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FOCUS SHARPENS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL, SPIRITUAL VALUES OF WILDERNESS

By Andy Marshall

The ancient understanding of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being from human contact with natural wilderness blossoms again, giving conservationists a potentially powerful impetus in their quest for more protected land.

Among the varied colours and shapes of this understanding is a concept called ecopsychology, which is gaining respectability in some academic circles but still relatively little known.

INSIDE

The word *ecopsychology* was coined by California State University professor Theodore Roszak in his 1992 book *The Voice of the Earth*, which examines our alienation from the natural world and how we can reconnect with it. The field of ecopsychology considers many aspects of the human/nature relationship.

The word popped up more than a decade later in the cause of conservation. "Ecopsychology can ... inform and inspire environmental activism," states British Columbia clinical psychologist and psychology professor John Scull in an article on reconnecting with nature in a recent edition of the Canadian magazine *Encompass*. While views in the article do not necessarily reflect the official government position, funding for it was provided by Environment Canada and Health Canada, giving it some status.

"Wildland resources are central to the quality of American life. Policy makers have a responsibility to assert that importance when priorities are assigned for allocation of public funds," concludes Richard Knopf in the U.S. publication *Western Wildlands*.

University of Alberta renewable resources professor Jim Butler takes matters further in his call on environmentalists to better acknowledge the transcendental spiritual, or even religious, experiences from their contact with the wilderness.

"There is another aspect of spirituality that I feel is important

D. Wales

for the environmental movement, and that is the transformation of the environmental battle onto a moral plane, a recognition of the spiritual and sacred nature of the earth," he writes in another *Encompass* edition.

In other words, the science that conservationists have relied on to make their case is not enough. "Science is an asset," he says, "but it cannot reverse the current dominant and destructive mindset of unlimited economic growth. Changes to central authority require calling on a higher divine authority."

Former Calgarian and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society vice-president Harvey Locke urged in a speech four years ago: "We must take active steps to engage with all communities of faith and all spiritually oriented people if we are to succeed in our quest to save nature."

Yet, as increasing numbers embrace the notion of tapping into the healing gifts of our unspoiled landscapes and influencing public policy to reflect that view, some conservationists suggest that proponents soft-pedal their approach or expect a less-than-enthusiastic response from tough-talking Policy makers and the more hard-nosed among the population.

"The concept is valid, but difficult to explain to the public and particularly to politicians who don't want any of this airy-fairiness," warns Alberta Wilderness Association Director Vivian Pharis.

"Humans, at least some of them, have certain innate needs for personal adventure and solitude and to experience green spaces uncluttered with human activity," she adds, "and I would love to see more discussion about this and have it taken seriously."

In Alberta, however, the debate over wilderness protection, says Pharis, is usually limited to biological diversity, human recreation needs and aesthetic values. The latter invariably involves the landscape's ability to attract tourists and boost economic values, she notes.

"Out of necessity, we have to talk economics and science. It's the language our politicians speak," she explains. "You have to make the utilitarian case. Otherwise, it's not taken seriously."

Former AWA president Peter Sherrington has long advocated a blending of the search for scientific knowledge with what he calls the wonder and awe of nature as the basis for wilderness preservation. "Science alone is engineering. Wonder alone is vapid," he says.

In fact, he sets out three criteria for wilderness advocacy. The first is practical – we need large, untouched areas simply to expand our knowledge of how ecosystems work. Secondly, there is an ethical reason – ecosystems have a right to exist, and humans don't have an unbridled right to "make a buck" out of them.

Then, thirdly, there is the psychological element of humans needing to know they cannot and should not attempt to control their natural surroundings. "We have this hubristic, simplistic view we can control everything," Sherrington says. "It is important that wilderness is there and that it functions without human beings ... there is something out there bigger than us."

He believes environmentalists may now be ready to discuss the spiritual or even Christian values attributed to the wilderness, as Butler suggests. "We were part of the wilderness for most of our existence as a species," he says. In that vein, he sees the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, as told in Genesis, as nostalgia over humankind's separation from nature. "If you want to talk of psychological schism, that is it."

Wilderness covers a spectrum of definitions, but the true wilderness experience properly involves discomfort and uncertainty, he adds.

Long-time environmental activist Dorothy Dickson adopts a practical tack, preferring to talk about the sense of renewal humans derive from nature, rather than associate spirituality or religion with it. "One of the wonders of being human is our ability to appreciate the beauty and intricacies of nature."

She doubts, though, whether even that value would have an effect on politicians. Other than citing direct health benefits, it cannot be defined in the monetary terms they seem to need to make decisions.

Butler's approach she finds "a bit over the top ... I don't think he's representative of many naturalists," she says. They'd be more inclined to pull back from such expressions of transcendental fervour.

Perhaps significantly, the AWA definition of wilderness does not refer to the human dimensions or the approach espoused by

ecopsychology. "Wilderness exists where large areas are characterized by the dominance of natural processes, the presence of the full complement of plant and animal communities characteristic of the region, and the absence of human constraints on nature," it says. In other words, the focus is on the intrinsic values, not our relationship with it.

Banff conservationist and long-time AWA member Mike McIvor points out that AWA tended to talk about wildland natural areas, rather than wilderness, during its initial years in the 1960s and 1970s. This reflected the early priorities of members, interested in recreation. Wilderness was a place where you went backpacking, hunting or fishing.

"This sort of thing [the human/nature relationship] was probably important to them, but it was not articulated," says McIvor.

Over time, members' interests became more clearly directed at the ecological benefits. "Wilderness was the place where we granted some freedom to natural processes, where evolution could proceed on its own timetable," he adds.

"As a result, I'm convinced those of us in the conservation movement have actually forgotten how to argue for the experience of wilderness... and its vital importance as a contributor to human health."

While further discussions of these more personal values is desirable, McIvor says it brings inherent dangers. Denigrating a mountain-biker for enjoying the pleasure of an adventurous ride through challenging terrain and suggesting that is a lesser experience than inward reflection is one such danger.

McIvor also suggests that a clearer articulation of the human benefits would prompt Policy makers to want to quantify those benefits. And, if that were possible, wilderness could become a popular place to go "because it's good for you." Then, he asks: "What do we do if we see wilderness overrun by people? Where do we draw the line?"

Neil R. Scott asks a very similar question in an article reprinted in the AWA newsletter 26 years ago: "What is the carrying capacity of wilderness beyond which the social impact of humans reduces the probable occurrence of the desired state?"

McIvor takes the view others have expressed regarding the spectrum of landscapes in which humans can derive these benefits. Experienced conservationists may balk at calling places like Banff National Park or Kananaskis Country wilderness. But for many urban people, a hike close to a transportation corridor may be their most extreme wilderness experience. As a result, says McIvor, "we must preserve the front country as a good experience as much as we can."

Federal and provincial government policies hedge at best on these more esoteric ideas of the psychological benefits of wilderness. Environment Canada and Parks Canada refer in their literature to "stunning beauty" or "incredible diversity" or "uniquely Canadian landscapes." There is frequent talk of protecting "ecological integrity for future generations." But that's as far as it goes.

Alberta has a similar focus. Here's Premier Ralph Klein on wilderness: "Our destination is a province with the most pristine environment in North America. We cherish the natural blessings of this province. People flock from all over the world to our province because of its natural beauty." Some may argue with the assessment. It certainly seems to place a priority on tourism – that is, economic activity.

Preservation of natural ecologies, recreation, tourism and heritage appreciation are the four goals for protecting land under Alberta Community Development. A spokeswoman for the Minister, Gene Zwosdesky, says heritage appreciation may be a different way of describing the psychological and other personal benefits coming from contact with wilderness.

"I know that's the mentality of our parks staff," says Cheryl Robb. "It is one of our visions of how we see parks and protected areas used."

The U.S. Wilderness Act does not include any reference to the psychological benefits of a non-human environment, says Garrett Duncan of Humboldt State University, California, in a recent Masters thesis found on the Internet. "If it did, it would give psychologists and environmentalists a powerful new tool."

A presentation called "Hope in the Wilderness" by Jungian analyst Mae Stolte at a recent Calgary meeting of the C.G. Jung Society of Alberta offers evidence, though, that these ideas are being discussed in ever-widening circles.

"I don't label myself a conservationist," she says in an interview. She was also unfamiliar with the term ecopsychology. But "I hope we're all interested in conserving and paying attention to the resources we're using.... The purpose of my lecture was to increase awareness of our relationship with wilderness and nature for our psychic growth."

No other continent has wilderness disappearing so quickly as North America, she said in her presentation. She went on to point out Canada's particular responsibilities – with 20 per cent of the world's wilderness, 25 per cent of its wetlands, 20 per cent of its fresh water and 10 per cent of its forests, according to World Wildlife Fund estimates.

The wilderness may seem chaotic and frightening, the Calgary woman explained. But immersed in it, humans are forced to consider what the purpose of their life is. "Wilderness is so much bigger than ourselves, so unknowable and beyond our control....

We're faced with the limits of our ego."

From the perspective of Jungian analysis, our growth as humans can only occur through the death of our ego and acceptance of our self (or higher self as Jungians sometimes call it). Stolte later said: "Wilderness is a place where we meet the transcendent."

She alluded, though, to Jung's contention made 75 years ago that humans have succeeded not only in conquering the wild nature around us, but in subduing our own wildness. "Through civilization, we've come to see wilderness as matter there for our use," she explains.

A final perspective on this issue goes to a U.S. Department of Forestry paper called "Examining Emotional and Symbolic Attachment to Place." Noting the challenge of capturing the full range of meanings associated with wildland places, it points to the anomaly of wilderness planning emphasizing economic and ecological values, while ignoring the value of wildlands to the human psyche.

Indeed, a report by the forest service pf the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The Use of Wilderness for Personal Growth, Therapy and Education," outlines the work being done to quantify in detail people's experiences of wilderness. For example, very specific studies have measured emotional, physiological or mental well-being in response to different environments, say the authors.

The Department of Forestry conclusion could serve as an inspiration for Alberta's push for preservation: "Resource managers are just beginning to recognize the importance and impact of the emotional, symbolic, and even spiritual value of wildlands in multiple-use planning and management.... The place perspective reminds managers of what the commodity approach can only hint at: why people care so passionately about the management of a particular resource."

Long may the passion continue, say conservationists.

ECOPSYCHOLOGY DEFINITION

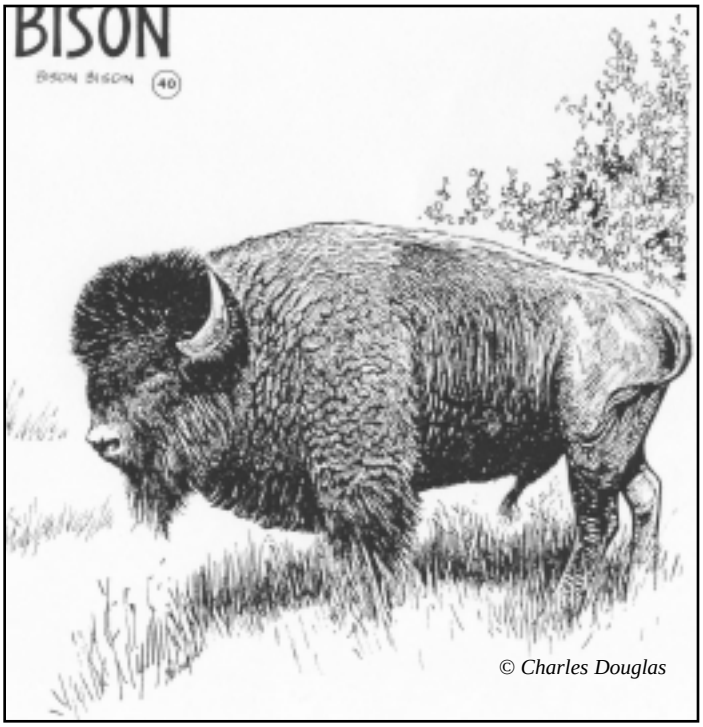
Ecopsychology is situated at the intersection of a number of fields of enquiry, including environmental, philosophical, psychological and ecological, but is not limited by any disciplinary boundaries. At its core, ecopsychology suggests there is a synergistic relation between planetary and personal well-being, that the needs of one are relevant to the other.

