sidewalks, even long-time residents can scarcely believe that the town's future was in doubt as recently as the mid-seventies when the coal mines closed.

Can you remember visiting the Crownsnest Pass, perhaps fascinated by the belching coke ovens that obscured the spectacular mountain scenery? Now the Pass has never been

more vibrant, with many small recreation businesses rapidly bringing the prosperity that the coal mines could never quite deliver.

Some communities have been proactive, actively seeking out a more sustainable and personal future. For example, Revelstoke, B.C. has involved all sectors of the town in creating a positive future. The municipal government, through its formal vision statement, made a commitment to quality of life and excellence of services. The discussion that led up to the vision got people involved and stimulated forward thinking. The implementation of the vision led to several actions, including an innovative bear management program that reduced bear mortality significantly.

Perhaps the most obvious action by Revelstoke was the establishment of a community-owned forestry company. The progressive management included improved conditions for both wildlife and recreational activities. Other positive programs have been brought forward as citizens claimed ownership of their government and their lives. They proved that the skills, resources and commitment needed to make their community prosper were already present.

Alberta is no different. We have proudly applauded the entrepreneurs that built the foundation of our society. We now must realize that each one of us has this type of skill, and can contribute to our province. We do not need to wait while large corporations shape the province to suit their ambition.

So, let us raise our glass in a toast to Alberta's sustainable prosperity as we thoughtfully sip our pure mountain water.

*(Rob Gardner is an environmental consultant from Medicine Hat.)* 🍁



*Bow - Canmore Corridor*



# DETERMINED ACTIVIST CARRIES A POWERFUL, SCIENTIFIC STICK

By Andy Marshall

When Bill Fuller corresponds with the Alberta premier, he still enjoys a chuckle out of addressing him as "Comrade Klein." It's certainly a much more subtle salutation than the stubby middle finger offered by then Environment Minister Ralph Klein to Bill and others gathered in Athabasca in the early 1990s to witness the government's approval of the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill there despite all the environmental evidence against it.

The greeting may seem out-of-character for the otherwise low-key, polite, almost diffident manner of the tall, distinguished scientist who has been preparing academic papers, writing books and composing letters and submissions on behalf of conservationism throughout his adult life. But it offers a clue to the activist passion that still burns brightly within the 79-year-old former University of Alberta biology professor. He even keeps a photo of Klein and his derisive digit.



Dr. William A. Fuller

Moreover, as with almost anything Bill says or writes, there is well-thought-out reasoning behind his choice of word. Through his close ties with the former Soviet Union – he's visited the place seven times in the past 35 years and counts many Russians among his friends and peers – he has amassed from the once-Communist country an impressive collection of mostly scientific books that adorns the

walls of his Athabasca area cedar log home.

Among the collection is a book about conservation in the Soviet Union from Stalin to Gorbachev. It relates the conversion of many natural regions into Communist reserves and their resulting degradation. "That's exactly what Klein's been doing here," Bill says quietly. "He's taken native, untouched land and turned it into a Communist reserve where people can raise pigs or cut the forest."

The failure of the province to preserve all of the Chinchaga from the forestry and energy industry clutches through its Special Places program in recent years was just another example for Bill of the ongoing evidence of Alberta's cavalier disregard for the value of its wildlands.

Those who know Bill say he is relentless in his ability to present a rational and unassailable scientific case for his opposition to development that he considers detrimental to the natural world, in particular the boreal forest and Canada's northern rivers. "He has amazing energy for scientific debate," says Louis Schmittroth, founder of the Friends of the Athabasca River Environmental Association, formed in 1988 to fight the pulp mill. Bill's scientific knowledge and contacts with other scientists were big factors in the recommendation from a review panel that the pulp mill not be built.

In time, the province overruled that recommendation, as it later ignored the Forest Conservation Strategy cobbled together by a disparate group, including industry and conservationist representatives, of which Bill was also a member.

Bill participated in the Northern River Basins Study, also in the 1990s, as a back-up member for conservation interests.

"They wouldn't have me as a full member ... I don't think this government likes me," he says. Schmittroth knows why: "When Bill sees skullduggery, he's not afraid to speak up and make enemies."

Whether it was taking on – and defeating – the Slave River Dam in 1983 and the plans to build facilities inside Banff National Park for the 1972 Winter Olympics, or his more than half-century-long advocacy for the buffalo and other northern mammals, Bill has invariably turned to science, tinged with a dab of humour, to make his point. Even though the Al-Pac mill in Athabasca was built, Bill is credited with having a hand in persuading pulp mills to use the more benign chlorine dioxide in their pulping process, as opposed to straight chlorine.

Is he an activist? "I don't get out on the streets," he replies. "I write letters. I try to educate people."

Education has been a huge part of his contribution – as a biologist for what became the Canadian Wildlife Service in Fort Smith, NWT from 1947-56 and in Whitehorse, Yukon from 1956-59, and then as a professor in the U of A zoology department from 1959-84, including five years as department chair.

"I liked teaching," he says simply. He has remained a U of A professor emeritus since retiring almost 20 years ago and also keeps current as an adjunct professor at the University of



Bill Fuller at the 2002 Annual Lecture

Athabasca, offering biology and ecology courses.

With five co-authored books, at least 46 refereed papers, 23 conference papers and 19 other articles in scholarly journals to his name, research has also, obviously, been a major part of his life. Although he doesn't have quite the same name recognition as U of A colleague and water guru David Schindler, he is a highly respected and renowned international mammalogist, says Harvey Scott, another retired U of A professor who has come to know Bill through their association with the Friends of Athabasca.



Apart from his work with the buffalo, muskrat and other northern mammals, Bill made a unique contribution to the efforts to bring back the whooping crane from the brink of extinction when he discovered the nesting site of the only remaining flock of whooping cranes during his years in Fort Smith.

His lifelong companion since those Fort Smith days has been his wife, Marie. They most likely first met in a biology laboratory at the University of Saskatoon where he was a senior student helping direct the labs, and she was a second-year anatomy student.

"I don't know what triggered it, but she caught me," he says. They married on May 31, 1947 in Regina, where Bill had grown up and gone to school after being born in Moosomin, Sask. Within days of the wedding, they were in Fort Smith, where a local told Marie, "You're just the 21st white woman in this town."

"We've been best friends. She's meant an awful lot to me," Bill says on their 56th anniversary. Their life together was jolted when Marie suffered a stroke a week or so earlier. At the time this piece was written, Marie was still in the Athabasca hospital with movement of part of one arm restricted.

An active social life and convivial relations with many of the local Metis and Aboriginals are among Bill's good memories of those years in the north. Responsible then for wildlife research in Wood Buffalo National Park and the southern Mackenzie district, Bill has retained the awe he first developed for the buffalo. "A magnificent beast," he says. His PhD dissertation at the University of Wisconsin was on the biology and management of bison in Wood Buffalo National Park.

Bill's attachment to the north really began as a student working with the Northwest Fisheries Investigation at Lake Athabasca and then at Great Slave Lake, NWT, where he completed research for his master's degree.

Among the honours given to Bill during his career was a Canada Centennial Medal in 1967. He is a corresponding member of the All-Union Theriological Society of the USSR, and, in 1989, he was awarded the Pimlott Award by the Canadian Nature Federation. Two years later he received the William Rowan Distinguished Service Award from the Alberta chapter of the Wildlife Society. AWA will present Bill with an Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award later this year.

Although Bill may be slowing up – walking has been restricted in the past few months by a pulled back muscle – he's still ready to tackle the political establishment.

Like so many who have studied the environment, he sees tough times ahead. "It's obvious we're heading for a pretty serious discovery – maybe as early as in the next 50 years – that this earth won't support all the people who are on it." He worries, for example, that his own four offspring's children and their children may lose the chance to see the real forest.

Brought up in a regular church-going family, Bill now rejects the idea of a theological God. "If there was a God and I were he," he notes dryly, "I wouldn't think much of what my people were doing. I don't know if I would save them or not."

That ultimately means it's up to us humans to try and make a difference. When he sees abuse of the world, "I still get mad," he says. "More people should get mad." 🍁



Ralph Klein, then Minister of the Environment, gestures his contempt towards those expressing concerns about the boreal forest destroying deal with AL-PAC.



Climb for Wilderness - Youngest climber, Keilee, age 2

D. Olson





# ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

## REBUILDING THE CASTLE

By Christyann Olson, AWA Executive Director



In Alberta there has never been a more bitter conservation battleground than the Castle Wilderness. AWA has its roots in the Castle; it is here that the organization worked, probably ahead of its time, to ground itself firmly in habitat and wilderness protection. It is here and in the Crowsnest Pass that I had the privilege of growing up amongst backyards of mountains, rushing rivers, warm Chinook winds, plentiful huckleberries and legendary grizzly bears. The Castle is an abused, misused jewel whose time has come.

Through the years there have been many tough battles involving the Castle. Conservationists have gone head to head with Shell Canada over the drilling of wells in sensitive areas. A particularly bitter confrontation involving two wells on Prairie Bluff in the Prime Protection Zone resulted in long years of conservationist mistrust of industry, government and regulators. Intensive motorized recreational use has increased every year. Forestry operations have created clearcuts and roads in many of the Castle's pristine valleys. The Alberta government ignored a hard-won recommendation from the Natural Resources Conservation Board that made legislated protection of the Castle Wildland a precondition of resort expansion at the Westcastle ski hill. The government provided protection of only 1 km<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> recommended for protection. The resort expansion is currently proceeding under a different company.

For some, the bitterness of these conflicts has not burned out and the frustration of so many futile disputes has increased over time. Nonetheless, the passion conservationists have for the Castle remains strong and focused. Public support for protection has remained constant through the years.

A new resurgence of public interest and pressure resulting from the sustained hard work of dedicated conservationists has recently drawn international attention to the struggle to protect the Castle. Conservationists want legislated protection for the Castle.

So after almost 40 years and despite the dedicated efforts of some of the province's best conservation strategists, the struggle for the Castle remains unresolved and the Castle's biological clock is ticking. Ongoing industrial activity continues to disrupt and fragment the landscape with roads, cut blocks and facilities. Much of the proposed wildland is now affected and will require considerable restoration to return to natural conditions.

Is it time to consider new conservation strategies and new ways of working to achieve protection for this sensitive, abused wilderness? The board and staff of AWA think it is. While legislated protection is the ultimate goal, we need to find innovative ways to deal with the scars left by the industrial incursions and to speed the exit of current operations.

Last fall in the *Wild Lands Advocate* we wrote about AWA's

work to monitor the activities of the oil and gas industry and to develop new ways to become more effective as wilderness advocates. We talked then about our working relationship with Shell. Indeed, those initial thoughts about how to be more effective when working with the oil and gas industry and discussions about our role defending wild Alberta are taking flight, particularly for the Castle.

It took a great leap of faith for AWA to begin a serious dialogue with Shell last fall when the company approached us to work with them in the Castle. From all accounts, 2002 had been a disastrous public relations year for Royal Dutch Shell. The company had become an international pariah.



*Prairie Bluff before drilling by Shell.*

A new book, *Riding the Dragon*, was published in which the author, Jack Doyle, documents how, despite spending millions of dollars creating the impression of a socially and environmentally responsible company, Shell remains one of the world's main environmental violators. Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman, editors of *Corporate Crime Reporter* and *Multinational Monitor*, listed Shell as one of the 10 worst corporations of 2002. A U.S. federal court ruling cleared the way for a lawsuit to proceed against Shell for human rights violations. It states that the company could be held liable in the U.S. for collaborating with the Nigerian government in the executions of writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, youth leader John Kpuinen, and seven other environmental activists. Currently, Shell is co-sponsoring an essay contest with *The Economist* on the topic "Do we need nature?"

Given Shell's public record and the strife AWA and its directors suffered because of Shell's strong-arm tactics in the past, to meet with Shell was, for many, mind-boggling. However, AWA staff and board agreed to meet with Shell to discuss the Castle and our vision for protection. We asked the company to



take a life-cycle approach in the Castle, to look towards reclamation plans and an exit strategy and to work with us to seek legal protection for the Castle Wilderness.

Two months after an initial meeting, Shell again asked to meet with all interested ENGOs. At the meetings, Shell announced its new "commitment to conservation" in the Castle. The company promised not to build roads or well sites further into the front canyons including Mill Creek, not to create new surface disturbance within the Prime Protection Zone, to phase out their oldest well, and to work with conservationists to determine the best restoration and reclamation plans for the well site.

