

# Wild Lands Advocate



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## COAL BED METHANE COMES TO RUMSEY CAN ALBERTA'S BEST ASPEN PARKLAND PROTECTED AREA SURVIVE?

Dr. Shirley Bray



*This is the first of a two-part series on coal bed methane development in the Rumsey Natural Area in the Central Parkland Natural Region of Alberta.*

In the spring of 2004 Trident Exploration Corp. drilled a coal bed methane (CBM) well in the Rumsey Natural Area, one of Alberta's best examples of rare remaining aspen parkland. In addition to the well, a pipeline was constructed to connect with nearby facilities. The well site was not only a new disturbance in this sensitive protected area, the pipeline construction left a scar of disturbed topsoil up to 100 m long. In spite of special requirements set out by Public Lands, Trident failed to communicate those instructions to a

third party pipeline company. Instead of ploughing in the pipeline, which doesn't strip the vegetation cover or disturb the roots, a trench was dug, destroying the native rough fescue grassland vegetation and leaving the area vulnerable to aggressive invasive species.

Cheryl Bradley found out about the surface disturbance of Trident's operations on a tour to Rumsey with members of the Prairie Conservation Forum in June 2004. A professional botanist, Bradley has studied Rumsey for almost 30 years and has worked hard for its protection. The advent of CBM development in the area was an unwelcome surprise.

Bradley says that at recent meetings on grasslands with NAFTA's Commission on Environmental Cooperation they identified important grassland areas throughout the Great Plains in North America. "Alberta has the largest area of rough fescue grassland in North America. We are guardians of an important global heritage," she says. "Rumsey is right up there as a very highly significant grassland internationally. And I just can't believe we still threaten it with the death of a thousand cuts. It's unconscionable to me."

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Coal bed methane well in Rumsey by Trident



A government management plan for the area recognizes that “the Rumsey Block is the only intact area of aspen parkland large enough to meet the scientific criteria for a functioning ecosystem.” The government also recently named rough fescue as the province’s grass emblem.

The Public Lands Division of the Department of Sustainable Resource Development is helping Trident to evaluate the damage they have caused and undertake reclamation activities. “The system obviously relies on the company to make sure things are done properly,” says Jason Unger, an AWA Conservation Specialist. “If this is what happens in a protected area, I wonder what happens outside a protected area.”

Once their error was discovered by the public, Trident decided to be conciliatory and implement a collaborative approach with any identified stakeholders. “If we’re going to drill in the Natural Area, we’re going to make sure that we do it right,” says Trident spokesperson Kyla Fisher. “Doing it right, as far as we’re concerned, is doing it in collaboration with the other groups.” Yet Trident had apparently been working in the area for two years and drilled the well all without any effort at public consultation.

Fisher says that it was in July 2004 that Trident started to research the significance of the area, who was involved and started meetings with people to find out what would be some of the best practices. But she admits, “The company knew right from the beginning that it was an ecologically sensitive area.”

Located about 40 km north of Drumheller, the Rumsey Block, as it is often called, is divided into an Ecological Reserve to the north and a Natural Area to the south, designated in 1990 and 1996 respectively. Its rolling terrain is a mosaic of trembling aspen woodland, rough fescue grassland and wetland habitats. Rumsey is a remnant of an almost extinct landscape and is the largest tract of aspen parkland left in the world. Covering 9.5% of Alberta, the Central Parkland is the most densely populated natural region in Alberta, its moist rich soils valued for agriculture. Only 12% remains as natural vegetation, 6.3% is native grassland, 3% is crown land, and less than 1% remains in blocks large enough to provide adequate representation of its ecosystems. Rumsey remains as a vital refuge for parkland plants and animals and is an important ecological benchmark.

Rumsey has been used for grazing livestock since at least the early 1900’s. Before that bison roamed the area. Fewer than 100 oil and gas wells have been drilled in the area and by

1991 only seven gas wells and one oil well were producing. There was once talk of phasing out oil and gas activity. But the entire Rumsey Block is underlain by coal in two major formations at two different depths, the shallower, dry Horseshoe Canyon formation and the deeper, wet Mannville formation. CBM drilling could be expected along access routes throughout the area with separate wells for each formation.

The earliest record AWA has of coal bed methane in Rumsey is a presentation by Gulf Canada in 1993. They drilled six wells in the Fenn-Big Valley field, of which Rumsey is a part, to evaluate the potential of commercial CBM development. A 2004 energy market assessment by the National Energy Board states “the Horseshoe Canyon play in south-central Alberta was described as an example where developments have been positive. Ultimately, some 50,000 wells may be needed to recover the CBM from this area alone.” This estimate is considered low by critics of CBM development in the area.

Fisher says Trident is currently looking only at the Horseshoe Canyon formation. John Koch, Trident’s VP of Operations, told *Fast Forward* (Oct. 21-27, 2004), “There could be potentially a billion dollars worth of gas under the Rumsey area.” That estimate was based on wellbore data gathered by the EUB in the region.

Trident has had several meetings with various groups, including AWA, and has offered sessions on coal bed methane to help people learn more about it. Fisher says that if the statement that comes across loud and clear from everyone is ‘Let’s not drill in Rumsey,’ “then that’s something that we need to evaluate.”

“What we want to do at this point,” she says, “is analyze what we can potentially do with minimum impact. If a decision to drill is made, the next stage would be to work closely with consultants, government, and interested stakeholders to draw up a plan to address the environmental sensitivities of the area.

“We don’t want to be pushing this down everybody’s throat,” she adds. “We want to make sure that everybody has time to evaluate how they feel about it and what could be some of the best practices for going about this.”

“It’s good that Trident is taking a proactive approach,” says Unger. “But even though Trident proposes to minimize disturbance, best practices means staying out of a protected area.” He points out that although Trident may say they will do things better than another company, which may or may not be



Coal bed methane well in Rumsey by Trident LSD 8 31-33-19-W4, showing damage from pipeline construction

C. Bradley



the case, they could sell their rights to other companies which might have other ideas. Other companies with leases in the area include EnCana, Canadian Superior, Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., Husky Oil and Pioneer Natural Resources.

“Collaborating to them means sitting down with them and deciding where they can do their activities and so on,” says Bradley. She told Trident at the first meeting that if they were looking for someone to work with on how to minimize their impact, they should go to a professional with expertise in that area, not to environmental groups. Such professionals work with companies to minimize their impact and help with reclamation.

“What we made very clear is that we’re not interested in talking with Trident about how to proceed,” says Bradley.

“The debate for us is whether it should proceed. We have different goals and it isn’t fair to keep requesting my time when it is clear we don’t have a common goal.”

“Trident’s bottom line,” says Unger, “is that CBM is going to be developed in Rumsey, so we should have a company that’s going to develop it according to some best practices. Our bottom line is it shouldn’t be developed. The value of

the landscape and the premise that the area is designated for conservation support abandoning future CBM plans. When the government presents the idea of protected areas to the public, the public should be able to rely on the claim of protection.”

CBM drilling typically involves a larger number of wells, from 2 to 16 wells per section, instead of one well with conventional gas, with attendant pipeline routes and access requirements. In a protected area, valued for its rough fescue grasslands, further surface disturbance is a serious concern. Estimates of surface disturbance for CBM wells drilled in relatively flat areas in the western U.S. is four acres per well, including roads, pipelines, compressor stations and well pad.

Trident’s CBM well and pipeline represents new surface disturbance in the area. Fisher claims that Trident will not drill more than four wells per section because it is uneconomic. Unger says that doesn’t guarantee that they or anyone else won’t reduce their spacing. “If I asked them, or any other company, to sign a contract holding them to no more than four wells per section, I have a feeling that their answer would be ‘No’.”

“The thing with Rumsey is the inability to restore rough fescue grassland,” says Bradley. Invasive species are constantly being introduced along roads and invade any surface disturbance, which can be there for a long time. A study done by Integrated Environments Ltd. in 1991 for Public Lands found that industrial sites were not restored to a native condition after 15 years and that, except for small pipelines, there was invasion of non-native species.

“If you allow continued development and continued access, there’s this incremental loss of fescue,” explains Bradley. “When you run that out over time with cumulative effects models you can see complete loss of your grasslands within a few decades. That’s the issue here, and nobody’s monitoring that.” Rough fescue has specific qualities that

make it ideal for grazing by ungulates, particularly in the winter.

A recent inventory of rough fescue grassland sites in the Central Parkland and Northern Fescue Grassland natural subregions shows that most areas of plains rough fescue grassland remaining are severely compromised by invasion of non-native plant species.

In a recent paper, Bradley notes that

currently there are no documented examples of successful restoration of rough fescue grassland following surface disturbance or invasion by non-native species. Rough fescue grasslands, once disturbed or invaded by non-native species, are less likely to be restored to native condition than other grassland types. She concluded, “Avoiding surface disturbance of rough fescue grasslands and preventing invasion by non-native species is a necessary planning and management strategy if we are to have rough fescue grasslands in Alberta in 100 years.”

Ultimately, says Bradley, the issue for conservation groups is not with Trident and there is no point in continuing with further discussions with the company. “We have to remember that corporations are in business to make money, not to do nice things for the environment or people. That’s what the law makes them.” She cites Joel Bakan’s book, *The Corporation*, in which he writes, “The corporation’s legally defined mandate is to pursue, relentlessly and without exception, its own self-interest, regardless of the often harmful consequences it might cause to others.”



*Glacial till has left a distinct “knob and kettle” topography of rounded hills and depressions. In wet years the poorly drained depressions are filled with water and attract abundant waterfowl.*



“Corporate executives can say they want to do the right thing,” continues Bradley, “but legally they’re bound to make money. We can’t rely on the corporations to preserve Rumsey, these decisions rest solely in the hands of government. The government’s job is not to encourage and facilitate the industry, because they will do that very well themselves. Government’s job is to protect the public interest from the corporation.”

At a recent conference on Unconventional Gas in Calgary, Michael Gatens, Chairman of the Canadian Society for Unconventional Gas, saw CBM as becoming the most vital part of Canada’s energy future and that the world’s reserves were far larger than those of oil or conventional natural gas. He pointed out that compared with many other parts of the world, North Americans were “energy hogs” and we had to accept that this is the case in our society. The challenge for their industry, he said, is to produce enough fuel to feed the “hogs” in the most economically, socially and environmentally acceptable ways they could devise.

Dorothy Dickson sat on the management committee for the Rumsey Ecological Reserve for a number of years and frequently gives tours of the Natural Area and Ecological Reserve. Her impression from the conference is that a few companies, like Trident and Nexen, seem to have a genuine interest in doing what they can to accommodate the interest of other stakeholders as long as it does not interfere too much with their operations or economics. Trident’s literature says the company “is dedicated to the discovery and commercial development of natural gas from coal in Western Canada.”

“Trident wants us to understand what they are trying to do and what good citizens they are, but their interest is in developing and government has given them the right to do that,” says Bradley. “Our argument is not with Trident. Our argument is with government and that’s where we need to be taking the opportunity of every process available to us to stop this madness.”

Industrial development in protected areas has been a sore point with conservation groups for many years. The *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* allows for the continued disposition of oil and gas rights in all protected areas except Wilderness Areas. The Minister has a great deal of discretion in activities that take place in any of the protected area designations, but Natural Areas have the least number of statutory prohibitions.

