



MILITARY HELPS PRAIRIE WILDLIFE GEM DODGE THE BULLET

By Andy Marshall



The successful designation of 458 square kilometres of magnificent, natural prairie in southeastern Alberta as a protected area has delighted conservationists and set them wondering what the formula to this good-news story is.

While many unique circumstances have contributed to the setting-up of the Suffield National Wildlife Area, it is clear the commitment of several individuals to conservation principles has played a key role in

this unique-to-Alberta achievement.

The ceremony earlier this summer to celebrate the formal protection for this virtually unspoiled area, part of the 2,690-km² Suffield Block operated by Canada's Department of National Defence for military training and research, was the culmination of decades of effort by such individuals.

The survival intact of this swath stretching along the complete eastern part of the Suffield Block beside the South Saskatchewan River and the abundance of plant, invertebrate and vertebrate species within it have not come about without skirmishes, however.

The whole Suffield Block has, of course, been the scene of many fierce, simulated tank and infantry battles since the military took it over in 1941 as a testing area. One could well ask how this particular area and its wildlife, in the words of Canadian Wildlife Service official Garry Trotter, have been able to dodge the bullet.

It is dangerous to pinpoint specific names, but several have been mentioned as contributors to the preservation of this significant "sea of grassland," equivalent in area to two-thirds of all of Calgary, almost eight Red Deers or seven per cent of Banff National Park.

An obvious force has been the Environment Canada and the Department of National Defence (DND) officials who

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Suffield National Wildlife Area

P. Taylor



have shepherded this project through to completion. In a history of the area, Trotter cites at least 15 Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) employees and others who have shown what he calls wisdom, persistence and knowledge, often under adversarial circumstances, to save the land from the pressures of the day.

There are base commanders and other army officers who accepted the advice of these wildlife experts to prevent training there and who regulate livestock grazing and energy development. The Lethbridge-based Prairie Conservation Forum is mentioned as an important, more recent catalyst for the designation.

And, of course, the conservation groups who championed the area, with its Middle Sand Hills, riverbank and mixed grassland zones, share a big part of the credit. They include the Alberta Wilderness Association and, specifically, current president Cliff Wallis.

"You can't single out one group or person," says Trotter. But "Cliff always took a strong interest in Suffield.... Cliff, in particular, was a strong supporter of the right things to do."

Wallis sees the designation as the validation of another important principle, often forgotten in a province where conservation victories seem so rare: the impact from actions of ordinary citizens.

"The only reason we have this wildlife area is through good citizen involvement and a little cajoling by the environmental community," he says. "You can have the most dedicated civil servants with the best ideas and the best science, but they'll get nowhere without that public support."

In the spirit of the saying about the fluttering of a butterfly's wing in Yucatan affecting the life of a fern in the Hebrides, it's as though the rustle from a simple letter to a

adds, "it's just as important to get a three-line letter off as it is a 20-page thesis."

Trotter's history of the whole Suffield Block before the military took it over in 1941 refers to the designation of an antelope reserve there in 1915. Despite conflicts with cattle and horse grazing, the antelope recovered and the park was abolished in 1938 through a land swap with the province to expand Elk Island Park near Edmonton. By that date, the Suffield Block was declared unfit for agriculture under the Alberta Special Areas Act. The human population had declined from a high of 1,650 in 1921 to about 450, who were then displaced by the military expropriation.

Originally, the block was secured as a chemical warfare proving ground for the British. Although records weren't kept from that era, Wes Richmond, the current Suffield base environmental officer, believes it is highly unlikely the now-designated area was ever used for that purpose. Trotter also points out there is little evidence of much land having been broken there by the earlier settlers.

A vital period in the area's history came in 1971 when Canada agreed to let the British use the Suffield Block, one of the largest training areas in the world. The prospect of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of massive, tracked vehicles tearing up the sensitive lands sparked a large public outpouring of concern, Trotter says in his account.

This is where Ward Stevens, a former CWS director from Edmonton, came to the rescue with a history-making report on the extreme ecological values of the east side of the base that prompted a military board of inquiry to declare that part out-of-bounds to all military training. The board accepted the report verbatim, says Trotter. Agriculture Canada soil specialist Andy Kjearsgaard co-authored the report.

"He and Ward can be considered the founding fathers of the movement which eventually resulted in the designation," Trotter notes. The outcome of their report created a de facto wildlife sanctuary and established a significant advisory role for CWS ever since.

The military is reluctant to single people out, says base public affairs officer Capt. Sterling Cripps. But the base commander at the time was Col. M.L.A. Weisman, and the military generally was then beginning to be much more sensitive to its environmental responsibilities. That sensitivity has grown since to the extent that all soldiers who are posted to Suffield undergo at least one day of environmental awareness training. "We've been large in environmental stewardship," says Cripps.

A DND website suggests that the "beauty of the Suffield Block is that tanks and artillery with a range of 32 km can be fired 360 degrees without danger to civil areas – they can actually practise warfare." It's becoming clearer that the natural beauties are appreciated, too.

During the 1970s, John Stelfox, another CWS official, led a challenge to livestock grazing causing severe damage in the area's Middle Sand Hills. As a result, DND closed that pasture



*Official signing for the designation of the Suffield National Wildlife Area.
Left to right: Major General Marc Caron, Lt.Colonel Ken Steed, Hon. David
Anderson, Federal Minister of the Environment*

politician or bureaucrat in Ottawa did have an impact on the 1,100 catalogued species in this wildlife area.

"People get back such vacuous replies that say nothing, they wonder why they bothered to write in the first place," says Wallis. "Well, it does make a big difference ... as a balance to the nay sayers. That very simple act is one of the most important conservation acts there are." Moreover, he



and a grazing and wildlife advisory committee was set up to monitor livestock activity at more suitable sites in Suffield. That committee still operates today for the 5,000 cattle that pasture in the whole block.

In 1975 the Alberta government exercised its right of entry for oil and gas reserves on the base. But before anything occurred, Alberta Energy Company (AEC) had to identify



Unveiling of the plaque at Ralston commemorating the official signing ceremony and designation of the Suffield National Wildlife Area

archeological sites and conduct environmental impact studies so that protective measures could be taken. An advisory committee exists today to oversee energy industry activity on the whole block, containing about 6,000 gas and 500 oil wells.

Officials note that AEC and, more recently, EnCana, which was formed last year when AEC merged with PanCanadian, has provided consistent support for the designated area including direct funding for various studies and its agreement to conduct only shallow drilling there.

A setback for CWS was the rejection by the military in 1984 of its formal proposal for a national natural wildlife area on the land in question. The province later had interest in designating it as an ecological reserve under provincial legislation. Prairie Conservation Forum (PCF) secretary Ian Dyson thinks that federal/provincial "dynamic tensions" over jurisdiction might have helped push the whole project forward. Formed in the late 1980s to conserve biological diversity on the prairies and in the parkland, the PCF prepared an action plan that might have also "got the ball rolling" on the Suffield designation, according to Dyson and other observers.

Individuals and groups such as AWA, Canadian Nature Federation, Canadian Wildlife Federation and Medicine Hat-based Society of Grasslands Naturalists were prodding the bureaucrats, too.

Finally, to their joy, DND and Environment Canada signed a memorandum of agreement in 1992 to designate the wildlife area. But the drama wasn't over. After several years of study

and inventory-taking, which identified 244 vertebrate, 462 plant and 436 invertebrate species, including 14 "species at risk," a glitch came to light that would prevent DND and Environment Canada from formally protecting the land, explains Environmental Officer Richmond.

To avoid this potential deal-breaker, it was decided to amend the Canadian Wildlife Act. It was considered necessary to link this change to the Species At Risk Act, then beginning its tortuous journey before being passed by Parliament after several years of delay.

Despite these delays, some core individuals kept up the pressure. Wallis names people such as AWA vice-president Ann Roberts, who sat on the PCF action-plan committee until 1995, Garry Trotter from CWS and Major Dan Davies, base operations officer from 1993 until his recent retirement. Trotter notes as well that Davies ensured the completion of two ground-breaking studies on kangaroo rats and the prairie rattlesnake in the area, and, against conventional wisdom, took the initiative to bring about further elk repatriation to Suffield in 1997.

In the meantime, other controversy struck the area during the 1990s over the wild horse issue. More than 1,200 feral horses were seriously damaging wildlife habitat in the northern part of the designated area. Davies, along with AWA's Roberts, who sat on a citizens' advisory committee, and Wallis as an expert advisor, played leading roles in controversial recommendations calling for the removal of all the horses – despite severe criticism from some horse lovers. In the end, a successful adopt-a-horse program limited the negative public fallout.



Further threats to the area came with proposals from the province to build the Meridian Dam on the South Saskatchewan, which would have flooded a large part of the wildlife area. Conservation groups joined other organizations, including AEC, in opposing the dam. The province eventually



backed off, citing the project's high costs.

Bearing in mind this convoluted history, federal Environment Minister David Anderson and Suffield base commander Lt.-Col. K. Steed could justifiably smile broadly when the official signing ceremony took place this past June.

Wallis and Roberts both praise the involvement of the military in the whole story. "The military needs to be recognized for their contribution," says Roberts. She has special praise for Davies, who took a lot of abuse from the animal rights groups on the feral horses decision. The fact that the land had one owner undoubtedly made the whole designation process much easier.

However, Wallis says the struggle isn't over. Nothing is ever cast in stone, and conservation groups like AWA will have to remain vigilant. The significance of the designation, he explains, is that it draws a line around an area, thus making it easier to defend. But he sees much more protection and restoration work to be done. He and other conservationists have a vision of "rewilding" the area – bringing back wolves, grizzly or even wild bison if links with other major prairie areas can be achieved.

"That's not something we're actively looking at or considering," says the base's Richmond, a civilian who once worked as an engineer.

Richmond turns on another red light when he does not rule out the possibility of further shallow gas activity in the area. "It has to be done with certain constraints in mind, [but] there's a good possibility of more exploration."

"I'm very concerned they would even consider it," responds Roberts. Wallis, meanwhile, is confident that wildlife values will remain paramount in the area.

Although few people will ever be able to directly access this land, the actions of a few people have ensured that it will be restored to its full glory, Wallis says. "There's something very special about the prairie," he adds. "What you have here is a very rich and productive ecosystem."

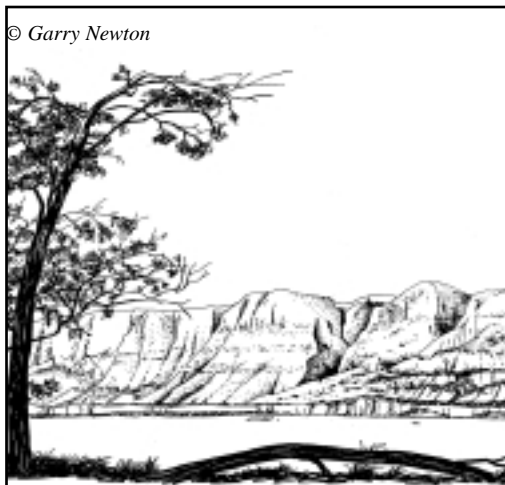
Trottier makes another point: "Designation of this area sets a precedent for securing other federal lands for wildlife protection on a cost-effective basis. 🍁"

DR. WARD STEVENS

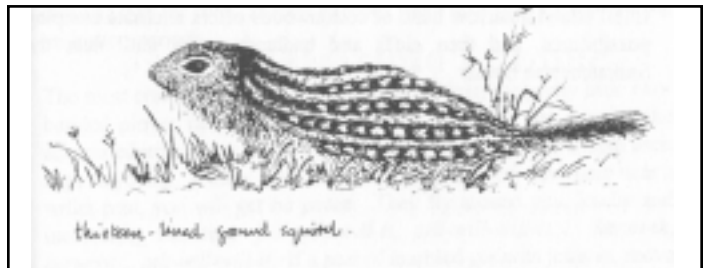
Ward Stevens is a retired research scientist and former director of CWS, Edmonton. In 1971 he led an assessment of the wildlife significance of the Suffield Block on behalf of CWS at the request of National Defence. The Suffield Block was to be commissioned as a Canadian Forces Base to support British Army training in Canada. There was a large public outpouring of concern for the impact this might have on an otherwise pristine tract of native prairie. Based on the findings and recommendations of Ward and Andy Kjearsgaard, a military board of inquiry declared the eastern portions of CFB Suffield "Out of Bounds" to military training when the base lands were divided up for various military uses. It is this area that today has been designated the official National Wildlife Area. Ward also wrote up a popular publication on Suffield wildlife entitled *Kangaroo Rats and Rattlesnakes*, CFB Suffield. As an ex-serviceman in the RCAF, Ward effectively used all his experience with military protocols in his negotiations with the base commanders and the board of inquiry.