Shell also announced that they would complete 3D seismic exploration of the area, including Prime Protection Zone lands. These data will further their understanding of the field and to allow better life cycle planning. Shell's promise is to use seismic techniques that minimize the impact of their work by avoiding linear disturbance of the landscape, and that the seismic will not lead to new drilling in the Prime Protection Zone.



*Prairie Bluff after drilling by Shell.*

Response by some ENGO's was swift and condemnatory. Many believed Shell's announcement was simply greenwashing, contained nothing of substance, and was simply a cloak for further exploration (the 3D seismic), which would inevitably lead to further development. A press release and letter responding to Shell's announcement were sent out by a number of the groups. The groups called on Shell to support legislated protection for the Castle before any development is considered.

AWA chose not to sign on to these documents. Before formulating a response to Shell's announcement, AWA wanted more opportunity for discussion and time to understand the implications of Shell's new commitments and approach to the Castle area. AWA believes that Shell must begin taking steps towards conservation by making changes in areas where they have control – such as making commitments about surface access, raising the standards of practice, reducing the footprints of operations and planning an exit strategy.

Perhaps this announcement was a step in the right direction for the Castle Wilderness. Vivian Pharis, one of AWA's staunchest fighters for the Castle and someone who suffered considerable personal strife in earlier battles with Shell, said of

Shell's announcement, "Things seem to be moving positively for the Castle, after ONLY 30 years!"

The outcome of AWA's dialogue with Shell has been a willingness to move cooperatively towards restoration and eventual protection. As a next step, AWA would like to engage an independent facilitator to begin a process that will see Shell work with conservation groups and important stakeholders to identify an ecosystem-based, life-cycle approach to development that contains real commitments to conservation, no-go areas and restoration.

AWA has already had the opportunity to work within such a cooperative process with industry on the Hay Zama Management Committee. While such a process is never simple, it has been successful, and better wilderness protection has been achieved.

AWA's objectives for the Castle remain the same:

- legislated protection
- a moratorium on new surface disturbance until we have core area protection and an ecosystem-based development plan
- an industrial exit strategy and reclamation/restoration plans to deal with existing industrial operations and roads.

"The jury is still out but I am hopeful," says Cliff Wallis, AWA President. "There have been a few mis-steps in the early stages but I attribute that to Shell being too eager and not taking the time to let the process evolve and build trust with the environmental community. Shell has a steep learning curve and they have to prove their sincerity through actions. We have a narrow window of opportunity and the AWA will do everything in its power to ensure there is meaningful progress and more protection for the Castle wildlands."

We are, as we always have been, committed to achieving protection for the Castle. 🍁



*Climb for Wilderness*





# NATURE CONSERVACY FACES DILEMMA IN WHALEBACK

By Mark Lowey, EnviroLine

A Calgary company that wants to drill a \$9 million exploratory sour gas well beside the protected Whaleback area in southwest Alberta is short of the land needed and is offering to buy the rest from a national conservation group.

Polaris Resources Ltd. also is promising the Nature Conservancy of Canada a share of revenue from the development, which would enable the group to buy and protect ecologically valuable land elsewhere in the foothills.

"We have made them a proposal where we would basically buy them [the Nature Conservancy] out," says John Maher, president of Polaris. "We would either buy them some more environmentally friendly land somewhere or pay them a [sum] so that they're gone."

The Nature Conservancy has so far said no. But Polaris will ask the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) at a hearing in September to order the conservation group to accept a working partnership with the company.

The EUB's decision on Polaris's application is expected to have significant and broad implications for how natural gas development will occur on Alberta's environmentally sensitive Eastern Slopes, as companies explore farther west and drill deeper wells in their search for diminishing natural gas reserves.

Provincial energy rules require a company to acquire the mineral rights for a full section of land in order to drill a natural gas well. So far, Polaris has secured the rights for only a half-section of land.

The Nature Conservancy holds in trust the adjacent public and private lands as part of a land-conservation agreement reached nine years ago with the Alberta government and Amoco Canada Petroleum Co. (now BP Canada Energy Company). In that 1994 arrangement, Amoco agreed to surrender more than \$1 million worth of its mineral leases in the Whaleback area to the province. This enabled the government to protect this ecologically sensitive montane region, named for its rolling hills that rise from the prairie grass like the backs of giant whales.

In 1999 the government created the Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park and the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland, protecting 28,755 hectares of the Whaleback under Alberta's Special Places program.

Polaris subsequently acquired the mineral rights under a half-section of privately owned land, about 1.5 kilometres outside the boundary of the protected area.

Nearly a decade after the agreement to protect the area, the Nature Conservancy still holds in trust the mineral rights on private land adjacent to the half-section where Polaris plans to drill its gas well. "We just couldn't see selling or farming out our interests [to Polaris]," said Larry Simpson, Alberta director for the Nature Conservancy. "We just didn't think it was going to be in keeping with the manner in which we were given them."

However, the mineral rights on the private land held by the Nature Conservancy are to be returned to the provincial government next spring, which marks the end of the 10-year arrangement to protect the Whaleback. The government has

decided to put these mineral leases – which are outside of the boundaries of the protected Crown lands – up for sale again.

Simpson said that decision came as surprise, because the Nature Conservancy, Amoco and area ranchers all believed 10 years ago that the leases were a gift to conservation, and that they would not be resold to the highest bidder. However, he acknowledged that "no one signed anything on behalf of the province saying that these mineral leases underneath private lands would never be reissued."

Mac Blades, a member of the Pekisko Land Owners Association of foothills ranchers, said the government "is definitely going back on what they said or what everybody understood" in terms of the Whaleback's future protection.

Polaris has applied to the EUB for an order that would compel the Nature Conservancy to include its adjacent half-section of land as part of Polaris's proposed gas well development. The company would then have a sufficiently large piece of land to meet spacing regulations to drill the well.



*The Whaleback.*

Provincial rules allow for such "compulsory pooling" of leases in order to recover oil and gas when it is in the public's interest. "It's reasonably common, because sometimes people just can't agree on things," said EUB spokesman Greg Gilbertson. "We act as that independent, neutral third party to try to resolve their differences."

Simpson refused to speculate on what the Nature Conservancy will do if the EUB approves Polaris's well and orders compulsory pooling. "We will simply evaluate things when and if the well is approved."

While the Nature Conservancy would earn revenue from its leases if Polaris drills a successful well, the group would leave itself open to criticism for collecting resource revenue on leases that were donated so the land could be protected from such development.

On the other hand, Polaris's Maher noted that the conservation group will lose any chance of earning revenue



when its leases revert to the province next year. "If it drags out to next spring, they're basically gone from the picture."

The EUB has scheduled a public hearing Sept. 9 in Maycroft, about 120 kilometres south of Calgary, on Polaris's application. Polaris's partners in the project are Vancouver-based Knight Petroleum Corp. Knight Petroleum says it has a 25 per cent before payout working interest, and that Ricks Nova Scotia Company of Calgary, a subsidiary of Oklahoma-based Ricks Exploration Inc., has a 50 per cent interest on the same terms.

The Level 3 critical sour gas well, to be drilled near the ranching community of Maycroft, is expected to go more than 5,000 metres deep and contain over 28 per cent poisonous hydrogen sulphide.

Polaris is facing formidable opposition from some prominent individuals and assorted groups, including the Whaleback Coalition, which successfully campaigned to have the land protected 10 years ago.

"The local landowners have completely rallied around against it [Polaris's plan]," said coalition member James Tweedie, who lives within four kilometres of the proposed well site. "This is a major hit to the whole landscape here if they allow it go ahead. And this is one of the few areas of montane that is still clean [of oil and gas development]."

Polaris intends to drill up to three additional gas wells if the first one is successful.

However, all four wells would be drilled from the same well site near an existing gravel road outside of the protected area, Maher said. Pipelines and associated facilities also would be built outside of the Whaleback's protected boundary, he added.

The geological structure that Polaris has identified may hold up to 300 billion cubic feet of gas, so successful wells would produce for at least 15 to 20 years, Maher said. The company plans to drill its first well next winter pending regulatory approval.

"We really think that it's beneficial for the province," Maher added. "It's absolutely minimal environmental impact, and it's really just the neighbours that don't want any industrial development there."

Also opposing Polaris's plans are the Oldman River Coalition of Maycroft-area landowners.

Coalition members and area cattle ranchers Einer and Judy Nelson's home would be the closest to the proposed well, within two kilometres. Judy Nelson says that a big concern is that the well would have to be flared for several days – with the resulting air pollution – to test its production capability, because there are no nearby pipelines in which to do in-line testing of the gas flow.

Also, a pipeline to carry gas from the well would have to follow the Oldman River, which would restrict landowners' ability to develop their river frontage and decrease property values, Nelson said. "This development is just so inappropriate for this location that it shouldn't go ahead."

The Pekisko Land Owners Association, the Alberta Wilderness Association, and the Federation of Alberta Naturalists are also opposing Polaris's plans. However, a local service station operator and the owner of a water truck company say the project will generate new business.

The Pekisko Land Owners, a group of ranchers that includes country singer Ian Tyson, last year fought a plan by Vermilion

Resources of Calgary to drill a sweet gas well on rangeland near Longview. Vermilion withdrew its application just two weeks before an EUB hearing was to start.

Individuals lining up to oppose Polaris at the Sept. 9 hearing include Calgary freelance journalist Andrew Nikiforuk, who owns property in the area, and author Sid Marty, who lives in Lundbreck. Nikiforuk wrote *Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil*, which won the 2002 Governor General's Award for non-fiction. Marty, a former national park warden and singer-songwriter, is the author of *Men of the Mountains*, along with several books of non-fiction and poetry.

*(Mark Lowey is the editor of EnviroLine and can be reached at 403-263-3272 or enviroline@shaw.ca. Reprinted with permission.)*

*The Washington Post has published a series of articles on the Nature Conservancy, exposing some questionable practices – for example, allowing industrial activity on donated land. You can read this series and the response of the Nature Conservancy at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). 🍁*



*Climb for Wilderness*



# OUR PUBLIC LANDS NEED AN INTEGRATED POLICY

By Shirley Bray, WLA Editor

Our public lands are a treasure and a great asset, yet they have also been a source of contention. For many years AWA has called for a public lands policy developed with comprehensive public input, similar to the public hearings held for the Eastern Slopes Policy in the 1970s. In fact, in 1993 a multi-stakeholder Subcommittee on Public Land Management recommended to the Minister of Environmental Protection the development of a public land management strategy for Alberta in which public involvement would play a strong role. This recommendation was never acted upon.

Such a policy would identify the diversity of values found on public lands and safeguard them for present and future generations. In our next issue we will publish a paper by Steven Kennett and Monique Ross of the Canadian Institute of Resources Law at the University of Calgary that will discuss this issue in more depth.

The latest news is that Bill 16, the Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act, has been given Royal Assent and may be proclaimed as early as July. The Bill requires that leaseholders grant reasonable access to grazing leases and farm development lease.

However, the regulation for recreational access requires recreational users to obtain consent from the leaseholders before accessing the land and must provide certain information (purpose, number of people, length of stay, etc.). Leaseholder must provide contact information which will eventually be on the Public Lands website; until then users will have to contact Public Lands for leaseholder information. The consent requirement does not apply where the leaseholder fails to provide the Minister with contact information.

Leaseholders can refuse access if users are using bicycles, animals for transportation or motor vehicles, if fenced pasture has livestock in it, if there is cultivated land before harvest is complete, if hunting is to occur close to livestock, if users are camping, or if use is contrary to a recreation management plan or other terms and conditions. Leaseholders may impose reasonable terms and conditions. A dispute resolution process will be available if access is unreasonably denied or there are

unreasonable conditions imposed.

The draft regulation is not publicly available, however, you can still submit your comments on access. A Sustainable Resource Development spokesperson argued that users do not need to "get permission." All they need to do is "give notification". However, this is incorrect.

AWA's position has always been to allow foot (NOT vehicle) access without permission, but has always encouraged the courtesy of contacting leaseholders whenever possible. If Bill 16 should be proclaimed, AWA would like its members to test out the new process and tell us their experiences. The Environmental Law Centre has submitted comments to Sustainable Resource Development on the strengths and weaknesses of the Bill and regulations. See [www.elc.ab.ca](http://www.elc.ab.ca) and look under "Briefs and Submissions".