During Alberta’s Special Places program Rumsey was high on the list of areas to be designated as a Heritage Rangeland. Dickson believes they kept putting off that designation because they knew about CBM in the area. Conservationists are pushing for Heritage Rangeland designation for Rumsey because it offers greater protection for the grasslands. According to the Act “no person shall do any act that will alter or disturb the surface of land within a wilderness area, ecological reserve or heritage rangeland.”

Although the south part of Rumsey was designated as a Natural Area in 1996, it is still being managed by a plan, called a Regionally Integrated Decision (RID), developed in the early 1990’s and published in 1993, prior to the designation of the Natural Area.

The purpose of the RID is “To preserve and protect the Rumsey Aspen parkland ecosystem while allowing for responsible use of its resources.” Bradley sat on the multi-stakeholder committee that developed the RID. In a recent letter to Public Lands, she wrote “I do not believe CBM extraction is consistent with this goal. Alberta Energy maintains that CBM development is in an experimental

phase in Alberta. A Natural Area, which was recommended for designation as a Heritage Rangeland under Special Places, is not the appropriate place for such ‘experiments’.”

She pointed out the RID addresses impacts of conventional oil and gas activity, but not the much higher level of impact and associated potential for native prairie destruction associated with CBM, including higher well site density, more fragmentation by pipelines, longer time frames for extraction and a need for more compressors due to lower pressures, and possible disruption of groundwater. Furthermore, in the shallow Horseshoe canyon formation, horizontal drilling is not possible, so certain opportunities to minimize impact such as moving well sites to avoid sensitive features, or drilling multiple wells from a central pad will not be available.

However, Alberta Energy considers CBM to be the same as conventional gas when issuing subsurface rights and not a new activity. Dickson thinks calling CBM ‘natural gas in coal’ just makes good PR.

A Central Region Resource Management Committee (RRMC) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the RID. Neither Bradley, Dickson nor AWA have seen any annual or five year reports that were supposed to be produced according to the RID. An assessment in 2001, without public



*Typical example of trenching for a pipeline in the prairies*



input, decided that no major review was necessary.

The conservation community has asked repeatedly that a new management plan suitable for a Natural Area and Heritage Rangeland be developed. "I've learned that Public Lands doesn't really want to open the RID because they think they'll get something worse," says Bradley. "I think it's really dumb that we don't have any commitment when we designate an area as a protected area."

Other reports monitoring impacts on ecological integrity and cumulative effects of industrial development also appear not to have been done. Underfunding and understaffing of agencies responsible for protected areas leaves them vulnerable to neglect and mismanagement. "Nobody's monitoring the spread of non-native species in Rumsey. We're just sitting here and the managers are just sitting there allowing continued fragmentation while at the same time not monitoring how the health of the area is doing," says Bradley. "And we can be pretty guaranteed that it's declining. Rough fescue is not gaining ground in Rumsey."

"They just don't have the focus on Rumsey like we do," says Dickson. She points out that laws, regulations and codes of practice are useless on the ground unless there is staff to enforce them.

"I don't know a person who hasn't gone to Rumsey in the last two decades that hasn't fallen in love with it or doesn't recognize how important it is," says Bradley. "I think government just ignores all of these things at our peril. There is an expectation among Albertans that our elected representatives will speak for Rumsey, but they're not. So we need the political will. We can't rely on the private sector to protect the public interest. We have to hold our public servants accountable." ❁

*Further information on Rumsey, including the history, the 1989 RID proposal and a paper by Cheryl Bradley, Is Oil and Gas Development and Conservation of Rough Fescue Prairie Possible?, can be found on AWA's website under Rumsey. Part two of this series will be published in our February 2005 issue.*

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## TRIUMPH OF THE COMMONS

### The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation as a Means of Creating Wealth and Protecting Public Health While Generating Biodiversity

Dr. Valerius Geist



The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation arose at the beginning of the 20th century in response to the virtual decimation of wildlife across most of the North American continent by the end of the 19th century. Garrett Hardin's

*Tragedy of the Commons* had run its course to the bitter end followed by the extermination of "vermin" that interfered with cattle and sheep production, including grizzly bear, wolf and even cougar over wide areas of their range.

Several once spectacularly abundant species went extinct, foremost among them the passenger pigeon, and later, the Eskimo curlew. Waterfowl, shore birds, even songbirds were then severely depleted by market hunting and uncontrolled pot-hunting, while wildlife habitat was converted to ploughed fields for corn, wheat, or cotton; livestock pastures; and urban sprawl.

Yet in these dark hours for wildlife there arose a unique system of wildlife

conservation and management that restored wildlife to the North American continent and made wildlife a source of wealth and employment. In a surprising fashion this restoration defeated Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*, and, contrary to advocates for private wildlife, showed that private ownership of wildlife is not compatible with conservation, which deals with maintaining biodiversity. The return of wildlife and biodiversity to the continent of North America is probably the greatest environmental achievement of the 20th century and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation one of the great achievements of North American culture.

And yet, ironically, that Model of Wildlife Conservation has only recently been recognized as such. It is very poorly known or understood in North America, it is politically incorrect for much of the urban electorate, and it is opposed by various special interests, including some agricultural and environmental organizations. You will not hear about it on radio or TV, and



*Bighorn sheep by Mount Michener*



even a good many wildlife managers must plead ignorance when asked about it.

A close examination of that model is most illuminating, as it is pregnant with tested ideas about how to manage a renewable resource in a sustainable manner. However, it requires certain pre-conditions to flourish, such as acceptance of wildlife as food and ready access by all citizens in good standing to weapons, which raise questions about its universality and transferability.



*Deer*

The North American Wildlife Conservation Model has evolved over nearly a century. It has since been examined by a number of symposia and has been discussed in the popular press and on the Internet. It is continental in scope, encompassing the United States and Canada, as it was formed in close cooperation among leading individuals from both nations. Here Canada, a loyal colony of Great Britain, opted not for the manner of wildlife conservation of the European mother country, but chose instead to unite under new common policies with the United States.

The model is based on raw grassroots democracy and is thus the product of innumerable political discussions – acrimonious or otherwise. Consequently, it is not the product of a single mind but expresses the collective wisdom of nearly a century of continent-wide debate and hard bargaining. It has retained what has worked. It therefore has a deep wisdom and could not have been invented by any single mind. We have before us an eminently successful conservation model, one worthy of scrutiny, regardless of one’s political philosophy.

## Successes

The major achievements of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model are, briefly, as follows:

- The recovery of wildlife and biodiversity continent-wide. This includes the recovery of species that were at the brink of extinction a century ago, which means most species of wildlife. Some conservation efforts went so well that in the case of the buffalo, the American Bison Society, dedicated to saving the buffalo, voted itself out of existence, considering its mandate fulfilled. Between 1974 and 1999 wild sheep in North America increased in number by almost 50 percent. There are again millions of white-tailed deer in North America, as well as other big game, but the recovery also included waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. Where the recovery is still wanting, concentrated efforts are at work to restore the species, including the much publicized efforts to restore grey wolves and whooping cranes.
- The generation of a novel economic use of wildlife. This results in the creation of great wealth and employment while the resource continues to grow and prosper: it is not merely sustained! In 1996 some 77 million US citizens spent in excess of 100 billion dollars on wildlife-related activities, creating about 50,000 jobs per billion dollars (US) in throughput. There are similar trends for Canada. We can also study the distinction between markets that destroy wildlife, such as markets in dead wildlife, and markets that increase wildlife abundance, such as markets based on encountering living wildlife. Hunting creates public benefits such as the “freedom of the woods” that results from keeping large and potentially dangerous carnivores timid and afraid of humans, as without this we could not use our woods and campgrounds safely. In addition, once wildlife populations expand, hunting keeps in check such wildlife population, which otherwise could expand to cause damage to agriculture, forestry, or the environment at large.
- A new uniquely North American profession: the university-trained wildlife biologist or manager. The first notable practitioner among these was Aldo Leopold, who became an idol of not only wildlife biologists, but also the environmental movement at large with his inspiring writing. It insured that North America’s wildlife received well-qualified, professional attention and care in its conservation and management.
- Public involvement with wildlife. This is one of the greatest achievements of North American wildlife conservation. The genius of North America’s system of wildlife conservation is that it captured the enthusiasm and support of all strata of society. This includes the whole-hearted participation of the blue-collar segment



of society in contrast to a primary involvement of the elite in European societies. This makes for a large volunteer force willing to act on behalf of wildlife. Outwardly, public involvement takes the form of a large number of conservation organizations, formed at the federal, provincial or state, and local levels. Notable among these are sportsmen organizations supporting single species or related groups of wildlife, such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Wild Turkey Foundation, etc. There are also effective conservation societies such as the venerable Boone & Crockett Club, the Campfire Club, and the Audubon Society. The volunteers have great achievements to their credit. The Rocky Mountain Elk foundation conserved over 3.8 million acres of elk habitat since its inception. A volunteer force of less than 6,000 Americans and Canadians, uniting biologists, managers, hunters, guides, outfitters, and interested parties in a common cause under the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, increased the mountain sheep population by almost 50 percent in the last 25 years. These are examples – and there are many others - of what volunteers, irrespective of nationality, in free association, without call for legislation or government funding can achieve under existing legislation.

- Taxing for wildlife. North Americans generated a secure funding base for wildlife conservation by adopting the user-pay principle as policy in 1930 by the American Game Conference. Ever since, North Americans have taxed themselves on behalf of wildlife (Migratory Bird Stamp Act 1934, Alberta's Buck for Wildlife Fund, etc).
- Habitat conservation. North Americans created an extensive public system of protected areas for wildlife, including great national parks and monuments, wildlife refuges, provincial parks ,and ecological reserves. Habitat conservation on agricultural land results from initiatives such as the U.S. Conservation Reserve Program. In addition there are significant ongoing private efforts to acquire habitat such as those by the Nature Conservancy or the many foundations dedicated to wildlife. They act continentally, continually acquiring habitat by purchase or gift, or habitat protection through liens on the land. In addition, military reserves, by long tradition, respect wildlife's presence and contain some of the finest wildlife habitats and populations.
- International treaties. North Americans recognized early the need to protect and manage wildlife that cross national borders in their migrations. They negotiated the first and effective international wildlife treaties, such as the 1911 Fur Seal Treaty, but above all the

famous 1916 Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds.

- Conservation of large predators. Despite early and continuing sentiments against large predators, such were nevertheless retained or reintroduced as functioning entities of ecosystems. They are controlled, protected, or reintroduced, depending on circumstances. Also, predators are better off under hunting regulations because the kill is very closely controlled and is under constant public scrutiny, and persons are held accountable for each kill. Not so in Canada's national parks, in which bears have a notoriously very high chance of dying due to concerns for public safety.