The International Community for Ecopsychology is an informal, international, interdisciplinary virtual community devoted to reflecting on the questions that arise from an ecopsychological viewpoint.

Ecopsychology is a new field that is developing in recognition that human health cannot be separated from the health of the whole and must include mutually enhancing relationships between humans and the non-human world ... to learn to see the needs of the person and the needs of the planet as interrelated and interdependent.

Ecopsychology suggests that the violence we do to ourselves and to the natural world results from our psychological and spiritual separation from nature.

Source: International Community for Ecopsychology Web site.



A COWS AND FISH STORY
CHANGING THE WORLD ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

By Lorne Fitch

It's a bright blue, warm spring day in early June. Not warm enough for swimming but deliciously hot after a spell of grey, rainy days. Forty grim-faced people are squeezed into a community hall to talk about the state of their lake. Comments ricochet around the room: "It's like living in a garbage dump"; "I used to swim here as a child, but wouldn't chance it now"; "It's a long walk to the water"; and "The lake stinks."

The realization of all the incremental and insidious changes of the past decades now cascades upon them. They recoil at the unfairness of it: that they are stuck in a community hall faced with these changes instead of being out, enjoying their little piece of paradise. "We've got to fix it"; "We want our children to play here"; and the equally telling comment "The value of my property is dropping" embody the frantic feelings of the crowd.

In the transition to awareness, we're still a ways from an understanding that this is no small repair job; this is a circumstance that won't be turned around tomorrow. "We just want it back to the pretty little spot it was." That may be wishful thinking, given the rapid escalation in the ageing process of the lake, exacerbated by shoreline development and nutrients delivered from the watershed.

It may well be that the lake never was the "pretty little spot," given the tendency of most central Alberta lakes to be eutrophic, or high in nutrients, naturally. The lens we view the world through has many coloured filters and prisms to reflect the reality we want to remember, not what actually existed. Their lake was probably always subject to some algae blooms. An old-timer in the group quietly confirms this with me, privately, away from the ears of the non-believers. His observations are that the magnitude of problems has grown with lakeshore development.

Others would like to reach into their blame holsters and, like the gunfighters of old, point their .45-calibre fingers at someone else. Because we, from the Cows and Fish program, are there, plus some farmers from the watershed, there is a heated exchange over who did what to whom and when. It is a natural human tendency to simplify the accountability and to deflect responsibility to others. This group will take a while to realize that the ownership of the issues includes all of them. They're still at the lashing and lunging stage with one another.

They listen politely, albeit impatiently, to the words and images of Riparian 101. This description of the ecological functions of their lake begins to help them unravel some of the mystery of the watershed, lakeshore and landscape under their tenure. Not all are instant believers, but it sets up a bit of uncertainty, which can only be assuaged through more information.

Cows and Fish never sets out to educate people about their watershed in one blinding flash of knowledge. Rather, it is a process of building, over time, a cumulative body of knowledge that creates within individuals and the community the capacity to make better or more appropriate decisions. The world we live in is a complex one, but some elemental knowledge is required to allow us to fit into it in a way that doesn't preclude options for the future.

Some in the audience are confronted with some cause and effect relationships they obviously weren't aware of before. Many become pensive and their previous complaints of lake problems and of the suspected guilty parties come into sharp focus. It is a bit of an epiphany when they begin to realize none of us see the world through the same lens and we communicate imperfectly about what we do see and how we value it.

A field trip with Cows and Fish.

Out of the silence comes the voice of one individual who declares that her contribution to lake restoration will be the installation of a new septic system for her cottage. She's realized that an already overloaded lake cannot stand any more nutrients. This is where a community response always begins, with one individual taking responsibility. It will take much more time, many more discussions and information sessions, before the community starts to work together to craft solutions. But they are on the way.

In a similar hall, miles south, with a different audience, a group of ranchers are beginning to comprehend the mystery of streams and the green zones beside them. The archival photographs, some dating back a hundred years, contrast sharply with today's image of the same piece of riparian landscape. The changes are often dramatic and indicate a suffering length of stream compared to what it was once. It is a sobering moment for those who thought the landscape has never changed, or that the changes have been benign under their tenure. For some, the information provides a vision for what these streams and riparian areas could be again, with some shifts in grazing management.

However, no matter how hard we try to craft our awareness messages to be non-threatening and non-controversial, we cannot avoid touching some individuals in a sensitive spot. One rancher, uniformed in Wranglers set off with a large silver belt buckle, feels singled out and explodes: "This is B.S." He doesn't use the

acronym, but paints his frustration with colourful language and a noisy exit. An embarrassed quiet falls on the crowd – not the attention-getting device we would have wished for to improve their listening.

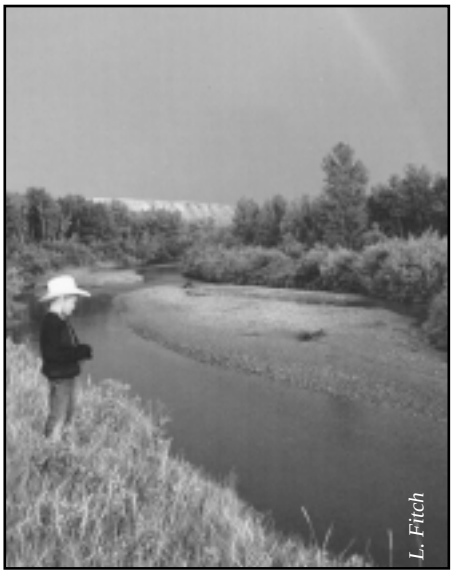
Never saying "whoa" in a tight spot, the presentation picks up again and finishes to polite applause. The unprogrammed interruption seems to have enhanced retention and motivated a sense of action, for we are invited back within a year. This time we are helping the community divine the intricacies of riparian health evaluation.

Riparian health evaluation is an ecological measuring stick that points out the key pieces of the riparian area, provides a standard system for evaluating a riparian area, and then rolls it up into a category relating to the ability of the site to perform some vital ecological functions. It's really an "eye tuning" exercise to allow people to "see" the riparian landscape through the same set of eyes. A common language is created and instead of arguing over what we perceive from our own perspectives, interests and backgrounds, we can view the current state of the riparian area.

A typical riparian area.

If the riparian area is "broken" we can appreciate that status and start a discussion on how to "fix" it. With so much energy often expended on arguments over our differing visions, this short-circuits the emotion and concentrates on what is in the realm of the possible for positive change.

In that crowd of ranchers on the side of the stream, each clutching a little green workbook on riparian health assessment, was that bright, shiny hubcap of a belt buckle attached to the rancher whom we had last seen a year ago beating a hasty exit from the hall. He was quiet throughout the day-long training exercise. We were on pins and needles waiting for the next outburst. It never came. At the end of the day he pulled one of us aside and said he had spent a long time (almost a year) thinking about the information we had provided. His observations, tuned a bit with our insight, had led to him conclude that changes had happened on his ranch, changes he was concerned about.



Conserving riparian areas for all generations.

Over the next few months, working with that community, he stepped up to the plate and began to implement several grazing management changes to deal with some riparian health issues. Some of those changes involved fencing to temporarily exclude livestock in order to allow regeneration of balsam poplars and willow, which he realized was a valuable shelter component, useful for livestock in winter and for spring calving. He had also seen the destructive portion of the 1995 flood and knew he had to get more of nature's glue and rebar growing on his stream banks.

Most of the changes, however, were related to changing the timing of riparian grazing and setting a more conservative stocking rate, both equally useful riparian management techniques. Ironically, a good deal of what we have learned and pass on to others about successful riparian management has been gleaned from ranchers who are ahead of the curve. They provide us with the evidence of how to do it right. Amongst many lessons, we have learned it is not about applying, in rigid fashion, a cookbook prescription. What is more appropriate and accepted is explaining the principles of ecosystems and of management and then allowing people to craft a solution that meets the particular needs of their landscape and operation.

These two groups, a set of cottage owners on an ageing lake and a herd of ranchers on a small foothills stream, seem poles apart geographically, socially and economically. Yet there are some remarkable similarities. They represent a new phenomenon (or a reborn one) in Alberta. These are people starting to take charge of their landscape, not waiting for governments to do something. They are rebuilding not just the health of their landscapes but also the sense of their communities. The realization has struck that riparian health is an issue we all face.

Based on evaluations that Cows and Fish has done over several years throughout the settled portion of Alberta, we face some sobering statistics. Only 11 per cent of the riparian areas inventoried are deemed "healthy," providing us with the full suite of ecological functions from which all benefits, products and services flow. A total of 49 per cent are "healthy, with problems," where the signs of stress are apparent. In 40 per cent of the cases, most ecological functions are severely impaired or lost; these are "unhealthy" reaches of shoreline or stream bank. These results go well beyond what could be expected in the natural variation of riparian health. This affects water quality, biodiversity and agricultural sustainability, things that touch all of us.

It's a huge job to turn this sinking riparian elephant around, but it must be done. Regardless of our backgrounds, interests or politics, we all depend on the 2 to 5 per cent of the landscape called riparian. In the work of the Cows and Fish program, usually at the community level, we are told "we need to do it ourselves, but we need help." Our role is to help communities figure out how

to “eat the elephant” of issues facing them. It begins with one bite.

The first bite is awareness, giving people some elemental understanding of the landscape they live on and make a living from. Awareness is the foundation that leads to a cumulative body of knowledge, not only about the landscape but also who to work with, what tools are available and how to monitor changes. Embodied in our pathway are elements of responsibility, authority, ownership and motivation. Cows and Fish doesn’t "do" things for people; rather we create the opportunity for people to do things for themselves. One farmer summed up the program this way: "Many organizations give us lots to think about, but Cows and Fish gives us something to think with."

Many of our riparian landscapes have been quietly deteriorating for many decades; we won’t turn this around quickly. What we have seen in over a decade of applying the Cows and Fish program throughout Alberta is a growing realization and a sense of action. Measuring that social change isn’t as easy as applying some measuring stick to the landscape but is equally important if we are to see change persist. Acknowledging our mistakes represents a fundamental shift in thinking; ensuring we don’t repeat them is the potential legacy of the Cows and Fish program.

(Lorne Fitch is a provincial riparian specialist with the Cows and Fish program. Visit their website at ww.cowsandfish.org.)

ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP ALBERTA’S GRIZZLIES?

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

The long-awaited technical report on the status of grizzly bears in the province has finally been produced, and it paints a pretty gloomy picture. Where we had previously been led to believe that grizzly numbers on provincial lands were "stable," or even improving, with a population of 1,000 bears, the new report estimates just 500 grizzly bears (along with 185 in the National Parks). Even this figure, which is based on landscape data from 1988, is likely to be an overestimate, particularly bearing in mind the damage to grizzly habitat in the last 15 years. The report, rather euphemistically titled *Report on Alberta Grizzly Bear Assessment and Allocation*, has not been released to the public but can be viewed on AWA’s Web site under Issues/Wildlife.

Grizzly Bear.

To put these numbers into context, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) recommends that a minimum of 1,000 breeding individuals is required to maintain a long-term stable population. Some people estimate that the breeding population in Alberta may now be as low as 300 individuals.

So what is to be done? Clearly the first step is to halt the spring hunt of grizzlies. Despite the reduction in licences for the spring 2003 grizzly hunt to 101, eighteen grizzlies were killed as part of the regulated legal hunt, the second highest total in the previous ten years. While AWA is not opposed to hunting per se, we strongly object to the continuation of this particular hunt because it is clearly not sustainable. There are plenty of hunters in the province who would agree. Suspending the hunt is the most expedient action that can be taken to reduce overall mortality rates while the recovery plan actions are implemented.