On the sales front, a motion (#507) was brought forward by Redwater MLA Dave Broda "to sell or dispose of public lands that do not possess any economic potential for the province." The Hansard debate on this motion showed how ignorant some MLA's are of the value of public land. It is inexcusable that this issue has come up again after the public has made clear so many times that it does not support the sale of public land.

AWA is opposed to the sale of public lands until a public lands conservation strategy has been developed. Many of the lands the government would like to sell are in the settled part of Alberta and are only marginally productive for intensive agriculture. They are

often uncultivated lands that retain their native vegetation. Often these lands are the last examples of what were once vast ecological regions like the Aspen Parkland and the Grassland. Their value for watershed maintenance, protecting biological diversity and cultural heritage and providing opportunities for healthful human recreation are not taken into account by those wanting to privatize such lands.

Only through a publicly developed Public Lands Policy will such values receive fair evaluation. Albertans deserve a strong say in the future of their land. It should not be sold off to vested interests.

*The history of public lands access and sales in Alberta can be found on our Web site under Issues/Public Lands* 🌿



# FIRM OPPOSITION TO MILK RIVER DAM

*The following letter is part of the submission of Natural 2000, c/o Students Association, Lakeland College, Vermillion to Klohn Crippen Consultants Ltd. regarding the Milk River Dam.*

We are writing to inform you that Natural 2000 is firmly opposed to the construction of a new dam in the Milk River area. The feasibility of a new Milk River Ridge Dam is currently being studied, as directed by Environment Minister Lorne Taylor. We opposed the damming of the South Saskatchewan River just over one year ago (another project studied under the direction of Minister Taylor), and virtually all of our objections to the Meridian Dam also apply to the Milk River Ridge Dam. We have attached a copy of our submission on that project for your information and wish to stress the minimal guidelines formulated by the San Francisco Declaration of the International Rivers Network: The Position of Citizens' Organizations on Large Dams and Water Resource Management contained therein.

A project similar to the Milk River Ridge proposal was studied in the 1980s but was shelved due to financial constraints and environmental concerns. Since this time, dams have only become more expensive to build and the pressure on our environment has only intensified. Spending taxpayers' money to once again verify this seems wasteful to us.



*Twin River Heritage Rangeland - at the confluence of the north and south branches of the Milk River.*

The environmental concerns are very similar between the two dam projects. The Milk River Ridge dam would destroy extremely rare, internationally significant, provincially "protected" heritage grassland, home to rare and threatened species. The economics of the two dam projects are also similar. Hundreds of millions, if not billions, of taxpayers' dollars spent on the dam would benefit only a very small number of Albertans in low value irrigation agriculture. This seems unconscionable when other Alberta farmers are trying (and often failing) to compete without benefit of such a massive subsidy.

It strikes us that the Milk River Ridge Dam would, in effect, be an expensive short-term solution to a very long-term problem. Alberta's water resources are disappearing. Our glaciers are rapidly melting as a result of global warming. Glaciers are a key source of water needed to fill the proposed reservoir. Global warming is also causing us to receive less rainfall in the continental interior and to lose more water to evaporation. Furthermore, we are "mining" water from our aquifers at an accelerating rate, without even knowing how much groundwater we actually have. We think it is abundantly clear that our water resources are badly over-allocated, and rather than pursuing projects that would allocate yet more water, we believe Alberta must begin to reduce its water use. We must protect what water we have left by pursuing methods to use our precious water resources more efficiently.

We understand that the Milk River Ridge Dam study was requested by local residents for the dual purpose of increasing irrigation and providing water for towns like Milk River. We sympathize with the residents as we too are enduring devastating drought conditions. We hope that they will join with us in calling for a provincial water strategy that makes the best and fairest use of Alberta's water resources in an ecologically sustainable manner. The tax dollars being spent on re-verifying that this dam is not feasible would be better spent on educating all Albertans (public, agriculture and industry) in water conservation. We, as Canadians, hold a shameful record in the world for water wastage, and it is high time we correct this. Natural 2000 will be carefully studying the province's water strategy, expected in March, for a new direction in water management, away from the futile attempt to continuously increase supply from a diminishing resource, to finally curbing and amending demand to live within our water means. 🍁



*Climb for Wilderness*



# BIGHORN MONITORING PROJECT 2003 – YOU CALL THIS WORK?

By Laurie Wein, AWA Conservation Biologist



I have just spent my first week "working" for the AWA. And now I am wondering how I got so lucky to find a job where I am paid to backpack in the east slopes of the Rockies. After only three days at the office, I joined conservation biologist Tamaini Snaith, board member Heinz Unger, and AWA volunteer Rod Burns (along with Rascal and Jiggs – AWA volunteers of the four legged kind) and spent eight days backpacking through the Clearwater-Ram district of the Bighorn Wildland.

The goal of our trip was to begin a human-use monitoring project for the Bighorn Wildland. As you may know, AWA is concerned with the increase in backcountry recreational activity in the Bighorn and the impacts this activity is having on the ecological integrity of the region. This summer AWA will assess the levels of this recreational activity and study its effects.

Of particular concern are the effects of motorized activity, particularly off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The environmental impacts of this type of recreational use include damage to soils and vegetation, increased erosion and sedimentation in streams, and the displacement and disruption of plant and wildlife populations. While Alberta's Eastern Slopes Policy has traditionally protected this area from these kinds of damages by designating it a Prime Protection Zone, the policy has been poorly enforced to date. Recently, the Alberta government has overridden the policy and authorized the access of OHVs on designated trails in these formerly protected areas.

AWA is concerned that current levels of both legal and illegal, motorized and non-motorized recreational activity may prove damaging to the Bighorn. As part of the AWA study, we will collect baseline data on the levels of damage that are already present as well as monitor the environmental changes that occur.

We began our trip from the Hummingbird equestrian staging area. After testing the Hummingbird River crossing at the staging area (and getting soggy in the process) we decided that heading down Ranger Creek to the Ram River was too ambitious this early in the season, with river levels rising rapidly due to increased runoff from the mountain slopes. Instead, we hiked west along Hummingbird Creek to the Onion Creek confluence and into Onion Lake.

Most of the main trail follows an old exploration road used in the 1950s that now sees use by hikers, horse parties and OHVs. Several side trails for hikers and horses parallel the main trail and provide views just as beautiful but with fewer mud holes. With beautiful warm weather we were lucky to have dry trails for the majority of our trip and hot sun to warm our frigid feet after walking sandal-footed through several small creeks and seepages whose run-off was bone-numbingly cold. We camped along the

trail at outfitters' camps, including one at Onion Lake, where we set our tents on a high bluff overlooking the lake. Onion Lake is named for the nodding onion, which grows at its south end. Unfortunately, we were too early in the season to see any in bloom.

Since this was a research trip, most of our time was spent getting an overview of the area, working out the glitches in our more technical equipment and discussing how to designate our sites for data collection. This meant we spent much of our time debating where we were exactly with regards to the topographic map or what the GPS was trying to say when it kept beeping at us. Sometimes we were so focused on our equipment that we failed to notice what was going on around us. Rod, in particular, had a close encounter with an elk while his attention was fixed on the GPS as it tracked our route. Luckily, both Rod and the elk emerged unscathed by the experience.

We were lucky enough to see a variety of animals on the trail, including mule and white-tailed deer, spruce grouse, bald eagles, harlequin ducks, and one lone bighorn sheep. One of the real treats was a sighting of three elk cows with a newborn calf. He was still wobbly on his legs and having a tough time crossing a stream after his mom, but we watched from a distance and



*Tamaini Snaith, Laurie Wein and Rob Burns on the Bighorn Trail Monitoring project.*

silently cheered him on as he made it across safely. Many tracks intersected our own – coyote, wolf, black bear and grizzly. Tamaini was sure that a grizzly wandered through our camp on one of the nights. I'm just thankful I hadn't chosen that particular night for a midnight trip to the bushes.

After eight days out we had achieved our objectives for the first trip of the season. We hope to be back in the Bighorn several times this season to continue our monitoring work. Maybe we will see you out there on the trail sometime this summer. You'll know us when you see us; we'll be the ones "working" under the beautiful sun, enjoying the animal sightings and the spectacular views of the Rockies to the west. See you on the trails.

*If you are interested in participating in the Bighorn Recreational Monitoring, or any other project of Alberta Wilderness Watch, please contact us at AWA. 🍂*



# FSC CERTIFICATION: IS THERE REALLY A CHOICE?

By Derek Osborne, AWA Conservation Biologist



In a previous edition of the *Wild Lands Advocate*, Phil Clement briefly noted a recent report commissioned by Forest Ethics, Greenpeace and the B.C. Chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada. Titled *On the Ground – Forest Certification: Green Stamp of Approval or Rubber Stamp of Destruction*, it provides a no-holds-barred investigation into the pros and cons of the various forest certification systems currently in circulation. The report examined certification strategies under the Canadian Standards Association's Sustainable Forest Management (CSA-SFM), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification systems. All three claim to be performance-based. A fourth system that many readers may be familiar with, the International Organization of Standards (ISO), was omitted from the report since it does not require holders to meet benchmarks of sustainability! So how do these certification systems truly hold up when it comes to on-the-ground results?

The shortfalls of the CSA and SFI certification systems are evident when one considers that each is quite heavy-handed in favour of industry. CSA was initiated and continues to be funded by the Canadian Sustainable Forestry Certification Coalition, which represents 22 forest industry associations. A technical committee consisting of academics, government and industry developed its standards. While attempting to work under the illusion of a balanced approach, most environmental and First Nations interests declined to participate as they felt the process was far too industry dominated. A small number of conservation groups, including the Alberta Wilderness Association, initially had representation in the process but withdrew with the realization that a credible set of certification standards would not be possible.

The shortcomings of CSA are further evident when one considers the standards do not set minimum performance requirements. So how successful has CSA been in moving the forest industry toward truly sustainable forest management? One needs to look no further than our own backyard. Weldwood of Canada, a subsidiary of International Paper, recently received CSA certification for forestlands in its Hinton Division. Annually the company harvests approximately 6,000 hectares of mature and old-growth forest and protects less than two per cent of its licence area from logging. Furthermore, despite a significant decline in woodland caribou that winter in the Weldwood forest management area, the company continued to clearcut those same forests used by the caribou. In spite of formal complaints from conservation groups like the Alberta Wilderness Association, CSA took no meaningful actions to address the conflict between Weldwood's logging and the CSA's requirement to ensure prosperity of all species through time.

The SFI certification system has fared no better than CSA in promoting truly sustainable forest management. It too was

initiated by industry, specifically the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA). SFI receives 82 per cent of its funding from AF&PA members, with the rest derived from U.S. federal and state agencies, independent logging associations and other industry sources. A multi-stakeholder board consisting of five conservation seats, five AF&PA industrial seats and five seats of "other stakeholders" govern the SFI standards program. Unfortunately these "other stakeholders" consist of industry interests with ties to the AF&PA. The AF&PA also appoints all board members.

Furthermore, AF&PA members have the option of "self-assessment" in acquiring certification. A prime example of SFI's failure to promote conservation is clearly illustrated through TimberWest's SFI certified forestlands on Vancouver Island. These same forests are also home to the Vancouver Island marmot, a species on the brink of extinction. While TimberWest has been a major benefactor of the Vancouver Island's Marmot Recovery Program, the company has at the same time made millions by logging forests that may be critical to the survival of the island's last marmot colonies!

*On the Ground* has concluded that FSC is the only viable forest certification option. Why? For starters, FSC is an international, non-governmental and multi-stakeholder governed organization that receives 85 per cent of its funding from independent, philanthropic foundations, with substantial in-kind contributions from conservation organizations.

Its standards are refined through both national and regional processes, and are set through a balanced representation of economic, environmental, social and aboriginal chambers. Where possible, agreement is through consensus. At the very least, standards approval requires a 75 per cent vote with no one chamber completely opposed. Furthermore, performance thresholds of the standards must meet with final approval from the international board.

The success of FSC's role in promoting sustainable forest management are highlighted in such examples as the Lisaak Resources certification in Clayoquot Sound and the Pictou Landing certification in Nova Scotia. Both have incorporated lower impact, low-intensity forestry practices that promote natural succession and community values. So is FSC without fault? Not by a long shot.

There continues to be some concern regarding consistency between certifiers and the ability of individual certifiers to be independent of forest companies to which they may provide other services. Issues relating to the lack of First Nation's involvement in Westwind's FSC certification in southern Ontario further illustrate potential inadequacies in the process.