Dr. Ward Stevens



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PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF FOR SUFFIELD

By Cliff Wallis, AWA President

Legal protection for the Middle Sand Hills has been a long time coming. I remember corresponding with Alberta Fish and Wildlife on this file during the late 1970s when I worked for Alberta Parks. The federal government was fully prepared to commit to protection of the Middle Sand Hills as a National Wildlife Area if the province would agree. Alberta shot down the idea since they would then have had no jurisdiction over wildlife in the area. Fortunately, the dream of protecting one of the world's biggest best grasslands did not die. The idea surfaced repeatedly through the 1980s and developed a real head of steam in the 1990s. Through the persistence of Garry Trottier of Canadian Wildlife Service, Ann Roberts of AWA and Major Dan Davies of CFB Suffield, the dream was finally realized on June 19, 2003 with the official dedication of the National Wildlife Area.

The Middle Sand Hills is a truly magnificent place. I have had the good fortune of going on "dune patrol" and walking for miles through the extensive grasslands, riparian woodlands, coulee springs, vegetated sand plains and stabilized as well as active dunes. They support an incredible variety of native flora and fauna including a host of rare plants and animals and some federally listed species. The recent successful re-introduction of elk was another milestone in the restoration of this grassland wilderness. There are few experiences that can compare with the excitement of tracking kangaroo rats around the active dunes at night or searching for rattlesnakes in the vicinity of their dens or golden eagle eyries along the spectacular South Saskatchewan River canyon.

The message for conservationists is clear – persistence pays off. Places worth protecting are worth putting in the hard work needed to convince decision-makers to do the right thing. I am proud of the roles that AWA and its members have played in securing this protection. Legal designation of the National Wildlife Area is no hollow victory. Protection of wildlife now takes precedence over all other activities. The proposed Meridian Dam, defeated twice by conservationists, is unlikely to resurface in any serious way. It also means that the wonderful conservation work initiated by CFB Suffield and Canadian Wildlife Service staff over the past two decades cannot be easily undone. The Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area is a win for wildlife that all Canadians should celebrate! 🍁

By Garry Trottier, Wildlife Biologist, Habitat Conservation Division, Canadian Wildlife Service, Edmonton

The day I first set foot in CFB Suffield, August 1989, I knew it was a special place for wildlife that would be a cornerstone of prairie conservation in the future. Little did I know then of the experiences I would have or the unique, dedicated people I would work with during the evolution of formal protection for arguably the largest wildlife reserve in Prairie Canada.

To me, Suffield was the opportunity of the century, a crossroads where decisive action could result in the most significant contribution to prairie habitat protection that will ever happen, and I had the good fortune through my employment in the Canadian Wildlife Service to live the dream. Having my name associated with the Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area is an honour.

I was always haunted by the thought that after 1992, when Environment Canada and National Defence formally agreed to establish a National Wildlife Area on Base Suffield, the objective would not be achieved because of unforeseen technicalities, a change in departmental policy exacerbated by the continual ebb and flow of key public servants, or management issues that would overwhelm the resolve of our military partners in conservation. Needless to say, many

challenges surfaced but were overcome thanks to a host of dedicated individuals and conservation organizations. In time, these stories will all be told.

While I hesitate to name individuals or organizations for fear of offending through omission, there are several whom I admire for their efforts. We must keep in mind the good fortune involved when the Canadian military obtained the Suffield Block in 1941, effectively taking the area out of the mainstream of human subsistence to evolve to this day as relatively ecologically intact. The Canadian Army represented by Major Brent MacDonald (deceased), Major Dan Davies, Col. Howard Marsh, Col. Keith Eddy, Lt.-Col. Chuck Watson, Lt.-Col. Ken Steed, Wes Richmond, and Bob Woods, have consistently acted as superb stewards of this land ever since.

Alberta Wilderness Association led by Cliff Wallis has a long-standing record of constructive dialogue with CFB Suffield in support of conservation management. On several occasions Cliff publicly endorsed the stewardship efforts of the Army in his as always professional, composed delivery. Yes, the official designation of the National Wildlife Area took a long time, but it was accomplished thanks to the hard work of many. That is the real story. People make the difference. 🍁



Cliff Wallis and Garry Trottier shake hands by the commemorative plaque

RAY SLOAN EMBRACED LIFE TO THE FULLEST

By Andy Marshall

Seven years after his untimely death at age 55, the love and respect people had for Ray Sloan are still just about as tangible as the Alberta natural landscape he cared for so dearly.

As husband, father, good friend, wildlife advocate, scientist, fish expert, college teacher, innovator, outdoorsman, hiker, skier, community activist and almost-never-failing affable companion, he attracted the warm regard of others like summer sun on the Rockies.

They can still hear his infectious laughter, the easy banter, the searching discussions on better preserving the wilderness. They see the beard that turned white in middle age, the T-shirt with Ranger Ray on it, the colourful ties, and the look of amusement that rarely left his face. They feel the joy, the passion and the peace he exuded so generously. They remember a man who embraced life to the fullest.

"He was a ray of light and hope ... a lot of things troubled him, but he made the best of everything," says his wife and best friend of 25 years, Christyann Olson, executive director of the Alberta Wilderness Association. "His inquisitiveness and wisdom were a source of learning and strength for others."

Despite a more-than-busy lifestyle, he spent as much time with his family as he could. "Ray taught me a tremendous sense of appreciation of the natural world, that ability to really see what is there," says Christyann from the northwest Calgary home they bought 30 years ago and which she still cannot imagine leaving. "Ray loved the spiritual renewal we enjoyed walking wide, sweeping valleys, climbing rocky peaks and resting under a magnificent tree."

Daughter Heather, now in her third year of teaching at Rocky Mountain House and applying her environmental knowledge to her elementary-age classes, has abiding memories of the numerous family backpacking, canoeing, biking or fishing trips. "I will remember him for the time he spent with us, teaching us about nature and the world."

He also passed on his love of fly-fishing and his zest for

adventure to son Russell, now travelling the world. "Dad's love of life and all around him is one of the things I remember most about him."

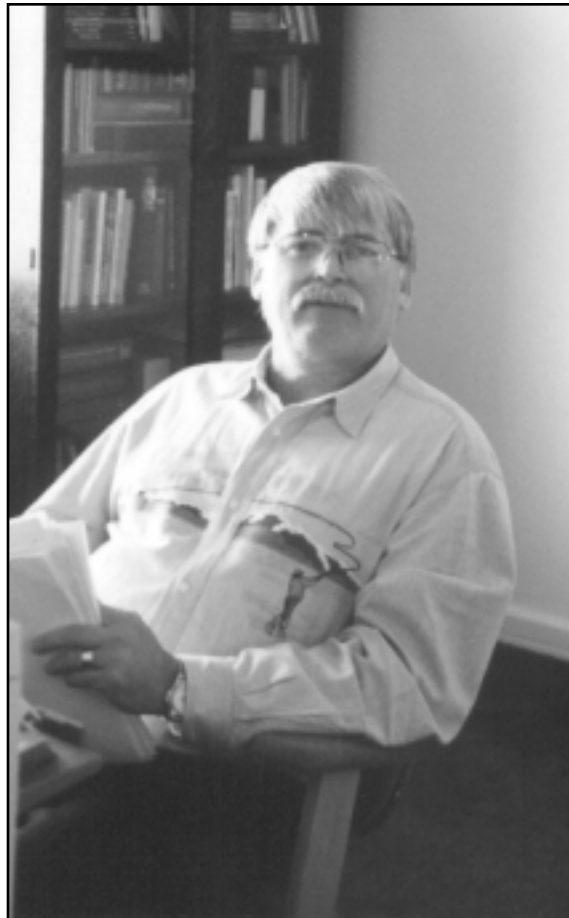
"He was a principled conservationist. He practised what he preached," says Dennis Leask, another instructor in the Mount Royal College environmental sciences department where Ray was still teaching after 30 years when he died of a brain aneurysm. The two met at the University of Calgary in 1963 – Ray was taking biology and Dennis engineering. Ray later completed his masters at the U of C, specializing in population biology. During the 1960s Ray and Dennis were active hostellers, and later served as "best man" for each other's weddings.

Leask calls him a true pioneer who had a big hand during the late 1960s in the formation of what was then called the environmental quality control program at MRC. Graduates went on to work in all kinds of major industries here, Leask explains. And, while conservationists may bemoan many activities by these industries, things are a lot better – thanks to the influences of Ray and his program – than they would have been without them. "Ray set the trend," he says. Ray was very popular with students and faculty, he adds, recalling the procession of students who came back to chat with Ray years after graduating.

Born and raised in Calgary, Ray likely picked up his avid enthusiasm for the outdoors from

an uncle who took him on many hunting and fishing trips west of Calgary. Later in life, Ray influenced hundreds of students who took his program and who participated in the field labs he set up for decades to further their studies of the beloved fish and their habitats he specialized in.

He formed a close partnership with the Jumpingpound Chapter of Trout Unlimited to develop projects to enhance fish species, particularly in the Ghost/Waiparous area. Trout Unlimited still wants to name a stream after him, according to long-time TU member Marshall Bye. The group gave him the Peter Smallman Memorial Award for outstanding



Ray in his office



achievement in fisheries conservation.

To offer students this practical exposure in these summer programs, he pursued a variety of funding sources, including corporations. "He was willing to let them say 'no' many times before they finally agreed," jokes Leask. "He was not easily deterred by blockades."

Projects included baseline surveys of various fish, as well as restoration work and habitat improvements that still exist today. To his students' amusement, Ray would sometimes end up on his back in the water. "No wading hazard would deter him," says Brian Lajeunesse in a TU newsletter.

Christyann remembers the big pancake breakfasts at their house before Ray and his students would head out for the streams and lakes. Even if students called late in the evening with questions on an assignment, he gave them his cheerful attention.

Heather notes he was one of the first instructors at MRC to put his courses on-line. "He loved technology ... he was never afraid of trying something new."

He also didn't back off difficult issues. But as Christyann points out, he rarely uttered an angry word. During his term as AWA president 1976-78, he fought hard against skihill expansion at Sunshine, for example. As one of the founding members of AWA in the 1960s and a director from 1975 to 1982, he played key roles in many of the other conservation battles, including the designation of the Milk River Ecological Reserve and Natural Area.

He also worked hard for his Calgary community and was a leader in the campaign that successfully persuaded the city not to build a freeway through Bowmont Natural Park. In 1997 Ray received the Calgary Mayor's Award for Environmental Achievement. For his efforts throughout the province, including participation in Alberta's Eastern Slopes and coal policies, he was nominated for a provincial Emerald Award.

In the winter, Ray was a keen skier and volunteered on the Canadian Ski Patrol, in which he became Western Division training officer and acquired the nickname Bull-Wheel Bill one day for failing to dismount from the ski lift at the top of the run and continuing around the cable wheel.

AWA director Vivian Pharis, who first met Ray during their U of C days, is among the many friends who recount his keen sense of fun. She tells the story of the biology students



Ray hiking in the mountains

dropping sodium triiodide-laced pieces of chalk down the open stairwell at the Science A building into the ashtrays of smoking engineering students on the bottom floor, creating a small explosion and good-natured uproar among all involved. Ray was front and centre in these "assaults" on the alien engineers, says Pharis.

Ray was a member and past master of Zetland Masonic Lodge. He also attended St. David's

United Church in Calgary. He liked to read and, with Christyann, attended Calgary Philharmonic concerts.

"He was a well-rounded man," says Christyann. She returns to MRC every year to present a scholarship awarded in his name to outstanding students from the environmental sciences program.

It is perhaps fitting to end with a quotation from daughter Heather on what she remembers most about this stocky, barrel-chested man who embraced life so enthusiastically. "He gave the best hugs," she says. 🌿



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION LOSES ARDENT DEFENDER

Born in southern Ontario, Ian was a true outdoorsman from the beginning, running a trapline even during high school. He graduated from the University of Guelph with an honours degree in wildlife biology in 1982. He began his field career working on a variety of wildlife species including snapping turtles and black bears. He headed west looking for new challenges, driving his pickup truck, packed with all of his possessions, out to Alberta.

A short stint working as a beekeeper near Hythe in northwestern Alberta was followed by a job as a wildlife biologist with a small Calgary consulting firm. Here he had his first experiences with grizzly bears, studying the effects of industrial development on the great bear southwest of Grande Prairie. It was the beginning of an illustrious 20-year career conducting research on large mammals, principally large carnivores in western Canada.