But even an immediate halt to the grizzly hunt would not be enough. By far the biggest factor contributing to the decline in grizzly numbers is habitat fragmentation, caused by increased human access to grizzly habitat. Industrial roads allow improved access for hunters, both legal and illegal and contribute to increased disturbance and displacement. Bears that are continually disturbed become more stressed and feed less efficiently, which means that they are less likely to build up sufficient fat reserves to last through the winter and are likely to produce less young in the future. "Productivity" of grizzlies on Alberta’s Eastern Slopes (which takes into account the number of young produced per litter, and the interval between litters) is the lowest in North America.

So if we are to maintain grizzly populations in Alberta, we need to reduce road density. Unfortunately, the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team seems to be moving away from the idea of reducing road "density" in favour of reducing road "lethality" (i.e., "Roads don’t kill grizzlies; road-users do"). The Team was established by Mike Cardinal, Minister of "Sustainable" Resource Development, in response to the recommendation by the Endangered Species Subcommittee (ESSC) that the grizzly bear be reclassified as a "threatened" species.

While reducing road lethality is a worthy objective, experience from other jurisdictions suggests that this approach by itself has never been proved to be successful. Physically closing roads to OHV riders and determined trespassers is well nigh impossible, and efforts to enforce prohibition in the backcountry have had little effect. This is a huge concern, as there is a desperate need to reduce (and not just maintain) the huge network of industrial roads running throughout the Eastern Slopes.

The Team also appears reluctant to incorporate protection of grizzly habitat into the recovery plan. "Special Management Zones" are being discussed as a tool to manage human activity in core habitat, but some team members appear to view these as "business as usual" areas where practices would only change marginally. There is clearly an urgent need to set aside large key areas of habitat, such as the Bighorn Wildland or the Castle Wilderness, where management for grizzlies is a higher priority than oil and gas development. Outside these core areas, there are plenty of ways in which oil and gas operations can be run to minimize impact for animals such as grizzlies, but currently there is no reason for companies to do so. Leadership clearly needs to come from the government.

Most people, if you asked them, would say that it is important to keep grizzlies in Alberta. They are the ultimate symbol of wilderness and even if we do not see them, it is important to know that they are there. But would they be willing to pay an extra five cents a litre on fuel? Or an extra $100 a year on their taxes to help ensure that grizzly habitat is managed more sustainably? As a society, we need to decide what our priorities are. Do we want an Alberta in twenty years' time that maintains its bulging economy but has no grizzly bears? If we don't change our attitudes soon, this is exactly what we will have.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit the Grizzly Bear Alliance Web site at www.bowvalleybears.org or www.AlbertaWilderness.ca for additional articles on bears in Alberta.

GRIZZLY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Estimated population in Alberta: 500 on provincial land;185 in the National Parks. These figures are based on 1988 landscape data, and so are likely to be overestimated.
- Estimated population in Alberta in the 1800s: 6,000.
- There are an estimated 250 to 350 "mature breeding individuals." This compares with a recommended minimum of 1,000 to maintain a stable, healthy population (IUCN).
- Between 1972 and 1996, there were 838 recorded human-caused grizzly bear deaths.
- 26 recorded grizzly deaths in Alberta in the first half of 2003 (4% of the population). Grizzly mortality is usually highest in September, October and November.
- 101 grizzly hunting licences issued in 2003.
- 18 legal hunting kills in the first half of 2003.
- Fall 2002 – The Alberta government's Endangered Species Subcommittee recommends the grizzly should be designated a "threatened species." For the first time, the government has refused to act upon this recommendation.
- Fall 2002 – Grizzly Bear Recovery Team (GBRT) established. For threatened species, recovery teams usually have two years to draw up a recovery plan. GBRT is given one year.
- In a recent poll of visitors to Banff National Park, 75% of respondents said it was "morally wrong" to kill grizzly bears "in most circumstances," and 61% believe grizzly bear hunting should be stopped. Only 15% would visit a park without grizzlies.
- A recent report by the Raincoast Conservation Society and the Centre for Integral Economics examining both the ecotourist and hunting industries concludes that bears in British Columbia are worth almost twice as much alive – $6.1 million annually – as dead.

POACHING PENALTIES INCREASED

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

In November 2003, the Wildlife Amendment Act was introduced in the Alberta Legislature by Ivan Strang, MLA for West Yellowhead.

Highlights of the proposed act include the following:

- an increase in penalties to help deter poaching (e.g., the maximum fine for a number of offences, including poaching grizzly bears, will be as high as $100,000);
- authority to seize and retain equipment used by poachers;
- capacity to cooperate with other jurisdictions to see that those convicted of serious wildlife violations elsewhere won't be able to get a hunting licence in Alberta, and vice versa;
- authority to issue clean-up orders for situations where people leave out food or garbage that might attract wildlife –- to help reduce wildlife-human conflicts.

While AWA welcomes any attempts to penalize poachers and to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, this new Act has to be taken in the context of a long-term reduction in resources (both manpower and money) for enforcement officers in the province. Quite simply, we have severely compromised our ability to catch poachers. So while it is a good idea to double the fines for people poaching grizzly bears, if you don't have the staff out there to catch them…well, double nothing is nothing!

There is also an urgent need to make sure that the message to get tough on poachers filters its way through to the courts. It is all very well to increase the maximum fines, but if the judges in the courts are not imposing maximum fines anyway, then the effects will be minimal. The Wildlife Amendment Act has some good measures in principle, but for it to be effective, there needs to be the will and the financing to make these measures work.

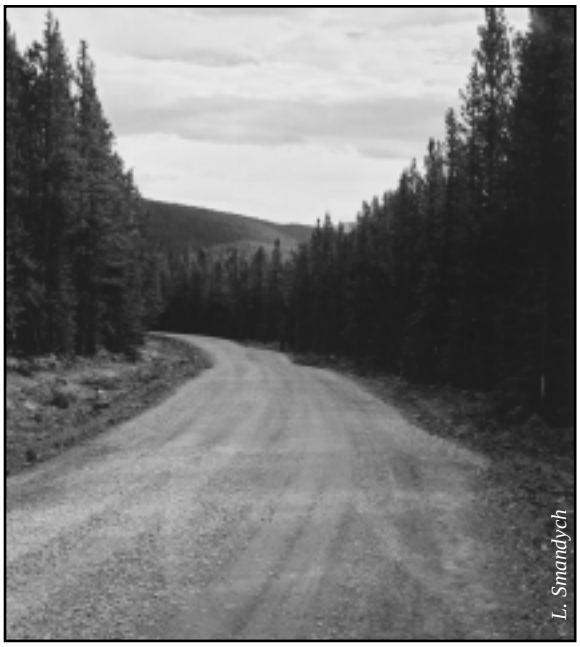
(Report A Poacher: 1-800-642-3800 Alberta Conservation Association.)

ILLEGAL RECREATIONAL USE THREATENING THE BIGHORN

By Lara Smandych, AWA Conservation Biologist

It is now officially official!! Although September was thought to be the last 2003 date of AWA's Bighorn Recreation Use and Impact Monitoring project, the October weather agreed with us and I, along with two fearless volunteers, set off to the Bighorn once again! The October trip allowed us to obtain the last of the information needed to complete our first year monitoring database. Data from the TRAFx counters were downloaded and their batteries changed for the season. We are optimistic that the TRAFx will continue to count OHVs and snowmobiles over the winter months and that this data will be available to us in the spring.

Ruts caused by OHV traffic.



New country road at the trailhead to Onion Lake.

The results of this first season are in the process of being analyzed. The final report will be completed in January. These results will be presented to the appropriate authorities in anticipation of bringing change in management and ultimately protection for the Bighorn.

Preliminary results show that visible and measurable damage of trails from various forms of recreation activity, primarily off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and horse use, are occurring. A large number of the trails have exhibited severe structural and vegetation damage. By definition, severe includes the presence of deep ruts, the complete removal of vegetation, tree root exposure and widened trails.

Rocks placed at the entrance to Onion Lake Trail.

Illegal use in the form of off-trail use, out of season use, and illegal recreation type (on-highway vehicles such as trucks) has been documented in the study area. It is evident that insufficient signage in terms of their number, location, size and clarity of message is contributing to this illegal use. Data downloaded from the TRAFx counters help substantiate these claims. Preliminary results are showing that illegal out of season and off-trail OHV use has occurred. Of all the OHV use recorded every month, approximately half occurs on legally designated trails and half on illegal or non-designated trails. These results may imply that the current management of the area under the Forest Land Use Zones (FLUZ) is not achieving the desired result.

October in the Bighorn has also brought about changes to the area. The once rather crude dirt road leading to the head of the Onion Lake Trail was improved. The new road, or "highway" as I call it, constructed by the Clearwater County, is now composed of rock/shale material, it has been widened, and trees on the shoulder have been removed. Although the existing road was highly degraded and in need of maintenance, AWA is concerned that such dramatic improvements will facilitate and encourage more illegal access into the area.

In attempting to curb illegal use in the area, however, Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), has placed piles of small boulders on either side of the Onion Lake trailhead. It is hoped that such attempts will deter illegal access into the area, but next year's monitoring trips will reveal how effective they have been.

POSSIBILITIES FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT OPEN IN CHINCHAGA

By Shirley Bray, *WLA* Editor

The Alberta government has decided to rule out permanent timber allocation within a 350,000-hectare area, identified as the P-8 forest management unit, just north of the Chinchaga Wildland Provincial Park. A government team will be established for the P-8 area in early 2004 to begin the process for developing a management strategy. Public consultation will be part of the process. This decision was announced as part of the Department's commitment to allocate the unallocated timber in northern Alberta.

Cliff Wallis, AWA past-president, thinks reducing forestry is a good first step. "We have continuing concerns, however, over the current lack of an integrated approach to oil and gas development and other land uses, including recreational activities." AWA would also like to see the area expanded onto Halverson Ridge to the east, with its tremendous stands of old growth forest and great habitat for a diversity of plants and animals.

Jonathan Wright, a wildlife biologist who knows the area intimately, agrees and says the overall timber values in the chosen area are poor anyway. However, he thinks it is a major step "to recognize that there are limits to how many interests an area can sustainably serve." Deciding which activities to exclude would have to be based on the concept of which activities give the most value to the most people at the least cost to the environment.

Wright's colleague, Jessica Ernst, says Chinchaga is largely an oil and gas resource extraction area. "Limiting forestry industry in the Chinchaga area provides some mitigation to cumulative effects."

In a recent press release, Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) Minister Mike Cardinal said, "We can now place a greater emphasis on the environmental features of the area while ensuring a balanced approach to the continued oil and gas activity. The government has recognized some of the values and priorities in this area, including watershed management, caribou recovery and grizzly bear management – and we will be able to build on our ongoing efforts here. We are committed to ensuring balanced social, environmental and economic benefits for this area."

Both Wright and Wallis are concerned about the cumulative effects of different land uses on caribou and carnivores such as wolverine, lynx, fisher and otter. Wallis believes that while it is possible to develop oil and gas in a more environmentally benign manner, AWA still has serious concerns related to its wide distribution and impact over large areas as well as the lack of integrated planning of all land uses. "AWA will be working to ensure those issues are addressed in upcoming planning."

Rick Schneider of CPAWS was pleased with the announcement but noted that ideally "the higher quality forest south and east of the existing park would have been protected instead of the forest north of the park." He believes that the oil and gas industry can achieve "no trace" exploration and development, with no new roads.

Chinchaga

He noted that the main thing the new site has going for it is size. "Large size is critical for maintaining ecological integrity and supporting local populations of caribou and grizzly. The new area has great diversity; it contains both upper and lower foothills, about half of it is comprised of merchantable forest, about a quarter of it is covered by peatlands, and it contains the Chinchaga river valley. Most of the forest is young, reflecting the fact that about 60 per cent of the site burned in the largest fire in Alberta's historical record. This again underscores the importance of large size because it is unlikely that the entire site will ever be burned in a single fire event."

YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED ON FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE WHALEBACK

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

In May 1999, the government of Alberta announced the protection of two areas within the Whaleback area of southern Alberta: the 20,778 ha Bob Creek Wildland and the 7,760 ha Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. An Advisory Committee for the two protected areas has recently produced a draft Management Plan for the two areas, which will determine their management for the next few years. This Plan is open for public comment, and we would encourage anybody with an interest in this truly spectacular area to take this opportunity to comment.

Alberta Wilderness Association will be making the following recommendations in its response to the draft plan:

Off-Highway Vehicle Use

Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use is not an appropriate use of protected areas.

The plan states: *"The primary goal of the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland is as follows: To preserve the natural heritage … of the two protected areas in perpetuity. Other provincial protected areas program goals … are of secondary importance with respect to the protected areas. The heritage appreciation and outdoor recreation goals may be met, but only to the extent that their attainment does not conflict with or impinge on the preservation goal."*

The plan then proposes allowing OHV access on designated trails. This is clearly in conflict with the stated aim of the plan. The Plan even mentions Bill 24 (the June 2003 amendment to the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act) *"prohibiting recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands."*

Of particular concern is a designated trail along White Creek, which is one of the few east-west animal migration corridors in the area and of particular importance for migrating elk (the Whaleback supports one of the province's two largest wintering elk herds).

Buffer Zones

The protected areas are a part of the larger Whaleback ecosystem. Lands outside the protected areas are also an integral part of this broader ecosystem and should also be managed sympathetically. Oil and gas development adjacent to protected areas should not be allowed.

Funding

Management of protected areas such as this, including monitoring and enforcement, require adequate funding. Budgets of enforcement staff have been consistently cut during the past decade, and there is an urgent need to restore funds to manage these areas to a suitable standard.

Oil and Gas

Crown petroleum and natural gas leases in the protected areas and outside were donated to Nature Conservancy Canada in 1999 by BP Amoco. *"Our partnership with the Nature Conservancy ensures that oil and gas activity will never occur in the Whaleback protected area,"* said Joseph H. Bryant, president of Amoco Canada Petroleum at the time. The Department of Energy needs to make assurances that these leases will not be resold once they expire in April 2004.

Riparian Areas

More measures should be introduced to ensure that riparian habitat is not damaged by grazing operations.

Carnivores

Management should allow for the full complement of native carnivore species. Management of potential livestock predators should focus on removing only individuals that are known to prey on livestock, while leaving non-preying animals.

Copies of the Draft Management Plan can be obtained via the Alberta Community Development Web site at http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/preserving/parks/draftmgmtplans.asp, or by calling Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Southwest Area at (403) 382-4097.

Comments are to be returned by **January 26, 2004** to Cliff Thesen, Area Manager, Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division, Room 416, Administration Building, 909 – 3 Avenue North, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1H 0H5. Phone: (403) 382-4097; Fax: (403) 382-4257; E-mail: cliff.thesen@gov.ab.ca.

AWA would appreciate a copy of your response; please send to Box 6398, Station D, Calgary, AB, T2P 2E1 or awa@shaw.ca.

Aerial view of the Whaleback.

© Charles Douglas

YA HA TINDA - OUR NEXT NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA?

By Dr. Herbert Kariel, AWA Director

A few weeks ago I was dumbfounded to hear that the 3,945 hectare Ya Ha Tinda Ranch might be sold or transferred to the Alberta government and that changes in its horse breeding program are being undertaken. It struck me that the Ranch, located along the Red Deer River and immediately outside the eastern boundary of Banff National Park, instead of continuing to be valued for its ecological and aesthetic significance and used to breed, train and overwinter horses for the Warden Service of western Canada's National Parks, might instead be "developed."

When I checked on this situation, Greg Kingdon, Senior Communications Advisor Western and Northern Canada Parks Canada, said that Parks Canada has no intention of selling or otherwise transferring ownership of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch. It is his understanding that in an effort to reduce some of the costs of operating it, Parks Canada is ceasing its horse breeding program and will instead purchase horses each year. Wintering of horses will continue.

He commented that talk of selling or transferring ownership of the Ya Ha Tinda crops up from time to time, apparently because some individuals would like to see this valuable property placed in private hands. As with any natural area, whether the Ya Ha Tinda will be maintained in its present state or developed is never permanently laid to rest until development occurs.

Alberta Outdoor Adventures' Web site proclaims: "The Ya Ha Tinda [area] is probably the most beautiful country in the Rocky Mountains. It is a large valley surrounded by high mountains. Because of its natural wild grasses, wildlife abound here. On any given day we can witness elk herds numbering in the hundreds feeding on the valley floor, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep feeding on the grassy hillsides and deer feeding alongside the bushes. It is a paradise, with two creeks passing through the valley pouring into the Upper Red Deer River."

Yet conflicting land uses for the Ya Ha Tinda area have been suggested, including a camp for underprivileged children, Boy Scout camps, special quarters for high ranking politicians, golf courses, motel lodge complexes, and ski and other major recreational developments. In the 1970s a paved highway following the Red Deer River Valley, to connect Red Deer with Lake Louise and Banff was proposed. The region has also been proposed for oil, gas, and coal extraction.

Proposals for a land exchange with the Province of Alberta continued even after 1958, when the Ranch's legal status was settled. In 1988 an official land exchange request was made by the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Mr. F. McDougall, on behalf of the Alberta Government. This exchange was extensively discussed by provincial and federal governmental senior and field staff.

In August 1989, Parks Canada decided against trading the Ranch. The following month, the new Alberta Acting Deputy Minister of Forestry, Mr. C.B. Smith, wrote to the Director General of Parks Canada, Western Region, "seriously asking" her to reconsider the decision" (Morgantini, 64-65).

An e-mail from Charles Zinkan, Executive Director Mountain Parks, Parks Canada, August 2003 states, "I can assure you that there are no such discussions (to dispose of the Ranch). We are examining strategies to reduce the operating costs of horse support but that is the extent of what is being considered. Any mention of sale would only be speculation by an uninformed source." Unfortunately, even if true now, this situation can easily change rapidly.

Because funding for the Ya Ha Tinda, as for the rest of Parks Canada, has not increased since 1996, there has been an effort to cut operating costs of horse support. Horses need to be retained for backcountry patrols because no substitute has yet been found that can handle trail maintenance, assisting people, monitoring wildlife, and other backcountry work as well as a warden with a horse. According to Ian Syme, Chief Warden, Banff NP, wintering of 170 to 200 horses would continue, while the breeding of six or seven colts a year would cease and horses would be purchased annually.

Evidence of human occupation in the Ya Ha Tinda region goes back to the last Ice Age. In the late 1800's, the entire Ya Ha Tinda region was within the boundary of Banff National Park. Changes to the park boundary resulted in the exclusion of the Ya Ha Tinda area in 1911, in spite of the acting Superintendent's strong recommendation for its retention and its re-inclusion in 1917. With the new National Park Act in 1930, the Ya Ha Tinda was once again excluded from the Park, with its ownership retained by the Government of Canada.

To raise these colts as replacement stock requires a herd of about 35 horses year-round because there would be nine brood mares, nine colts, seven to eight two-year-olds and seven to eight three-year olds being raised and trained at any time. Ranch staff will gradually begin purchasing horses and continue to train the colts to pack and saddle and to be usable by wardens with different horsemanship skills in rugged backcountry conditions. The valuable stallion, a purebred quarter horse, will be sent to the Bar-U Ranch, where it will be welcomed and possibly used for breeding. Based on average hay, veterinary and other operating costs, the plan will save about $30,000 annually.

One night, while wondering about the future of the Ya Ha Tinda and those who follow the beat of the drummer that says, "Develop the Ranch and land surrounding it," I woke and watched the constellation Orion. I recalled the zodiac and the ancients who devised it. I thought about how they had personally related and regulated their life and the care of their land to what they directly observed in nature – that is, they adapted their philosophical outlook and actions to what takes place in nature or the natural environment.

Continuing this line of thought, I was struck by how far removed our civilization has become from natural phenomena. We now worship and believe in technology, science, and progress, and believe, in our hubris, that we through them and by having given them human traits, can solve and achieve anything.

In our haste to pursue an easier or more pleasant life, or perhaps simply to consume or have "more," we forget or do not care about the impacts upon either the environment or other individuals. By not caring about others' feelings or about virtually anything except ourselves, we are bound to destroy close relations and the natural environment and to lose because it is by helping others we care for ourselves.

Over time, our civilization has produced an ethic of greed and conquering, subduing, or using (pick your verb) "nature," the planet earth and all that is found thereon for human use, putting humans above other living and non-living things – to control the universe. This ethic has been accompanied by a view that considers land and nature as a gift, not free or deserved, which is accompanied by certain conditions required to maintains it.

Wendell Berry's seven conditions, based on nature (ecology) and human nature, concern people's motivation and intimate knowledge to care for the land. His seventh condition states: "A nation will destroy its land and therefore itself if it does not foster in every possible way the sort of thrifty, prosperous, permanent rural households and communities that have the desire, the skills, and the means to care properly for the land they are using" (Berry, 195-96).

Ultimately we do not live as isolated individuals. We depend upon our environment and each other. As social beings we exhibit certain social ties and traits. We must be neighbourly, just and kind to one another, generous to strangers, and honest in trading, and we must practice good husbandry.

After all the facts are in, what we do – that is, whose tune we follow – becomes a matter of values. A mountain view, a sunset, the presence of native plants and animals in an area all have values that cannot be measured in monetary terms. Those who would exploit our planet by developing every area as much as possible are often motivated primarily by selfishness and greed. Others believe that we need to take responsibility for preserving and caring for nature rather than despoiling it, and thus leaving it as untouched as possible for future generations. The argument is not only one of aesthetics, but also a matter of health of the planet itself, which ultimately determines the fate of all life on earth.

By nature and history, the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch has been entrusted into the hands of Parks Canada, to which it owes its present relatively unspoiled state. Clearly its ecological and historical significance transcends alternative short-term goals. Although the Ranch is not under the jurisdiction of the National Park Act, Parks Canada is widely considered responsible for its protection and sound management.

The unique mix of wildlife and horse stock and the significant increase in recreational use makes it a management challenge that requires a regional approach, an understanding of the ecological, historical and recreational value of the ranch, and a cooperative effort by all the federal and provincial agencies with jurisdiction in the region.

Ya ha Tinda has four distinct ecoregions: Alpine, Subalpine, Upper Foothills and Montane. It is one of the very few Montane areas that has not experienced extensive development and whose ecological integrity is relatively untouched. The overall warm and dry microclimate has facilitated the development of an extensive rough fescue grassland, a rare occurrence in mountainous regions north of the Bow River, surrounded by lodgepole pine and aspen. It has a rich biological diversity and is one of the two most important elk winter ranges in Alberta, the other being the Bob Creek-Whaleback area.

How long the Ya Ha Tinda will remain in its present state without widespread support or a change in society's ethic of greed and conquest of nature is a good question. Possibly now is the time for Canadians to take action on behalf of this largely unknown gem and designate it a National Wildlife refuge.

Some of the philosophical material is based on my understanding of Wendell Berry's book, The Art of the Common-Place, *Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint. Most factual information is based on or quoted from Morgantini, L. E., 1995,* The Ya Ha Tinda: An ecological overview, *an unpublished report prepared for Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada, Alberta Region, Calgary. I thank Martha Kostuch for suggesting that I check on the validity of the story that the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch might be sold or transferred to the Alberta government, Parks Canada staff for the information provided and Brian Horejsi and Pat Jackson for their comments on a draft.*

NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART: TRAVELLING WILLMORE WILDERNESS PARK, 2003

By Vivian Pharis, AWA Director

Willmore Wilderness Park, that splendidly wild 1,775 sq mi swath of land north of Jasper Park, has not made headlines in the WLA for some time for two reasons: it has not been in crisis and it has not been visited. Former AWA treasurer Jane Kennedy dubbed the area "Willow-More" when she visited it in the early 1990s, and that name is more apt now than ever before. I am left with two overall impressions of the Willmore in 2003: its raw, wild beauty and its incredibly awful willow-engulfed, boggy, rutted, dead-fall ridden, steep, rocky, horse-shoe-pulling trails.