However, FSC is not a static process. Given the challenges presented in the Westwind case, FSC Canada initiated a revised standards process that is now inclusive of First Nations. Indeed, Westwind demonstrates the adaptive nature of FSC and its ability to involve a wide range of players. FSC may not be perfect, but it is truly the only viable and credible option on the table.

(*On the Ground* is available on-line at [www.goodwoodwatch.org](http://www.goodwoodwatch.org)).





# GAME FARMING DISASTER UNFOLDING LIKE CLOCKWORK

Long-predicted game farm catastrophes are unfolding relentlessly while government inaction jeopardizes agriculture, public wildlife, and the public trust. "Federal and provincial governments need to stop covering up this mess and take action now to completely dismantle the game farm industry and the legislation on which it is based," said Vivian Pharis, Alberta Wilderness Association director. "We are calling for a publicly developed wildlife policy that is finally protective of wildlife."

Among the extraordinary revelations of the last few weeks:

- News of a second CWD deer has been kept from the public since March (Chronic Wasting Disease is a sister disease to 'mad cow').
- Direct trace-out deer herds remain alive six months after CWD was confirmed.
- Game farmed elk, apparently abandoned or released are being shot at Marwayne, near Lloydminster – the epicentre of the outbreak of CWD.
- A herd of some 350 bison was found starving with more than 100 dead.
- A leading Saskatchewan agricultural 'think tank', the Centre for Studies in Agriculture, Law and Environment, recommended eliminating game farming because it is neither economically viable nor environmentally acceptable.
- Game farmers slaughtering animals to salvage meat cannot find sales.
- The backlog of CWD tests on elk and deer contributed to a 14 week delay in testing the 'mad cow,' allowing time for the carcass to be rendered and enter the feed chain.
- A growing number of game farmers have launched lawsuits against the federal government.

"Every single part of this was obvious a year ago," said Darrel Rowledge, Director of the Alliance for Public Wildlife. "We pleaded with governments to face this disaster, eliminate this ill-advised and grossly uneconomic industry, and compensate producers. Even then game farmers were pleading for help because they couldn't afford to keep the animals and were afraid some game farmers would begin releasing them, and their diseases, into the wild." ❁

# WEYERHAEUSER'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION LACKS CREDIBILITY

By Brian Bildson



In 2001 I became involved in a public advisory group that was formed to provide public input to Weyerhaeuser in their pursuit of CSA certification in their FMA. Never having been involved in a process of this type, I was hoping to have some meaningful input and help craft a sustainable forest management plan.

It didn't take long after the process began to discover that the whole CSA certification process had been carefully mapped out and was being driven by hired facilitators. We were carefully slotted into "special interest" categories to give the appearance of a wide spectrum of public consultation. For example, if I were to say that tourism was an important indicator to me, it would then be noted that tourism's interests had been brought forth and were considered.

I brought my concern up at one of our meetings, namely that we as private citizens did not have the knowledge or skills necessary to give Weyerhaeuser proper direction in many areas. I may be concerned about the mountain caribou but that does not make me an expert on formulating a caribou recovery plan. My impression was that by using public members Weyerhaeuser is able to say that they have consulted with the public which has great PR value as well as allowing them to duck contentious issues as the public members do not have the academic or scientific background to ask the right questions.

After a year and a half of attending every meeting and participating to the best of my abilities I came to the conclusion I was wasting my time. Weyerhaeuser was only prepared to change their practices where it suited them and dug in every time we asked for a real change. But then again why would they change when there is no pressure from our government agencies to do so? Hopefully public pressure and adverse publicity will some day put forestry on the right track. ❁



*Climb for Wilderness*



# IMPRESSIONS FROM MY CHINCHAGA LIFE

By Jonathan Wright



I have spent six winters in the Chinchaga wilderness monitoring wildlife in relation to oil and gas development. I am paid by oil and gas to do this. I have been out there in the forests and muskegs almost every day for six winters, observing. At night I live in the industry camps. I suppose this means I am better acquainted with the area than just about

anyone alive today. I do not go around touting myself as an authority on the area, although relatively speaking, I undoubtedly am. Biologists in Alberta aren't getting out much these days, and I think this is how Alberta prefers it.

You don't generally get in here without a life-support system, without being bound to some machine or other, to save your heart from a rude and unaccustomed shock. For most Albertans, the figurative "iron lung" of choice is the pickup truck, the bigger the better. To enter Chinchaga, this wilderness surrounding the Chinchaga River, you will likely want one of these. In fact, if you are like most Albertans today, you will have allowed yourself to become physically incapable of going far without one, even if you wanted to. While I do not fall into the latter category, I still accommodate modern timelines and get around Chinchaga by pickup truck. Only mine is small. I also have a snowmobile, smaller yet, but I don't like it much. It is unnecessarily smelly and loud, but nonetheless a great asset at times.

I am not particularly taken with the landscape at Chinchaga, nor the ecosystem as a whole. I don't particularly dislike it either. I'm ambivalent. The boreal forest is not like the mountains or the plains – it is a place of subtler beauty and intrigue, and at times it appears devoid of anything redeeming to refined sensibilities. Chinchaga is intriguing to me then not for its landscapes, but rather for the handful of truly fantastic creatures it hosts.

The Chinchaga forestry road begins in a belt of farmland that was once the western edge of the Peace River Parkland. This is the artery by which a species of restricted mobility (ours) must enter this wilderness. The road carries a staggering amount of industrial traffic, so be very careful! Eventually, by following this road and its tributaries (some for winter use only), you can drive right through to the Alaska Highway in B.C. So without even getting your feet cold, you can get a good feel for what Chinchaga is.

The parkland becomes forest within fifteen kilometres or so. At first, the forest is of aspen stunted by the dryness of the Peace microclimate, but as you progress west, you will see how narrow the boundary between climatic regimes can be as the trees grow larger with each kilometre, until by kilometre twenty or so, you are in the great boreal forest proper. One of the best tracts remaining, I have heard.

The first hundred kilometres of the highway climb through the gently rising, rolling terrain of the Clear Hills. This is Chinchaga at its finest. These uplands support not only the most fabulous forests in the region, they also support the greatest diversity of life at Chinchaga. If one measures wilderness by the creatures it supports, than this truly remains a wilderness. Here

lives the most intact population of grizzly bear outside the cordillera. Here dispersing wolverine travel their marathon adventures. There are fisher almost the size of wolverines, and marten and otter and beautiful beaver ponds and plenty of moose and therefore wolves, plenty of wolves, many of them hulking brutes of midnight black with burning yellow eyes and feet the size of pie plates.



Lynx

The forest looks incredibly intact for all the trucks seen rumbling by, loaded down with old-growth trees. This is no accident. Where the land tilts to lend a more panoramic view, you will see that in many places what appears to be a healthy wilderness is an illusion created by the foresters in leaving a buffer of trees along the road, concealing the clear-cuts from the casual observer. It is as though the forest industry, so quick to woo the public with how "green" their practices have become, are ashamed to show their handiwork. The Clear Hills. The Clear-Cut Hills.

Following the Chinchaga Road west, one finally begins the descent from the Clear Hills at kilometre one hundred. The descent takes over ten kilometres. The steep feature you are descending is the western slope of the hills, known as Halverson Ridge. This feature, along with the Milligan Hills, which barely enter Alberta from B.C., is my favourite part of Chinchaga. Here the boreal old growth is truly magnificent. Plenty of the spruce here are bigger around than even the largest beef-fed Albertan. It is prime lurking ground for grizzly and wolverine. It is this part of Chinchaga that is most worth incorporating into a protected haven. So it was that the forest industry strongly protested its being designated as such when the Chinchaga Wildlands Park was created during the Special Places 2000 initiative. And so it



was that the park was whittled down to encompass mostly what lies beyond Halverson Ridge, and what you can glimpse spread out below you as you descend the great ridge on the forestry road.

What lies beyond is the "other landscape" of Chinchaga. The one of muskegs and peat fens. Compared to the uplands, it is an impoverished place. But just as life persists in our human slums, so life is to be found in the muskeg. A few forms even do quite well there.

The muskegs and fens are like a giant sponge, permanently at or near saturation. There are areas of permafrost. The sponge sports a thin mould of stunted willow and spruce and lichen. On drier ground, scraggly aspen and pine form a forest, no doubt, but certainly not something one would be inspired to travel a thousand kilometres or more to view, and certainly not what comes to mind when one hears the term "wilderness." The average diameter of the trees is likely no more than that of a Spaniard's thigh. This landscape covers an enormous area straddling the provincial boundary. Traversing it one feels as a louse might feel navigating a coyote in the advanced stages of mange.

Only on the rare well-drained hillocks can be found trees that approximate the grandeur seen in the uplands. But these token patches of prime forest occur here only as islands amid the wastes and do not support the diversity of life found in the uplands.

So what does live in this other landscape of Chinchaga?

Lynx live there. To me, no creature is more symbolic of Chinchaga than the Canada lynx. In the years I have been here, they have seemed preposterously abundant. If you are at all skilled as a tracker, you will discern this soon after entering the forest on the forestry road and without leaving your lung. Their distinctive round tracks punched straight and close into the snow can be seen with gratifying regularity along the road, where the cats have left the forest to cross to the other side. That they do so successfully on most occasions, despite the convoys of huge trucks, is borne out by the fact that after six years and tens of thousands of kilometres of travel on these roads, I have seen only one that was vehicle-killed. In fact, if my observations are taken as any indication, most of the carnivores here seem to have adapted to the road, or learned to avoid the road, and the only creatures that seem to be killed regularly are the spruce grouse. I wouldn't be surprised if the road acts as a sort of "semi-permeable barrier" (a little bio-geek-speak there for your irritation) to such creatures as wolverine and grizzly.

Your chances of seeing a lynx in the flesh are very good here, perhaps better than anywhere else on earth. They are remarkably nonchalant about disturbance and will often permit fairly close approach. Frequently, you will see more than one at time – groups up to five or six perhaps – mothers with half-to-mostly-grown kits. Late fall seems to be the best time to spot them. They live far out in the wastes and right amongst busy oil and gas development, hidden just within the fringes of spruce, and sometimes not hidden, and apparently unconcerned. As long as there is prey and cover, they're there.

Another defining feature of Chinchaga, and one that cannot be missed, is an anthropogenic one – the seismic corridor, or "cutline." Chinchaga hosts one of the highest densities of such

linear corridors in all of northern Alberta, which is saying something. I have examined maps depicting the patterns of these corridors in the northwest. The entire of northwest Alberta and northeast B.C. is analogous in these representations to certain photos I've seen of antebellum negro's backs.

Evidence suggests, depending on your interpretation of course, that this proliferation of linear features is having a detrimental effect on northern Alberta's sacred cow, the woodland caribou. (Southern Alberta has a sacred cow too, and it's called the cow.) Caribou are one of the few large species that actually likes to live on the big sponge. They choose to do so, so one theory goes, precisely because most other creatures do not. This includes another really abundant animal at Chinchaga, the moose, and its deadly predator, the wolf. Wolves at Chinchaga prefer to prey on moose. Moose do not live in fens. So wolves don't go into the fens, except, it is said, when seismic lines allow them to do so easily and more rapidly, and then they get the caribou they wouldn't normally have gotten. I suspect that if this theory is substantiated in the future, it will be found to be most relevant at calving time. The caribou I have observed in many dozens of encounters do indeed like fens. Any fens. They roam a lot, and spend plenty of time in moose habitat during their travels, and in fens of such limited extent that I can't believe they lend any isolating effect.



*Chinchaga*

Despite the proliferation of seismic lines, it should be remembered that they still only account for an overall removal of approximately two per cent of the forest canopy at Chinchaga at present, based on the most recent GIS analysis. But they are nonetheless having effects on the ecosystem. What are some of these effects, other than the ones purported for caribou?

If you were to plunge your head beneath the snow in any of



the forested areas of Chinchaga and peer around in that little subnivian space at ground level, you would be greeted by peevish cinereous and dusky shrews, and especially by a pretty little character known as the southern red-backed vole. He's fast food for martens and weasels, particularly, and the prevalent small rodent of the area. If you were to perform the same feat a metre or two onto a cutline, you would meet another totally different species of vole, the familiar and larger meadow vole. The entirely different habitat created by the grassy openings is his domain, and he's likely much more abundant out here in an otherwise hostile environment for the presence of the seismic lines. Lynx are quite fond of hunting him, as I have witnessed many times. I don't know if they make up an important part of the lynx diet on a percentage basis. His presence also tends to focus the attention of great grey and hawk owls on these openings.