He began work on the Sheep River Cougar Project with Orval Pall and Martin Jalkotzy in the early eighties. Many happy days in the field were spent snow tracking cougars for hundreds of kilometres up and down the foothills of Kananaskis Country. His joy working on the cougar project was prophetically cut short when his mentor, Orval Pall, died in a plane crash while radio tracking bighorns in the Rockies in June 1986.

However, the die was cast. Ian and Martin continued the Sheep River Project through 1994. The 14-year project became the most intensive study of cougars in Canada and one of the longest running research projects on *Puma concolor* in North America. The work also allowed him to participate in the drafting of a new management plan for cougars in Alberta as well as the draft conservation strategy for large carnivores in Canada, a project initiated by WWF Canada.

The cougar attracted much attention and Ian used that attention to foster a thoughtful and effective wildlife conservation message to all those who came out to his many public speaking engagements. His work on the cougar project received national recognition on CBC's Morningside with Peter Gzowski. Arthur Black of CBC's Basic Black radio program followed along with Ian and Martin while they radio-collared a cougar. Several dubbed it some of the best radio they had ever heard.

Ian was also a very, very good writer. He was the senior author of nine papers in peer-reviewed journals in addition to many other technical reports. He regularly served as a reviewer for peer-reviewed journals as well. In addition, he wrote popular articles on cougars; one was published in the internationally known magazine, *Natural History*.

After the cougar project wrapped up, Ian and his colleague Martin continued to work together conducting environmental impact studies in western and northern Canada. He continued to have a tremendous positive impact on both the projects and the people with whom he worked. Of particular note, he recently rewrote the grizzly bear status report for COSEWIC, meticulously documenting current information on the bear in Canada. He also worked tirelessly with our professional organization, The Wildlife Society—Alberta Chapter, dealing with wildlife conservation issues. He served as president of the Chapter in 1997.

Ian also continued to capture wildlife for other research projects, something that he did better than most any other biologist, and in doing so he assisted many graduate students with their research. Over his career, he captured more than 100 cougars, 100 grizzly bears, and 800 bighorn sheep, along with countless black bears, moose, and mountain goats. He conducted his capture work using an exacting professional approach while at the same time retaining an empathy for the wildlife he was pursuing. He cared for each individual and did his utmost to conduct captures in a humane manner. Last year his capture work was on a Discovery Channel program that showcased grizzly bears.

However, the environmental assessment process, endlessly mitigating and judging the significance of cumulative effects, was frustrating to him. That work bound him to a desk and away from the fieldwork and

research that he truly loved. Ian jumped at the chance to participate in the Liakipia Predator Project, a study of large African carnivores in central Kenya designed to find ways to allow for the coexistence of hyenas, lions, leopards and people in the agricultural matrix that exists outside national parks in most of southern Africa.

Ian understood that if these predators were to survive in the long run they had to be able to exist outside of the national parks. His time

IAN ROSS

SON, BROTHER, UNCLE, FRIEND.
WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

BORN DECEMBER 16, 1958

IN GODERICH, ONTARIO.

DIED JUNE 29, 2003, AGE 44,

NEAR NANYUKI, KENYA IN A LIGHT AIRCRAFT
ACCIDENT WHILE RADIO TRACKING LIONS FOR
THE LAIKIPIA PREDATOR PROJECT.



Ian taking cougar HR



was largely volunteered. Money was never really an issue for Ian. He was much more concerned with the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.

His conservation ethic permeated all of his life. He did not consume needlessly. He rode his bike in Calgary and used public transit. He took the bus to Edmonton to visit his brother when taking his truck would have been much easier. He had a garden and recycled. And he encouraged all of us to do the same. His email contact list included all three levels of government. These weren't professional contacts, but those who continually needed reminding that what they were doing didn't make sense and that there were better ways of doing things.

Ian spent his recreational time in wild places as much as possible. He and his wife of 20 years, Sheri, loved to hike the foothills of the Rockies west of Calgary, as well as more far-flung locales. The U.S. desert southwest, the Canadian Arctic, Mexico and Africa were all places he returned to. He loved to hunt elk, deer and moose for his own table, and more recently he enjoyed learning to fly-fish both in mountain lakes and in the Gulf of Mexico. At the same time he vigorously opposed the senseless trophy killing of wolves, bears and cougars.

At one time a bit of a loner, Ian had grown to become a committed and emotional friend and family man. He always remembered everyone's birthdays. Ian's dry sense of humour was famous. We will never forget his recent letters from Kenya describing the goat stew (scavenged from a lion kill) or the haircut performed by his mechanic.

"Last night I got a haircut. First time since I left Calgary, almost 4 months ago. Only those who remember 'The Mod Squad,' or Michael Jackson when he was still black, can appreciate what I looked like. My hair was the widest part of my body, and my hat just sort of perched on top of it like a bird dropping. Joe cut my hair. Joe is the mechanic here at the Centre. He's a good mechanic."

Having no children of his own, Ian was a hero to his young nieces, nephews and children of friends who thought that his was the most important and exciting job of all. What uncle could match Ian



Ian with F5 windy



Ian catching lambs

when he produced the perfect fossilized tyrannosaurus tooth found on one of his Alberta expeditions?

Two days before his death he was on top of the world, having collared his first leopard. Many family members and friends were planning to visit him and he was busy organizing their upcoming visits to the research station in August. On the evening he died, Ian was tracking a radio-collared lion from a light aircraft. Searchers located its wreckage the next morning. As he wished, he was cremated and his ashes dispersed in Kananaskis Country, where he had spent so much time with his cougars. Ian Ross died at the peak of his career, doing what he loved. 🍁

More than 200 people attended a memorial service for Ian held on July 27, 2003 in Millarville. It was a measure of Ian that people came from such long distances to share their memories, laughter and tears.

As we all struggle with Ian's death, some comfort might be found in the sentiment that no one who is remembered really ever dies. Our memories of Ian as an exceptionally competent biologist, an ardent conservationist and a man of humanity, humility and a wicked sense of humour will endure.

– Lorne Fitch, friend and colleague

In Memoriam

AWA is deeply saddened by the loss of our friend and colleague, Ian Ross. Ian will be remembered as a gentle man, who took great pleasure in sharing his experiences and knowledge. He helped many to see cougars as a peaceful adversary. Ian requested that AWA receive memorial bequests in his name and we are sincerely appreciative.



ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

PUBLIC LAND LAW WORTHY OF ALBERTA'S PUBLIC LANDS

By Steven A. Kennett & Monique M. Ross

Introduction

The management of Alberta's public lands and resources is a matter of tremendous economic, environmental and social importance. Provincial Crown land accounts for approximately 63 per cent of the province, with federally controlled land making up another 9.6 per cent.¹ The surface and subsurface resources in this vast area, along with most of the subsurface resources under private land, are also owned by the Crown.

These public lands and resources support a wide range of economic activities, notably hydrocarbon exploration and development, forestry, mining, grazing and tourism.² Public lands also provide numerous recreational amenities to Albertans. These lands include most of the Foothills and Rocky Mountain regions of the province, large areas of northern Alberta and pockets

of land scattered throughout the rest of the province – a varied landscape of global ecological importance due to its biodiversity and relatively undisturbed natural ecosystems.³ Much of Alberta's public land also has high aesthetic value.

Public land management⁴ in Alberta is increasingly the subject of controversy, an inevitable result of the many and diverse values and interests that are affected by decisions regarding land and resource uses. The challenges facing those responsible for managing public lands and regulating their uses will undoubtedly be accentuated as development on and adjacent to public lands becomes more intensive, public values regarding economic and environmental trade-offs change, and threats to the long-term sustainability of natural ecosystems become better understood.

These conflicts are often played out in project-specific regulatory processes, such as the hearings on proposals for petroleum development in the Whaleback,⁵ recreational and tourism facilities in the West Castle Valley,⁶ and coal mining adjacent to Jasper National Park.⁷ They are also evident, however, in broader land-use planning and policy processes, such as the province's protected areas initiative, Special Places 2000,⁸ the ongoing provincial review of the Kananaskis Country management plan,⁹ the proposed Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy¹⁰ and the

recently completed federal Banff Bow Valley Study.¹¹

In all of these facets of public land management, there are increasing demands that a broader range of values, interests and interrelationships be considered. The ability of current legal and institutional arrangements to provide the level of integrated decision-making required to meet the challenges of public land

management is thus a matter of grave concern to those who view the sustainable use of this province's rich endowment of lands and resources as a high priority.

This article reviews the legal basis for public land management in Alberta. The question to be answered is the following: Does the considerable body of law and regulation governing Alberta's public lands and resources constitute a unified legal framework for managing the public

domain? To answer this question, a template for integrated public land law is proposed as the standard against which existing legislation is evaluated.

The analysis and conclusions set out in this article summarize the results of a study of public land law in Alberta that was funded by the Alberta Law Foundation. The findings of this study are published in two Occasional Papers available from the Canadian Institute of Resources Law.¹²

A Template for Public Land Law

The starting point for this analysis is the proposition that public land law should be a unified body of substantive and procedural requirements that provides the basis for an integrated approach to managing public lands and resources. In practical terms, public land law should establish (1) a normative basis for public land management that embodies principles of ecosystem management; (2) a comprehensive land-use planning process; (3) a logical decision path, from broad land-use policy to project-specific review and regulation; and (4) mechanisms for interjurisdictional and interagency coordination. All of these elements, it is argued, should have a solid legal foundation reflecting the important functions of law as an instrument of public policy.



Our public lands - South Saskatchewan River



The first attribute of public land law – its normative basis – consists of the principles, objectives and standards that guide decision-making. Current debate on this topic centres on the contrast between the "multiple use" approach and "ecosystem management" as competing general principles for public land management.¹³ Multiple use has been the dominant paradigm for public land management in both Canada (including Alberta¹⁴) and the United States. It reflects the view that lands and resources can simultaneously meet a variety of needs and should be managed to achieve the greatest stream of benefits or outputs. While multiple use mandates can incorporate notions of sustained yield, or even more ecologically based notions of sustainability, their practical effect is generally to confer broad discretionary power on land managers to balance competing uses as they see fit.

Criticisms of multiple use management focus on three general issues: (1) the inconsistency between the virtually unconstrained administrative and political discretion that frequently accompanies multiple use regimes and basic tenets of democracy and the rule of law; (2) the weak normative basis of multiple use in a context where public lands and resources are subject to increasing demands and ecological processes are at risk; and (3) the tendency of multiple use regimes to accord undue weight to narrow, well-organized interest groups in determining the use of public lands and resources.¹⁵

Critics also argue that the environmental legacy of multiple use suggests the need to look elsewhere for principles to guide public land management.¹⁶ For example, the sustainability of public land management under the multiple use approach as practised in Alberta has recently been questioned not only by environmentalists,¹⁷ but also by the Natural Resources Conservation Board¹⁸ and the Future Environmental Directions for Alberta Task Force, a group of government officials, stakeholders and other experts that was established to identify priorities for making sustainable development a reality in this province.¹⁹

Ecosystem management is the most promising alternative normative basis for managing the public domain. This concept, while relatively new, is gaining increasing currency as a basis for land and resource management.²⁰ It is not, of course, a formula for resolving all land-use conflicts, nor does it define precise management options. Rather, ecosystem management is a set of normative principles and operational guidelines for managing human activities in a way that permits them to coexist over a specified management area with ecological processes deemed to be worth protecting over the long term. More specifically, ecosystem management embodies an ethical commitment to the value of

natural ecosystems; gives rise to a series of substantive goals for public land management; requires the integration of science and public policy; takes account of the role of humans in ecosystems and the importance of human values in land and resource management; and has important implications for institutional arrangements and decision-making processes.²¹

In practical terms, ecosystem management arguably requires decision-making at two levels.²² The first involves determining the amount of human activity within a defined management area that is consistent with ecosystem viability. Once this ceiling is established, the second level of decision-making consists of determining the appropriate mix of uses to be allowed. For this model to operate as intended, the ecosystem viability ceiling must constitute a meaningful constraint on the lifestyle choices made at the second level. While there are no a priori limitations on the menu

of lifestyle options for land and resource use, short-term lifestyle decisions would not be permitted to cause long-term ecological damage.

Ecosystem management thus constitutes a solid normative basis for public land law. Through its ethical premise – the value of ecosystem integrity – and the set of substantive and institutional guidelines that follow from this

premise, ecosystem management provides a structure for the balancing of multiple values and uses that is inevitable in public land management.