Elk

- Preservation of non-game species. From the very outset the out-of-doors was considered an integrated whole. That is, very early on under the so-called Roosevelt Doctrine, conservation was considered broadly. Consequently, the history of bringing non-game species under the same umbrella as game species has a very long history. However, not all conservation was altruistic; rather, it was usually motivated by utility. This included songbirds, which early in this century were considered effective allies against various crop insect pests. Moreover, the focus on particularly desirable game species casts a broad halo effect from which non-game species benefit. Although specific legislation to save endangered species has been in effect across the continent, such legislation could not succeed in the absence of a hunting culture that had practiced broadly based habitat conservation which simultaneously conserved biodiversity.
- Law enforcement. In North America, enforcing conservation law is normally a remarkably civil affair,



although it can be as dangerous as its European counterparts when commercial poaching is involved. Because wildlife conservation is broad-based and is an exercise in participatory democracy, much self policing is involved. This differs from European models, in which wildlife is private property and its protection is pursued accordingly.

## Foundation Policies

The foundation values on which the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is built are best summarized in a collaborative paper that includes the insights of Shane Mahoney, then Chief of Research of the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division, and John F. Organ, Wildlife Program Chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### 1. Wildlife as Public Trust Resources

Wildlife in North America is public property, not merely *de jure*, but also *de facto*. Wildlife may be held privately, but only as a trust for the public and at the discretion of the sovereign. The Public Trust doctrine has a long history in the U.S.

Why is public ownership of wildlife so important for wildlife conservation?

- Public ownership prevents the inevitable consequences of private ownership, such as the domestication of wildlife, as well its genetic alteration to fit market whims. Domestication systematically diminishes the anti-predator adaptations of a species by making it more tractable and easier to control under conditions of captivity. Domestication has led to severely reduced brain size. Domestication is done so as to serve specific markets and therefore leads to genetic alteration of a species to produce desirable products. Gigantic antlers in deer or horns in buffalo are some examples; the restructuring of bison to assume the carcass confirmation of cattle is another. The latter is done to increase the carcass value, as the carcasses of domestic cattle compared to those of wild bison have a higher proportion of high-priced cuts. Selecting for antler size in deer selects for social incompetence. Domestication is thus the systematic genetic alteration of innate adaptations. Such altered stock can escape into the public domain and pollute public wildlife irreversibly.
- Public ownership of wildlife largely prevents the mixing in captivity of many species and thereby prevents what parasitologists have labeled “transporting the zoo” (of pathogens and parasites). Each species carries its contingent of pathogens and parasites, which, when transferred to another species, may mutate into strains dangerous to public health. Transferring wildlife into domestication increases the risk of pathogens escaping into human populations. Private ownership of wildlife generates a disease bridge across which may pass diseases affecting livestock and

human health on one hand and public health on the other. Retaining wildlife in strict public trust therefore prevents wildlife farming and the building of a disease bridge between wildlife, livestock, and people. It is good public health policy. The recent SARS epidemic originated in farmed wildlife – namely, in farmed palm civet cats in China. In any confrontation between private agricultural and public wildlife interests, wildlife is inevitably the loser.



Lynx

- Wildlife in public ownership insures the ecological basis for native cultures to continue. One way to diminish native cultures is to make wildlife and their habitat private property.
- Because wildlife is in the public domain, it is possible to consider national systems of wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife treaties.
- Because the state is ultimately responsible for wildlife, it is possible to hire professionals to do the conservation and management on behalf of the public. Herein lies the origin of the North American profession of wildlife biologists.
- Wildlife in the public domain is subject to public scrutiny and concern. The public has a say in how wildlife is to be treated. When grizzly bears become private property, *de jure* or *de facto* by virtue of being turned over to owners of private or leased land, their fate is no longer the public’s business.
- Once wildlife is made private, private wildlife is pitted against public wildlife, a battle in which the latter is the inevitable loser.



## 2. Elimination of Markets for Wildlife

The elimination of trafficking in dead game animals, or parts and products derived from them, is one of the most effective and important policies of wildlife conservation. Its introduction was revolutionary, as North Americans at the turn of the 20th century were avid consumers and traders of wildlife.

Why is the elimination of markets in wildlife and its parts and products so important to conservation?

- The elimination of markets in dead wildlife eliminates a financial incentive for the illegal taking and selling of public wildlife. Where such incentive exists, it promotes illegal markets and encourages the criminal element to enter and ruthlessly exploit wildlife. Law enforcement under such circumstances is hazardous in the extreme and of questionable efficiency.
- Eliminating monetary value from wildlife encourages the public to enjoy wildlife for its own sake. A grizzly bear is no longer a walking bank account.
- The acquisition of wildlife outside the marketplace is bound to significant private effort. The resulting sweat equity and expenses incurred act as a deterrent to killing wildlife. So does the inability to sell legally killed wildlife.

## 3. Allocation of Wildlife by Law

Allocation of surplus wildlife for consumption by law, and not by the marketplace, insured an equal allocation of wildlife to citizens irrespective of wealth, social standing, or land ownership. Every citizen in good standing is able to participate in the annual harvest of wildlife within the laws set by legislatures. Aboriginal people are an exemption, as wildlife harvest is also governed by treaty rights.

Why is allocation by law so important to wildlife conservation?

- This policy generates a sense of propriety and ownership by those participating in the wildlife harvest and is fundamental to public participation in wildlife conservation, be it directly as volunteers or indirectly via the legislatures.
- This policy, by encouraging citizen to regard wildlife as their own, generates large national and continental organizations of citizen who join together into societies on behalf of wildlife. Large foundations dedicated to single species or species cluster are a North American phenomenon. These NGOs organize volunteers and funds toward the maintenance and spread of such wildlife, as well as the acquisition of their habitat.
- Because all citizen in good standing have access to wildlife as prescribed by law, wildlife is removed from any image of elitism or of the plaything of the filthy rich, a symbol of privilege. Wildlife controlled privately by an elite can become a symbol of the hated elite and suffer the consequences. This can be particularly tragic

when public sentiments against the elite and their symbols are unleashed in revolutions.

- Egalitarian allocation provides the basis for an equitable cost of conserving wildlife through a “user pays” principle. Because enough of the public avail themselves of the opportunity to obtain wildlife for private consumption, there is enough funding for conservation. User pay means that hunters are footing most of the bill for wildlife conservation and in so doing provide a benefit to society at large – the maintenance of wildlife and the continent’s biodiversity.
- Egalitarian distribution of opportunities to acquire wildlife also generates indirect public benefits. One of these is the “freedom of the woods”: for example, the harassment of bears through inefficient hunting conditions bears to avoid humans, allowing safe camping and hiking. Clearly, this depends on reasonably large numbers of hunters going into bear habitat.



*Hunting moose*

## 4. Wildlife Can Only Be Killed for a Legitimate Purpose

Wildlife can be killed only for cause: that is, for food, for fur, or in self defence or in the protection of property. Wanton waste of hunted wildlife may be considered a felony in some jurisdictions. This policy obliges all hunters to properly make use of animals killed.

Why is killing wildlife for cause only a desirable conservation policy?

- This policy outlaws wanton slaughter, which was once a not uncommon practice in market hunting days or a mark of prowess among so-called hunters. It reduces wildlife mortality and questions all killing.
- Allocation plus regulation of the taking of wildlife by



law is enforced inefficiency. This is a very important point, as it is the enforced inefficiency of harvest that generates wealth and employment. Efficient harvest, by contrast, eliminates wildlife without generating public wealth. Since an animal taken in hunting must not be wasted, it insures that the hunter spends a fair sum of money in transporting, processing, storing, and consuming the animal. This generates a demand for services.

- Enforced inefficiency also triggers the invention of gadgetry, a consequence of ingenuity rewarded by the marketplace. North America's wildlife economy is thus comparable to the automobile industry, where the multiplication of a product that generates convenience, but not transportation efficiency, generated huge wealth.

### 5. Wildlife Is Considered an International Resource

Wildlife is considered an international resource to be managed co-operatively by sovereign states. This policy is basic to international wildlife treaties, as well as to the broad-based, continental co-operation between professionals and conservation organizations.

Why is wildlife formally considered an international resource conducive to conservation?

- This policy brings wildlife to the highest political level as a public good. It insures federal involvement in all nations affected.
- This forces – by law – all federal, provincial, state, and municipal jurisdictions affected into active cooperation.
- This generates a lasting federal attention to wildlife crossing the borders.
- Treaty law is considered strong law that supersedes that of lower national jurisdictions. Thus treaties are effective conservation and management tools.

### 6. Science Is the Proper Tool for Discharge of Wildlife Policy

Science is considered to be the proper tool for discharging management responsibilities. This is the Roosevelt Doctrine. This is another basic policy that gave rise to science-based wildlife professionals hired by the state to perform wildlife conservation.

- Science is by and large our best tool to formulate appropriate management and policy options because it is based on a disinterested pursuit of understanding. It stands apart from political considerations and favours a hands-off policy by elected representatives.
- This policy insures that public wildlife is in the hands of exceedingly well-educated individuals and that it is scrutinized continuously.

### 7. Democracy of Hunting

The concept of "sport hunting" has origins in Europe. The term "sport" as applied to hunting refers to a code of honour, rather than

a frivolous recreational pursuit; it was adopted to distinguish hunting under codes of fair chase from market hunting, and it is not an appropriate descriptor of North American hunting.

The European model allocated wildlife by land ownership and privilege, whereas in North America, all citizens in good standing can participate. The European model, a manifestation of class conflict between aristocracy and commoners, often led to wildlife poaching as a means for inflicting revenge on the ruling class. In North America, where all citizens have the opportunity to participate, everyone is a stakeholder, not just the privileged. Theodore Roosevelt wrote eloquently of the societal gains to be made by keeping land available for hunting by the common people. Hunting as a deep-rooted passion is thus fundamental to wildlife conservation, but only within a framework of honourable, ethical conduct. By adopting a code of "fair chase," North Americans explicitly opposed the excess of wildlife slaughter, particularly in enclosures.



*Fishing in the Crowsnest*

### What can we learn from the North American Wildlife Conservation Model?

- Hunters support wildlife conservation because there is something in it for them: a payoff in their annual allocation of wildlife. The motive is selfish, not idealistic. As a profit motive drives a capitalistic economy, so a profit motive drives the North American system of wildlife conservation: the hope for a richer harvest and a richer experience in hunting. Consequently, with self-interests in wildlife, hunters become concerned, active spokespeople for and supporters of wildlife, and experience shows that wildlife will then flourish. Elevate wildlife against the self-interests of the common person and wildlife will



suffer and be destroyed if and when the opportunity arises. Our only hope to retain thriving biodiversity is to embrace a human-centred view for the use of the biosphere, in which wildlife provides for human needs and aspirations and is therefore valued by a broad segment of society. An ecocentric, impersonal view of biosphere management cannot but fail, romanticism notwithstanding.