Vivian Pharis with cast caribou antlers near Adolphous Pass.

It had been 12 years since my husband Dick and I had travelled into the Willmore, although we frequently traversed the area by foot and by horse in the 1970s and 1980s. A trip to the Willmore, especially from as far south as Calgary when trailering horses, is a serious undertaking requiring at least a full day of highway travel at either end. In August of this year, we did haul horses to the Big Berland take-off point south of Grande Cache and headed out for two weeks over old and new routes through the northern section, east of the Smoky River. This area is getting little use, probably less now than it got 20 to 30 years ago. West of the Smoky River the Willmore is even more remote and hard to negotiate. Around Rock Lake, Eagle's Nest Pass and along the border with Jasper, the Willmore is more used because these areas are more accessible.

This year we travelled through the valleys of the North and South Berland River, Snow and Zenda Creeks, the Sulphur and Muskeg Rivers and Walton and Sunset Creeks, in a big loop. Through most of this area the trails and campsites have become less accessible than they were in past decades due to willow growth and encroachment. Some trails and campsites have not been maintained in 50+ years. Where we remembered open valleys, campsites with plenty of grass and trails accessible to backpackers, many of these are now willow-choked with long stretches of trail being like tunnels through tall, dense willow and young conifer. Some trails are now uninviting to hikers who can't see out of them, or are even dangerous because of the possibility of close bear encounters in willow tunnel situations. We saw bear diggings everywhere we went – the animals may be preferentially following the horse trails because of the overgrown conditions.

For those who relish wild places, the Willmore has huge allure. There are few places like it, where you can travel for several weeks and encounter almost no one else. If we had scheduled our trip before the opening of sheep hunting season, we could have met no one else this year. Of the six parties we did meet, three were sheep outfitters, two were private hunting parties and one was, like us, just trail riding. Three of these six parties were at the fairly accessible Big Grave Flats. People you meet in such remote places are all characters, equipped with large coffee pots and tall yarns. They care passionately about holding onto places like the Bighorn and Willmore, where they are able to go with their horses and a few primitive luxuries for a couple of weeks of pure escape. To a man though, all said they would like a bit more trail signage and maintenance in the Willmore, if not for their sake, then for the sake of their horses.

Here and there local outfitters have cut out stretches of trail for their own use, and it is such a relief to reach one of these and travel for a while, just admiring the scenery. Willmore valleys, like the

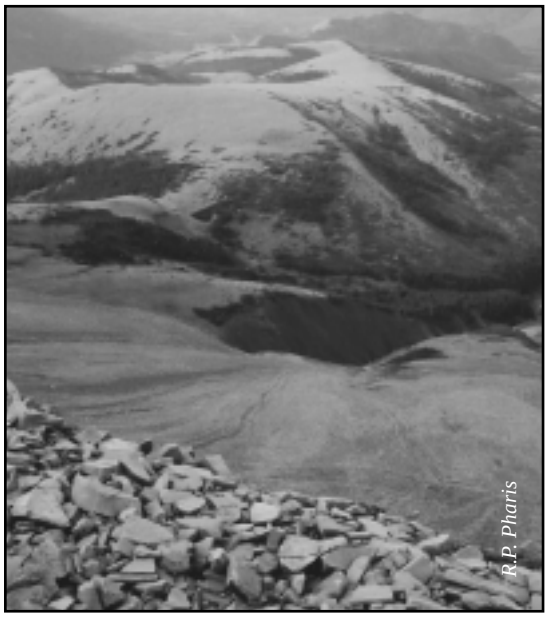
Little Grave Flats and grave of baby Delorme.
Willows were cut away and the marker replaced.

seldom-visited Walton Creek, can be absolutely lovely, and the couple of old camps along the creek (which have not been used in years) have everything aplenty that a horse party could desire - grass, water, wood, shelter and view. Once reached, the open alpine country, as in the vicinity of Adolphous, Jack Knife and Rocky passes, stretches out in a myriad of inviting, open ridges. Smoke from B.C. fires obscured the skies somewhat this year, making photography a challenge. Generally though, the Willmore was wet and lush and we had two days of rain in two weeks. Nights usually dropped below freezing so that we awoke to frosty meadows and a centimetre of ice on the water buckets.

A moose horn trail sign.

Old cabins, gravesites and the unique carved moose horn trail signs give the Willmore a sense of human use that is a part of the landscape. However, these interesting relics are perhaps melding a bit too much to last more than another decade or so. We worked to find, cut the willow away from and set the marker back in place on the grave of baby Delorme at Little Grave Flats. Around Little Grave Flats the old moose horn trail signs are still in good condition; however, in many areas, often at crucial trail junctions or where trails are obscure, they are missing or have fallen down and can't be seen.

Traditionally, the Willmore and environs would have been more open due to fire, both natural and set by native peoples and outfitters to clear meadows around campsites for game production and horse grazing. Several decades of fire suppression have resulted in remarkable changes that must be having a negative impact on wildlife populations. In the early half of the twentieth century, the Willmore was considered one of the world's great hunting destinations because of its abundance and variety of North American species. In two weeks of travel this year, we saw NO big game animals and not much sign of them except for bear diggings. It was the beginning of bighorn sheep hunting season, however, and hunters we talked to were seeing bighorns and mountain goats in high places. We did find cast caribou antlers and a few relatively fresh caribou tracks on a high ridge near Adolphous Pass, but no animals.



Ridge near Adolphous pass, looking into Muskeg River.

Another perennial trail hazard in the Willmore that has not improved in recent years is the presence of muskegs and soggy slopes. When the Willmore was much better used by native peoples living and trapping there, and by outfitters in the first half of the twentieth century, long stretches of trail were corduroyed with logs and streams were bridged. In the last 50 years, however, there has been no support for such work. Today the muskegs are often deep mud holes in the trails or are open bogs; some even contain the remains of broken corduroy and bridges, making them hazardous. A few muskegs have become downright dangerous. Some trails, such as the one to A La Peche Lake, are no longer passable before freeze-up because of bogs.

It was in trying to find a trail across a boggy slope where no marker existed that we ran into grief with our horses. An older packhorse tried to leap a deep boggy creek but slipped into its trench and soon became so thoroughly entrenched that we could not pull her out with our most powerful saddle horse. After several hours of trying, we broke the cinch on the pulling horse and were forced to make the terrible decision. Fortunately we carry a rifle with us for such a situation. Thankfully, her final resting place is truly magnificent. She is well off the trail (which we found later) and poses no danger to travellers. One consolation is that our old horse will likely ensure that some grizzly bear goes into hibernation in top condition. Such, though, illustrates the condition of travel in the Willmore – probably tougher now than 50 years ago when the trails were maintained, better used and far more obvious.

I kept a diary of each day's travel and the condition of trails and have written a detailed letter to the Parks minister, Gene Zwozdesky, and his local staff about our observations and recommendations. Right now the Willmore is in dire need of official attention, of prescribed burning and of trail maintenance. Alberta is losing prime tourism and recreation opportunities by neglecting the Willmore and allowing it to become so inaccessible. It has now become difficult for tourists and local people to use large parts of the area, especially if they are travelling on foot.

FINDING HOPE IN THE LOST CREEK ASHES

By David McIntyre, MSc., Forest Resources, University of Washington

The Lost Creek Fire has fueled considerable dialogue and more than a little controversy. One aspect of the issue that has escaped public scrutiny is the profound difference between fighting a forest fire (unessential and astronomically expensive) and fighting a wildfire that threatens a community (essential). Another unreported issue is the oft-hidden cost of managing public forests.

Trees grow most productively near sea level, on land where rainfall is measured in feet, not inches. As elevation increases and moisture decreases, nature's potential to deliver a viable forest industry begins a measured ride into the dust and smoke of cost overruns. Here on the eastern slopes of the Rockies, where even the valleys are high, timberline is low and rainfall is more of a dream than an honest expectation, it takes a century or two (depending on variables) for surviving trees to achieve "harvest" status.

I don't believe that any knowledgeable forester has ever suggested that a timber industry, here, produces a net economic benefit to society. It would appear, however, that many people think it does. But if you consider the costs, how could it?

Nature provided the greater Crowsnest Pass with an original stock of timber. But once the first "free" tree was logged, it took 100 years – in staffing, management, fire suppression and control – before a replacement could be grown on that same piece of landscape. That's the picture on the most productive lands. Elsewhere within the regional forest, a 200-year investment is required, an investment made against increasing odds, and an investment made with the assumption (often false) that the landscape can be "protected" from the same natural force (fire!) that allowed that first tree to set root.

The Lost Creek Fire has already cost society 50 million dollars (my assessment) – an expenditure, in a *single* year, of one thousand dollars/acre of burned landscape. Add to this, throughout the previous one hundred years, the investment society has made on the same land base. Add, too, the costs, year upon year, of the supporting men and women, the offices and warehouses, computers and phone lines, trucks and helicopters…and more.

A scene from the Lost Creek fire.

A viable forest industry requires its "managed" trees to live long enough to achieve harvest status. Here, that means that the trees must be managed to outlive the natural fire cycle that, for millennia, has defined the period of life and death for most of their predecessors. The problems created by suppressing forest fires – the primary means of achieving this outcome – are many. Most significantly: the practice isn't sustainable. Worse, it's dangerous. It's also *phenomenally* expensive. But *our* expenses have been paid.

During the past century we have spent millions of dollars in order to protect living trees, and foster *extreme* and unnatural accumulations of forest fuels. Within our fuel-rich landscape, any fires that now erupt – and we have seen that they will – tend to be larger and more severe than their historic counterparts. There is no known precedent for the size and severity of many of the fires that have blackened the new millennium. More frightening than the recent past, however, is the forecast: the threat will increase.

During the past century there has been a tremendous increase in the abundance and density of trees on the landscape. Many former grasslands and open woodlands have been replaced by thick brush. All across the visible land, dead limbs and downed timber now create an expanded opportunity for wildfires to climb from the forest floor to the canopy. We've spent millions to create this transformed landscape. Concurrently, society has contributed to the unprecedented fuel load by allowing subsidized livestock grazing to consume forage to the degree that there has been a near elimination of the low intensity surface fires that historically consumed brush and dead limbs.

We have paid dearly in our extreme efforts to suppress fires. We've been rewarded with *extreme* fuel loads. Therefore it would be truly astonishing if our current wildfires were anything *less* than extreme. Some people have suggested that drought, whether natural or induced, is responsible for the increased potential for wildfire. Regardless of the effect(s) brought by drought, it's easy to see that the more extreme the fuel loads, the less *extreme* the drought needs to be to foster

extreme wildfire behaviour.

It is interesting that the government's fire suppression ethic, created by the voice of an "authority," has caused our society to pay for and produce an era of extreme fuel loads. Ironically, most people of Crowsnest Pass, more afraid of forest fires than they've *ever* been, may now believe that there is more need than ever to suppress all fires. The populace, today, might even, *unknowingly*, cast their vote to foster the perpetuation of the costly, unsustainable practice that delivered the current outcome: an era of extreme fuel loads and extreme fire behaviour. Ironically, it's society's inability to educate its authorities that has produced this product.

Looking at public perception another way, it's society's fear of wildfires that has created – through costly manipulation of the environment – a reality that exceeds its original fear. Of course, the government is also recognized as the department that saved society from the approaching "red dragon." By accomplishing this feat, the government established an interesting social paradox: it saved society from the dragon it created.