The second key attribute of public land law is a comprehensive planning process. There are a number of ways in which planning, if properly designed and executed, can improve public land management. For example, planning has the potential of focusing decision-makers on the long-term sustainability of land and resources, reducing the risk of incrementalism and associated cumulative impacts, enhancing the information base for decisions, and improving the fairness, consistency, legitimacy, predictability and efficiency of public land management.²³ To achieve these benefits, both the planning process and the resulting land-use plans should have a firm basis in law.

The third element of the proposed template is that public land law should ensure a measure of integration among the stages of decision-making. Most decisions regarding public land and resources can be located at some point along the following continuum: (1) the establishment of broad policy directions and priorities; (2) land-use planning; (3) rights disposition (i.e., the granting of private rights in public land and resources); and (4) project-specific review and regulation. Public land management benefits from the integration of these stages into a logical decision



Our public lands - Highwood Pass, Kananaskis

H. Kariel



path for the following reasons: decision-making processes can be tailored to the types of issues that arise at each stage, certainty for those whose interests are affected by land-use decisions can be increased, the progressive narrowing of issues provides direction to decision-makers, and the likelihood that important issues will be overlooked or addressed too late in the process is reduced.²⁴

Finally, public land law should establish mechanisms for interjurisdictional and interagency coordination. This role is vital because of the undeniable fact that ecosystems do not respect administrative or jurisdictional boundaries. Since decisions in one area or by one set of managers frequently have implications for land management objectives pursued by others, overarching institutional arrangements or clear mandates requiring interagency and interjurisdictional coordination are necessary if an integrated approach to public land management is to be achieved.²⁵

In relation to all four elements of this template, the importance of a legal basis for public land management is a recurring theme. This emphasis reflects the four key functions of law as an instrument of public policy: (1) law-making is a public and deliberative process for setting important societal goals and priorities; (2) law can increase predictability for those whose interests are affected by government decision-making; (3) law can constrain the exercise of discretion and serve as an accountability mechanism; and (4) law is a means of structuring decision-making processes. These functions explain why democratic societies establish legal mechanisms to achieve policy objectives. All of them reinforce the rationale for developing a legal basis for public land management.²⁶

Public Land Law in Alberta

Having outlined the four key attributes of public land law, this template will now be applied to evaluate land and resource legislation in Alberta. While space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of this extensive body of law in this article, the main conclusions of this review can be briefly summarized.

At the level of principles, objectives and standards, public land management is currently without a clear normative basis in law.²⁷ Alberta's statutes governing land and resource use lack an overarching legal framework, and even at the policy level there is no authoritative basis for an integrated approach to land and resource management. Furthermore, the sector- and process-specific statutes that govern the uses of public lands and resources provide very little substantive and procedural direction in areas critical to the integrated management of the public domain. For example, the statutory provisions that authorize comprehensive

planning and rights disposition confer virtually open-ended discretion on decision-makers. In terms of the substantive normative basis for public land management, most public lands in Alberta remain subject to a multiple use regime;²⁸ adherence to principles of ecosystem management is nowhere mandated by law.

Alberta is also currently without a comprehensive planning process for public lands and resources and, in any case, has never had a legal basis for such a process beyond a bare statutory authorization.²⁹ This gap is not adequately filled by either the zoning resulting from protected areas designation or by the sectoral planning processes that currently exist for water and forest resources. While these sectoral processes might play a limited integrative role, there is no legal requirement that they do so, nor has the relationship between them been defined in law or policy.

This key element of the template for public land law is thus completely absent.

In addition, there are few legal mechanisms linking the various decision-making stages in public land management.³⁰ In fact, an integrated decision path from general policy issues to project-specific regulation is currently precluded by the absence of both substantive and procedural law at the early stages and by the independent statutory mandates of decision-makers responsible for project review and regulation. Problems arising from this lack of integration are well illustrated

by the Whaleback³¹ and West Castle³² project reviews.

It is in relation to the fourth attribute of public land law, the existence of mechanisms for interagency and interjurisdictional coordination, that Alberta legislation contains a stronger measure of statutory support.³³ Although most of the provisions are enabling only, they have provided a legal basis for the establishment of a variety of administrative mechanisms for interagency coordination and some interjurisdictional arrangements, notably in relation to environmental assessment. They fall short, however, of establishing full integration of decision-making and there are significant gaps, notably in relation to transboundary issues.

The finding that legislation in Alberta does not measure up well when compared to the proposed template for public land law does not imply, of course, that the use of public lands and resources in this province takes place in a legal vacuum. There is a significant amount of legislation dealing with resource management on a sector-specific basis and establishing general requirements for environmental protection. The elements of this regulatory regime do not, however, add up to a coherent and integrated body of public land law.



Our public lands - Forests in West Central Alberta



Conclusion

The analysis summarized in this article leads inevitably to the conclusion that public land law, as defined above, is virtually non-existent in Alberta. This conclusion is remarkable for several reasons.³⁴

First, the proposed template for public land law is neither radical nor particularly novel. The standard against which the current legal regime was measured cannot, therefore, be characterized as overly demanding. Principles of integrated resource management have been widely recognized and debated for several decades, and Alberta was in fact a leader in this area in the 1970s. Ecosystem management, while not widely implemented, is at least common currency in land and resource management circles in North America and has been advocated in various venues within Alberta. The lack of congruence between the administrative and jurisdictional boundaries that limit decision-making authority and the problems confronting land and resource managers is an oft-repeated theme of legal and policy analysis. In terms of land-use policy and institutional design, therefore, the four-element template for public land law seems hardly groundbreaking. Legislation in Alberta is, however, severely deficient in relation to most, if not all, of these elements.

Secondly, the absence of a coherent body of public land law in Alberta is remarkable given the tremendous economic, social and environmental significance of the public lands and resources of this province. Alberta's economy remains heavily dependent on non-renewable and renewable natural resources, including the natural landscape and opportunities for outdoor recreation that support a substantial tourism industry. Furthermore, Alberta is a province where government readily embraces private sector models when fulfilling its public responsibilities. The failure to develop an integrated body of public land law — including a clear statement of principles and objectives, a comprehensive planning process and mechanisms to coordinate decision-making — is anything but "businesslike" when one considers the value of the province's public resources and their potential to yield benefits to Albertans in perpetuity if they are properly managed.

Finally, the absence of public land law in Alberta is remarkable because it shows the very limited role of law in this important area of governance. Broad grants of discretionary authority are commonplace and there is consequently little opportunity for law to fulfill its key functions as an instrument of public policy. In fact, the principle of the "rule of law" has little substantive content in relation to most of the areas of decision-making that are critical to an integrated approach to managing the public domain.

While public land management should not be transformed into a highly legalistic process, there are considerable risks in conducting this important aspect of public governance through only the most minimal of legal frameworks. In order to ensure the long-term economic, environmental and social sustainability of Alberta's land and resource base, the existing patchwork quilt of legislation and policy governing public land management should be transformed into an integrated body of public land law. Only then will Albertans have public land law worthy of their public lands. 🌿

1. Alberta Environmental Protection, *Alberta's State of the Environment Comprehensive Report* (Edmonton: 1995), 3.

2. For a discussion of the various uses of Alberta's public lands and resources, see Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, *Alberta Public Lands* (Edmonton: 1988).

3. Banff and Jasper National Parks (along with Yoho and Kootenay National Parks in British Columbia), Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, Wood Buffalo National Park and Dinosaur Provincial Park are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and the Waterton-Glacier region has been designated a biosphere reserve under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program.

4. The term "public land management" is used here to refer to decision-making regarding (1) the use of the resources that are on, under or move across public lands (e.g., forests, rangeland, minerals, water, wildlife); and (2) the other uses of public land (e.g., recreation, tourism, ecosystem and biodiversity preservation, protection of aesthetic values and wilderness).

5. Energy Resources Conservation Board, Application for an Exploratory Well, Amoco Canada Petroleum Company Limited, Whaleback Ridge Area, ERCB Decision D 94-8 (6 September 1994). See Steven A. Kennett, "The ERCB's Whaleback Decision: All Clear on the Eastern Slopes?" (1994) 48 *Resources* 1.

6. Natural Resources Conservation Board, Application to construct Recreational and Tourism Facilities in the West Castle Valley, near Pincher Creek, Alberta, Decision Report #9201, December 1993. See Steven A. Kennett, "The NRCB's West Castle Decision: Sustainable Development Decision-Making in Practice" (1994) 46 *Resources* 1.

7. Alberta Energy and Utilities Board-Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Report of the EUB-CEAA Joint Review Panel – Cheviot Coal Project Mountain Park Area, Alberta, June 1997, 122-126.

8. Government of Alberta, *Special Places 2000: Alberta's Natural Heritage* (Edmonton: March 1995); See Steven A. Kennett, "Special Places 2000: Protecting the Status Quo" (1995) 50 *Resources* 1.

9. The government has initiated a second round of public consultation on this issue.

10. Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy Steering Committee, *Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy (AFCS): A New Perspective on Sustaining Alberta's Forests*, Final Report (Edmonton: May 1997); see also Glenda Hanna "AWA President Cannot Endorse AFCS Document," *Wild Lands Advocate*, July/August 1997, 4.

11. Banff Bow Valley Study, *Banff-Bow Valley: At the Crossroads*, Summary Report of the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, October, 1996).

12. Steven A. Kennett, *New Directions for Public Land Law*, CIRL Occasional Paper #4 (Calgary: Canadian Institute of Resources Law, January 1998); Steven A. Kennett & Monique M. Ross, *In Search of Public Land Law in Alberta*, CIRL Occasional Paper #5 (Calgary: Canadian Institute of Resources Law, January 1998).

13. See Kennett, *ibid.*, Section 3.1.

14. For example: Alberta Forestry Lands and Wildlife, *Alberta Public Lands* (Edmonton: September 1988), 2; Alberta Forestry Lands and Wildlife, *Integrated Resource Planning in Alberta* (Edmonton: September 1991), 3; Alberta Environment, "Water Management Policy for the South Saskatchewan River Basin," Fact Sheet (Edmonton: May 1990); Environment Council of Alberta, *The Environmental Effects of Forestry Operations in Alberta*, Report and Recommendations (Edmonton: February 1979), 6, 85-86.

15. See Kennett, *supra* note 12, Section 3.1.3.

16. The definitive documentation of the U.S. experience is Charles F. Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water, and the Future of the West* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1992).

17. See, for example, Vivian Pharis, "Can 'Special Places 2000' Protect the Eastern Slopes?" (July/August 1993) 28 *Environment Network News* 25; Reg Ernst, "Is Public Land Management Effective?" (January/February 1996) 43 *Environment Network News* 11.

18. Natural Resources Conservation Board, *supra* note 6, 9-72 – 9-74; 10-10 – 10-11; 11-2; 12-5 – 12-6.

19. Future Environmental Directions for Alberta Task Force, *Ensuring Prosperity: Implementing Sustainable Development* (Edmonton: Environment Council of Alberta, March 1995), 52-54.

20. See, for example, R. Edward Grumbine, "What Is Ecosystem Management?" (1994) 8(1) *Conservation Biology* 27; Reed F. Noss, "Some Principles of Conservation Biology, As They Apply to Environmental Law" (1994) 69 *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 893; Robert B. Keiter, "Beyond the Boundary Line: Constructing a Law of Ecosystem Management" (1994) 65 *University of Colorado Law Review* 293.

21. These elements of ecosystem management are discussed in more detail in Kennett, *supra* note 12, Section 3.2.2.

22. Scott W. Hardt, "Federal Land Management in the Twenty-First Century: From Wise Use to Wise Stewardship" (1994) 18 *Harvard Environmental Law Review* 345, 392-396.

23. See Kennett, *supra* note 12, Section 4.1.

24. *Ibid.*, Section 5.1.

25. *Ibid.*, Section 5.2.

26. *Ibid.*, Section 6.

27. See Kennett & Ross, *supra* note 12, Section 4.

28. It is noteworthy that the policy statement establishing the province's "protected areas" initiative, *Special Places 2000*, adopts multiple use language and does not even mention the term "ecosystem management." See Kennett, *supra* note 8.

29. See Kennett & Ross, *supra* note 12, Section 5.

30. *Ibid.*, Section 6.

31. *Supra* note 5.

32. *Supra* note 6.

33. Kennett & Ross, *supra* note 12, Section 7.

34. These reasons are discussed in more detail in Kennett & Ross, *ibid.*, Section 8.2 (Steven Kennett and Monique Ross are research associates with the Canadian Institute of Resources Law. This article is related to two Occasional Papers #4, and #5, January 1998, both available from CIRL: In Search of Public Land Law in Alberta and New Directions for Public Land Law. Republished with permission from CIRL's newsletter RESOURCES, No. 60 - Fall 1997.)