- Wildlife must remain a harvestable resource, supplying in the first instance food for our tables. It is an alternative to agriculture generating utility from the land. It must not be viewed as a purely recreational resource, as a source of sport or entertainment. Its first order of utility is the provision of a harvest of unusual food of exceptionally high value. Wildlife thrives with attention and dies from neglect. Utility fosters attention.
- We must, therefore, retain the utility of wildlife. For instance, songbirds were historically protected not for moral or ethical reasons, but because they were valued as destroyers of insect pests in fields, forests, and gardens – not because songbirds were cute and entertaining. Today songbirds have no utility in North America and enjoy little organized public support such as is enjoyed by native game birds like the turkey, ruffed grouse, or waterfowl. Songbirds may have the protection of the law, but they have little in the form of tangible popular support – despite birdwatchers.
- We must examine for retention the seven basic conservation policies that have served us so well in bringing back wildlife and retaining continental biodiversity. These contain many counterintuitive lessons about how to maintain and foster a public resource. Would we but dare to manage forests the way we (cheerfully) managed wildlife. Would we but manage marine fisheries the way we manage wildlife – openly, transparently, and with accountability.
- One must point to the awesome power of the democratic process, in which we set aside willingly our differences and unite in a public cause, fostering the welfare of wildlife and through it of the biosphere as well. One should recognize the power of volunteers as social equalizers, as reciprocal carriers of information and power. In this one retains the accountability and openness that has characterized to date the relationship between wildlife managers and the public. It is essential to establish a partnership between managers and the public and to unlock the spirit to act in the public good.
- Wildlife conservation in North America suffers from ignorance of the past, be it an uninformed judiciary or uninformed managers of wildlife unable to defend the system. We must buck the trend!

The universality of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is in doubt, as it is built on some fundamental assumptions, the primary one being that all citizens may participate in both the harvest of wildlife and its management. And that entails the availability of firearms to all citizens, not merely the country's elite. An armed citizenship, one practiced in the art of grassroots democracy and thus accepting of decisions reached by public debate and compromise, is fundamental.

Therefore, there has to be an acceptance of responsibility for a public resource, despite embracing a capitalistic economy and values. Citizens must see wildlife as a common good and must accept sharing on trust. Even the country's elite must participate in the processes of wildlife conservation and must not be exempt from such. There must be willingness by the public to privately support wildlife, accepting public efforts at conservation as minimal at best.

The North American Wildlife Conservation Model is openly opposed by some agricultural interests who would like to tie wildlife ownership to land ownership, make wildlife a private resource to be managed according to market demands and sold to the highest bidder. The same goes for companies who, for whatever reason, lease large land areas and are interested in generating revenue by leasing out hunting rights to the highest bidder.

There is support for these efforts by a significant sector of urban-based, affluent hunters who chafe at bag limits, short seasons, and crowded hunting grounds. Their efforts are effectively supported by gun-control advocates who lobby for a disarmed public. In practice, that means disarming the blue-collar segment of society, leaving the elite well armed.

Without effective, egalitarian public hunting there will be little opposition to privatizing wildlife, making it a plaything of the elite as it has been so often in the past. Canada's most unfortunate gun-control legislation is well on the way to doing just that and is thus in opposition to the North American Wildlife Conservation Model. It is self-evident that in dictatorships, this model is unlikely to be accepted, based as it is on armed civilians who practice effective grassroots democracy. 🍁

*(Dr. Valerius Geist is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science at the University of Calgary. This article is excerpted from a paper that he presented at the International Fund for Animal Welfare Forum 2004, "Wildlife Conservation: In Pursuit of Ecological Sustainability," June 16-19, 2004, Limerick, Ireland. He also presented information from this paper at AWA's 2004 Alberta Wilderness and Wildlife Trust Annual Lecture and Awards. The complete text of Dr. Geist's paper can be found on our website under Wildlife or Lectures.)*



# ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

## NEW REPORT SHOWS PRIMROSE-LAKELAND AREA WORTHY OF PROTECTION

Dr. Ian Urquhart



The past several months have seen a number of significant developments – some positive, others less so – in AWA’s pursuit of protection for the Primrose-Lakeland area in northeastern Alberta. Let’s start with the good news. Thanks to the funding we have received from the Richard Ivey Foundation, we were able to retain Kevin Timoney to prepare a study for AWA on the potential conservation value offered by portions of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR). From a biodiversity perspective, the Lakeland/CLAWR area is important because it spans both the Dry Mixedwood and the Central Mixedwood subregions of Alberta’s boreal forest. The data that Kevin was able to gather and analyze indicate that, in his words, “the region is indeed biologically diverse, relatively unfragmented, and worthy of protection.” It therefore lends considerable strength to our case.

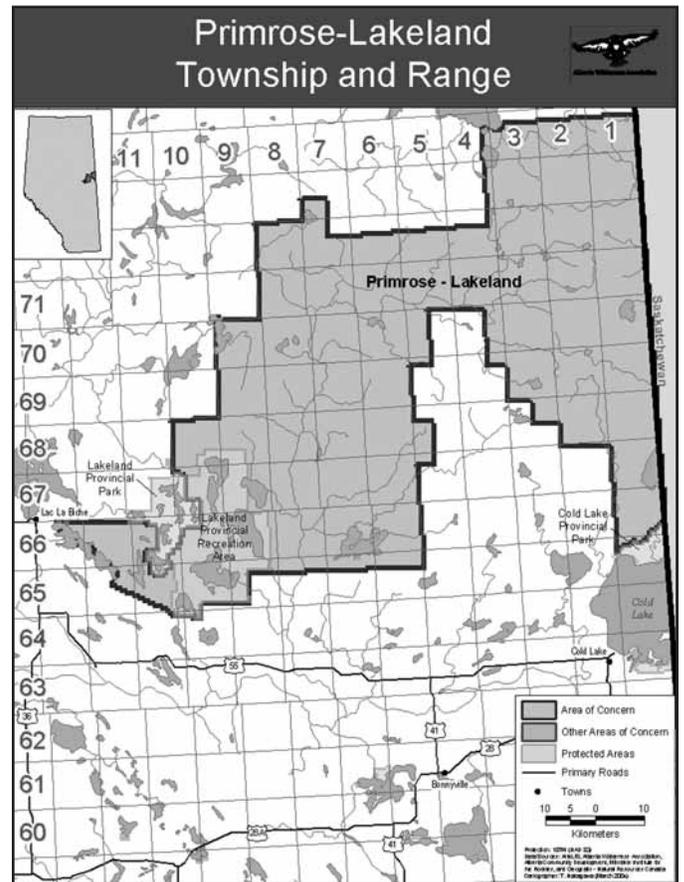
But even this encouraging message has aspects we should be concerned about. While the area’s biodiversity conservation potential is high, the report also underlines the need to gather better information about the flora and fauna found on the range. For decades the military and the energy industry have controlled – make that limited – access to the Range. Consequently, the CLAWR has often been excluded from scientific studies. When it comes to the species tracked by the Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre and the Biodiversity Species Observation Database, the CLAWR is a “virtual terra incognita.” “It is almost a certainty,” the report notes, “that many rare, uncommon, ‘at risk’, ‘sensitive’, ‘keystone’, ‘umbrella’, or otherwise significant species, communities, and ecosystems occur in the CLAWR about which little or nothing is known.”

Another challenge that Kevin Timoney’s report confirms or underlines is the threat that the petroleum industry’s thirst for oil and gas poses to our conservation agenda for the CLAWR. Over the past month we have been mapping the locations of active petroleum, natural gas, and oil sands leases on the CLAWR. Some townships, particularly those in the south-central portion of the Range, appear to be characterized by more wells than forest. One oilsands company, for example, has erected 796 wells on 54 sections of land inside the southern boundary of the Range.

This report will play an important part in our efforts to try to secure the support and participation of local conservation groups and First Nations in the vicinity of Lac La Biche and Cold Lake. December and January promise to be months

where we meet with organizations such as the Beaver River Naturalist Society, the Cold Lake First Nations, and the Lac La Biche Birding Society in order to outline our objectives and to try to secure the local support and participation we believe to be essential to promoting sustainability in Primrose-Lakeland.

Now that the provincial election is behind us and the new cabinet has been sworn in, we will be focusing some of our attention on the MLAs from Lac La Biche-St. Paul and Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and the Honourable Gary Mar, the new Minister of Community Development. Given Ray Danyluk’s (Lac La Biche-St. Paul) support for the protection of the Garner Fen, as well as comments he has made in the Legislature about Lakeland’s potential to become a “Kananaskis of the North,” we are very hopeful that we will be able to work together to finally get the government to adopt an ecologically sensitive management plan for Lakeland Provincial Park and Recreation Area. 🌿



Map of AWA's Primrose-Lakeland Area of Concern



# FOREST SUCCESSION ON SEISMIC LINES, WELLSITES, AND ROADS

Mark Sherrington, Landscape Ecologist



Oil and gas exploration and development creates linear disturbances that affect boreal forest ecosystems by splitting up, or fragmenting, boreal forests. Over time, through the natural process of forest succession, natural plant communities regenerate.

Environmental assessments (EA) predict the effects of a proposed activity by comparing the planned disturbance footprint of a project to the existing disturbance. In a traditional EA approach, disturbances are assumed to remain on the landscape regardless of when they were constructed. This traditional representation of baseline – the condition that exists at the time a project application is submitted – does not take into account forest succession.

In reality, the disturbances created by oil and gas exploration and development do not remain on the landscape indefinitely, but regenerate through a process termed “forest succession.” Given that forest succession does occur on the landscape, representations of baseline in EA may overstate the amount of existing disturbance on the landscape.

Forest fragmentation has several effects on boreal forest ecology and on biodiversity in general. The clearance of lines in the boreal forest increases the accessibility by predators such as wolves (*Canis lupus*) and humans that use the linear disturbances as movement corridors (Dyer 1999, Dyer et al. 2001). Similarly, the movement of invasive plant species such as Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) and timothy (*Phleum pratensis*) into undisturbed areas can be facilitated by these linear disturbances. In addition, invasive weeds can alter the ecosystem’s natural processes and displace native, threatened, and endangered vegetation and habitat.

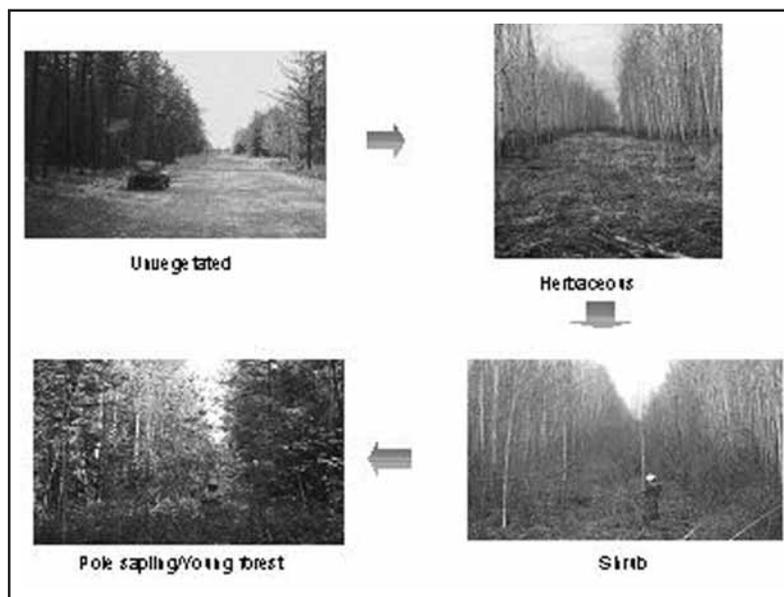
From an ecological function perspective, fragmentation affects those species that use forest habitats (aspen, white spruce, black spruce) extensively. However, certain species extensively use open habitats (graminoid fens and cleared areas such as seismic lines) in the boreal forest. For such species – for example, wood bison (*Bison bison athabascae*) –

the forested elements of the landscape can present barriers to movement while herbaceous areas such as wellsites and seismic lines are typically utilized for grazing and movement (Gates et al. 2001). Thus, a fragmented landscape for species adapted to forest habitats may be a connected landscape for species utilizing herbaceous-dominated open habitats.