The greatest casualty in the Lost Creek Fire may well prove to be the nearly complete lack of relevant, meaningful and appropriate public education that was generated.

Locally, it could be said that the Lost Creek Fire enhanced our community's resistance to future wildfires. That's true. But look at the cost: *50 million dollars!* We could have achieved vastly superior results, ecologically and socially, for a fraction of that figure.

I don't wish for my words to be construed as being critical of any members of the local workforce. Nor am I suggesting that the workforce needs to be diminished. The problem doesn't originate within our community.

I do question the fact that the harvest of timber – the century-old dream for this spectacular and diverse landscape – has been allowed to reign as the primary and defining vision for landscape manipulation throughout the headwaters of the Castle, Crowsnest and Oldman rivers. There has *never* been an economic assessment that would suggest the regional timber reserves warrant this status.

I'm not suggesting that society stop the harvest of timber. I am promoting a vision in which timber products are simply considered as one of *many* resource values. It's not logical, sane nor fiscally prudent to use the timber industry, within the noted area, as an ongoing, de facto force that can be allowed to propagate the costly, unnecessary, and inherently dangerous policy of turning our forested lands into volatile powder kegs.

We are surrounded by an awe-inspiring landscape that contains stunning mountain summits, some of the most beautiful rivers in the world, miles of blue-ribbon trout fishing, a wealth of plant and animal diversity, Canada's largest caving complex, spectacular alpine meadows, exceptional opportunities for backcountry camping, world-class snowmobiling, phenomenal cross-country skiing and a host of other recreational opportunities.

We need to manage *all* of our resources, measuring their true worth within the projected economy. The only way this landscape can be managed to achieve its full potential is to have society formally recognize the region's full spectrum of resource values, economically and socially, and prescribe a plan that takes us from the present toward a vision that delivers, to future generations, the greatest gift.

CHANGES TO THE PUBLIC LANDS ACT

DEALING WITH OFFENDERS AND LETTING GAME-FARMED BISON LOOSE ON PUBLIC LANDS

By Shirley Bray, Editor & Vivian Pharis, AWA Director

Bill 49, Public Lands Amendment Act, 2003 was introduced November 18, 2003 by Denis Ducharme, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake on behalf of Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. A government announcement says that "these changes will strengthen and clarify the government's role as the land manager for public lands." These amendments will allow Alberta to "deal swiftly and effectively with instances of non-compliance on public lands, and allow some bison grazing on public land."

Non-Compliance

The amendments dealing with non-compliance "are intended to further discourage people from travelling on closed roads, destroying gates or preventing access to those who need to lawfully access public lands." They will "clarify existing offences on public land, outline a police officer's authority to remove people from public land and enable the Minister to take enforcement action if people travel on a road that has been closed to the public."

AWA has long lobbied for a legislative mechanism for closing roads on public lands in order to protect wildlife habitat, reduce poaching and allow regeneration of some roads. However, we also see a danger in such legislation, if it is applied to unfairly exclude the public, including First Nations peoples, from lawful access to public lands. We would like to see clarification as to when and where this legislation is to apply.

Bison Grazing

The government is considering legislative amendments to the Public Lands Act to let bison producers raise bison on some public lands.

According to the announcement, "in 2001, a multi-stakeholder Bison Review Committee was formed in response to ongoing requests about bison grazing. The committee, which reported to the Ministers of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Sustainable Resource Development, reviewed stakeholders' concerns and proposed that bison

grazing be allowed on agricultural dispositions, with certain provisions.

"As a result of the committee's review and scientific input, the program will have strict requirements for containing animals, disease testing, tagging and monitoring of the program. The program will also prohibit bison grazing on certain public lands. Once the legislative amendments have been made, government will review applications for bison grazing using criteria developed from the Committee's recommendations."

Bison

Bison was the first wildlife species to be game-farmed. Attempts were made to interbreed bison with cattle to produce beefalo. Being in close proximity to cattle gave bison the diseases bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis. The cattle industry subsequently tried to get all the bison destroyed to protect their interests.

There are serious problems with all game-farmed wildlife species. AWA has never supported the domestication of wildlife and has continually called for an end to this anti-wildlife industry. One of our concerns with this announcement is that if the government opens the door to grazing of bison on public lands, it could set a precedent for opening public lands to elk and deer farmers too. Such a move would increase the exposure of wild wildlife to the significant diseases of game-farmed animals, to more escapes into the wild and to hybridization with native wildlife.

Grazing bison (and other game-farmed animals) on public lands is not the same as grazing cattle. Bison in particular, can be aggressive, dangerous animals, so the public would be excluded from accessing these lands. Wildlife would also be excluded from using these lands since the high-security fencing needed for game farmed animals would exclude wildlife.

WATER FOR LIFE STRATEGY

Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability was released on Nov. 27, 2003. The Web site is www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca. AWA will be reviewing the strategy over the next two months and we will discuss it in the next issue of the Advocate.

LETTERS SUPPORT NATIVE PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

The following is one of many letters AWA received regarding the use of native prairie for cropland.

I would like to draw to your attention [to the possibility] that the activities of Vauxhall Foods Limited could potentially impact wildlife in southern Alberta. Much of southern Alberta has been converted into cropland for the production of forage crops, cereal crops and vegetables. However, some large blocks of land remain as native prairie rangelands. Most of this land is controlled by the provincial or federal governments or by landowners that have been heavily subsidized by government agencies.

These native rangelands are the foundation of the ranching industry in Alberta. And in addition to being of economic importance, these rangelands have significant cultural, archaeological, and ecological values. They are of great importance to wildlife including game species such as the pronghorn, and federally and provincially designated endangered species including the burrowing owl, short-eared owl, long-billed curlew, ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit, swift fox and short-horned lizard to name just a few. The importance of these native rangelands has been emphasized in a number of conservation initiatives including the Prairie Conservation Action Plan.

Recently, six sections of native mixed grass prairie rangeland north of Bow Island, Alberta were converted to irrigated cropland for potato production. This area was plowed under during the heart of the breeding season, and consequently, wildlife populations inhabiting the area were decimated. The Eastern Irrigation District, centered around Brooks, Alberta, has also proposed to convert 10,000 acres of native rangeland into irrigated croplands. Other projects are also certainly being considered. All of these projects would have significant impacts on wildlife populations and biodiversity values.

I'm sure that Vauxhall Food Limited does not want to aid in the destruction of wildlife habitat. However, your company would inadvertently be supporting the destruction of these important habitats if it processed or marketed potatoes grown on areas recently converted from native rangeland to irrigated cropland for potato production. I would therefore request that your company establish a firm position on the conversion of existing native rangeland to irrigated cropland, and not accept any crops grown on recently converted farmland. However, please be advised that if your company accepts potatoes grown on converted rangeland, I will be boycotting your products and encouraging others to do the same.

Sincerely,

Jason Rogers, Red Deer, Alberta

WAS THE TRADE OF NATIVE PRAIRIE FOR POTATO PRODUCTION A GOOD ONE?

By Shirley Bray, Editor and Cliff Wallis

Sustainable Resources Development, responsible for public lands, has traded a piece of native prairie for another piece of land so that a local farmer can plough it up for potato production under irrigation. According to Mike Cardinal, "the details of land exchanges are typically not public information." Mr. Cardinal said that the land in question was not sold, it was "exchanged." The difference between selling and exchanging or trading is one of semantics, and to tell us that the land was not sold is disingenuous.

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

In letters to AWA and the Grasslands Naturalists, Mike Cardinal told us the following: "SRD has entered into a two-phase land exchange with Mr. Ypma and other parties that provides a positive outcome for all. The exchange supports SRD's goals by enabling the acquisition of private lands which have an equal or higher intrinsic value than the public lands being exchanged. The exchange strikes a balance between stimulating local economic opportunities and acquiring lands high in conservation value. Mr. Ypma has acquired land that he can develop for potato production under irrigation, which will create economic opportunities in the agriculture sector. In turn, the land that the Alberta government has obtained has similar potential for wildlife as that which was exchanged with Mr. Ypma. For example, it has a sharptail grouse lek and a history of burrowing owls and rattlesnakes. It also has the added benefit of allowing the Alberta government, after completion of both phases of the land exchange, to consolidate its native prairie holdings in a large contiguous block."

Located about 10 miles north of Bow Island, Alberta, the 10 sq km of Grand Forks grasslands (31 and 32-11-11-W4M, and 5 and 6-12-11-W4M) were traded to Mr. Louie Ypma of Tri-Seeds in exchange for 11.5 sq km of deeded land, some of which had been converted to non-native crested wheat grass pasture. Alberta Fish and Wildlife indicated that this property would have wildlife value because it was part of a larger block of prairie. Despite recommendations that comprehensive field studies be conducted, none were ever done. The area was tagged as being of regional environmental significance in a report prepared for the Alberta government in 1991.

The importance of native grasslands has been emphasized in a number of conservation initiatives, including the Prairie Conservation Action Plan (http://www.albertapcf.ab.ca). Native grasslands are important for ranching and have significant archaeological and ecological values. Approximately three-quarters of the wildlife species considered at risk in Alberta rely on native prairie habitats. About a quarter of Alberta's rare vascular plant species are native to the prairies. Populations of rare low milkvetch *(Astragalus lotiflorus)* were destroyed by this cultivation in the Grand Forks area.

The land base remains finite and even a one percent annual loss of native grassland will eventually destroy all that remains.

This cultivation violates key principles and objectives of the 2001-2005 PCAP:

- a conservation ethic will be applied to all activities and management decisions
- stakeholders will work cooperatively to achieve prairie conservation objectives
- adopt ecosystem management practices to sustain and conserve all prairie landscapes and provide specific protection for significant, representative, and sensitive ecosystems

This cultivation of the Grand Forks grasslands would appear to violate the required actions in the Potato Growers of Alberta Code of Practice, including the following:

- research aimed at long-term sustainability of land and water resources
- adoption of environmentally friendly land and water use practices
- addressing public concerns regarding potato production and environmental sustainability

The Grand Forks grasslands' value for watershed maintenance, protecting biological diversity and cultural heritage and providing opportunities for healthful human recreation have not been taken into account by decision-makers who are privatizing such lands. Only through a publicly developed Public Lands Policy will such values receive fair evaluation in future decisions.

CHARLES DOUGLAS: FROM FISH TO SEX SYMBOLS, HE'S DRAWN THEM ALL

By Andy Marshall

Millions of Canadians have probably seen drawings by Charles Douglas of North American animals and birds. Although few would recognize his name, it's likely that large numbers may have also glanced at his cartoons in *Playboy* and in another men's glamour pin-up magazine called *Oui*.

That's a pretty amazing achievement for a man who took no formal art lessons and who recalls little contact with other artists about his work. As for bridging the gap from wildlife to, let's say, other wild aspects of life, that's another story.

"All my life I had a knack for drawing," says the 80-year-old from his Aylmer, P.Q. home about his works.

For 20 years until retiring in 1986 he was the official illustrator at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa, painstakingly drawing anything from fish scales to bear skulls, dissected amphipods to lizard parts for the museum's resident scientists and curators. These illustrations were published in their academic papers or pamphlets.

"I was called an artist, but I didn't create anything new or different," he says. Peering through a microscope or using blown-up images projected from a microscope, "I just illustrated what was in front of me."

Dipping a pen and nib into an ink pot was his method of choice. "You had to be exact," he says. "These guys were fanatic about whatever specialty they were working for."

What brought him the most exposure, though, were the regular weekly wildlife illustrations the museum asked him to draw in the late 1970s for the *Ottawa Citizen* and then later for newspapers across Canada for four or five years. Produced from photographs and from his imagination on top of his regular work, the so-called "Natural History Notebooks," samples of which are reproduced in this edition of the *Advocate*, were intended to publicize the museum's name before a wider audience.