If it sounds like I am leaning toward suggesting that the proliferation of seismic lines at Chinchaga have increased biodiversity there, it's because I am. I have witnessed what seems to be an increase at Chinchaga of other creatures that prefer the anthropogenic equivalent of forest edge habitat, and that, more tellingly, are not typically creatures of the unbroken boreal forest. White-tailed deer. Coyotes. Magpies. Puma. Is this change good or bad? I don't know. It depends on your viewpoint, to some extent. Ultimately, time will tell.

I also believe these lines, which are reseeded by law to a variety of grasses and herbs, result in an increased carrying capacity over and above that of the forest in its pristine state, and as a result, an overall increased biomass. The creatures that absolutely relish foraging on these lines, and one might assume are therefore gaining some benefit, include moose, caribou, grizzly and black bear. By benefiting moose alone (which, incidentally, are also benefited by the later seral stages of regrowth on these lines), and given the presence of wolves to prey on the moose, one benefits much of the ecosystem. I don't think the same can possibly be argued for clearcuts – remember, we are talking about an approximate two per cent canopy reduction here, with the majority of pre-existing growth remaining, as opposed to... *yikes!* These creatures listed are the major wilderness players out there. They are what, in my estimation, define Chinchaga as a still-healthy wilderness...

(Okay – we'll pause here to allow for the inevitable shouts of "paycheck bias" so that those predictable ones among you can get it over with. It is an understandable viewpoint coming from a culture of wage-slavery, so pardon me for not caring if you think it. It is human nature to project one's own motivations onto others.)

The *obvious* negatives – and I'm not saying there might not be others – of seismic corridors are these: they provide *much* easier access to market and ego-driven human predators – hunters and trappers. (And so as not to sound *too* biased, meddlesome radio-collar bearing biologists.) But let's not lay this problem entirely in the lap of industry. There is a great need for hunting and trapping reform, and has been for years, at Chinchaga as elsewhere in Alberta ... as on the rest of the continent. The north, for instance, has been allowed to remain completely blanketed by traplines. It is a solid quilt of traplines, as though every inch of the land owes some trapper a living.

There are no "buffer-zones" between these lines. It's a potential furbearer clear-cut. Hunters are also allowed to run rampant. They are allowed to access the area by iron-lung, and quad and argo, and all manner of ATVs. The solution here is a return to long-abandoned fair-chase ethics. Get these lazy guys out there on those cutlines *stalking on foot*, with bows and arrows, and you won't have to worry any more about these anthropogenic effects of linear corridors on wildlife. Don't laugh. This is exactly what some eminent hunters are advocating, too. I stole the idea from hunters. Let the hunters actually cultivate some hunting skills!

Is Chinchaga worth seeing? I suppose so. You may not put it at the top of your priority list. It's like the mountains, really – without the mountains. An underwhelming landscape. It is representative of much of what this country is about. It is our Siberia.

Is it worth protecting? Absolutely! All the major wilderness icons are there. This is how Chinchaga shines. How many places can you say that about anymore?! What landscape there is in most imminent peril of devastation? The uplands. The Clear Hills and Halverson Ridge. The few remaining stands of magnificent boreal old growth. They are still there at Chinchaga to be saved. Will they need saving? Of course. Hungry, greedy thoughts are hovering over them as you read this. They are counting on the fact that few will even be aware of what's there at Chinchaga before it's gone.

In fact, if you want to get a preliminary glimpse of the Chinchaga wilderness, you needn't even enter the forest. Go no further than the motel café at Manning, the gateway to Chinchaga. Take a seat by the window, and as you sip your coffee the old growth will come to you - loaded on convoys of trucks that never quit. 🍁



Halverson Ridge, Chinchaga

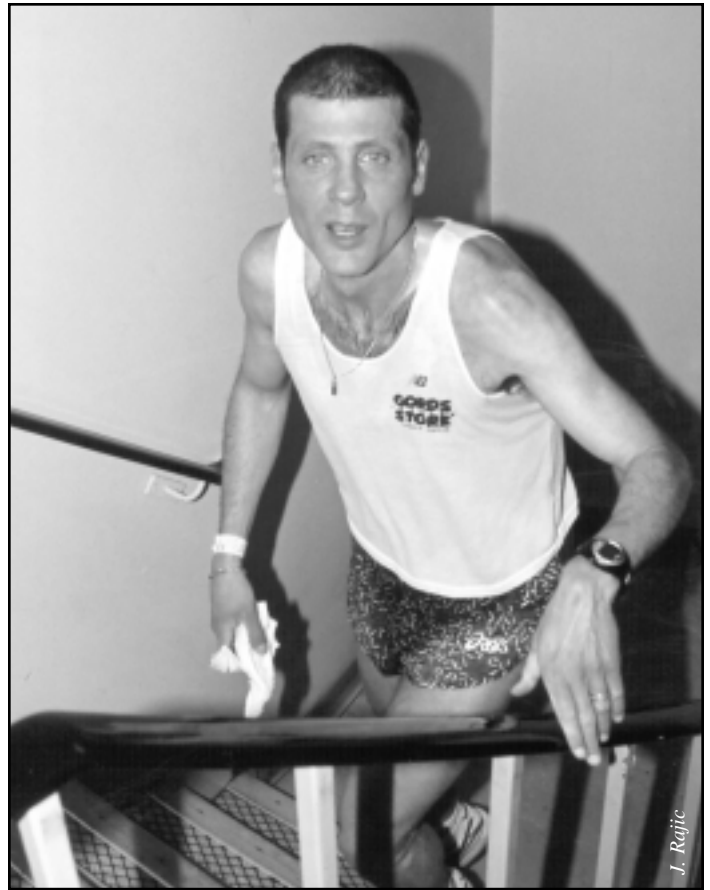


# CONTROL PROJECT TARGETS CORMORANTS

The Alberta government has approved a plan to reduce cormorant populations in the Lac La Biche area. The Cormorant Control Project will be carried out by Fish and Wildlife and researchers at the University of Alberta. It involves oiling the birds' eggs to keep them from hatching. The goal is to reduce the numbers of cormorants, not eliminate them. Many people blame cormorants for eating large quantities of fish in area lakes and depleting fish stocks.

Tom Maccagno, a local naturalist and member of the Lac La Biche Fisheries Enhancement Society says he is adamant that oiling cannot take place on Lac La Biche itself because that would be a gross violation of the sanctuary status of the lake. Lac La Biche has recently been designated as an Important Birding Area. Maccagno told the *Lac La Biche Post*, "I think [the cormorants] are a scapegoat for the under-management of our fisheries resources."

AWA covered this issue with a news release and backgrounder in May 2002 and in the June 2002 issue of the *Wild Lands Advocate*. In a letter to the *Post* editor, Dr. Richard Thomas noted that scientific studies showed the reason for expanding cormorant populations was that excessive commercial exploitation of large predatory fish (e.g., walleye and pike) allows forage fish populations to expand dramatically, which in turn, due to the greater availability of their preferred prey, results in an increased abundance of cormorants. 🍁



*Climb for Wilderness - Most Climbs, Bert Stark*



*Cormorants*



*Climb for Wilderness - The two most senior women climbers -  
Phyllis Hart and Roxie Neale*

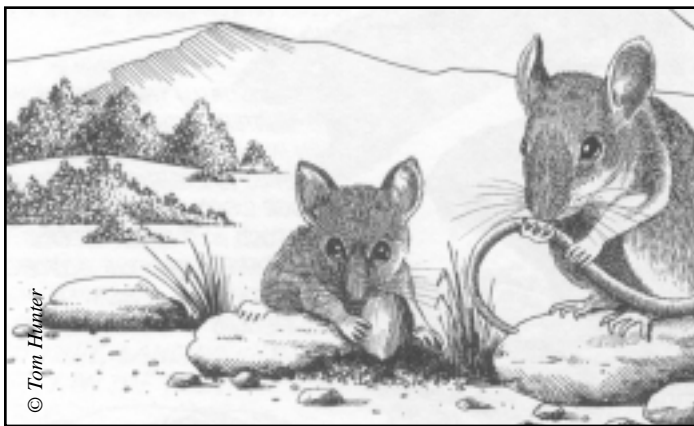




# DEER MICE: LORDS OF THE WILDERNESS

By John S. Millar

Anyone who has spent many nights sleeping in the wilderness has felt the pitter-patter of little feet across his or her sleeping bag and heard the rustling of whiskers in the corner of the tent, and anyone fast with a flashlight will recognize the culprit, with its long tail, large ears and beady black eyes, to be a deer mouse. It belongs to a group of New World Mice (genus *Peromyscus*) that are ubiquitous in North America, being found from Mexico to Yukon and from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. Its diet is omnivorous (primarily insects and seeds) and its habitats include deserts, dry grasslands, deciduous and coniferous forests, alpine talus slopes, lake shores and ocean beaches, as well as barns, sheds and houses. If you have mice in your house, they are most probably deer mice.



They are easy to maintain in captivity, which, along with their ease of handling in the field, makes them a favourite subject for studies on small mammals. They have been the subject of literally thousands of scientific papers, several scientific books and numerous popular publications. The morphological features of these mice undoubtedly provided the model for Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, a cartoon character familiar to everybody.

Our interest in these mice arose because they, like almost all small mammals, can only reproduce during the summer. This is not a problem in a southern environment with a very short or mild winter because they can breed during most or all of the year. It was already known in the 1960s that, under these circumstances, several generations could be produced each year. Overwintered mice give birth in the spring. Their young (the first generation) mature at two months of age and give birth (the second generation) within three months of their parent's birth.

The second generation, in turn, can mature at about two months of age, producing a third generation within the same year. Meanwhile, the overwintered mice are breeding repeatedly approximately every three months. Collectively, there is tremendous potential for population growth and for rapid recovery after a population decline when breeding seasons are long.

How do such populations persist in the north where the summer season is only a few months long? No data were available, but the conventional wisdom was that they must

compensate by producing many more young per unit of time in order to offset the high mortality associated with a long, harsh winter.

To test this hypothesis we received funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) to initiate studies on these mice in 1972. Over the next 10 years we conducted studies at five locations with different seasonal environment: London, Ontario; Pinawa, Manitoba; Heart Lake, NWT; Milk River, Alberta; and Kananaskis, Alberta. The results were conclusive and our hypothesis was soundly rejected. In northern environments, deer mice have severe constraints on reproduction.

Overwintered females produce only two litters during the summer season and their young do not mature in the summer of their birth. They mature the next year, when they, in turn, produce only two litters. This means that generation time is one year in the north, as opposed to a few months in the south; their potential for population growth is very low and their potential for recovery from population declines is severely compromised.

How can the population persist with such low productivity? It's quite simple. They live a very long time relative to southern mice. Mice born in the spring in southern Ontario are almost never still alive by October, while it is quite common for a mouse born in the spring at Kananaskis to be alive two years later.

Our studies since then have focused in the Kananaskis Valley of Alberta because elevation provides a short-season environment without the high expense of transportation to the far north. The fine research facilities at the Kananaskis Field Station (University of Calgary) are an additional asset, although we have ventured to Mexico and California for specific studies in long-season environments. Our subsequent research continues to focus on deer mice in order to better understand the precise constraints on their reproduction (and consequences for survival). We have also investigated the constraints on reproduction in other northern species and a general, similar pattern has emerged.

Many northern species of mammals, including red squirrels, chipmunks, voles, jumping mice, and ground squirrels show delayed maturation when the time for reproduction is short. Even lemmings, notorious for high population growth potential in some years because they have two breeding seasons per year (one in winter, one in summer) often cannot mature in the season of their birth. Understanding the specific constraints on reproduction in all these species provides plenty of research opportunities for the future.

*(Dr. Millar is a professor in the Department of Biology, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, N6A 5B7.)* 🍁





# ZOË PRESTON: THE LADY BEHIND THE BEAR

By John Geary

If you've been to any AWA event in the past four years, there is a good chance you've seen Kananaskis, the K-Country Grizzly Bear. Let's face it, a bear the size of a buffalo *is* difficult to miss.

However, while many AWA supporters, volunteers and friends have come to view the bear as an integral part of any association event, not many are familiar with the story behind the bear. Fewer still have had the opportunity to meet the lady behind the bear, Zoë Preston.