Fragmentation is measured in a number of ways. When viewing the landscape as a whole, the primary attributes of the undisturbed habitat (predominantly forest) that are quantified are class area, number of patches, average patch size, total edge, and total core area. Total core area is the portion of a forest stand that is located more than 100 metres from an edge. The question I wanted to answer in my research was this: “How do the metrics used to measure forest fragmentation

differ between the traditional EA approach, where succession is not accounted for, and an approach that accounts for forest succession?”

The flow diagram shows the progression from an unvegetated disturbed stage, to the herbaceous stage, shrub stage, and pole sapling stage on linear disturbance. The structural stages are of interest. Herbaceous and shrub structural stages are barriers to movement for species that use interior



forest habitats, or, conversely, are conduits for predators such as wolves.

Pole sapling/young forest structural stages are comprised of densely-spaced trees that impede predator movement and human ATV use, and provide hiding cover for disturbance-sensitive wildlife species. Previously separated mature and old forest stands can be reconnected, re-establishing movement for species with lower tolerance for disturbance. One species that benefits from regeneration of seismic lines is the cat-sized member of the weasel family, the American marten (*Martes americana*). This species is a boreal forest resident that declines in abundance where forest is highly fragmented (Hargis and Bissonnette 1999). Regeneration of former barriers to movement (seismic lines) can increase useable habitat for marten and other interior species.

In this research, I measured structural stage regeneration at 30 locations along previously cut seismic lines in the boreal



## Landscape Fragmentation Comparison of Baseline without and with Linear Disturbance Regeneration



*Landscape Fragmentation Comparison of Baseline without and with Linear Disturbance Regeneration. Forest succession on linear disturbance: the change in area of forest regenerated on clearings is 2% of total study area. Regeneration reconnects mature forest, reducing the total forest edge by 59%, increasing total core area by 33%.*

### Landscape Measures

### Traditional Cumulative Disturbance Landscape

### New Natural Regeneration Landscape

Class Area (ha)	1518	1551
Number Patches (#)	91	25
Mean Patch Size (ha)	16.7	62.1
Total Edge (km)	151	95
Total Core Area Index (%)	33	44

forest. Aerial photograph interpretation on large-scale, false-colour infrared photo-pairs also helped determine the structure of regeneration on lines with the following results.

The figure and results column on the left pertains to the traditional baseline landscape against which projects are assessed in EA. In this “cumulative-disturbance landscape,” all disturbance ever constructed is considered in the baseline. The figure and results column on the right shows a new approach where a “natural regeneration landscape” is used as baseline. In this landscape, regeneration on human disturbance reconnects many patches of the undisturbed forest (the matrix). In the “natural regeneration landscape,” relatively small areas of regeneration (two percent of total area) reconnected the undisturbed forest portion of the landscape.

The natural regeneration baseline landscape has a lower level of forest fragmentation compared to baseline measured traditionally. Compared to the traditional EA baseline, there is less edge habitat where weedy species typically occur and more core area that supports sensitive species such as American marten in the “natural regeneration landscape.”

To ensure that project effects are stated as accurately as possible in EA, assessment methodology, particularly GIS

applications, can provide a closer representation of the actual landscape. The parameters needed to run these models (structural stages, site conditions) still need to be collected on regenerating disturbance in the boreal forest. ❁

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# ORLOFF-OTTER WILDLAND PARK A PLAYGROUND FOR ATVS

Vivian Pharis, AWA Director



Only after visiting Otter-Orloff Lakes in June 2004 did I learn, to my amazement, that the area is actually an official Wildland Park. My amazement was for two reasons. First, I had never heard of the area before my chance visit. Second, all access to the lakes appears to be by off-road vehicle. Like so much of Alberta, particularly the highly roaded boreal, quads and snowmobiles are dominating the area around the lakes and causing considerable damage. Hardly the situation most of us would expect to find in an officially protected area!

North and east of Edmonton is a broad band of wetlands and lakes, dominated by Lesser Slave Lake to the west and Cold Lake on the Saskatchewan border. Otter-Orloff Lakes lie in this band, north of the town of Athabasca, off highway 813, and at the south end of the Pelican Mountains. They are smallish lakes compared to many in this wetland band, but from the ground they seem impressive bodies of water. Still relatively pristine in terms of infringing clearcuts and seismic lines, they seem to be a worthy representative of an aspect of the boreal, were they given the opportunity to stay intact. But from what I saw, action is needed to control destructive OHV activity, especially along the riparian edges of the lakes – areas obviously attractive to the boys with muscle machines.

Open understory mature spruce and mixed spruce-aspens forests surround the lakes. Rich riparian areas fringe much of their shoreline, and a wide mix of shorebird and waterfowl species was evident in June, including sizeable flocks of pelicans. Deer, moose, and black bear sign was common and a long-used trapper's cabin on the lake's shore indicates the presence of furbearers.

My husband was conducting forestry field studies in the Calling Lake area in June, so Francie, my Labrador dog, and I decided to accompany him so that we could explore some of the boreal. One of my husband's local colleagues suggested a hike into Otter-Orloff and lent us a map. Off we set along a trail that I learned had been deliberately bulldozed around

1960 by a local wanting fishing access. In places where the trail had been allowed to regenerate, the original grade was barely visible anymore. Most of it though, along with new detours, has become a hardened, expanding, and deeply eroded road, maintained by apparently increasingly heavy OHV traffic.

It took Francie and me about one and a half hours to reach the lake and a fishing camp. A couple of small fishing boats with outboard motors were putting along just off shore. A couple of guys were lounging in camp and other quad camps were scattered nearby. "Did you walk in here?" they called to me, obviously surprised that anyone would or could do such a primitive thing.

Francie and I continued on the road (now more like a recent quad trail) where it followed in the trees along the shore of Orloff Lake. The day had become hot and walking was pleasant through tall spruce stands until the trail

was forced to cross feeder streams and wetland fingers. Here the rich plant life, now bright with marsh marigolds, was churned into muck holes, some almost impossible to negotiate on foot.

Eventually the trail led to an old trapper's cabin that was obviously in current use and that was surrounded by decades of decaying human effluvia. It is this wildland park's ugly slum and there has been no evident attempt to clean it up. Beyond the cabin, the quad trail continued to follow the lake's shore, but usually back in the trees. However, new parallel trails are becoming evident right on the

lake's edge, where quads find more challenging terrain and where new and disturbing damage is happening to sensitive riparian zones.

After several hours we turned back and once again found ourselves at the quad camp where fishing boats could be launched. The two guys who had spoken to us were just leaving on their quads to return to their truck for more supplies. They again expressed surprise that I had walked so far around the lake and back – they had seen me on a far shore. They preceded us toward the trailhead but as we walked along, the whine of their engines remained annoyingly near. The road was too rough for them to make speed.



*Significant damage from ATV tracks along the edge of Orloff Lake*



*Old trapper's cabin surrounded by human waste shows complete lack of care for the environment in this Wildland Park*



Francie and I took a late lunch break in the shade of a big spruce, then continued our walk out. We reached the trailhead just as the two quadders were about to return to camp. Now they were incredulous and asked if I did marathons. They thought there was no way a person could walk as fast as someone on a quad. They were middle-aged men with no

obvious impediments, but they must have forgotten that legs have carried humans over these lands for thousands of years and that the quad is not a necessary extension of the human body. If wildland parks are ever truly protected in this province, people like these two may rediscover their legs, along with the joys of quiet solitude. ❁

## DISCOVERY OF THE NESTING GROUND OF THE WHOOPING CRANE

Dr. W. A. Fuller



I have received a lot of credit for the discovery in 1954 of the only whooping cranes in Canada, but if it hadn't been for the fire and an observant forester named George Wilson, I might never have gone out to identify the birds. The last nest of a whooping crane had been seen in about 1926 in Saskatchewan. Members of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USWS) and others had searched from central Saskatchewan to the delta of the Mackenzie River without success. The USWS was interested because whoopers migrated to Texas.

In 1945 I spent the summer working on fish in Lake Athabasca. At the end of the summer I decided that I would never return to the north. However, in 1946 I signed up to spend the summer at Great Slave Lake. The following winter I put together all the data that had been gathered over several years on the "Inconnu" (*Stenodus leucichthys*) and submitted the result as my masters thesis for the University of Saskatchewan. Convocation took place in early May.

A few days after the ceremony, I turned 23, and on the last day of May I married the young lady who is still my wife. I had previously applied for one of two jobs advertised by the federal government, and I was approved for the one based in Fort Smith, NWT. I found the north gets under your skin, and my wife Marie and I landed in Fort Smith on June 5. My duties centred on mammals in the south half of the Mackenzie District and in Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP), part of which is in Alberta.

In those days, the United States sent a bird guy, Bob Smith, and an assistant down to the Arctic Ocean. They flew out of Fort Smith for two or three days, and I usually took them up on their invitations to go on their sorties. Bob was a great guy,

as well as a good pilot and a good bird man. Although waterfowl were the main target, they kept their eyes open for other birds, such as whooping cranes. As late as 1954 they had not made a sure discovery of whoopers, although on an earlier flight with them, one thought he had spotted a crane, but by the time Bob swung the plane around, whatever had been seen had disappeared.

In June 1954, a fire broke out in the northern part of Wood Buffalo Park. On June 30, the fire crew radioed to Fort Smith that one of their pumps was out of order. The forestry guy, George Wilson, went out to the site of the fire in a whirlybird piloted by Don Landells. I was in my office around 4:00 p.m. when a message came in from the plane to the effect that George and Don had seen a few big white birds, which they suspected were whooping cranes. Furthermore, Landells was to make another trip on the same route with a new pump, and if Bill Fuller was at the landing spot at 5:00 p.m. he could go back with Don and the pump.

Bill Fuller was at the landing and ready to go at 5:00 p.m. Don took us back on about the same route he had flown earlier, and we did see some large white birds, which were certainly whoopers. There were young birds as well as adults, so there was reason to believe that the nesting grounds were not too far away. I think we saw about nine birds on that first trip. I sent a telegram to the head office in Ottawa later that evening.

Ottawa's reply the next morning asked me to keep an eye on the birds whenever there was a chance. I made several trips on an

ordinary prop plane. On one such trip I counted thirteen birds, which was just over half of the birds (21, I think) counted in the Texas flock at that time.

The Whooping Crane Society and the USWS were very excited about the discovery, and soon there was talk about a ground survey in 1955. Canadian and American scientists would carry it out. However, the Canadian Wildlife Service



Whooping crane

(From a 1982 *Hinterland Who's Who* brochure on the Whooping Crane written by E. Kuyt and published by the Canadian Wildlife Service)



(CWS) did not want to commit to that until there was proof of nesting, so I was to take a look next spring as early and as often as possible.

In those days, light aircraft landed on skis in winter and on pontoons in summer. The changeover was made in Edmonton in spring and fall, so it was difficult to find transportation just when I needed it. While our government plane was in Edmonton, I got a ride with a pilot from Yellowknife on his way to Edmonton. I got another ride in a plane owned by the RCMP in Fort Smith. On that flight I saw what could only be a crane sitting on a nest. So the ground survey was on. Robert P. Allen of the National Audubon Society was to lead it. When Allen arrived in Fort Smith, we made one flight over the area so I could show him the location of the known nests.