"The museum allowed the drawings to go to whoever wanted them," he explains. Imagine his surprise in 1985 when he was given a full-blown book called *The Natural History Notebook of North American Animals*, put out by publishing giant Prentice-Hall and filled with a selection of his drawings.

"It came out of the blue," he says, adding that apart from his regular salary, "I never received a nickel for them."

Douglas has no regrets, though, about doing the drawings. "It was a nice break from the tedious stuff of peering through a microscope."

What had really excited him during his earlier years at the museum in the 1970s was being able to freelance cartoons to *Playboy* and *Oui*. "All my life I wanted to be a cartoonist and I did make some headway."

At $300 each for *Playboy*, the published cartoons – and he did about 15 – represented about a month's salary at the museum at that time. Understandably, *Playboy* pushed a sexual theme, Douglas notes. But "the cartoons I liked best had little to do with sex."

His job at the Museum of Nature was a dramatic mid-life change at age 43 from a career as a bank credit officer, which he began in Toronto and which later took him to other Ontario centres. "I detested the credit business," he says. So when he saw an ad by the museum for a biological illustrator, he answered on a whim and landed the job in 1966. He had sample drawings from much younger days, but his portfolio was slim.

Not bad for a person who quit school in Grade 10 and never completed his diploma.

From an early age, he remembers he liked to doodle and draw cartoons. Born of Scottish parents in Aberdeen on Scotland's east coast, he came with the family to Trenton, Ontario, when he was four. His father was a golf professional who worked in several Ontario cities and passed on a love of the sport to young Charles.

Douglas is still an avid golfer with a handicap of seven – in his heyday, it was three. As with his drawing, he is reticent about discussing the basis for his abilities. "Talent, aptitude, I suppose," he says.

After his formal schooling, he found himself, in his own words, floating around a bit. He took a job as a draftsman and then at age 19, he joined the Canadian Air Force in 1942. A couple of misadventures during training on the biplane Tiger Moth redirected him from being a pilot into the position of bombardier.

Just as his training concluded and he was on his way to Europe, though, the war ended and he was out on civvy street again. Before entering the banking business, he did architectural drafting for a Toronto firm for a while, again demonstrating his natural draftsmanship skills.

He had an uncle who was a good artist, and the eldest of the three sons he raised with his French-speaking wife, Jeannine, also draws as a sideline and has been successful selling wildlife illustrations at some Ottawa galleries. Charles and Jeannine still live in the house they bought across from Ottawa when he began the museum job 37 years ago.

Although he did so many wildlife drawings for the museum and clearly liked his subjects, he says he never developed a yen to study them further. He also doesn't view himself as an active conservationist.

When he took the job at the museum, he realized the institution was not looking for someone to spread his wings as an artist.

"I had no message for the world. I still don't," he says. "I'm not into that stuff about making an impression or making a difference. That's too presumptuous."

Asked if he's proud of the *Notebook* drawings and other books his drawings appeared in, including a book called *Mammals of Canada* and a children's book called *Munoo: Life of an Arctic Sled Dog*, his reply is hesitant: "Yeah ... I guess I am ... yeah."

His simple philosophy is that he was paid to do the job and for the most part, he enjoyed doing it. Modestly, he adds: "I'm not blowing horns about it. A lot of other people have done better stuff than that."

That doesn't stop him enjoying being told that children liked the weekly *Natural History Notebook* drawings. And while he's not exactly famous, there can't be too many people who have had the exposure from their efforts that he has.

ALBERTA WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE TRUST ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARDS

SETBACKS FAIL TO DETER GRIZZLY RESEARCHER

By Andy Marshall

Charlie Russell's quest to promote bears as peace-loving, even affectionate animals is still on track — despite a year of setbacks that sparked doubts about whether he would carry on.

The illegal slaughter of up to 20 bears in the Russian wilderness park he and his partner Maureen Enns have been visiting to study grizzly for more than eight years, the savage death of friends Timothy Treadwell and Amie Huguenard after an Alaskan grizzly attack in early October, and sniping against his efforts by some wildlife biologists have left him undeterred.

Facing down the apparent intent of the shootings to intimidate him from his work, the 61-year-old self-styled researcher, ex-rancher and author is pushing for more private funding to carry on the almost six-year-old ranger program he began in the Kamchatka Sanctuary on the northeast coast of Russia to help protect the bears he's come to care for so intensely.

Although one major funder has withdrawn, Russell has another source. "I think I can find the money. I'm trying to renew another six-year program," he said in an interview.

And buoyed by the changing stance in at least one high-profile United States wilderness park toward bear/human interactions, he vows to continue spreading his message in North America that bears and humans can co-exist harmoniously.

"Humans have to learn to be less of a nuisance to bears," Russell said.

The comments came as the soft-spoken Cochrane area resident prepared for his presentation to about 90 members and guests of the Alberta Wilderness Association on Nov. 21 as guest speaker for the third annual Alberta Wilderness and Wildlife Trust lecture series. Together with The Calgary Foundation, AWA formed the trust from an endowment fund, initiated in 1986 as a memorial tribute to the former Orval Pall, killed in an airplane crash while studying bighorn sheep.

Charlie Russell holds the audience spellbound with his photos and observations about grizzly bears in the wilds of Kamchatka. He also eccepted the Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award on behalf of his father Andy Russell.

Dorothy Dickson accepts her Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award.

Some of the many thousands of slides he and Enns have taken of their breathtakingly close encounters with bears drew "oohs" and "aahs" from the appreciative AWA audience.

Introducing him, master of ceremonies and former AWA president Peter Sherrington noted Russell is seeking to buck conventional wisdom that bears are dangerous to people and unpredictable. That willingness to challenge current thinking continues the tradition set by the two previous guest lecturers: University of Alberta renowned water specialist David Schindler dispelling the notion in 2001 that we are blessed with lots of water; and Montana economist professor and author Tom Power shooting down the myth that the extraction industry enhances a region's economy.

As bear-book author Jeff Rennicke pointed out in a recent edition of *Backpacker* magazine, "this unlikely peacemaker ... with unruly silver hair, large glasses and a toothy overbite that causes him to lisp ... with just a twelfth-grade education, no university affiliation, and no backing from any government wildlife agency ... is an anomaly in the bureaucratic, doctorate-laden world of bear research."

Showing shots of him lying in the grass with a bear, swimming with one and touching the paw of another, Russell noted gently: "This is obviously an animal with feeling and intelligence." He added: "We soon learned that bears want to be around people.... We explored the limits of trust." And in answer to a later question: "They're not like dogs, they don't want to please people, [but] you could sense their enjoyment of things, if they were in a good mood. They aren't cuddly, but they are affectionate animals."

Grizzly Heart: Living without Fear among the Brown Bears of

Kamchatka (Random House of Canada), the latest book by Russell and Enns, is filled with photos of the magnificent yet playful bears and the glorious landscape of the 2,000-sq km World Heritage Site they've spent so much time in. About half the area of Kananaskis Country and blessed with an abundance of wildlife and fish in a terrain filled with stunning volcanic mountains, Kamchatka is home to an estimated 8,000 brown bears.

The son of celebrated Alberta naturalist, rancher, author and guide Andy Russell, Charlie first learned about bears growing up on the family ranch, about 55 km southwest of Pincher Creek. Accompanying his dad while he was making a film about grizzly in 1961 had a life-changing impact on him.

After receiving permission from Russian authorities to build a simple cabin there in 1996, the couple used the area to release three orphan bears from a zoo in Petropavlovsk, the regional capital. Over the years, they have spent countless hours walking with the trio and meeting other bears, never sensing any threat from them.

The trio and other bears they came to know are believed to be victims of what Russell thinks is a poaching gang, angry that Russell's protection program is restricting potentially lucrative sales of bear parts.

While he has suspicions about who the culprits are, he doesn't believe a prosecution will be forthcoming in a country where bribery is still rampant. Yet with future funding relatively secure, he hopes to continue to hire the up to ten people needed to run the ranger program there. He and Enns will likely be there again in the spring, taking the Kolb ultra-light aircraft he uses to fly around the region.

He understands well the irony that the bears were mostly likely killed because of the success of his protection program.

Bill Fuller accepts his Albera Wilderness Defenders Award.

The Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award for Ray Sloan was accepted by his daughter Heather & his wife Christyann.

Treadwell's and Huguenard's deaths came as an understandable shock. "It makes me sober about the possibility of that happening to myself," he said in the pre-lecture interview. Yet he feels that the American bear researcher made himself vulnerable to such an attack by not taking sufficient precautions to protect himself against the very occasional male predator bear he might come across.

Russell uses portable electrified fences around areas he is sleeping in – the Kamchatka cabin perimeter is powered from solar panels – and rarely ventures out without pepper spray (although he has never used it). In his book, he advised Treadwell to take such precautions, and in their last face-to-face chat earlier in the year, he urged him even more adamantly to take better care. "It was ironic we had this hassle going on. That was our last conversation," Russell said.

He's often heard the criticisms from other bear researchers that what he's doing is foolish and unscientific; that his approach to bear/human interaction will actually hurt North American grizzly conservation; that his "live gently" world is unrealistic and naive.

"Most criticisms come from people having to manage bears and people. I sympathize ... but it is the human part that is harder to manage."

On the academic slights: "I'm not trained to be a biologist, but I refuse to be slowed up by those limitations. Research can be done successfully without absolute qualifications."

His 40 years working with bears is enough to give him confidence to assert that humans, not bears, are the problem. He was greatly encouraged by a recent conference in Missoula, Montana, where Yellowstone park officials outlined plans for bear habituation for bear/human relationships, rather than the conventional adverse conditioning practice followed in all Canadian parks. In other words, a park with almost as many visitors as Banff has decided not to try to frighten off bears from most areas where humans might be.

It's hard to imagine that happening here, said Russell, where wildlife officials routinely fire rubber bullets and set off noise devices to scare bears away from where people congregate. That response creates bears that are fearful of and angry with people.

However, Russell said he will devote his energies toward trying to restrict the adverse conditioning practices and helping people interact better with bears. That could mean suggesting to people they stay well away from bear territory when they're fattening up in late summer, or simply stepping aide when they see a bear on the trail ahead of them.

A vital lesson from the bears in Kamchatka, which had little to no contact with humans, is that almost all bears have no argument with humans as long as people don't impede their ability to live and as long as they haven't been conditioned to fear humans.

"It may take some generations, but I want to show that humans are sophisticated enough to learn this," he says.

(Photos and stories of winners of the Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award can be viewed on our Web site under Events)

AN AUTUMN CELEBRATION OF WILDERNESS

An enjoyable dinner was served to a cheerful and lively crowd.

Vivacious guests set the dance floor on fire to the fabulous rhythm and blues of Blue Rhino.

The dynamic band, Blue Rhino, set a vibrant and spirited tone.

Auctioneer Jesse Starling of Graham Auctions raises the excitement during the live auction.

Alberta Wilderness Association would like to thank our guests and volunteers for making our 15th annual autumn fundraising dinner and auction a great success!

Peter Sherrington hosts the evening.

Richard Secord, AWA Director, welcomes guests to the Autumn Wilderness Celebration.

Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator, shows off a rustic creation by Rod Burns.

Torsten Bucholtz, AWA volunteer, shows off a much admired painting during the live auction.

The silent auction draws keen bidders for the many unique and interesting items.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Alberta Wilderness Association has been very successful this year and we owe a real debt of thanks to each volunteer who has helped us in some way. Our volunteer roster throughout the province includes more than 400 individuals. Some write letters, some monitor trails, some help in the office or at our fundraising events. Others are watchdogs and stewards for our wilderness. We want to let you know what a difference volunteers make in our daily work. We have room for more volunteers, please call the office at (403) 283-2025 or visit our Web site (see "About Us") if you are interested.

Bighorn Trail Monitoring Crew in June - Steve Swettenham, Lara Smandych, Tamaini Snaith, Cheryl Smyth, Ian Urquhart, Laurie Wein.