While the story of the bear's construction is interesting, it is just one chapter in her life's narrative.

Constructed as it is from a wooden frame, cardboard-papier maché and the kind of fake fur you used to see on 70s toilet seat covers, the bear is a real work of art. That's appropriate, as Zoë has been involved with art in one form or another most of her life.



*Zoe and KC the Bear*

Born in Australia, her family moved to England when she was 15. They lived near a riding school, and her family arranged for her to learn how to manage the school. However, she really wanted to go to an art school, so off to the Kingston School of Fine Art she went. In four years, she earned a Queen's Scholarship to the Royal College of Art. She completed her four years there, but before she could put her education into action, World War II intruded and she found herself in the Women's Royal Navy Service, WRNS, better known as the Wrens. She became involved in one of the war's most crucial operations, an art in itself: breaking enemy codes to decipher messages.

"We worked on huge computers with dozens of drums that contained all the alphabet on them," she says. "They would send a plane across to the coast of Europe to intercept German messages. They'd work out what they were saying in German, give it to us in English, then we'd plug it into the computer, break down the code and determine what the message said."

When the war in Europe ended but the war in the Pacific was

still underway, she used her art skills to teach art to sailors in the north of England. At the war's end, she married and had three children. After giving birth to her first son, they moved to Ontario, where two more children were born. Between settling into a new country and raising a family, she still did not have much opportunity to do any artwork. However, she did manage to find time during this period to turn her skills to making marionette puppets.

"It's like knitting, you can put it down and pick it up again a week later. But if you're doing a portrait, it's no use having someone sit for you one day, then wait a couple of weeks."

She looked into teaching, but that would have meant another three years of college, so instead she landed a job drawing the Avro Arrow plans for A. V. Roe. She continued to make puppets and put some in a fête held in Caledon, the village where she lived. A filmmaker saw the show, and used the puppets in a pilot film about the Alice in Wonderland tea party. The CBC expressed an interest in producing a longer film using all the puppets; however, Zoë and her husband divorced before she could complete them, so she had to find a fulltime job. That kept her from finishing the puppets.

Shortly after the divorce, she moved out west, still intending to complete the puppets at some point. Little did she realize how she would soon turn her puppet-making skills to another project.

"I wrote a letter to a newspaper about some environmental issue, and Donna Remington, a lady from Northern Light [a group formed to protest Alberta Pacific clear-cutting in the boreal forest] read it, and phoned me, asking me if I'd like to help out," says Zoë.



*Zoe's interpretation of Premier Ralph Klein.*

Before she knew it, she became an environmental activist, "rallying at the drop of a hat," making placards and signs for

rallies. Her environmental involvement meant once again that she did not have time to finish her puppets – or a book project she had started in Ontario.

One of the groups with which she became actively involved was the K-Country coalition. While trying to come up with an idea for an effective outreach tool, Sean Harrison suggested that a giant grizzly bear would help draw people to their rallies and campaigns. Given her puppet-building skills, Zoë was placed in charge of making it.

The project took the better part of a year to complete. When she was finished, they had a bigger-than-life grizzly bear to attract people to environmental rallies. "It didn't look so big when I was making it," she says. "To make it any smaller, it would have been very hard to get the details and proportion right."

The legs and body were made of masking tape, Saran wrap, newspaper papier maché and cardboard maché. This was put over a wood frame that stands upright by itself. Zoë drew on knowledge she gained as a child to make the bear's skin. "My father used to hunt rabbits and my sister and I would skin them, taking the skin off in one piece," she says. "The skin fits over the cardboard body and legs quite easily."

She designed the head using the same method she used to make the other body parts. The claws were made from a unique mixture of materials. "I used to make my puppets out of wood powder and poly filler, but I couldn't find any wood powder, so I substituted bran."



AWA worked with the K-Country coalition and borrowed the bear for some AWA outreach events, which is how Kananaskis came to be associated with AWA, as the Association began using it at all its events.

Zoë is currently trying to finish the other project she started years ago in Ontario: the writing of a storybook about animals. She imbues creatures that lived near her Caledon farm – mice, a toad, a porcupine – with the personalities of some family members and friends. In addition to writing the story, she is sketching pictures for the book, drawing them from her own hand-made three-dimensional models of each of the characters.

"I couldn't do it without the props," she says. "It becomes more real, like I'm actually living with the creatures."

The story itself is finished, now she's working on the sketches. She does not have a publisher lined up yet, but when finally published, she thinks the book will appeal to all ages. "It's a child's book, but I'm hoping anybody can pick it up and enjoy it." 🍁



*Climb for Wilderness*



# ALBERTA'S TRUMPETER SWAN NEEDS YOUR HELP

In our last issue, Marian White wrote about the plight of the trumpeter swan in Alberta. Your help is needed if this swan is to continue its journey back from near extinction. The Alberta government recently reaffirmed that the trumpeter swan, which breeds in and migrates through Alberta, remains a Threatened Species here. Accordingly, it has mandated a team to develop a trumpeter recovery plan within twelve months. It will hold the first of four Recovery Team meetings in Grande Prairie in late April and intends to produce the plan within 12 months. So. Now is the time to have your say.

**Trumpeters in Alberta:** As individuals and as an organization, make your concerns known by contacting the Recovery Team leader (shown below). For more information, contact Marian White.

**Trumpeter migration habitat around Calgary:** Find out more from the Weaselhead-Glenmore Park Protection Society. Then make your views known to your city councillor, Mayor Bronconnier, and the Recovery Team.

**Wintering grounds:** Sign up now so the Trumpeter Swan Society can call upon you to write letters when the time comes (shortly). Do this by letting the Marian White have your name, address, postal code, phone/fax and email address.

## Contacts and Resources

Marian White - The Trumpeter Swan Society  
Tel/fax Calgary 403-246-2994 sherwood@nucleus.com

Mark Heckbert, Team Leader -  
Trumpeter Swan Alberta Recovery Plan  
Alberta Fish & Wildlife. High Prairie, AB  
Tel RITE 310-0000 + 780-523-6517  
Mark.Heckbert@gov.ab.ca

Brent Johner - Weaselhead Glenmore Park Preservation Soc.  
403-251-7486 <http://weaselhead.org>

Follow Yukon RMP trumpeters through Alberta  
on migration at [www.uen.org/swan](http://www.uen.org/swan).  
Visit the Trumpeter Swan Society at  
[www.taiga.net/swans/index.html](http://www.taiga.net/swans/index.html).



*Trumpeter Swans: Two Grande Prairie non-breeding adults run across lake ice to take off.*

Robin White/FotoLex



*Climb for Wilderness*

J. Rajic



*Climb for Wilderness*

D. Olson



# ASSOCIATION NEWS

## CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS MAKES A GREAT FAMILY TRADITION

By Wendy Northrup



It all started with a casual conversation with a friend who was working on a project. "Can you hand out a few brochures and put up some posters to publicize the AWA's Climb for Wilderness? I'll even give you a T-shirt from last year to talk it up at the gym," she said. A fairly simple request to support a good cause, I thought.

Then I read the brochure and the wondering began. Won't it be hard to climb 812 stairs? How long will it take? Do I walk or run? Could I do half the stairs two at a time? Will the stairwell be busy or will I be the only sucker to attempt this? Why should I raise money for the Alberta Wilderness Association? Will it be easy to get sponsors? Questions, questions and so little time.

Of course I procrastinated about getting sponsors, although I did enlist three colleagues to do the climb. It was because they started to get all the pledges in the office that I was spurred to action. "Hey, if you're going to sponsor Sue, how about me, too?" I would whine. It was a piece of cake. I gathered \$185 in pledges in two days. Whew!

interviewed me and I sputtered something about not knowing what to expect but it was for a good cause. How could anyone sound that HOKEY on camera?

No more excuses. The entrance to the stairs is open, a volunteer smiles at me, winks and hands me a bottle of water. I'm on my way. The sign says "Start climbing slowly." No need to tell me twice, I think, and slow my pace. I'm breathing pretty hard by the twelfth landing but by then I'm almost one quarter done! I start humming a tune. In less than eight minutes I'm at the fortieth landing and I'm feeling fine! My breathing is laboured but steady so I finish with two stairs at time for the last 12 flights. From the relative darkness of the stairwell I emerge to the bright landscape seen from the observation deck. The Tower has been climbed and it was easier than I thought it was going to be.

On the way back down the elevator to check out the environmental fair, I meet one of the youngest participants in Climb for Wilderness, a four year old who is climbing for her second year!!! Humbled, I decide that next year I'll be doing the multiple climb and my five- and seven-year-old daughters will climb the first set of stairs with me. We'll start a new family tradition and perhaps our efforts will help ensure a clean water



*Run for Wilderness*



*Humorist and Emcee Michael Kerr*

*Climb for Wilderness*

Why should AWA matter to any of us? I checked out the Web site and the mission statement: "Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action." Given the unbridled development I see around me, someone had better advocate for conservation.

As for the stairs, I didn't really do any special fitness preparation. I picked up my activity level, although my incentive was to wear a bathing suit on vacation, not to climb the stairs with authority. I arrived at the Tower early on April 19 and was genuinely nervous. It was time to find out just how tough it would be or how much of a wimp I really am. A-Channel

supply and wilderness areas for their daughters and granddaughters. I know they will appreciate all our efforts to support AWA.

*Almost 1,200 people climbed the Calgary Tower on April 19 to show their support for wilderness. Prize winners, record holders and photos are online at [www.climbforwilderness.ca](http://www.climbforwilderness.ca) 🍁*



# CONGRATULATIONS

## JERRY HALL: A CARING CANADIAN

By Joyce Hildebrand

While the rest of us curl up by the fireplace on a cold winter day, Jerry Hall is likely to be dropping a fishing line into a hole in the ice, surrounded by the wilderness he grew to love more than half a century ago. Born in 1933, Jerry was raised on a mixed farm near Caroline, Alberta, with the surrounding foothills and mountains as his playground.

Later in life, Jerry watched development erode his beloved wild places. "It broke my heart every time a new road appeared," he recalls. That led him to the Alberta Wilderness Association in 1991 in the hope of helping to slow down the disappearance of those special places. Always ready to lend a hand, he helps with AWA events such as the Tower Climb and the annual banquet. And every spring he heads for the woods to help with the annual bird species count for the Bird Atlas Committee.

Jerry's commitment to volunteering started long before his connection with AWA. Early in his 44-year career with the Alberta Wheat Board, he became involved with 4H, serving on the 4H Council and Foundation. "There is so much to be gained from working with youth," he says, "helping them to develop into caring citizens." Two years ago he was inducted into the 4H Hall of Fame after more than 30 years of volunteer service.

The United Church is another beneficiary of Jerry's generosity. Over the years he has served on numerous boards and committees, mostly with local congregations but also for the presbytery. Twenty years ago the Renfrew Ramblers emerged from the Renfrew United Church playing upbeat country and dance music. A longtime member of the group, Jerry continues to play his electric guitar free of charge for shut-ins, seniors, and church groups.

In May 2003 Adrienne Clarkson presented Jerry with the Governor General's Caring Canadian award for making a difference through a lifetime of volunteering. The presentation was part of the citizenship ceremony for a number of new Canadians. Jerry was one of four Calgarian "models of citizenship" to receive the award.

When he's not helping out or tramping in his childhood paradise, Jerry enjoys authors like Pierre Berton and Farley Mowat, attends concerts and travels with Margaret, his wife of 42 years, or goes metal hunting – he has a collection of over 400 rings! Chat with him for only a few minutes and you will sense his warmth, his genuine interest in others, his kindness and humour. Like the treasures he finds on his metal safaris, below his gentle, soft-spoken surface there is gold. 🍂



*Jerry Hall receives his award from Governor General Adrienne Clarkson.*

## TOM MACCAGNO WINS AWARD FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION



*Tom maccagno*

*Congratulations to Tom Maccagno for winning a Canadian Environmental Award for "Habitat Conservationist" 2003. The awards are described as a celebration of community achievement and are presented by the Canadian Geographic Society. The following profile is excerpted from the award booklet.*

Tom Maccagno grew up on the shores of Lac Biche in northeastern Alberta. As a kid, he fished and hiked the area, reveling in the wonders of nature. As an adult with children of his own, he began to notice that the province's seventh largest lake had begun to look and smell bad, showing signs of unruly weed growth and fewer fish. When he witnessed a handful of pike in an inlet to the lake turn tail and flee, he knew his favourite wilderness was in serious trouble.