I made other flights, and I think I found a few more nest sites, but when the ground survey came on, I was at a conference in Alaska. The attempted ground survey is a story of its own.

In 1956 I moved to Whitehorse in the Yukon, and Ernie Kuyt of the CWS took over work on the cranes. I had flown over the region of the first sightings a number of times. I had noted the tracks in the mud and searched my brains for a mammal that would make such a trail in the soft mud of the lake bottoms. Big birds never crossed my mind until I saw the cranes there in 1955.

So who discovered the nesting ground? Wilson and Landells, who saw the big white birds? Me, because I saw young birds as well as mature birds on my sorties in 1955 and was also the first to see a female on a nest in the spring of 1956?

It doesn't really matter. The important point is that an important nesting ground was found. Each year for several more years, Ernie Kuyt found new nests. The total number of cranes in the Texas/WBNP flock has continued to increase in most, if not all, years since 1955. ❁

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## BALANCING ACT IN KANANASKIS A DETRIMENT TO WILDERNESS

Jason Unger, AWA Conservation Specialist

The government tells us that the recent decision to allow further development in the Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area of Kananaskis Country “strikes a balance.”

Webster’s defines “balance” as the “stability produced by even distribution of weight on each side of the vertical axis ... equipoise between contrasting, opposing, or interacting elements, equality between the totals of the two sides of the account.”

Another, simpler definition (from yourdictionary.com) is “a state of equilibrium or parity characterized by cancellation of all forces by equal opposing forces.”

The use of the word implies weighing contrary ideas, fairness, reason, and impartiality. When we balance ideas or balance interests we imply that we are going through a process of careful and scientifically valid consideration and exploration of contrary views. Hefty meaning, and this is likely why politicians love the term. Those more cynical among us, however, despise how “balance” is bandied about, absolving the speaker of common sense or real proof and scientific exploration.

Indeed, it is the cynical view of “balance” that appears to have been applied in the Evan-Thomas decision. The allowance for further development to the lodging and recreation facilities of Evan-Thomas was proclaimed to “strike

a balance between protection of our natural environment and providing tourism and recreation opportunities for ever increasing numbers of visitors.” As part of this allowance, a portion of the Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area was placed into the adjacent Bow Valley Wildland Park and the Spray Valley Provincial Park.

How can this “striking a balance” be claimed? The government relies on its “extensive opportunities for public input” in the development of the Evan-Thomas Management Plan for this purpose. To say public input was requested is no

lie; unfortunately we don't have a clue how the public input was “balanced” due to a lack of transparency in the actual decision-making process.

What we do know is from past surveys that indicated a majority of Albertans have wanted to see limits placed on development in Kananaskis. Indeed, in a 1999 survey of Albertans, a majority felt that Kananaskis was reaching its

limits in terms of use and that wilderness should take priority over further recreational development.

What we also know is that the Evan-Thomas is an important wildlife corridor and that further infrastructure development and increased use that accompanies the development will likely have an adverse effect on the wildlife population of the area. Assessing this adverse effect does not



Hiking in the Evan-Thomas area of Kananaskis



occur, however, as no environmental impact assessment (EIA) was conducted. Undoubtedly the reaction from government would be that an EIA is not required by law and therefore they needn't conduct one. Yet with the Alberta public clearly realizing that recreational restrictions are required to maintain the wilderness values of the area, the choice not to do an EIA further undermines the purported "balance."

In this light, does the "balance" reflect the nature of Albertan's interests or does it simply cow-tow to the business interests in Kananaskis Country? If balance does exist, why was the decision lacking in transparency? We have no idea

how the public input was weighed or if it was weighed at all; indeed, how the scales were loaded is a mystery to everyone but the government (and possibly some business interests).

Albertans love their wilderness, they love their recreation, and they love their natural environment. Albertans deserve more than broad public relations proclamations of balance. They must be able to see that decisions about their wildlands are being made not on economics and the views of narrow interest groups but on the views of Albertans and on evidence of strong science. ❁

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## GOVERNMENT BOARD'S REFUSAL TO HEAR ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP'S APPEAL OF WATER LICENCE DECISION STILL UNEXPLAINED AFTER FIVE MONTHS - THIS IS NOT RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Southern Alberta Environmental Group, News Release: November 5, 2004

Five months after deciding to dismiss an appeal by the Southern Alberta Environmental Group (SAEG) of an irrigation district water licence amendment, Alberta's Environmental Appeal Board (the Board) has yet to provide reasons. The Board has informed SAEG that it is "compelled to meet other timelines."

"Providing reasons for a decision is an administrative requirement of law; the decision to deny access to the appeal process should not have been made without articulating reasons," states Cheryl Bradley, representative of SAEG. "This unreasonable delay leads to speculation that either the cabinet-appointed Board is extremely disorganized or that a hasty decision was made in the absence of clear and objective rationale; either way it is not responsible government," says Bradley.

On October 31, 2003 Alberta Environment granted an amendment to a water licence that will allow the Saint Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) to use water for purposes other than irrigation, to the long-term detriment of the aquatic environment in the southern tributaries of the Oldman River. In an April 24, 2004 meeting before the Alberta Environmental Appeals Board, SAEG sought standing to appeal the Director's decision. SMRID argued that SAEG should not be heard.

On May 28, 2004 SAEG was informed by the Board that the group and its members are not directly affected by the licence amendment, the appeal is dismissed, and reasons would be provided in "due course." The Board's decision

contradicts an earlier one by Alberta Environment to consider SAEG directly affected because SAEG "is a local interest group" and "the amendment has regional implications related to water supply in the basin."

"SAEG members are concerned about the lack of fair and open process regarding water allocation decisions, particularly when the health of our rivers is threatened," states Bradley. "The seriousness of our concern is reflected in the



St. Mary River

significant financial (\$15,000) and volunteer commitment required to prepare and file affidavits with the Environmental Appeal Board. It is unjust that a group of informed, concerned citizens is denied a fundamental avenue of appeal regarding these very important decisions."

Water to SMRID comes from the overallocated southern tributaries of the Oldman River – the St. Mary, Belly, and Waterton Rivers. Below the irrigation dams and diversions,

these rivers flow at regulated minimum flows, which are just ten percent of mean flows, most of the time. The aquatic environment has been assessed as heavily impacted and degraded. Fish and cottonwoods are in decline and water quality adversely affected. The amendment to SMRID's licence fails to use saved water to save rivers and allows the private irrigation board to make decisions about how water, a scarce public resource, will be allocated in future. In June 2004 SMRID refused to provide SAEG with information on its water conveyance agreements because "disclosure might be harmful to personal privacy and commercial interest." ❁



# LIVINGSTONE MOTOCROSS CROSSES THE LINE

Jason Unger, AWA Conservation Specialist



The seeming regulatory vacuum of off-road vehicle (OHV) use in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains must come to an end, and sooner rather than later. A case in point is the recent motocross that took place in the Livingstone Range south of Kananaskis Country. The race took place free of any bothersome regulation and apparently didn't need any approvals, despite its relatively high impact on public land.



*Trail damage due to the Livingstone motocross race*

The race happened on the July long weekend and resulted in erosion and scarring of the land and siltation of water bodies, as one comes to expect from high-rpm off-road racing. The race itself also had significant impacts on other recreational users and recreational businesses in the area. The impacts of the high-pitched whine of motorbikes, the oil and gas being leaked into the environment, and the safety issues related to high-speed vehicles in the wilderness undermined other users' ability to enjoy the area.

The race really takes the cake, however, for apparently going through a portion of the Don Getty Wildland Park. If this were in fact the case, the race appears to be in violation of the provisions of the General Regulation under the Provincial Park Act and is indelible proof of the ineffectual regulatory framework currently in place to manage OHV use.

With the assistance of some proactive members, AWA was able to bring the race to the attention of both the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, and later obtained photographic evidence of the detrimental impacts of the race.

Following the race, AWA sought the government's reaction to the impacts of the race, and indeed, it appears the government decided to take action. In a reply letter to the AWA dated October 8, 2004, Minister Mike Cardinal stated that "Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) has investigated this matter and has sent a letter of warning to the event organizers. Information on the trespass into Don Getty

Wildland Park was forwarded to the department of Community Development for their investigation and possible enforcement action." Further followup with Community Development is planned.

AWA is at once encouraged that "possible enforcement" is being pursued and forlorn that such races occur in such an unregulated manner in the first place.

The fact that SRD knew of the race prior to its running and that no authorizations were obtained, or even required, raises many questions about how the public can trust that races, if allowed at all, will be conducted in a lawful and environmentally responsible manner. Of activities that detrimentally impact the land, it appears that the off-road vehicles alone are free of regulation or requirements to obtain approvals for their activities.

Whether the enforcement action against the organizers will be effective is also an open question when, without any authorizations or regulation being in place, actually identifying those responsible for the race may prove difficult.

We encourage Community Development to make every effort to ensure that the Wildland Park is protected and the full weight of the law is brought to bear. To do otherwise will only encourage future races to be conducted in a similar fashion, a fashion unacceptable on public land.



*Motocross racers*

We must also tell the government that followup enforcement, while required, is not an effective way of dealing with the off-road vehicle problems. Motocross events in Alberta's public wildlands is not appropriate in the first instance. Further OHV use generally must be appropriately regulated, with designation of specific routes and timelines on access to ensure that the detrimental effects of OHV use are minimized. This should be done in conjunction with promotion of low-impact recreation like hiking. Failure to properly regulate OHV use in the Livingstone Range undermines the ecosystem and watershed values provided by this important area. ❁



# ALBERTA CARIBOU POPULATION FACES GRIM FUTURE AT THE HAND OF INDUSTRY

Lara Smandych, AWA Conservation Biologist



Caribou in Alberta's foothills are experiencing steep declines in their numbers and are facing the permanent loss of their habitat through habitat fragmentation, alteration, and alienation. The face of Alberta's foothills landscape is changing. This natural subregion is only two percent represented in the province

and has been subjected to extreme transformation from increasing industrial activities, including oil and gas and forestry, along with recreation. In turn, the demographics of Alberta's remaining caribou herds are shifting.

Woodland caribou are now listed as "Threatened" under both the Federal Species at Risk Act and the Provincial Alberta Wildlife Act. Of Alberta's 18 herds of caribou, three have been ranked as of "Immediate Risk Of Extirpation" by the 2004 Alberta government's Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan. Included among these herds is the Little Smoky herd located in the foothills northwest of Hinton.

The Little Smoky caribou, with its population estimated at fewer than 80 animals, have been at the centre of recent conflict and debate between ENGOs and industry. AWA, along with other ENGOs and interested parties, met with Suncor and partner ConocoPhillips (and their consultants) in September to discuss the development of a 101 km-long gas pipeline through the heart of the Little Smoky home range.

The groups attempted to negotiate re-routing options for the pipeline, echoing the recommendations made by caribou scientists who had advised Suncor to locate its pipeline outside the range. Currently within the Little Smoky caribou range, approximately 85 percent of the habitat is located within 250 meters of a linear corridor. Although the area within and surrounding the Little Smoky range has experienced a high degree of industrial activity and fragmentation, Suncor's pipeline would traverse through the only relatively intact habitat remaining in Little Smoky range.