Bob Blaxley leading a Whaleback hike.

Dan Olson and Rod Burns help a horse on the Historic Bighorn Trial trip in July.

Ed Hergott pinpoints oil and gas activity in AWA's areas of concern.

An assistant, J.W. Campbell (sitting) and George Sibley during the filming of the Bighorn Wildland.

Heinz Unger, AWA director, joins a Bighorn Trail Monitoring trip.

Peter and Barbara Sherrington dance up a storm at the Wilderness Celebration.

Contributors to the Bighorn Wildland Book: Elaine Gordon, Don Wales, Vivian Pharis, Dorothy Dickson.

Cliff Wallis, AWA President, in his favorite place - the grasslands.

Robb Mole and Heather Sloan volunteer at the Wilderness Celebration.

Torsten Bucholtz and Darren Bezushko, enthusiastic volunteers at AWA events.

Jason and Jen Harris enjoy volunteering at the Wilderness Celebration.

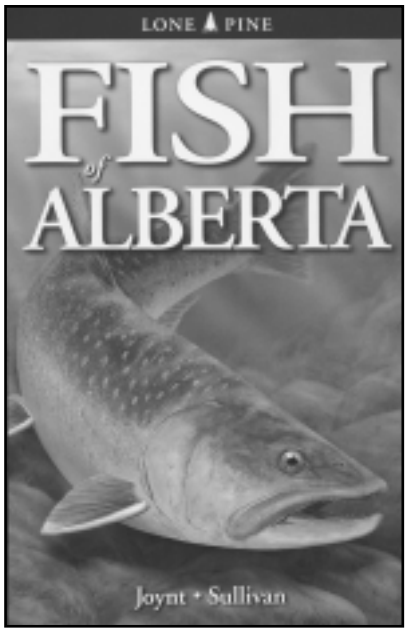
FISH NEED FRIENDS, TOO

By Dr. Michael Sullivan

As biologists, when we speak in classrooms or at public forums, the reaction of our audiences is typically a fascination with natural history. I believe this is a nascent seed of environmental ethic. All that seed needs to grow into a powerful societal value is linkage. People need to feel personally connected to natural history, to recognize that the natural world touches them, and realize they touch it. I believe if you can name it, you will see it. If you see it, you will appreciate it and, hopefully, act to protect it. The goal of *Fish of Alberta* is to feed people's innate fascination and awaken an ethic by showing them animals that are all around us but are rarely seen, seldom recognized and poorly championed.

As any local birder will proudly declare, Alberta has a marvelous diversity of habitats. Mountains, boreal lowlands, parklands and near-deserts let us see an amazing diversity of birds and mammals within a few hours of anywhere we live. Our fish diversity is no exception.

The classic naturalist's long-weekend road-trip from Edmonton west into the Rockies, then along the continent's spine into the dry south prairies, will show you arctic animals like burbot and grayling, some of the slowest growing lake and brook trout in North America in our cold mountains, and the Mississippi fishes of the prairies like catfish and silvery minnows. Unlike dull old birds, you'll find Alberta fish courting and spawning in almost every month of the year.



Burbot spawning under the ice in February and March, pike running up half frozen creeks in April, trout and suckers finding ideal gravels beds in May through June, our delightful sticklebacks and minnows building nests all summer, bull trout moving into the high country in September, mountain whitefish congregating in the foothill pools in October and November and lake whitefish spawning late under the new winter ice in December. A keen naturalist will always have a neat fish-watching spot somewhere in Alberta at any time of the year.

Unfortunately, fish watching is not the main interest people have with our fishes. Most fish taste great and live in water that we all need for homes, crops and industry. Consequently, Alberta fish face a lot of pressures. Alberta has few lakes (numbered in the hundreds, unlike the Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario where there are hundreds of thousands of sport-fish bearing lakes).

Our fish grow slowly, with big sport fish like walleye, pike and lake trout often being 15 or 20 years old. Even the tiny yellow perch doesn't get big enough to interest anglers until it is 8 or 10 years old, with bragging-sized perch seldom being younger than 15 years of age. In fisheries, slow growth means low productivity. The oil boom, however, has given Albertans roads and trails to virtually every lake in the province and fishing is intense and widespread. Irrigation and industry need to move water and use water that the fish also need, further intensifying pressure.

The consequences are that most populations of our big predator fish (the ones we most like to catch and need the largest habitats) are a shadow of their former selves. Recently, intensive recovery strategies and restrictive regulations have helped, but the pressures haven't abated. For example, recovering walleye fisheries like Baptiste Lake may attract 10,000 anglers in a summer. The sustainable harvest is likely no more than 1,000 fish. How do you divide 1,000 fish amongst 10,000 anglers? Once minor problems like catch-and-release mortality (usually as low as five to ten per cent) have now become major sources of the annual kill when multiplied by the heavy angling pressure. Without innovative changes to Alberta's fisheries, recent recoveries will not be sustainable.

Those recoveries of a few of our fish populations (walleye and bull trout in a handful of choice spots come to mind) have shown Albertans just how impressive our fish can become. Look at all those bulls in Lower Kananaskis Lake, go walleye fishing at Iosegun Lake. Even our grandparents may never have seen abundance like that. Isn't this great? Don't you want to keep it like that to *show* your kids and grandkids, rather than saying "You should have seen the fishing here when I was a kid"? These partial recoveries have given us a marvelous window of opportunity. Albertans should get out and appreciate fish. It doesn't have to be at the end of a fishing line, either. When fish are protected and abundant, the viewing becomes great. Make a trip to Tide Creek in the spring to see hundreds or

thousands of spawning walleye and suckers running out of Pigeon Lake. Check out the autumn bull trout extravaganza in Smith-Dorrien Creek. Bring a kid, tell a friend. Learn…see…appreciate…protect. That is the message of the book *Fish of Alberta.*

(Dr. Michael Sullivan is a provincial fisheries scientist and co-author (with Amanda Joynt) of Fish of Alberta, *Lone Pine Publishing, 2003, paperback, $18.95. Excellent maps and beautiful drawings by Ian Sheldon.)*

BIGHORN WILDLAND A POPULAR CHOICE

AWA's new publication *Bighorn Wildland* is a great success! During our book tour through Alberta over the past few months we have met many new people and shared our passion for the Bighorn and wilderness in Alberta. We have been very pleased with response to Bighorn Wildland and we thank everyone for their support.

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

- 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.

For more information or to obtain copies of the book, please contact Nigel Douglas, (403) 283-2025; awa@shaw.ca or visit our Web site www.AlbertaWilderness.ca for a list of bookstores or to order online. Paperback, full colour, $29.95 ($7 shipping and handling).

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS

RUN FOR WILDERNESS

April 17, 2004 at the Calgary Tower

13th Annual Climb for Wilderness
Climb 802 Stairs

2nd Annual Run for Wilderness
Run 1km & Climb 802 Stairs

Visit www.climbforwilderness.ca for details.

MURAL COMPETITION AT THE CALGARY TOWER

March 2004

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

Visit www.climbforwilderness.ca for details.

OPEN HOUSE TALKS PROGRAM

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, December 16, 2003
Curing the Silence:
Restoring Trills, Trumpets,
Tracks To Alberta's Wilderness
With *Tian Dalgleish*

Tuesday, January 13, 2004
Bats: Alberta's Charismatic Mini-Fauna!
With *Dr. Robert Barclay*

Tuesday, February 3, 2004
Exploring Alberta's Badlands
With *Carter Cox*

Tuesday, February 24, 2004
Wolves and Elk:
Their Ecology and Conservation in
Alberta's Eastern Slopes
With *Mark Hebblewhite*

Tuesday, March 9, 2004
Riparian 101
With *Lorne Fitch*

EDMONTON

Thursday, April 29, 2004
Alberta Wilderness Association's 2nd Annual
Spring Wilderness Celebration
Location: Alberta Provincial Museum, Edmonton
Contact: (403) 283-2025, awa.ava@shaw.ca

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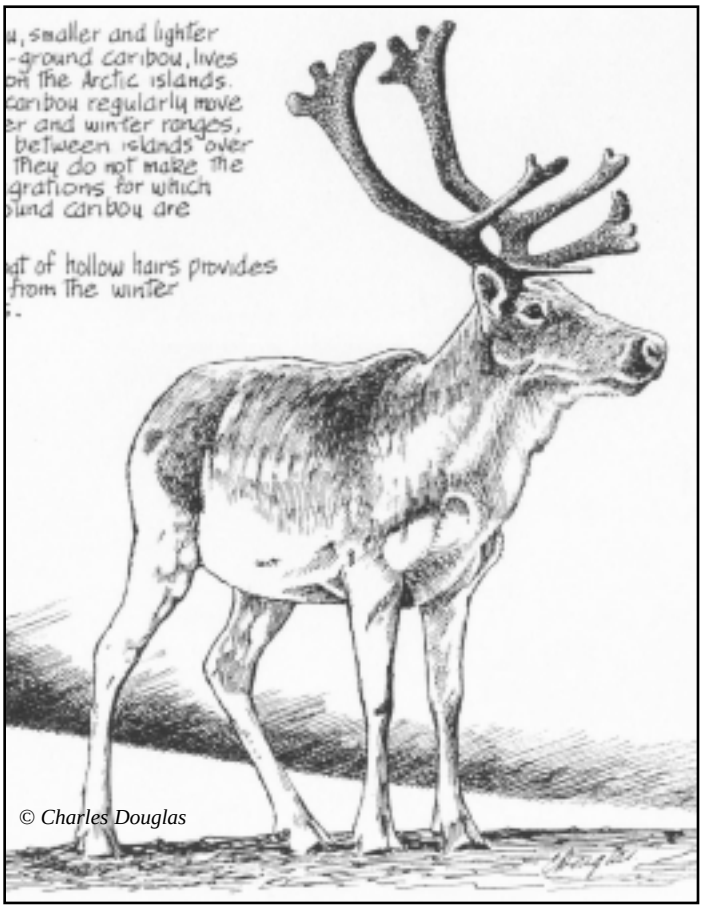
OTHER EVENTS

Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre
(west end of Fish Creek Provincial Park)
Cost: $5.00 per person. Contact and pre-registration:
(403) 297-7927

Wednesday, January 14, 2004. 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
High Plains Survivor – The Lower Milk River

Wednesday, February 11, 2004
Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park

Wednesday, March 10, 2004
Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park



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Are you moving? Please let us know.

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

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☐ Wilderness Circle	$2500 +
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Alberta Wilderness Association

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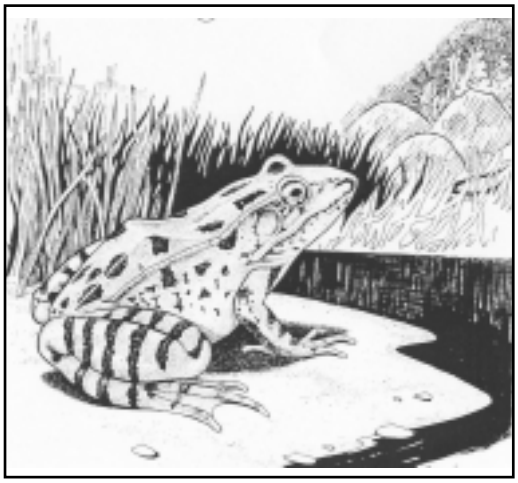
AWA respects the privacy of members. Lists are not sold or traded in any manner. AWA is a federally registered charity and functions through member and donor support. Tax-deductible donations may be made to the Association at: Box 6398 Station D, Calgary, AB T2P 2E1. Telephone (403) 283-2025 Fax (403)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

February 26-29, 2004
Calgary, Alberta

Keeping the Wild in the West

Sign up for the official conference list and newsletter at www.PCESC.ca

PCESC Conference Organizing Committee
Box 6398, Station D Calgary, AB T2P 2E1
mail: info@pcesc.ca



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