DIRECT ACTION IN THE BIGHORN

By Dr. Ian Urquhart, AWA Director

"Direct action" is a term I usually associate with environmentalism's dark side. It describes the activities of a monkeywrencher, a founder of Earth First, a Wiebo Ludwig. It usually calls for sabotaging or vandalizing property – its proponents justify themselves with the hope that destructive behaviour will lead those who abuse nature to mend their ways.

In late June I participated in part of AWA's campaign to give direct action a more positive face – the Recreation Use and Impact Monitoring Project in the Bighorn Wildland. AWA designed this rigorous study to document the impact of recreational activity (including quads, horses, hikers and snowmobilers) in the Bighorn Wildland, one of Alberta's few remaining large, intact, unprotected wilderness areas. AWA's objective is to give the provincial government the data needed to craft policies to protect this landscape.

After my week in the Bighorn I have no doubt that this project may prove to be very valuable. It promises to give AWA the data the government claims it needs in order to strengthen its protection of this area. When we were there the signs of illegal OHV and on-highway vehicle use were as obvious as the peaks of the Ram Range rising to the southwest of the study area. While we were gathering data we encountered a handful of people violating the area's various vehicle closures. Two fishermen drove their trucks up the trail to chase cutthroats in Onion and Hummingbird Creeks – in blatant disregard of the government's roadside sign prohibiting travel towards Onion Lake.

A third encounter proved more troubling for me. It took place near the end of our second day as the group was returning to our base camp from Onion Lake. We met two men on quads who were headed to the lake. After exchanging greetings, Tamaini asked them if they had seen a government map of the Bighorn and if they realized that the trail they were riding on was closed to OHVs until July 1st. They pleaded ignorance on both counts: they had not seen Sustainable Resource Development's (SRD) map or the sign at the parking lot, and they said they thought the trail was open to OHV use. To their credit, when they heard Tamaini's news they turned their machines around and headed back to the staging area's parking lot.

Given that they turned back, you might wonder what I found troubling about the situation. I think it highlights well how

Sustainable Resource Development effectively has abdicated much of what I regard as a government department's most basic responsibility – ensuring that the public has the information needed in order to stay on the right side of the law. Unlike the bald warning to on-highway vehicles noted above, the main trail does not have sufficient signs outlining when OHVs are allowed to use it. The only mention of OHV seasons is buried on the main information billboard – a good distance from the trailhead itself – at the staging area.

While ignorance is not a defence for breaking the law, surely government has a duty to make it abundantly clear when and where certain activities are permitted. SRD has failed the public miserably in this respect when it comes to outlining trail use regulations in this portion of the Upper Clearwater/Ram Forest Land Use Zone.

This failure may be interpreted in many ways. But given the government's dismal track record on wilderness preservation in the

Bighorn, you do not have to resort to cynicism to see a pitifully weak political commitment to strictly enforcing SRD's OHV access regulations. And in light of such a weak political commitment, AWA's positive version of direct action in the Bighorn may prove even more valuable. It may well help AWA build the lever needed to push a reluctant government towards preserving what remains of the wilderness in this magnificent slice of Alberta's Eastern Slopes.

The birth of this project arose out of the Association's growing frustration with the provincial government's profile on this wilderness protection issue. In 1986 the provincial government sketched out the Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area – an area the government promised to protect from industrial development and OHV traffic. But like many a New Year's resolution, the commitment needed to give this promise meaning never materialized.

This failure to pass the required legislation foreshadowed subsequent government decisions. The most damning of these was the provincial decision last fall to give OHVs access to previously protected areas of the Eastern Slopes Prime Protection Zone. Trails up Onion Creek, Hummingbird Creek, Canary Creek, the Ram River and elsewhere – longstanding victims of illegal OHV traffic – have been opened up officially to OHV use.

Frustration over this situation only intensified when AWA participated in "stakeholder" consultations with the government and OHV user groups over what policies should guide human use of this area. In these forums the concerns of AWA staff were effectively dismissed. They heard claims from OHV users, claims



Ian Urquhart in the Bighorn Wildland



never challenged by the government, that OHV use was not degrading the Bighorn's landscape.

This argument is absurd. Anyone who travels in the Bighorn will see the damage OHVs have caused when they "frolic" in fens alongside the Onion Lake trail or on the hillsides surrounding Onion Lake itself.

The primary goal of our June visit to the Bighorn was to gather baseline data on trail conditions before "Quad season" officially began on July 1st. The beautiful warm weather that welcomed the first team of the season did not greet us when we gathered at the Hummingbird Equestrian Staging Area to start this second phase of the study. For the first four days of our trip the weather was pretty grim. Rain, wet snow, hail – we saw all manner of precipitation during those first four days.

Yet even when I wondered why the weather would not be more cooperative, I could not ignore how even bad weather can look good in the Rockies and foothills. Waves of wet snow sweeping down rocky, windswept ridges, shroud-like clouds lingering just above the valley floor, hail doing the jitterbug to impress alpine buttercups – all deepened my appreciation of what nature has to offer our senses.

Over the next six days we accomplished most of the objectives

set by Tamaini Snaith, Lara Smandych, and Laurie Wein, the AWA staffers who led the trip. We catalogued a number of trails into analytical units. We photographed these trail segments and recorded their characteristics (such as signs of use and extent of damage).

I think AWA members will be impressed by the quality and professionalism of the Association's recreational use study. Its designers canvassed the conservation literature extensively in order to develop a fitting framework to rank and evaluate the impact of recreational use on the landscape. By combining photo-documentation with extensive, systematic data collection, the study design promises to give the Association objective terrain damage data. This combination also will enable AWA staff and volunteers to replicate the study from year to year, further strengthening the reliability of our assessments and arguments. ❁

(Dr. Ian Urquhart is a professor of political science at the University of Alberta. AWA expresses thanks Alberta Ecotrust, LaSalle Adams Foundation, Shell Environment Fund, Suncor Energy Foundation, Y2Y and Wilburforce Foundation for their generous support of our work in the Eastern Slopes and our Alberta Wilderness Watch projects.)

BIGHORN UPDATE

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist

Our efforts to protect the Bighorn Wildland have taken a new and interesting turn this summer. We launched the *Bighorn Recreation Use and Impact Monitoring* project. This project is part of our *Alberta Wilderness Watch* program, which is an initiative in environmental stewardship throughout the province.

With the project in the Bighorn, we hope to be able to produce scientifically defensible documentation of the local effects of recreation on our wilderness. We also hope to deter illegal and damaging use by creating a research presence. Of course, whenever we observe illegal use we will report it to the government.

Our efforts to achieve legislative protection for the Bighorn Wildland will receive new life in the fall with a re-launch of our Bighorn Campaign. Watch for outreach events, action alerts and new information on the web page.

AWA stewardship programs are created to involve recreationists in volunteer stewardship activities. Volunteers are helping us to collect data on recreational use and its impacts throughout the Bighorn. If you are interested in becoming an *Alberta Wilderness Watch* volunteer, please contact us for more information and a training package. ❁



HELI-TOUR COMPANY WANTS UNLIMITED FLIGHTS OVER WILDERNESS

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist

Icefield Helicopters have applied to have the only remaining restriction removed from their operating permit. If they are successful, there will be nothing to restrict the number of flights they operate over national parks and other sensitive wilderness. AWA and other local tourism operators want more restrictions on heli-operations, not less.

Icefield Helicopters has been operating heli-touring, hiking and fishing trips over the national parks, the Bighorn Wildland and surrounding wilderness since 1999.

Other restrictions attached to their operation permit have already been removed. In 2001, despite local opposition, Icefield was granted their request to expand their operating hours. They are now free to fly from 7:00 am to 8:30 pm.

The only remaining restriction on their operation restricts their operation to three helicopters. But Icefield wants to be able to use an unlimited number of helicopters for an unlimited number of flights per day.

Helicopters create noise pollution that can disturb, stress and displace wildlife populations, particularly during sensitive seasons and at certain times of day. Restrictions on their use are important to avoid creating these disturbances. Unrestricted helicopter operations can pose a serious threat to sensitive wildlife species in the area.

Noisy helicopters that disrupt the solitude of the wilderness experience also affect backcountry users. A local survey found that users of this area overwhelmingly felt that helicopter tourism was not an appropriate development option for the area.

For more information see our June Action Alert on our website. ❁



PRECIOUS PRAIRIE SOLD FOR POTATOES

Public lands that are the birthright of all Albertans are endangered by land sales once again. At least 10 square kilometres of environmentally significant native grassland in the Grand Forks (Bow Island) area were ploughed under last week. The newly cultivated fields will be used to grow potatoes.

AWA is calling for a complete halt to any further sales or destruction of public native grasslands. We are also calling again for a Public Lands Policy. Such a policy would identify the diversity of values found on public lands and safeguard them for present and future generations. It would also ensure that the public is involved in any decisions about the sale or destruction of its native grasslands.


Cliff Wallis, AWA president, is angry at what he calls "a politically controlled and under-resourced process that fails to protect the public interest. There was no public involvement and very little science directed at this. It is a travesty that any of our precious native grasslands have been cultivated for potatoes. It is even more distressing that these are environmentally significant, publicly owned lands."



Environmentally significant native grassland in the Grand Forks (Bow Island) area about to be ploughed up

We are calling on Alberta to take its public lands stewardship role seriously. All public native grasslands must be protected from conversion to other uses. They are simply too precious to allow their destruction. To that end, the Alberta Public Lands Division must have additional resources that are commensurate with its management responsibility.

Alberta acknowledges that public land sales, including undisturbed native prairie, have proceeded regularly without public input. Alberta has consistently said that lands with any conservation value will not be sold. Despite this commitment, the Minister of Environmental Protection sold environmentally significant public land near the Milk River Canyon of southeast Alberta in 1997 and the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development appears to be doing the same at Grand Forks in 2003.

"The grassland natural region is one of the most threatened ecosystems in Canada and home to many species at risk," says Wallis. "We can't afford to lose any more native prairie to private sale and cultivation. That would be contrary to numerous government initiatives that are trying to protect Alberta's endangered prairie areas. Albertans deserve a strong say in the future of their land. It should not be sold off to vested interests." 



Environmentally significant native grassland in the Grand Forks (Bow Island) area ploughed up for potatoes

PUBLIC LAND SALES MOTION PROCEEDS

Private member's motion 507 by MLA Dave Broda is continuing to move ahead. The motion states: *Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government to sell or dispose of public lands that do not possess any economic potential for the Province.* AWA strongly objects to this motion. Please write to Premier Ralph Klein, Minister of Sustainable Resources, Mike Cardinal and your MLA with your concerns. For addresses, see our Actionkit on our website under Resources. For the history of public land sales see our web pages on Public Lands.

PUBLIC LAND ACCESS RULES PROCLAIMED

The *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act* (Bill 16) was proclaimed as law on July 10, 2003 specifying new rules for recreational and exploration access on agricultural public lands leased for grazing or cultivation.

A news release, backgrounder and brochure explaining the new legislation are available on the Government of Alberta website, <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/recaccess/publiclandaccess.html>.

For more information on this new legislation, please call toll-free 1-866-279-0023.



AWA'S WHALEBACK POLL: THERE'S A CHILL IN THE AIR

By Dr. Ian Urquhart, AWA Director

Beginning on September 9 the AEUB will hold public hearings in Maycroft to consider the application by Polaris to drill a critical sour gas well within shouting distance of the southern boundary of the Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park. AWA opposes this threat to, in the provincial government's words, "Alberta's last remaining area of montane wilderness."

We feel strongly that the AEUB should consider the views of Albertans on this important issue. To this end, we wanted to commission a public opinion survey of the attitudes of Albertans towards this development proposal. Sounds pretty straightforward? It wasn't.

I approached IPSOS-Reid, one of North America's leading polling firms, with a draft question about the Whaleback that we wanted to include in the firm's Alberta survey. The preamble to the question referred to provincial government reports and decisions that affirm the national ecological significance of the Whaleback.

It acknowledged that some energy companies remain interested in drilling for oil and gas in the Whaleback and pointed out that the AEUB was considering an application to drill a sour gas well just outside the boundaries of the protected area. Given this background information it finally asked: "Are you in favour of or opposed to any natural gas drilling in the immediate vicinity of the Whaleback protected area?"