A lawyer by training and the mayor of Lac La Biche from 1990 to 1995, Maccagno used all his skills and influence to persuade the government to designate nearby Portage La Biche a provincial historic resource in 1993. It was the first victory in a 20-year fight to protect the area.

Known in political circles as "Alberta's fisheries conscience," Maccagno has expanded his efforts to preserve and restore other wildlands. He is a relentless writer and editorial campaigner, and he reinforces his arguments with practical work for a host of environmental foundations and associations. "In this province, everything has a For Sale sign on it," he says. "But wilderness is like a cathedral. You don't look for it to have another purpose."

When the Lakeland District, of which Lac La Biche is part, was described in a 1999 government-commissioned report as environmentally degraded, Maccagno and colleagues hiked the region to discover and record the presence of 16 orchid species. He is now lobbying for the creation of a protected orchid fen in the Lac La Biche area. "We don't inherit the landscape; we borrow it from our children," says Maccagno, invoking a Haida expression. He's determined it will be a gift he can return. 🍂



# ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH: HELPING YOU TO PROTECT YOUR WILDERNESS

**Alberta Wilderness Watch** is an AWA initiative in environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship involves respecting nature, striving to understand it and accepting responsibility for the health of wilderness. With this program we hope to strengthen the land ethic among Albertans, while monitoring and protecting our wilderness.

Albertans are interested in their wilderness areas but often do not know what they can do to help protect it. At the same time, damage from human activity is widespread and growing.

Traditionally, AWA has organized wilderness clean-up trips and completes an annual trail maintenance program in the Bighorn Wildland as part of the Alberta government Adopt-a-Trail scheme. Through our more formal stewardship program, *Alberta Wilderness Watch*, AWA provides additional opportunities for volunteers who wish to be involved practically in wilderness protection. Whether you are a scientist, an activist or simply want to be more involved with the wilderness you love, we have some great programs for you to be involved with.

## VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

AWA is responsible as the official steward for two sites under the Alberta government's stewardship program: Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve on the southern tip of Kananaskis Country and the Beehive Natural Area, in the headwaters of the Oldman River.

Volunteer stewards are needed for both of these sites. As a volunteer steward, you will commit to making two site visits per year. You will look for signs of disturbance or potential problems at the site, record any wildlife or plants of interest that you may see, take photographs and fill in a brief report to record your findings. No formal scientific training is needed and AWA offers guided hikes to both of these sites, where an informal orientation to being a volunteer steward is offered (see the Events page of our Web site at [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca)).



Plateau Mountain



Beehive

## WILDERNESS REPORTING

Last year AWA produced our Wild Alberta map, showing the protected areas in Alberta and the areas of remaining wilderness where AWA believes there is a need for more protection. Throughout the province AWA has supporters who regularly report about areas that concern them. Being an AWA **Wilderness Reporter** means that you will keep an eye on an area, researching any reports and documents that exist or may be produced and keeping AWA informed of any developments that might affect wilderness status of the area. We have a need for many more individuals willing to keep in touch with us about an area they really care for.

The following is a list of "Wild Spaces" identified on our Wild Alberta map. Please consider helping us with this important stewardship role. If you are interested in any of the areas listed below, please seriously consider being a **Wilderness Reporter** for AWA. You would visit the site occasionally to check on any developments, keep a watchful eye for any news stories about the area and provide copies to the Alberta Wilderness Resource Centre, here at AWA. There is also a need for photographs of many of these areas. If you are interested in being an AWA spokesperson for the area you love, we would also appreciate the opportunity of discussing that role with you.





SOUTHERN ALBERTA	CENTRAL ALBERTA	NORTHERN ALBERTA
Bow River Castle Cypress Hills/Milk River Hand Hills Kananaskis Livingstone/Porcupine Majorville Middle Sand Hills Milk River Ridge Oldman River Red Deer River South Ghost Waterton Parkland	Athabasca River Bighorn Bodo Hills Cardinal Divide Goose Wallace Kakwa Kirkpatrick Prairie Little Smoky Marten Mountain North Saskatchewan Otauwau Parkland Dunes Primrose/Lakeland	Athabasca Delta/Dunes Athabasca Rapids Birch Wabasca Bistcho Cache Creek/Wolverine Cameron Hills Caribou Mountains Charles Cornwall Chinchaga Clearwater Firebag Harper Old Fort Peace River Slave River Wabasca River Wylie Lake



*Bighorn Trail Maintenance*

**TRAIL MAINTENANCE**

Each year, AWA maintains the 80-km Historic Bighorn Trail, keeping it accessible and clear for hikers and equestrian trailriders. A 10-day trail maintenance trip is planned each summer and volunteers move deadfall, construct trail drainage systems, clear brush and generally inspect the trail.

**TRAIL MONITORING**

A new **Alberta Wilderness Watch** initiative this summer is a program for volunteer stewards to learn about trail use and abuse and to help monitor conditions on specific trails. This year, the program is focused on the Bighorn Wildland and will provide important baseline data and learning opportunities. We expect that the results of this **Alberta Wilderness Watch** program will also include greater appreciation and awareness of sensitive wilderness environments as well as opportunities to learn about impacts and long-term problems caused by inappropriate human activity. It will provide volunteer opportunities to enjoy our wilderness and participate in its protection.

**RARE PLANT SURVEYS**

Another new initiative this summer for volunteer stewards will be the opportunity to learn more about rare plants in Alberta and participate in comprehensive rare plant surveys. Rare plants are a good indicator of biodiversity and can be used as a scientific benchmark for management decisions. The Waterton/Castle area is particularly rich floristically because of its location in the extreme southwest corner of the province and because of its overlapping ecosystems stretching from high alpine meadows to the Foothills Grassland ecoregion. For this reason we will begin this **Alberta Wilderness Watch** program of rare plant surveys in the Castle Wilderness area.



**WILDERNESS NETWORK (WiN)**

WiN is an essential component of **Alberta Wilderness Watch** that AWA developed to help concerned individuals participate in wilderness protection with a minimum of time and energy! When you become a member of the WiN team, we periodically provide you with updates and action alerts about our Wild Spaces and areas of concern. WiN members have access to a listserv newsletter service, receive updates and tips on how to participate in decision-making processes and write, phone, email or fax decision makers about wilderness issues.

These six outstanding opportunities to volunteer, learn and participate in "Defending Wild Alberta" are programs that we hope will continue to grow and serve our members and the public well. Many of the programs depend on dedicated volunteers, donations and the valued support of funding agencies including Alberta Ecotrust, the Shell Environment Fund and others. If you are interested in any of these **Alberta Wilderness Watch** opportunities, please contact me (Nigel Douglas, Outreach Coordinator) by phone at 403-283-2025, toll free at 1-866-313-0717, or by email: awa@shaw.ca. 🍁



## STAFF PROFILES:



**DEREK OSBORNE, BSc, MFC.** I have recently joined the AWA staff as a conservation biologist. The focus of my work here will largely concentrate on the southern portion of the Eastern Slopes region. This will include issues relating to the Castle Wilderness, the Whaleback and Kananaskis Country. I am also serving as AWA's representative on the Forest Stewardship Council's Alberta Standards Working Group and will be developing an old-growth forest strategy.

As for my background, I hold an honours degree in biology from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Upon completion of my undergraduate degree, I spent four years working with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (i.e., Eastern Habitat Joint Venture and Ducks Unlimited) as a wetland biologist. After additional projects with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and the Baccalieu Board of Economic Development, I completed a Masters in Forest Conservation (International Stream) at the University of Toronto. As part of my graduate studies, I worked with the Long Beach Model Forest (Vancouver Island) in developing a restoration strategy for upland and riparian secondary forests of Clayoquot Sound. Prior to joining AWA, I was employed as a riparian biologist with the Vancouver-based Habitat Restoration Corporation.

These are exciting yet challenging times for Alberta's wild spaces. I am quite pleased to be joining such a talented and dedicated organization as AWA in promoting the conservation of this awe-inspiring land. I am also looking forward to sharing my experiences and concerns with you in future issues of the Wild Lands Advocate. 🍁



**LARA SMANDYCH, MES.** I am the newest addition to the AWA team as a conservation biologist. I am very excited to join this amazing group of staff, members and volunteers. I look forward to meeting all involved with AWA and share in the fantastic work they do. I bring to the Association a passion for wilderness conservation (protected areas) and public environmental education. I hope to make a positive and knowledgeable contribution to the great work undertaken by AWA as it strives for better management and protection for the Alberta wilderness!

I hold a degree in land use and environmental studies and a certificate in physical geography from the University of Saskatchewan. This experience provided me with the basic understanding of the need for nature conservation while allowing me the opportunity and distinct pleasure to work as an environmental programmer and nature interpreter. The road eventually led me to the maritimes and Dalhousie University where I completed a Masters in Environmental Studies with a focus on biodiversity preservation and protected area selection.

My discovery and use of GIS technology at this time fueled the way to an advanced diploma in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) from the Centre of Geographical Sciences, also in Nova Scotia. The East, however, couldn't keep me for long and the call of the West brought me to Calgary and AWA. 🍁



**LAURIE WEIN, BSc, MA.** This May I joined AWA as a conservation biologist. In the fall of 2002 I completed my Master of Arts in political science at the University of Alberta. My thesis examined the behaviour of the Canadian federal government in the past decade of international climate change negotiations. A large part of my thesis work centered on the importance of political leadership and on the quality of the stakeholder consultative processes during this time. During this time I also worked part-time at the Canadian Forest Service in Edmonton on a project to measure the policy-related beliefs and attitudes of bureaucrats confronting climate change in several natural resource sectors.

Prior to my MA, I undertook a Bachelor of Science in forestry, also at the University in Alberta. I have worked on forestry issues in Alberta, in northern Canada and in Germany. I hope that my combined training in both the biological and social sciences can be put to good use at AWA in helping protect wild places here in Alberta.

Although I have lived in many parts of the country, at present I am lucky enough to live in Jasper National Park where my husband is a park warden. Surrounded by the blessings of truly wild places, I am reminded every day of how fortunate Albertans are to live in a part of the world where such magnificent natural areas abound.

While at AWA I will be working on a strategic plan for the Lakeland area and assisting with an ongoing project in the Bighorn Wildland area. I look forward to meeting you all in the coming months. 🍁



**ANDY TEUCHER.** I am working for AWA this summer as an outreach assistant. Over the next few months I will be organizing displays and attending various venues around the province with AWA displays. I will be trying to raise the profile of AWA in the province, increase public awareness of current conservation issues in Alberta and encourage people to become involved with wilderness issues.

I received a Bachelor of Science in zoology from the University of Calgary in 2001. Since then I have had experience working in an environmental laboratory in Calgary, and I spent some time doing fieldwork in the Mojave Desert in Nevada, performing population studies of the threatened desert tortoise. My current plan is to attend the University of Calgary in the fall to pursue a Masters degree in ecology. I am an avid outdoor enthusiast and a passionate conservationist, and I relish the opportunity to work with AWA and contribute to efforts to preserve Alberta wildlands. 🍁



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## BIGHORN WILDLAND VICTIM OF THE ABSRD

When you write a letter to the Alberta government expressing concerns about how the wilderness areas in the Eastern Slopes, specifically the Bighorn, are being managed, it ends up on the desk of Minister of Sustainable Resource Development Mike Cardinal. When it comes to wilderness preservation, this is like the fox guarding the hen house.

In replies from Cardinal to letters I have written regarding resource development proposals and the opening of the Bighorn to ATV abuse, I received his "take" on the intent of the government's own Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes.

In my mind this was an excellent document that outlined how wilderness preservation was to co-exist with commercial and resource development. It clearly outlined Prime Protection Zones in the slopes that would be exempt from resource development and entry of motorized vehicles.

But Cardinal writes, "It is not a regulatory document but provides a broad, regionally focused guide to resource development within the Eastern Slopes," and later, "It was designated to be flexible to allow consideration of a range of future proposals."

If Cardinal had been around when this policy was forged he would have discovered that his spin on its intent is vastly different from the view of hundreds of concerned citizens, researchers and the government's own staff, whose focus was the protection of sensitive landscapes, protection of critical wildlife zones, protection of watershed (the source of our clean water), and preserving for future generations some semblance of wilderness.