The development of this pipeline would undoubtedly pave the way for further industrial activity within the area,

including tie-ins and other infrastructure. As compensation, Suncor has committed over \$1 million to restore approximately 400 km of existing linear disturbance in the range, including seismic lines, cutlines, and trails.

Although Suncor's efforts are acknowledged, the issue is not about dollars and cents. Suncor is of the opinion that their investment into restoration will help to eliminate some of the negative effects of linear disturbance on the caribou herd. However, if the company were truly interested in the viability



Little Smoky

of the herd, they would not be operating within this sensitive range to begin with. Although Suncor is willing to account for existing disturbance left by others, they are in no way accounting for the brand new disturbance they will be exerting on the landscape. They would have us believe that if it is not them who develop the pipeline, it will be constructed anyway

by another company unwilling to undertake any mitigation endeavours.

Suncor puts the blame on the government, which allows industry into these sensitive areas. This assertion is correct insofar as the project was granted approval by both the Alberta Energy Utilities Board (EUB) and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). However, industry must take the lead and set a higher standard of practice and push government to do the same. It cannot be left strictly up to ENGOs and other concerned individuals and organizations.

Suncor's activities come on the eve of the release of the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan (Caribou Plan) to the Minister in October for approval and implementation. Recommendations of the report include the establishment of range teams and range plans for caribou herds. Without gathering further scientific data, it is unknown what impacts the new industrial development would exert on these already threatened caribou. Given the high value placed on these animals, a moratorium on new development within these sensitive ranges is not much to ask if it would lead to the development of better management practices in the range and the revitalization of the population.



The implications of the release of the provincial Caribou Plan is believed to be of concern to other industry players. In the week prior to, and the day of, the release of the Caribou Plan to the Minister, AWA received many inquiries by companies to discuss their activities in areas within and adjacent to the Little Smoky caribou range. From discussion with these companies, they did not appear to be concerned about the possible implications the Caribou Plan might exert on their activities, including a possible moratorium on new activity in the caribou ranges considered to be at immediate risk. "A moratorium on oil and gas – I doubt it. After all, this is Alberta!" These words come from companies who themselves have endorsed the Caribou Plan. Although they appear to support the initiative, their business-as-usual attitude does little to reflect any commitment.



*Caribou*

We must be cautious not to forget that the primary issue is the viability of the Little Smoky caribou herd. The fact is, Alberta's government continues to allow industrial activity in the ranges of these threatened species, and industry continues to purchase the leases. It remains uncertain whether linear disturbance restoration will have a substantial benefit for the caribou. Methods have not been assessed for effectiveness and would require scientific confirmation before they are implemented. These unknowns may place an unacceptable risk on an already threatened herd. More information, including the viability of the herd, the quantity and location of key habitat, and parameters of present and historic ranges, is required before allowing any new industrial development within the caribou ranges at immediate risk of extirpation in this province.

A pipeline may be worth millions, but the survival of the Little Smoky caribou population is priceless! ❁

## GRIZZLY RECOVERY PLAN TO BE PRESENTED TO GOVERNMENT

**Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator**



Alberta's Grizzly Bear Recovery Team has been working for the last two years to produce its Grizzly Recovery Plan, and this is due to be presented to the Minister for Sustainable Resource Development in late November 2004. Although filled with lots of pleasant sentiments, the plan appears to do little to address the habitat disturbance that is the root cause of Alberta's threatened grizzly bear population. It is hoped that the plan will continue to recommend a suspension of the grizzly bear hunt until grizzly numbers are recovered.

The former Minister failed to adopt the recommendations of any of his scientists on this issue, and also failed to act upon their recommendation to upgrade the status of grizzlies to "Threatened" in the province. But with a change of Minister in the recent cabinet reshuffle, AWA is optimistic that the new incumbent may be somebody who is more inclined to listen to his scientists before making decisions.

The Grizzly Bear Alliance have been working hard to compare Alberta's flawed recovery plan with plans in other jurisdictions that have been demonstrably successful, such as the Yellowstone Grizzly Recovery Plan. AWA believes that there is a need for an alternative, scientifically defensible version of the plan, which would focus on what would be needed to actually recover grizzly bears in Alberta (as opposed to what could be done to recover grizzlies without upsetting industry or politicians).

The question remains: are Albertans prepared to pay the financial costs that will be required to keep grizzly bears on the landscape? Albertans appear to say "Yes": their political representatives appear to say ... "Maybe." ❁



# CASTLE WILDERNESS NEEDS EVERYONE'S FOCUS NOW

Jason Unger, AWA Conservation Specialist

*The farther backward you can look the farther forward you are likely to see.*

--Winston Churchill

*If you chase two rabbits, you will lose both.*

--Author unknown

However cliché it may seem, we need to turn over a new leaf for the Castle Wilderness. Learning from decades of past difficulties and past battles fought – some won, some lost – we need to ensure that the biodiversity and wildlife values of the Castle are preserved for future generations.

AWA realizes this, our fellow ENGOs realize this, the broader public realizes this. We need only refocus our efforts, as a whole, to have industry, government, and some narrow interest groups come to a similar realization.

The values Albertans place on their environment and its wild spaces have been repeatedly canvassed over the past year. Those values have also been repeatedly stated in favour of preserving our wilderness areas. Preserving the Castle is about our quality of life; it's about Albertans understanding the inherent value of our wilderness in terms of our health and culture. The majority of the public wants a strong wilderness legacy in Alberta. Currently the Castle Wilderness is an essential piece missing from this legacy.

The foresight for this legacy in the Castle requires that we learn from the past, and unify our voices for the future. The foremost requirement for this unity is ensuring that everyone has an understanding and awareness of how we can work together toward this common goal. It also means it is time for Albertans to let the government know that the Castle needs protection.

The Castle has, along with Waterton National Park, the greatest biodiversity in the province. It is a key corridor for numerous species, connecting populations from the national parks and across the range into British Columbia. Without the

protection of the Castle and maintaining or restoring corridors north over Highway 3, there is little hope for preserving wilderness values east of the B.C. border. This in turn will adversely impact wilderness areas in the surrounding areas.

Is there hope? Will the government and industry comply with the environmental values of the Alberta citizenry? Following the election, Premier Klein told us that the people of Alberta have given him a mandate and that he is going to listen. Albertans have been telling him for some time what they want in terms of environment protection, but he has definitely not been listening. It is time to change this.

Dave Coutts, the new Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, is also the MLA for Livingstone-MacLeod, the Castle riding. Minister Coutts should have firsthand knowledge of the issues in the Castle, from off-road vehicles to cumulative effects and the expansion of the Castle Mountain Resort. We must all ensure that he is informed of the values of

protecting the Castle, not only for his constituents but for all Albertans. Even at a basic economic level, as gas reserves continue to decline, the Castle Wilderness, if retained in a relatively pristine state, will constitute some of the most important capital his constituency retains.

Similarly, Gary Mar's return to an environmental arena as the Minister of Community

Development may provide opportunities to ensure that the voice of Albertans is heard in cabinet. His past knowledge of the issues attained in his tenure as Minister of the Environment must be utilized to ensure that our protected areas network coincides with the expectations of Albertans.

Government action is required if the Castle is to be protected, this is for certain. It is essential that we move forward with a common vision, that we acknowledge and incorporate what we have learned from looking back and apply it to looking forward. It's time we let the government know that the one rabbit we're chasing won't get away. 🦅



*Abandoned seismic road, South Drywood Valley*



# MIKE JUDD: CONSERVATION THROUGH OUTFITTING AND ART

John Geary

Mike Judd spent a good portion of the first part of his life introducing people to the wilderness as a guide-outfitter in the southern Alberta Rocky Mountains. While he intends to continue doing that for many years to come, he is also reaching out and connecting people with wilderness through another method: his artwork.

Judd began working as a guide in 1968, after growing up with a love of hunting and the outdoors. His father was an outfitter, so he has spent much of his life traveling in the mountains. "From my earliest years, I've been doing trips in the mountains," he says about combining his passion with earning a living. "I can't imagine living life any other way, really."

That kind of life can lead to some interesting experiences. He has twice taken people from the Pincher Creek area north to Banff on horseback, and during one of those trips, encountered Nature at her most fearsome. "In 1995, we had terrific flooding while crossing the Elk River and the other streams and rivers ... that was a bit of an adventure."

In addition to enjoying the wilderness, he has enjoyed the people he takes into the mountains. And he has his share of stories to tell about many of his experiences, particularly when he deals with clients whose command of English is not always the best.

"I had a German fellow out who spoke virtually no English at all," says Judd. "We were sitting on a hillside the first day of our hunt and I handed him a sandwich. He said, 'You got beers, here?' I said, 'No I don't have any beers.' Then he looked at me and said, 'You don't got black beers?'" It then dawned on Judd his client was asking about four-legged ursines, not some cold refreshment with which to wash down his sandwich.

As Judd has grown older in recent years, he finds he has

become more than just an outfitter – he is a teacher to the people he takes into the mountains, teaching them about the importance of conserving our remaining wilderness. "When I take trips, I always make it educational for the people going with me, so they understand about the problems facing the Rocky Mountains."

During the past 30 years, his clients have sent him hundreds of letters about what he's imparted to them about conservation. Many of them have gone on to join conservation groups or helped conservation in their own way.

As far as his art goes, Judd has had no formal training, although he's been "doodling" all his life. During the past five years, he's turned serious attention to painting – and that started as a result of his outfitting. "I started doing horseback trips with artists, taking them out during the day to paint. I'd have nothing to do while they were busy, so I decided I might as well try doing this too, while I'm waiting."

Although he did produce some pen and ink drawings, he spends very little time drawing now, devoting most of his time to painting. He has 30 paintings in his house right now, almost exclusively landscapes, most of them done in acrylic paint, which he finds easier to work with outside. "It dries quickly, and you don't have the problems that oil presents, although I have to admit, I would prefer to paint in oil. I'm working

towards doing that now."