A senior IPSOS-Reid official, after running my draft question by some people in the firm's Calgary office, said the

questionnaire was slanted. Identifying the Polaris well as a sour gas well contributed to the bias in the questionnaire. They would not run the question in its original form.

I responded by saying I wouldn't object to including a stronger statement in the questionnaire about the potential amount of natural gas that could be extracted from the Whaleback. But I couldn't agree with people in the Calgary office who contended that citing provincial government reports "slanted" the questionnaire.

Nor could I see how calling the well "sour" – which is exactly how Polaris identifies the well in its application – "further biases the questionnaire." Since Polaris has applied to drill a "critical sour gas" well, wouldn't you be misleading the public if you did not acknowledge this fact?

I compared the details of the Polaris application to asking the public what they felt about building an electrical power plant. If you knew the design for the facility was

nuclear wouldn't you want people to know that before you asked them whether they were in favour of building the plant?

A subsequent telephone conversation made it painfully clear what the label "slanted" really meant. At least some people in the Calgary office were concerned that running AWA's questionnaire could jeopardize the firm's relationship with a significant customer – the oil and gas industry.

Fortunately, not all polling firms take this rather chilling view of what topics should or should not be investigated. The Dunvegan Group, a Calgary firm that has done work in the past on the Whaleback for the World Wildlife Fund, is polling Albertans for us on the Polaris scheme and will be able to give us the results prior to the deadline for filing interventions with the AEUB. 🍁



Whaleback

MILK RIVER ON CANADA'S ENDANGERED RIVERS LIST

Alberta has two rivers in the National Endangered Rivers List, released recently by Earthwild International and Wildcanada.net.

AWA nominated the Milk River, which sits at number six on the list, to recognize its unparalleled environmental value and the threats to this significant resource, most notably recent proposals for a major dam.

Using the National Endangered Rivers List, AWA will work with Earthwild International and Wildcanada.net and

partner organizations, local communities, First Nations and conservation groups from across the country to highlight the plight of Canada's most endangered rivers. Throughout the coming months, an online Action Centre will be developed for each river, encouraging Canadians to participate and learn more about our river heritage.

Also on the list, at number 10, is the Bow River, nominated by the Mountain Parks Watershed Association.

You can view the Endangered Rivers report and the online Action Centres at www.endangeredrivers.net 🍁



PILOT PROJECT OPENS DOOR TO INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY IN PROTECTED AREAS

By Tamaini Snaith, AWA Conservation Biologist



What's in a name? If you're talking about protected areas in Alberta, the names are becoming more meaningless every day.

The most recent insult to Alberta's wilderness was last week's announcement by Gene Zwozdesky, the minister responsible for our protected areas, that seismic work would be allowed within

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area, a legally designated protected area under the Special Places program.

Seismic operations are the methods used by the oil and gas industry to explore what's underneath the earth's surface by setting off loud explosions and listening to how it travels through the ground. This tells them where to find the oil.

According to the minister's press release, he "will provide limited access to Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area to test zero-impact seismic methods to contribute to more effective management of the natural area, while also helping industry to better image the subsurface resources adjacent to the natural area."

To his credit, the minister has prohibited vehicle access and vegetation clearing within the Natural Area and for 300 metres surrounding its boundary, and has required that the operations be videotaped.

However, I find this announcement very troubling, and it has made my slim trust in government management of protected areas deteriorate even further. I am concerned for the following reasons:

1. Seismic operations are conducted to locate and image oil and gas reserves. When they find them, the industry will "need" to drill for them. The minister has been quoted as saying that it is possible that permission will be given to drill within the protected area.

2. This operation is to be a "pilot project," which may be repeated in other protected areas. This dangerous statement has opened the door to seismic and drilling throughout Alberta's protected areas.

3. The claim that this seismic work will have "zero impact" is unfounded. The press release says they are testing the methods – so how do they know they have no impact? Seismic work used to involve major clearing of 30-metre swaths of land with bulldozers. More recent so-called low impact methods remove fewer trees, but a recent study has found that all the same negative effects are still present (they fragment

the landscape, disturb wildlife and introduce weeds).

If we want to protect Alberta's wilderness, wildlife and water resources, then we need to make some commitments:

1. There should be no industrial activities in any of Alberta's protected areas (or in areas identified as critical wildlife habitat or as environmentally significant).

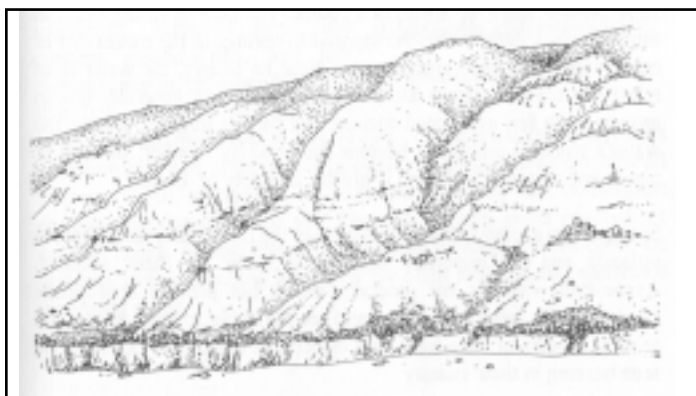
2. There should be a transitional zone surrounding protected areas where little to no surface access is allowed. Many studies have shown that among the biggest threats to Canadian parks is what happens outside their borders.

3. Sensitive areas are not the place for *testing* new methods. We don't test seat belts by putting delicate humans in the car; we use crash test dummies first. The same philosophy is required to protect our landscapes and water resources.

4. Zero-impact methods and "best practices" should not be reserved for sensitive landscapes but should be standard practice required by legislation throughout the province.

5. One of the most worrisome and detrimental activities associated with oil and gas development is road construction. Alberta is already seriously fragmented by roads and seismic lines. Wherever possible, there should be no new roads constructed. At the very least, road construction should be prohibited in protected and other sensitive areas. In less sensitive areas, there should be a road/seismic line removed for every new one constructed.

Again and again, the Government of Alberta has shocked me with its blatant disregard for environmental concerns and its systematic downgrading of wilderness protection in favour of industrial development. Motorized recreation and industrial operations are present in many of Alberta's "protected" areas. Now the door is open to more industrial activity. So what exactly are these areas protected from? I sometimes wonder why the government even bothered with Special Places – why name these so-called protected areas and draw them on maps if they have no intention to protect them? 🍂



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OPPOSITION GROWLS AT GRIZZLY RIDGE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Lara Smandych, AWA Conservation Biologist



Alberta Community Development's Park and Recreation Division recently released a draft management plan for the Grizzly Ridge Wildland Park. What makes this draft plan so controversial is its proposal to limit off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to designated trails only. AWA strongly recommends that OHV use be prohibited within Grizzly Ridge Wildland Park and that the draft plan be revised to support the intent of the Wildland Park designation. This plan is causing many OHV recreationists to "growl" in opposition.

Grizzly Ridge Wildland Park is recognized for essential wilderness values. Located in north-central Alberta southwest of the town of Slave Lake, the 107-km² park was established in 1999 under the Special Places program. Its special features include scenic meadow complexes containing a high diversity of animal and bird species, large ungulate and carnivore habitat, and rare vegetation species and communities including old-growth forest.

Like many park management plans, the draft plan provides a long-term vision for park stewardship, and outlines the type and

extent of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, facilities and services offered within the park while providing an overall direction for park management.

Alberta legislation dictates that as a Wildland Park, Grizzly Ridge should provide low-intensity wilderness recreation opportunities while maintaining natural processes. Protection of natural heritage values is the principal consideration. For years, OHV riders have been using an undetermined number of trails within Grizzly Ridge Wildland Park. OHVs constitute all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles. The negative effects of OHVs have been well documented and include the disruption of natural vegetation patterns and surface water flow, noise pollution, along with soil erosion and compaction and the disturbance of wildlife.

Under the draft Plan, three trails will be legally designated for motorized use within park boundaries: two summer trails in the north and a winter snowmobile trail through the southern portion of the park. All other trails that have been previously used by OHVs will be closed. In opposition, OHV users have responded to the Plan's proposal by lobbying for increased access, and petitions have been submitted to the government requesting more motorized trails.

The use of OHVs is incompatible with environmental protection, the maintenance of ecological integrity and low impact recreational enjoyment in the Grizzly Ridge Wildland Park. OHV activity must therefore be eliminated from this ecologically sensitive area for

the maintenance of Grizzly Ridge's great wilderness value. 🍂



Grizzly Ridge is part of Alberta's network of protected areas and represents the Alberta foothills, a landscape that is currently under-protected (<2%). The Grizzly Ridge area has been defined as environmentally significant and represents some of the least disturbed Upper Foothills region. (photo from Alberta Community Development Grizzly Ridge Management Plan)

GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY IN ALBERTA

By Peter Zimmerman

In the fall of 2002 the provincial Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, Mike Cardinal, established a Grizzly Bear Recovery Team in response to the recommendation by the Endangered Species Subcommittee (ESSC) that the grizzly bear be reclassified as a "threatened" species in this province. Under provisions of the Wildlife Act, such a reclassification would have automatically meant that a Grizzly Bear Recovery Team be put in place and that a moratorium on hunting occur.

The minister chose to defer his decision on classification but did put a recovery team together whose mandate is to create a recovery plan for grizzlies in Alberta within a one-year timeframe. He has also allowed the limited entry hunt to continue in 2003, although with a reduced

allowable take. Out of the 26 grizzly mortalities so far this year, 18 have been legal hunting kills.

A generous perspective might say creating a recovery team while his decision on reclassification is pending is being responsible and proactive. A more cynical, or perhaps realistic view, would be that he may simply be trying to keep the Feds from intervening with the new Species at Risk Act (SARA) by going through some motions but without making any substantive changes to the status quo. Without the authority of the reclassification under the Wildlife Act, any recovery plan developed will be a recommendation only, leaving the minister to act, or not, at his discretion. It also lets him continue to allow an annual hunt.

Whatever his motives, the recovery team, consisting of



representatives from industry, ranching, several ENGOs (including AWA), government and the university research community has now been working for almost 10 months to build a plan to recover grizzly bear numbers in this province.



Grizzly Bear

Progress has been slow to date, in part because the minister has not released a critical document the team requires. This is a technical report prepared by several researchers that, among other things, critically examines the current method of calculating the grizzly bear population in Alberta. For some time the accepted number has been somewhere around 850 for the entire province, with the trend showing an increase in numbers. Rumour has it that this report will demonstrate that the number is really much lower and the trend much flatter. Based on this new population number, the rate of total human cause (THC) mortalities will probably exceed the four per cent THC mortality cap that the team has agreed needs to be in place as one objective of the recovery plan.

Why the minister would withhold this important document for so long – it was sent to him in January of this year – from the very team he mandated to create a recovery plan is difficult to understand, unless of course you subscribe to the more cynical point of view. At the time of this writing, the document has gone all the way up to the cabinet level and is to be released "any time," so we are told.

Even with this document available, moving forward to build a meaningful recovery plan for a species such as the grizzly, which ranges over a very large portion of the province where there is a great deal of industrial and recreational activity, will be a very tricky bit of business to accomplish in one year. The Yellowstone Park Grizzly Bear Recovery plan, which is the only successful plan in North America to date, took nine years to build and implement.

So far the recovery team has agreed on seven broad objectives:

- Limit the rate of human-caused mortality
- Manage reproductive parameters to achieve desired population goals
- Maintain current bear range and expand where possible and/or desirable
- Conserve and improve habitat suitability and effectiveness
- Enhance connectivity of habitat and re-establish where fracturing is evident
- Reduce human-bear conflicts
- Obtain and improve grizzly bear population data on an ongoing basis.

There are seven corresponding strategies for each objective. These strategic areas include Education, Policy and Legislation, Population Monitoring, Research, Management Activities, Access Management, and Interjurisdiction Cooperation. The team is now working to fill in the specific actions for each strategy and objective.

Regardless of what the final recovery plan looks like, the Achilles heel of this process is that the grizzly is still not reclassified as "threatened" and until that occurs, there is little to compel the minister to act. It also somewhat hamstring the recovery team in that we have to deal with some thorny issues – such as hunting – that would be automatic if the threatened status was in place.

Only time will tell how effective the final plan will be in recovering grizzly bear numbers in this province. Anything AWA members can do – such as writing the minister or your MLA – to encourage the minister to proceed with the reclassification, would help move this ahead. 🍁

(Peter Zimmerman represents AWA, CPAWS, Y2Y and GBA (Grizzly Bear Alliance) on the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team. Note: The Grizzly Bear Alliance (GBA) has initiated a FOIPP action to obtain the "Technical Report" mentioned in the last Grizzly Bear Recovery Team update. Gord Stenhouse, the Recovery Team Chair, has informed the Director of Wildlife that the team will not meet again until the report is in our hands.)