How is Alberta doing in the protection of wilderness and wildlands? In a recent report card on Laws Governing Canadian Parks and Protected Areas by environmental law professor David Boyd, Alberta received an "F" grade for effectiveness for protected area legislation. This is par for the course for Alberta, which has lagged behind all other provinces in the area of wilderness preservation.

Many of our provincial parks and so-called special places still have outstanding resource development leases that could be honoured at any time. The three wilderness areas – South Ghost, Siffleur and Whitegoat – are protected by legislation but they are postage-stamp size and likely only protected because there was nothing of value there that could be extracted.

Luckily, the national parks are under the capable control of the federal government. We have a golden opportunity to protect world-class wildlands for a rapidly growing and sustainable ecotourism industry, but we are mangling them with weak or non-existent legislation.

So who is Cardinal? Is this not the same man who re-opened the walleye fisheries on a lake where he owns a cabin against the recommendations of his own fisheries biologists? Is this the man who recently opened a hunting season on the grizzly even though they are classified by the government as "code blue," one level below the

endangered species designation in Alberta, and he has no accurate estimation of how many grizzlies are living in Alberta? Is this not the same Mike Cardinal who caved in to the minority ATV lobby and threw open the Bighorn to "self-regulated" ATV access? Is this not the same Mike Cardinal who is actively encouraging the extraction of timber and oil and gas in the Bighorn?

There is a disturbing theme running here – an elected official who does not respond to public opinion or listen to his own wildlife and fisheries biologists.

So what are Albertans doing about this? Not much, as far as I can see. The Bighorn Coalition, a group of stakeholders with a vested interest in protecting the wilderness aspect of the Bighorn, couldn't put aside their petty differences for the time it would take to boot resource companies and ATVs out of most of the Bighorn.

- Don Wales, Red Deer 🍁

## A TRAPPER/BEEKEEPER RESPONDS TO TRAPPING LETTERS

In response to Jonathan's Wright's essay on trapping, I would like to bring up the subject of beekeeping. I will not go into the history of beekeeping in Alberta, but I do want to mention that bees are really a cute and fantastic little creature.

When I kept bees some thirty-odd years ago, the practice then was to buy packaged bees every year from the U.S. in the spring, keep them all summer producing honey and then on a good frosty night in early September we would give each beehive a good shot of cyanide gas, shake the bees out of the hive onto the ground and leave them to slowly freeze to death. Beekeepers thought nothing about doing that.

Times have changes since then and most beehives are insulated and overwintered now. You might say that beekeepers operated in the dark ages back then, but did people stop eating honey because of the way bees were treated? I think not.

Now trapping has come a long way since Mr. Wright had been a trapper, and I, being a professional trapper for thirty years plus, know this for a fact. A good trapper checks his traps on a regular basis and if a trap is set for a beaver, a beaver is what you are going to catch. Set a trap for a weasel and that is what you will catch. I can see an animal pulling out of a weak spring trap, but the traps we use today don't have weak springs. If you get your hand caught in a magnum conibear type trap, it will break your hand, so you can imagine what it would do to the neck of a raccoon. Beekeepers and fur trappers are not in the dark ages anymore.

I invite Mr. Wright to come on the trapline with me; he can take a video camera and if I catch any animals the way he said he did when he trapped, I will give up trapping.

- Dave Donahue 🍁



## OPEN HOUSE HIKES PROGRAM

### Saturday, June 21, 2003

The Whaleback (FULL) with Bob Blaxley

### Saturday, June 21, 2003

Ducks and Medicine Wheels! A Summer Solstice Bus Trip to the Majorville Medicine Wheel Project With Ducks Unlimited

### Saturday, June 28, 2003

Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve with Vivian Pharis

### Saturday, July 12, 2003

Cypress Hills with Hyland Armstrong

### Saturday, July 26, 2003

Blue Hill Fire Lookout (west of Sundre) with Will Davies

### Saturday, August 23, 2003

Beehive Natural Area with James Tweedie

### Saturday, September 6, 2003

The Whaleback (FULL) with Bob Blaxley

### Sunday, September 21

Chester Lake, Kananaskis with Vivian Pharis

All hikes are \$20.00, and pre-registration is required. For more details, check the Events page of the AWA Web site at [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca). To register for hikes, please call 403-283-2025.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CALGARY CASINO

September 28 & 29, 2003  
Call AWA office 403-283-2025

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SUMMER OUTREACH DISPLAY TEAM

Throughout the summer we will be having staffed displays set up at various venues around Alberta, where we will be trying to raise awareness of current conservation issues in the province and encouraging people to become involved in saving our wild spaces. We are looking for volunteers to help out as members of our display team this summer. All necessary training and information will be provided.

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Sunday, June 22        | Helen Schuler Coulee Centre, Lethbridge |
| • Friday, June 27        | Strathmore Farmers Market, Strathmore   |
| • Saturday, July 5       | Barrier Lake Visitor Centre, Kananaskis |
| • Sunday, July 6         | Barrier Lake Visitor Centre, Kananaskis |
| • Saturday, July 19      | Millarville Farmers Market, Millarville |
| • Sunday, August 3       | Canmore Folk Festival, Canmore          |
| • Monday, August 4       | Canmore Folk Festival, Canmore          |
| • Saturday, August 9     | Capilano Farmers Market, Edmonton       |
| • Sunday, August 10      | Callingwood Farmers Market, Edmonton    |
| • Saturday, August 16    | Mountain Equipment Co-op, Edmonton      |
| • Sunday, August 17      | Kerry Wood Nature Centre, Red Deer      |
| • Saturday, September 13 | Millarville Farmers Market, Millarville |
| • Wednesday Evenings     | Hillhurst Farmers Market, Calgary       |

If you would like to donate a couple of hours of your time to help us out by staffing a display booth at any of these venues, please contact Andy Teucher, Outreach Assistant, at 403-283-2025 or [events@albertawilderness.ca](mailto:events@albertawilderness.ca).

Editorial Board: Shirley Bray, Ph.D / Peter Sherrington, Ph.D /  
Andy Marshall / Joyce Hildebrand  
Graphic Designer: Ball Creative / Printer: 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](mailto:awa.wrc@shaw.ca)  
[www.AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://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.



# READERS' CORNER

## ALBERTA WAYSIDE WILDFLOWERS

By Linda Kershaw

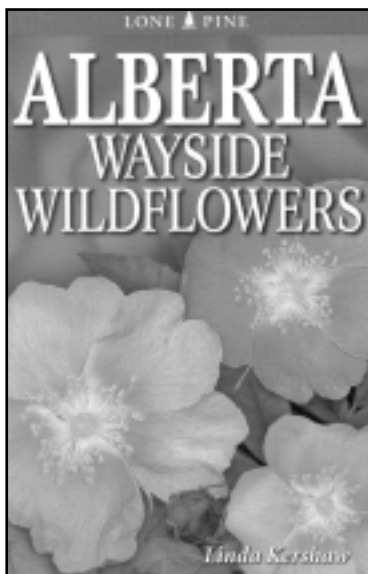


The idea to write a book about common wayside flowers evolved over many years of travelling with my family. Being a botanist with a camera, I'm always on the lookout for beautiful and unusual flowers along roads and trails, and my family is used to hearing "Stop! Back up!" knowing that they will have to wait patiently while Mom jumps out to photograph some plant in the ditch. This habit has resulted in a fairly large collection of wildflower photos and a great appreciation of these beautiful plants.

I've often wished that there was a book I could use to identify and learn more about the wildflowers we discover along roads and in our towns and cities. Most guides focus on native species, but many of our most common wildflowers are in fact weeds that have been introduced from Europe and Asia in the past 200 years. Many of these have fascinating histories and have been used as food and medicine for centuries. Dandelions didn't arrive by accident. They were carefully cultivated by early settlers. All wildflowers are beautiful to behold, but which are native and which are weeds? Which are sensitive to disturbance and which can I pick to make a summer bouquet? The section "To Pick or Not To Pick" (p.14) provides helpful information about this.

I tried to include something for everyone, with lots of colourful photos, detailed descriptions and points of special interest for each species. The first few pages are a colour guide, with photos of all the flowers in the book arranged by colour – from orange to yellow to white to pink to purple and blue. This is followed by a few pointers on how to identify wildflowers using their shape and arrangement. An illustrated key (pp. 26-35) then leads you to the name of your plant. This section illustrates the great variety of flower types in Alberta and helps you to recognize some of the major groups. I've tried to use everyday language, but for cases where technical terms couldn't be avoided there's also an illustrated glossary (pp. 148-152).

During the summer holidays I was always looking for ways to keep the kids occupied (especially on long trips in the car), so I've included a few suggestions for activities that can help to pass the time and nurture a love of wildflowers. Did you know that marsh-marigold petals have secret lines that only insects can see? Have



you noticed that you can only smell the fragrance of a violet for a minute or two? Did you know that sweet-smelling pineappleweed can take the smell of fish off your hands and can also make a fragrant, soothing tea? I hope that Alberta Wayside Wildflowers will help people, young and old, to appreciate the beauty and fascinating history of Alberta's amazing flora.

(Published by Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, AB., 160 pp., \$16.95, ISBN 1-55105-350-0 [paperback]) 🍁

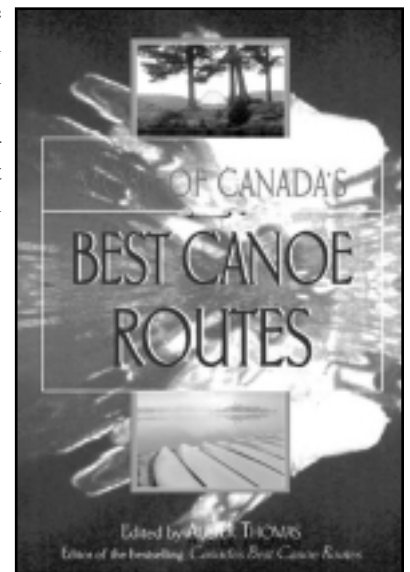
## MORE OF CANADA'S BEST CANOE ROUTES

This sequel to Canada's Best Canoe Routes (previously published as Paddlequest) offers 31 prime paddling trips, encompassing British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador, and north to the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. All routes are described by Canada's foremost paddlers. The book includes four Alberta trips: the Grease River, the Peace River, poling the Sheep River and ice-canoeing on the Bow River.

This canoeing and kayaking compendium has it all: freshwater, saltwater, flatwater and whitewater paddling; weekend trips; and epic adventures. It also features profiles of 20 noteworthy paddlers, as well as a section entitled "Vital Tips for Paddling and Protecting Canada's Waterways." Included in that section is a reprint of the essay "The Ascetic in a Canoe" by Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Alister Thomas has gunwale-bobbed on placid lakes, found himself upside down (unintentionally) and backwards (intentionally) in frothing whitewater, and plied many of Canada's historic waterways. A Calgary-based journalist, he lives one block from the Bow River. Several Calgaryans are featured in the book – some writing, others who are profiled – including John Geary, Pat Mahaffey, Keith Morton and David Finch.

(Edited by Alister Thomas, Boston Mills Press, 2002, 296 pages, ISBN 155046390X [paperback]) 🍁



# SUPPORT ALBERTA WILDERNESS

*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**

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



Cheque  Visa  M/C Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (work): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**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 1<sup>st</sup> of the month (minimum of \$5 per month).*

*AWA respects the privacy of members. Lists are not sold or traded in any manner. 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 awa@shaw.ca Website <http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca>*

## HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY KANANASKIS!

Alberta's beloved Kananaskis Country turns 25 years old this year. Take action and send a birthday card from <http://www.wildcanada.net/kananaskis>. Ask Premier Klein to give Kananaskis a much needed birthday gift by designating Evan Thomas as a park.

Despite huge support for the protection of Kananaskis Country, Alberta Community Development is proposing a management plan for the ecological heart of the valley – the Evan Thomas region – that would allow for new lodges and the expansion of existing facilities, golf course and ski hill. The Evan Thomas region is currently not protected as a park. It is a Provincial Recreation Area, which means that recreation – and, in this case, development – takes priority over protection.

Take action at <http://www.wildcanada.net/kananaskis> to ensure that Kananaskis Country can celebrate protection on its 25th birthday. Make Evan Thomas a park! 🍁



© Tom Hunter



**Alberta Wilderness Association**  
Box 6398, Station D  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1



Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement  
No. 485535 • ISSN# 1192 6287