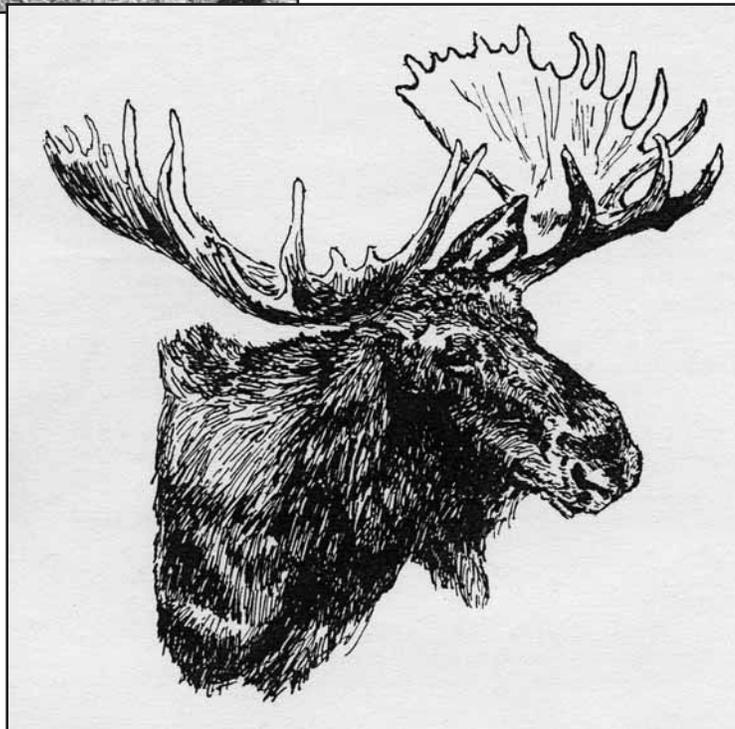
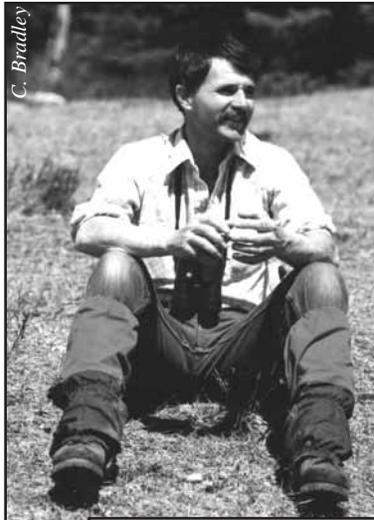
While he has sold several paintings, like most successful artists, Judd does not paint simply to sell them. "I'll paint because I like the scene. I won't paint on commission, because I feel like I'm painting something that's contrived and I won't do that."

Just as Judd followed in his father's footsteps as a guide-outfitter, it now appears one of his sons, 20-year-old Matthew, is following in his footsteps – but as

an artist, not as a guide.

"He's quite a good artist and I'm hoping down the road, he'll be able to pursue his artwork.

Judd thinks the day may come when he will do less and less



guiding and more painting – but that’s a few years away, yet. “I’m 55 now, and I’m still pretty active with guiding and running dogsled trips in the winter, so I can’t see myself shutting it down anytime soon,” he says. Once he does retire from guiding, he will still be educating people about wilderness conservation through his artwork.

“To me, it’s telling my story about the way I see the landscape, and occasionally I do paintings that suggest what industrialization is doing to the wilderness. I’m trying, in another way, to tell that story.” ❁

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

### ALBERTA WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE TRUST ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARDS



*Cliff Wallis receives his award*



*Emcee Peter Sherrington displays photographs from Ian Ross's collection that were auctioned on behalf of the Trust*

AWA would like to thank our speaker, Dr. Valerius Geist, for a thought-provoking talk, and our award winners, guests and volunteers for joining us at November's Annual Lecture and Awards.



*Martha Kostuch receives her award*



*Dr. Valerius Geist receives his award. Dr. Geist was also this year's speaker. He spoke on the topic of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model*



*Beth Ross receives the award on behalf of her brother Ian Ross*



# AWA GALA 2004



*The foyer of the Calgary Zoo's Safari Lodge is set for live auction items and a table of delicious and diverse appetizers*



*Guests bid on items in the silent auction*



*Volunteers carry a coveted canoe during the live auction to display it for the audience*

**October's gala was a wonderful success with many interesting auction items, a great emcee, auctioneers who kept the guests bidding and a band that kept the guests dancing late into the night. Many thanks to our guests & volunteers.**



*Well-known author Andrew Nikiforuk emcees the evening*



*AWA Executive Director, Christyann Olson, welcomes guests*



*AWA President, Richard Secord, introduces the AWA staff and directors*



*The banquet room in the Safari Lodge provides an inviting place for guests*



*The band, The Real Deal, gets guests on their feet and dancing*



*Auctioneer Jesse Starling of Graham Auctions leads the bidding in the live auction*



### HOWSE PASS ARTICLE DRAWS COMMENT

Dr. Herb Kariel

In the article on the Howse Pass Highway (*Wild Lands Advocate*, August 2004) I stated that over the years there had been a spirited debate between the *Rocky Mountain Mountaineer* and the *Red Deer Advocate* regarding its construction, the former supporting it and the *Red Deer Advocate* opposing it. Although this is correct, the *Mountaineer* has changed its position and is now counseling people to no longer waste their efforts pursuing its construction (Editorial, "Howse it possible?" *Mountaineer*, September 28, A4).

When the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater County and Alberta Economic Development recently teamed up to study the development of a highway through Howse Pass, preparing to spend \$30,000 on the project, a *Mountaineer* editorial (September 28, A2) argues that this is a waste of taxpayers' money. There are many valid reasons for this position. Environmentalists would oppose it. The federal Parks Act precludes it and Paul Martin's minority government

would avoid changes to the act. The Golden, B.C. Chamber of Commerce opposes it, and there is little interest on the part of the British Columbia government, which is already struggling with a \$40 billion debt and is concentrating on upgrading the highway to Whistler for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The editorial also states that to raise this issue continually brings Rocky Mountain House into disrepute as the community has worked hard to promote itself as the point "Where Adventure Begins" and thus would attract people who want to enjoy a "West Country" experience.

Brian Mazza, editor of the *Mountaineer*, wrote to me saying that public opinion is changing its approach toward tourism, toward attracting more higher-end spenders looking for wilderness experience and using the services of tourism operators, rather than attracting more campers. The thought of increased transport truck traffic also seems to be unpalatable. ❄

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## TOUGH DEBATE OVER WILDLIFE MONITORING METHODS

Dear Editor:

The article by Ernst and Wright in the recent *Wild Lands Advocate* (October 2004) represents a strong, corporate-induced, anti-science agenda common to fundamentalist right-wing societies. AWA ought to be ashamed to have it under their cover. It panders to the anti-science and anti-environment bent of religious and corporate interests, those that have spurred the decline in our democracy and in our collective environment.

The not-so-subtle attack on wildlife science (and scientists), while playing up their version of sound science – hormones in poop – is characteristic of those laypeople who have "found" their calling and been able to "sell" – cheaply of course, compared to telemetry studies, at least – their phony scientific studies to an industry that quite likes the absence of hard science and the scrutiny and review that comes with it. We all know this is permissible, even encouraged, in Alberta, but it is not permissible or tolerable for the AWA to advance it in any manner.

The attack on the impacts of scientific study on wildlife, contrasted to the broad impacts of cumulative industrial effects documented around the world, may appeal to uninformed Albertans who have a limited grasp of scientific procedure and evidence, but it represents another "fluttering wing" diversion from reality. Again, welcome news for an industry that continues to degrade and fragment public lands.

Contrasting stress levels (in individuals) with differential distribution and mortality is a red herring, but again a

characteristic corporate and fundamentalist tactic to belittle and therefore neutralize not just scientific evidence, but science in general. Certainly this is the modus operandi of the Fraser Institute, CAPP, and the "consultants" who wrote the *Advocate* article, but it is not worthy of print in a journal that claims to represent the public interest, or the interest of people thinking about environmental integrity, scientific honesty, and the future of this province.

It's time for the environmental movement in Alberta to realize they need a voice free from corporate influence and discriminating enough to tell science from sham.

– Dr. Brian L. Horesji

Author Jessica Ernst replies:

Dr. Horesji is entitled to his opinion, as is everyone. We thank him for taking the time to make his opinion available to *Advocate* readers and ourselves. We remain firm in our belief that alternative, less invasive methods of study provide valuable contributions to conservation of listed species. Glucocorticoid work is being used on many species worldwide, even on laboratory mice where handling activities have been found to alter study results. We believe it is the responsibility of good scientists – laypersons and industrial included – to raise questions about whether current research methods alter study results or harm the species being studied.

Contradictory results and new ideas often lead to uproar. Scientific research of little consequence is usually ignored. Questioning why results are contradictory is essential to good



science. We ask Dr. Horesji why our results and methods of study are to be silenced. They may contribute to the conservation and understanding of a listed species. Wanting scientific research restricted because it may come from laypersons is prejudiced and dangerous. Judging whether a scientist is a layperson or not is even more dangerous. Restricting information available to readers because it does not fit into a personal point of view is censorship.

We remain impressed that the AWA is willing to provide its readers with many points of view. The AWA publishing new ideas and contradictory results shows courage. These results may lead other researchers to question telemetry results and in turn, lead to better methods than ours and ultimately improve woodland caribou conservation in Alberta. This is our goal: scientific research at its best – constantly evolving, deepening our understanding, and giving us the opportunity to improve our current capacities.

We thank Dr. Rupert Sheldrake for making his opinion on scientific research publicly available:

“Scientific research is now almost entirely confined to universities and research institutions and carried out by professionals with PhD’s. This exclusivity has seriously impoverished modern biology.”

– **Dr. Rupert Sheldrake**, educated in natural sciences, philosophy and biochemistry at Harvard and Cambridge.

We remain committed to our research and thank Pioneer for being concerned and diligent enough to provide eight years of wildlife monitoring at Chinchaga.

– **Jessica Ernst**

*Author Jonathan Wright replies:*

It is important that Dr. Brian Horesji give voice to his thoughts, and I thank-you AWA for providing an objective forum for all of us. We at Ernst Environmental Services do not have a corporate, right-wing, or religious agenda. Glucocorticoid results are not influenced by the source of funding, and have been used to graphically demonstrate stress in wildlife as a result of anthropogenic impacts in other, institutionally based studies.

Science is an important method for the determination of truth in our world. There are many ways to become a scientist, institutional learning being but one. By definition, you don’t need a degree to be a scientist, although many great scientists hold degrees, and some great scientists don’t. The institution has worked very hard to claim science as theirs and theirs alone, much as the Church has done with the phenomenon of marriage. The extent to which they have succeeded is evidenced by the increasingly widespread assumption in our time that only scientific method (as ordained by the institution) can ascertain truth, and that scientists are, therefore, the ultimate arbiters of truth. Incumbent upon this odious belief is the disrespect, if not outright dismissal, of those whose knowledge was not scientifically derived.

I understand Dr. Horesji’s anguish – we are in the throes of environmental catastrophe, (exacerbated at present day by recurring political catastrophe). But he has obviously confused we at EES (and now you, the AWA, it seems) with ‘the enemy’, if there be such a thing. Frankly, suggesting that we at Ernst Environmental are “lay-people” is not offensive, but it is absurd, by Horesji’s own apparent standards. Myself perhaps, and I don’t mind if I am labeled as such. But my colleagues? Are Masters of Science graduates ‘lay-people’? Are faculty members at the University of Washington ‘lay-people’?

For several years we have kept some of Alberta’s scientific community informed of our work, but have rarely to date been dignified by so much as a perfunctory response. We are all one interdependent community on this planet, and it is in this spirit that we best proceed.

– **Jonathan Wright**, Professional Consulting Layman

## OPEN HOUSE TALKS PROGRAM

### CALGARY

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

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5 per person: \$1 for children

Contact: (403) 283-2025 for reservations

**Pre-registration is advised for all talks**

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

**Swift Foxes in Southern Alberta**

*With Clio Smeeton*

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

**The Spider’s Niche**

*With John Hancock*



Website for  
bear researcher  
**Charlie Russell**  
and his work  
with bears  
in Kamchatka:  
<http://cloudline.org>



# SUPPORT ALBERTA WILDERNESS

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

- **Richard Thomas**

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

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

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

Alberta Wilderness Association	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Circle	\$2500 +
<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropist	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$50
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