KICKING HORSE BEAR PEN: ANOTHER CASE OF MISREPRESENTATION AND EXPLOITATION OF GRIZZLY BEARS

by Dr. Brian L. Horejsi, Wildlife Scientist



The move by Kicking Horse Mountain real estate and ski development in Golden to commercially exploit the plight of grizzly bears is another in a growing list of inappropriate and unacceptable scams to exploit the broad public appeal that bears have.

The Kicking Horse bear pen is being used to misrepresent the status and problems associated with conflicts between humans and bears. It projects the perverse image that bears that come into conflict with humans are being well cared for simply because they will end up in the zoo-like atmosphere at Kicking Horse.

Further, it falsely claims to provide a solution to a problem of considerable magnitude; as many as 30 or 40 grizzly bears annually come into conflict with humans because humans are intolerant and continue to invade grizzly bear habitat. Kicking Horse masks the severity of this problem and portrays and prolongs the false impression that conflicts can be resolved simply by moving the bear into a pen.

Any bear being released into the wild from Kicking Horse will be a threat to people and property. These will be bears that are habituated to human presence and activity and will, the moment they are "free," be at great risk of being killed because of their familiarity with humans. They will NOT contribute to the viability of other bear populations but they WILL create additional conflict with humans.

Survival of these bears is rarely monitored, partly because there have been thankfully few similar situations, but bears that conflict with humans and have been relocated and monitored experience very high stress and overwhelming mortality rates of up to 90 per cent! The probability that such bears live a normal life is near zero!

It could be viewed as cruel and deliberate punishment to

confine a bear that would normally range over 135 to 1,000 square kilometers of habitat to a nine-hectare pen. Bears in the pen are going to have to be fed, just like zoo bears. And they're going to have to be monitored for disease. And social conflict amongst themselves will arise. There is certainly nothing natural about this, no matter how loudly the marketing director pounds his desk.

The real force behind this is crass commercialization, which explains the "desire and the savvy to invite bears into the fold." Or as one newspaper article says, "the bears have created a lot of economic activity." But the fact is bears in the wild and the wild country they need can generate millions of dollars in economic activity, and they don't have to be misrepresented or abused in order to do so.

We're being told Europeans and Asians like the deal! After all, one presumes, they can have a cold beer one minute and watch grizzlies the next, maybe even chomp on a burger as they sail over the bears in a chairlift. Of course, no one will ever chuck one down to the bears! Talk about a wild experience. Certainly sets the mood, doesn't it? This perversion does not build respect for grizzly bears and the wild country they need to survive.

The whole notion that Kicking Horse, an "exclusive" real estate and ski development that blasted a gaping hole into grizzly bear habitat when it was built, is now going to prop up the facade of "helping" endangered species is obscene. This development and the people it draws have displaced wary and behaviourally neutral wild grizzly bears from several hundred square kilometers of habitat around the development, and that will only get worse as people fan out from the development. And as young and unwary bears wander into the development's zone of influence, they will be relocated or destroyed as they pose a threat to people and property.

The real benefit for grizzly bears would have been to have an Environmental Impact Assessment done before Kicking Horse became a development progressively consuming public land and wildlife habitat, with an alternative being not to develop.

The existing bear pen should not be licensed, and it should not be used to commercially exploit and misrepresent the plight of animals that have been unfortunate enough to come into conflict with humans. Wildlife pimping we can do without!

I look forward to the day, given the developers proclaimed concern for wildlife, that they aggressively support and become involved in the protection of a 10,000-km² roadless protected area where wild bears can actually survive.

In Memoriam

John Farley was a quiet, shy man who loved the outdoors and was never happier than when he was heading off to the mountains on a back-packing trip, canoeing a wilderness river, or cross-country skiing in winter. But he also did an incredible amount of volunteer work, particularly for the Birkebeiner Association, helping with trail maintenance at the Blackfoot Recreation Area and Strathcona Wilderness Centre, near Edmonton. He was killed tragically in a hit-and-run accident on 23 June 2003. Although not a member of the AWA, he was very concerned about the loss of Alberta's wilderness, and his friends felt it would be a fitting memorial to remember him through donations to the AWA. He is survived by his sister, Juliette, in Kent, England.



RAVENS OVER CROWNEST, OR ... CHOOSING A POSTER CHILD FROM THE DARK SIDE

By David McIntyre, MSc

Project Coordinator/Crowsnest Birding Project

*When night winds blow warmly and call to the free
To follow the shadows of the slow-swaying trees
Where the magic of evening is casting its spell
And the sounds of the black woods have stories to tell*

*Then follow your calling, smell of the night
With its secrets and torments and changing moonlight
Where the raven of darkness floats through the wild skies
With fate in her passing and death in her eyes*

*Follow the raven, in darkness she flies
While everything suffers and everything dies
The wind hears her passing, the raven of death
While men fear her power and feel her cold breath*

Monica Field

The Raven

The raven – black and bold, yet cryptic and enigmatic – a bird that reflects our inevitable fate from the haunting convex mirrors of its malevolent and watchful eyes, ... or so we're led to believe!

But isn't it the raven's black and mythical magic that draws us into its shadowy realm and challenges our own mortality? Well, ... that's part of the intrigue and power that led to the selection of the raven as "poster child" and icon for the Crowsnest Birding Project. It's often the mysterious or the macabre that pulls us into its enticing grasp:

*Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook
Myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this
Ominous bird of yore ...
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."*

Edgar Allan Poe

The Raven

Nearly two centuries have passed since Poe's death. Yet, we're still intrigued by The Raven and the dark realm of the unknown – the raven's refuge.

With my thoughts on the raven's world, I sit in the shadow of Crowsnest Mountain, overlooking the Crowsnest valley and the community of Crowsnest Pass. And I contemplate the complexity of this vast arena: What sort of raven has Crowsnest created?

Well, ... I'm convinced that the Crowsnest raven is a bird that knows which residents, on which days, will leave edible garbage on the edge of which street; a bird that will patrol the highways to find dead deer and elk, then arrive at the dump before the trucks carrying these roadkills have delivered their cargo; a bird that

knows which trash bins, by which grocery stores, on which days, will hold accessible treasures of meat and vegetable; and a bird that conducts planned, low-level flyovers above selected bird feeders, with the specific goal of flushing targeted flocks of feeding birds and causing them to fly to their death against adjacent windows (where they are collected and eaten).

The raven, I believe, shatters the common barrier of what we traditionally think is a bird's world. In breaking through to the other side, the black bird of yore violates our comfortable ideas about where our intelligence and that of a mere bird should divide!

The raven rules with its wit! Working together, teams of ravens "dance" a taunting, teasing dance in the face of a feeding eagle. One raven pulls the eagle's tail feathers. As the irritated eagle whirls in response, a second raven jumps in – stealing the meal that was the eagle's.

I'm thinking of the raven's intelligence as I compare the skulls of an eagle and a raven. A superficial glance suggests that the two are surprisingly similar – almost exactly the same length. The most obvious differences, other than the shape of the birds' mandibles, are reflected within the disparity between the two birds' eyes and brains.

The eagle's eyes – huge – are each supported by a wheel-like bone (sclerotic ring) and dominate the skull. It's not the eye that dominates the raven's skull. It's the brain!

The size of an animal's brain in relationship to its overall size is an indicator of that animal's capacity to accommodate information. Using this brain-to-body measure, the raven's brain is second to no bird. Perhaps even more interesting is this: the raven's brain accounts for almost exactly the same percentage of its total weight as our own!

Ravens are very smart, but it's impossible to measure their intelligence without entering the raven's complex world of sensory inputs and its equally important means of decoding that same information. Ravens rule life within their domain, and it's therefore reasonable for us, knowing their capacity for intelligence and believing in ours, to speculate. For example: Ravens probably don't follow wolves to the site of a kill.

Instead, they may be more prone to lead wolves to their prey in order to be present for the ensuing feast. And ravens probably "sing" to the grizzly – directing the bear to the carcass of an avalanche-killed bighorn and using the bear's strength, teeth and claws to tear the carcass open, thus making it available to a "mere" bird. Similar interactive partnerships between ravens and Inuit hunters have been documented – the ravens leading the hunters to unseen prey.

Keen and resourceful observers, ravens become increasingly effective exploiters of a realm limited only by their vast explorations. And they do this during a lifetime that may exceed 40 years!

So adept is the raven in obtaining food and adapting to life and the opportunities within its territory that it has been blessed with a commodity few wild species enjoy: spare time. The raven seems to use its "free time" to play, explore, and observe life.

I've seen ravens hang-gliding in hurricane-force winds and



watched established pairs, in flight, synchronizing their every move. I've also wondered at the sight of solitary ravens soaring above the highest peaks in the heart of winter, when the only voice was their own and the chance of finding food seemed impossible. And I've watched them make "snow angels" in new-fallen snow, then stand back in apparent admiration of their sculpted profile.

As winter grips the land, I see them at first light – a flock of ravens, airborne as they descend into the Crowsnest valley from their night roost somewhere to the far north. Black dots emerge against the pale sky of dawn and break over the crest of an exposed ridge of sedimentary rock. There the birds disperse and fall in organized chaos toward the escarpment far below. And just as they – somersaulting through space – appear destined to hit the frozen waves of fractured rock, they recover, ... arc upward, loop, and fall once again, ... this time in headlong dives, half-rolls and tumbles. And again, just as they seem doomed to crash into the weathered mesozoic seabed, they pull another trick from their aerial bag.

Aloft once again, they appear as black punctuation marks against a blue sky. There they converge in disjointed togetherness. Riding high above the sandstone escarpment, they fly past me as a ragged flock, descend into the valley, and ... disappear. Beyond my sight, their haunting guttural calls float back over the separating void.

Following their departure, my thoughts return to the raven's flight and the bird's expansive playground. In the air, the raven performs an artistic dance that's influenced by convection and gravity, wind and calm. And the dance continues – throughout the raven's passage on an ephemeral and transitional stage – between an out-of-the-blue entrance and exit. Across a vast landscape, the raven appears and disappears, seldom exposing more than a glimpse of its complex itinerary; order is cloaked in disorder.

Far beyond my vantage point, the ravens are gone! Only as darkness approaches am I likely to, once again, catch a glimpse of the black cast of aerial players as they return, headed – I presume to guess – toward their hidden place of rest.

The raven's complex, often cryptic, and seemingly erratic behaviour has caught the attention of many people. The first written record of the raven in Crowsnest Pass comes via the Palliser Expedition (1858) as a Cree to French to English translation – literally "the nest of the raven." But, as history reveals, the pass wasn't named "Ravensnest." Instead, it was named for a bird that didn't exist in the region!

Crows did, eventually, come to Crowsnest, in response to the added opportunities made available by human settlement. And their presence subsequently made the error appear to reflect an accurate observation and interpretation. (Crows, roughly one-third the weight of their larger relative, still migrate into Crowsnest Pass but are seldom seen during the coldest months of the year. Of the two birds, only the raven is a regular, year-round resident, and only

the raven has a history that predates settlement. Yet here in the heart of the raven's domain, even the raven's name is lost to the more exposed world of its much smaller, less intelligent relative.)

Researchers who try to open the door into the raven's world soon discover that their experiments are prone to failure. This bird is too intelligent! The raven's intellect is reflected in the confounding complexity of its behaviour. How, for example, do you study the raven's diverse language, a language which only hints at its depth – a language in which new "words" seem to suddenly appear? How do you gain insight into a raven's multifaceted social structure, where song, dance, flight, feather-erections, and mouth colour are part of the "game"?

How do you follow a bird that can cover hundreds of miles in a single day, and whose wanderings may suddenly shift from the seemingly predictable to the bizarre, or the inexplicable? The

bird's ability to outsmart behavioural scientists has led more than one university advisor to issue a stern warning: "You've got to be smarter than the animal you're going to study!"

How intelligent is the raven? It's more than smart enough to gain the respect of the grizzly and the wolf, and to earn its dominance high in the sky over the mountains of Crowsnest Pass. From its lofty, year-round vantage points, and with its long lifespan, the raven has observed more aspects of the greater Crowsnest Pass than any living thing! And it's the raven – ever-present on the landscape – that will, through its power and presence, expose the surprising depth and diversity of Crowsnest Pass birding opportunities.

*Follow the raven, in darkness she flies
While everything suffers and everything dies
The wind hears her passing, the raven of death
While men fear her power and feel her cold breath*

Monica Field
The Raven

CEAS recently (December, 2002) announced the approval of a \$10,000 grant from Alberta Ecotrust for the Crowsnest Birding Project. The goal: compile, document, and deliver information relating to birding opportunities in the greater Crowsnest Pass. The raven has been chosen to lead CEAS in launching this effort. 🦅

(David loves the mountains of southwestern Alberta. He writes and photographs the land and its inhabitants from his home in the shadow of the Livingstone Range. A former study leader with the Smithsonian Institution, David has led hiking tours throughout the Canadian Rockies, and trekking tours and whitewater raft trips elsewhere in North America.)



ETCHING EXPERT MAKES ENRICHING IMPRESSION

By Andy Marshall

The pen-and-ink drawings by Medicine Hat artist Garry Newton reproduced in this edition of the *Advocate* have a sparse but fascinating quality. In many of the illustrations, taken from the book *Prairie River: A Canoe and Wildlife Viewing Guide to the South Saskatchewan River*, first published in 1997 and now to be republished, you won't find intricate feathers drawn on the birds or plant details in the landscapes. There's a lot less literal reproduction of the landscape and its inhabitants than you find with many other wildlife artists.

"I've always liked images that are somewhat off ... with a suggestion of surrealism," says the 63-year-old from his home overlooking the South Saskatchewan. "I like to be very economical with the lines. The picture is not in the details, but the overall impression."

Despite their subtleties, these illustrations hardly prepare you for the magic, the mystery, the sheer exoticism of the full range of Newton's artwork. The inspiration arises from a richly varied career, from a four-year spell with an art community on Rhodes Island in Greece four decades ago to a 13-year stint as a drawing and printmaking teacher at Medicine Hat College that ended in 1993.

A couple of hours on Newton's website (www.garrillnewton.com) and a lengthy interview give just a glimpse into this artist's broad talents and diversity of media and influences. With his own etching press and printmaking equipment, Newton has carved out a long career in various techniques of engraving, etching and intaglio printing.

Mostly self-taught in all aspects of his art, he has, in the past five or six years, immersed himself in the pursuit of marquetry – the inlaying of veneers of wood, brass or ivory to form pictures or designs on ornamental boxes. In Newton's case, he has specialized in wood, much of it coming from South America with beautiful natural patterns and evocative names like Ziricote or Cocobolo.

Many of his etching prints are on display at the Kensington Fine Art Gallery on Calgary's 17th Avenue S.W. He hopes the marquetry will soon be available at Xylos Gallery in Market Square, near the Stampede Grounds.

Although an intensive, two-week bird-watching tour of Costa Rica is the closest Newton has been to South America, that continent has had a big influence on his art. A lot of the

images – from lush trees to a sultry moon – have their origins in the books of South American writers who have enjoyed a literary ascendancy in the past few decades, he says in his thoughtful, almost halting way. "I've read quite a lot. They're very visual writers. They have some extraordinary descriptions."

Born in York, England, Newton was eight when he came with his parents in 1948 to settle in Medicine Hat, where his father was a warrant officer with the RCAF flying school. Now living with his widowed mother in the house his parents bought a few years after their arrival here, Newton's voice still has a trace of a North English accent.

Apart from several years in Europe as a young man, he's spent two years in Australia. He has also worked at the McGill University law library in Montreal and as a soil tester on Calgary construction sites. But he has called Medicine Hat his home since the late 1970s.

Cultural backwater? he's asked. "Oh, yes," comes the gentle reply. "But that's the whole province." With so many outside influences in his art, it doesn't matter where he lives, he explains. Besides, he delights in the graceful majesty of the prairies. "You can go anywhere and be gripped by something or other."

Newton's formal qualifications include a degree in zoology from the University of Alberta. But apart from his immersion in art during his time in Greece and his participation in some classes since, including a course in relief printmaking and art fundamentals at Arctic College in Coppermine, NWT in 1994, he has acquired much of his knowledge from reading books, many of which fill his crowded home.

After acquiring a new computer last year and still unfamiliar with terms like "server" or "upload," Newton embarked on what he calls the exhilarating challenge of setting up a website for his art. "Most of us know more than we

think," he says. "When you learn things by yourself, you can do them without wasting a lot of time." Whether in computer-age lingo or the secrets of soft-ground etching, he has made the necessary leaps of knowledge.

Newton's art has been displayed in galleries throughout Alberta and as far away as Norway and Spain. His list of public and corporate collections is impressive. It includes major energy companies and law firms throughout Canada.



Garry Newton



He still marvels that a print called "Melancholia," from a series on "psychological rooms," ended up at a Citibank branch in Toronto. Inexplicably, another branch of the same bank independently then chose the same print.

The upshot of this and other corporate purchases has been a career that Newton calls "intermittently financially lucrative" and "very satisfying."

Despite the colour of the moods he depicts so well, much of his work is in various shades of black and white. It's hardly a surprise, then, that he's partially colour-blind.

One stunning series of prints, assembled into what he calls his "Album Casares," derived from random shapes he saw on the backs of old etching plates. In his hands, they became a burning biplane, a woman tossing flowers by a decaying tombstone, and a military officer wearing an eye patch. Newton wrote short stories to accompany the prints, some of them remarkably inventive and dramatic.

This all seems quite incongruous with his life in Medicine Hat, where he perfects his marquetry techniques, reads Proust and Shakespeare, or tends to his large garden. As with the prairie he loves so passionately, a quick first glance reveals little of what's really going on beneath the surface. 🍁



ASSOCIATION NEWS

BIGHORN WILDLAND IN PRINT

Nestled along the central east slopes is 4,000 km² of spectacular wilderness. Find out more about one of the last great pristine wildernesses in Alberta, the Bighorn Wildland, in this latest book from AWA.



Attend the **Book Tour** by joining editor and author Vivian Pharis at one of the following venues. Vivian will read selections from the book and introduce you to the wonders of the Bighorn Wildland.

- Filled with spectacular photographs, excellent maps, personal reflections and natural history of the majesty of this beautiful area.
- An excellent introduction for those seeking a wilderness experience.
- Written by highly-regarded experts with first-hand knowledge of the area; their personal experiences in the Bighorn make this book easy to read.
- A valuable reference for years to come.

AWA is grateful for support from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Aurum Lodge, Mountain Equipment Coop Edmonton, Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation and individual donors who have made this vision become a reality.

For more information on the book tour, or to obtain copies of the book, please contact Nigel Douglas, (403) 283-2025; awa@shaw.ca. Paperback, full colour, \$29.95 (\$7 shipping and handling).

BOOK TOUR

Wednesday, September 24, 2003, 7:30 pm
Audrey's Books, 10702 Jasper Ave., **Edmonton**

Thursday, September 25, 2003, 4:00 pm
Westlands Books, 118 - 2 Ave. West, **Cochrane**

Tuesday, September 30, 2003, 7:00 pm
Second Story Books, 713 Main St., **Canmore**

Wednesday, October 1, 2003, 6:00 pm
Buddy's Bookshoppe, **Rocky Mountain House**

Tuesday, October 7, 2003, 7:00 pm
AWA, 455 - 12th St. NW, **Calgary**

Thursday, October 9, 2003, 7:00 pm
Kerrywood Nature Centre, **Red Deer**



TAMAINI SNAITH SAYS GOODBYE

I have truly enjoyed my time at AWA. My job here has always been challenging, interesting and enjoyable. I learned so much working at AWA and I hope that I was able to contribute to the growth and success of the organization in some way. It is difficult to leave, but wherever I go, I will always remain committed to conservation. AWA is an amazing organization, with wonderfully dedicated and kind staff, board and volunteers. Thanks to everyone for making my time here so fantastic.



AWA board and staff extend their sincere appreciation to Tamaini for her hard work and dedication in promoting wilderness conservation in Alberta. Tamaini is pursuing her doctoral studies at Harvard.

CONGRATULATIONS



Cliff Wallis received the prestigious Douglas H. Pimlott Award from the Canadian Nature Federation for environmental research and consulting. Cliff runs an environmental consulting business, Cottonwood Consultants, and is also AWA's president. Martha Kostuch was also presented with a 2003 Pimlott Award for her efforts in ecological conservation.

ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH: BE A WILDERNESS STEWARD

Alberta Wilderness Watch is about environmental stewardship – respecting nature, striving to understand it and accepting responsibility for the health of wilderness. Wilderness Stewards help monitor and protect our wilderness.

- **Volunteer Stewardship**

Become a Volunteer Steward for Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve on the southern tip of Kananaskis Country or the Beehive Natural Area in the headwaters of the Oldman River.

- **Wilderness Reporting**

Be an AWA Wilderness Reporter and keep an eye on one of the "Wild Spaces" on AWA's Wild Alberta map.

- **Trail Maintenance**

Help maintain the 80-km Historic Bighorn Trail. A 10-day summer maintenance trip keeps the trail accessible and clear for hikers and equestrian trail-riders.

- **Trail Monitoring**

Learn about trail use and abuse and help monitor conditions on specific trails.

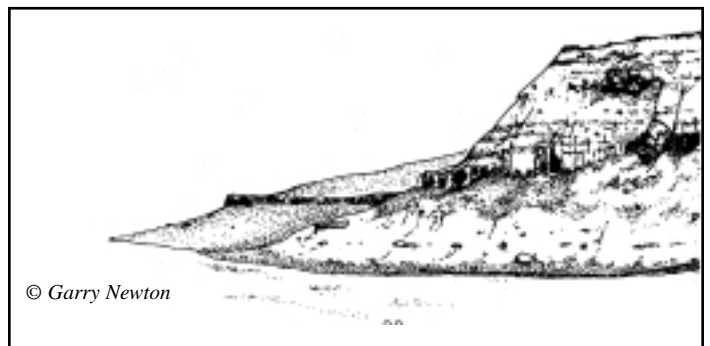
- **Rare Plant Surveys**

Learn about rare plants in Alberta and participate in rare plant surveys in the Castle Wilderness area.

- **Wilderness Network (WiN)**

Become a member of the WiN team and participate in wilderness protection with a minimum of time and energy! Get action alerts, updates and tips on how to participate in decision-making processes. We make it easy to write, phone, email or fax decision-makers about wilderness issues. <http://www.albertawilderness.ca/AWRC/WiN.htm>

For more information on *Alberta Wilderness Watch* opportunities or to become a Steward, please contact Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator by phone at 283-2025, toll free at 1-866-313-0717, or by email: awa@shaw.ca.



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OPEN HOUSE HIKES PROGRAM

Saturday, August 23
Beehive Natural Area
With *James Tweedie*

Saturday, September 6
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 our Events page at
www.AlbertaWilderness.ca.
To register for hikes, please call (403) 283-2025.

OPEN HOUSE TALKS PROGRAM

Calgary

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

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5.00 per person

Contact: (403) 283-2025 for reservations

Pre-registration is advised for all talks

Tuesday, September 23, 2003
Endangered Species Law in Alberta
With *James Mallet*, Environmental Law Centre

Tuesday, October 4, 2003
The Bighorn Wildland
A presentation of the spectacular new
Bighorn Wildland book with *Vivian Pharis*

Tuesday, November 4, 2003
**Bears, trains and automobiles:
The future of Alberta's grizzlies**
With *Tracey Henderson*, Grizzly Bear Alliance

Tuesday, November 18, 2003
Trumpeter swans: Their future in Alberta
With *Marian White*

Tuesday, December 2, 2003
Lynxes in Alberta
With *Clayton Apps*

WILDERNESS CELEBRATION AUTUMN 2003

Alberta Wilderness Association invites you to
Celebrate Wild Alberta
15th Annual Fundraising Dinner and Auction

Join us for this great evening!

Live rhythm and blues of Blue Rhino
Fine Drink - Great Food - Fabulous Entertainment
Exciting Auctions and Unique Raffles



Saturday, October 18, 2003

6:30 pm

Glenmore Inn, Calgary

\$75 per person

Call for tickets: (403) 283-2025

Order tickets online: www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

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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,



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
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	



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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 1st 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

Alberta Wilderness and Wildlife Trust Annual Lecture and Awards 2003

CREATING HABITAT FOR GRIZZLIES BY LEARNING TO LIVE WITH THEM

with Charlie Russell

Date:
Friday, November 21, 2003

Location:
The Hillhurst Room, AWA Office,
455-12 St. NW, Calgary

Time:
Reception at 6:00 pm,
Awards and Lecture at 7:00 pm

Cost:
\$25.00

For Reservations:
(403) 283-2025 or awa@shaw.ca

Seating is limited.



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