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AWA

WILD LANDS ADVOCATE

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Crowsnest Mountain in the heart of winter (D. McIntyre)

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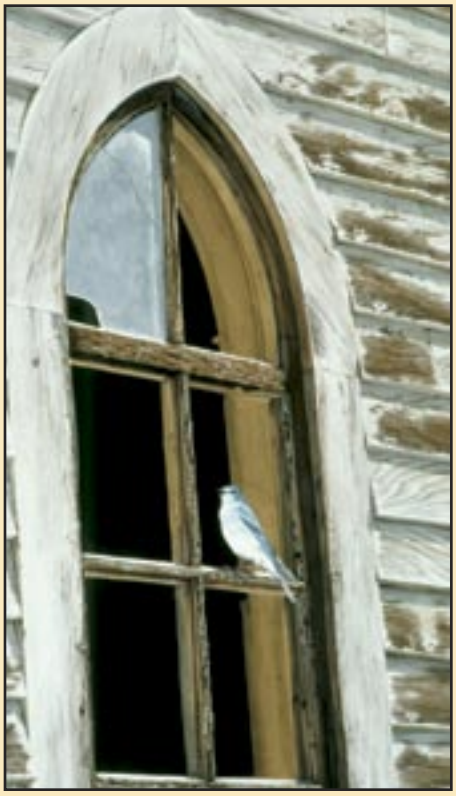

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Exploring Wild Alberta

Lindsay Hanhart

Lindsay Hanhart

Two bucks peek out from snowy branches.

C.Olson

A frosty Alberta morning

Lindsay Hanhart

In 1977 Alberta's schoolchildren chose the great horned owl (Bubo virginianus)*, a year-round resident of the province, as the official provincial bird.*

N. Douglas

The dark-eyed junco (Junco hyemalis) *– the best-known species of junco, a genus of small American sparrows – is a winter resident in the prairies and parklands of Alberta.*

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Stewards Unite Passion and Vigilance in Care and Protection of Natural Areas, Part 2: Sacred and Sacrificed

By Shirley Bray

It's impossible to convey in words why Yamnuska is special. You must walk her paths, lay amongst her flowers, listen to her stream song and stand on her summit to begin to know her – and to know why. I will stand with Yamnuska come what may.

- Aaron Bowersock, Volunteer Steward for Yamnuska Natural Area
From: *Partners in Preservation*, Fall 2000

Volunteer stewards are well known for their enthusiasm and concern for the natural areas they look after, and Bertha Ford is no exception. In 1998 she eagerly took on the stewardship of Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve, an area she knew and loved from her earlier years spent in Rocky Mountain House. She and her husband, Harry, attended First Nations sun dances in the area before Highway 11 was built. After many years in Ontario, they returned to Red Deer and signed up to be volunteer stewards when they saw the area was available.

"I thought, this is amazing," says Ford enthusiastically. "I absolutely love nature. I grew up on a farm." The Kootenay Plains, one of two montane areas in the Bighorn Wildland, lie in the North Saskatchewan River valley. The grassy meadows, subject to chinook winds, are popular winter feeding grounds for ungulates. The area was partially flooded by the building of the Bighorn Dam and the creation of Abraham Lake in 1974. It was upgraded from a Natural Area (NA) to an Ecological Reserve in 1987.

Besides hiking, one of Ford's greatest pleasures is taking care of the bluebird boxes, a feature prescribed by the management plan and a great motivator to make the five-hour drive many times a year. "When I was a child up at Peace River, one day I saw a bluebird, and it was so beautiful," she recalls. When the Fords first arrived, many of the boxes were falling apart. Harry helped repair them and built more boxes, for a total of 23. In 2005, the same year one of the boxes was stolen, there were 94 baby bluebirds and Ford observed second clutches in 13 boxes.

Courtesy of Bertha Ford

Bertha Ford in the Kootenay Plains

Ford successfully lobbied to get fencing installed at the deceptively dangerous Siffleur Falls and a boardwalk along the trail to Siffleur bridge in an erosion-prone area. She is requesting that a sign be erected telling mountain bikers to use the boardwalk as well, since tracks to the side have caused some damage to the sensitive soil. She worries that the large number of visitors to the falls is causing the trail to widen, sometimes up to 10 feet across.

Her first challenge came when she received the steward's manual describing expected duties. "After they sent me the book I nearly died," she says. "I thought, oh, what have I done? I didn't know where the boundaries were. This place was huge." Her military-trained son came to her rescue with maps in hand and helped her identify the boundaries, showed her all the hikes that were in her area in a local hiking book, and took her out hiking. Ford now uses a GPS and can pinpoint whether she is in the area or not.

Other challenges have come her way. While most people are responsible users of the area, she says, garbage and illegal camping are two major issues. The amount of garbage has diminished during her years as steward, a sign, she feels, that people are being more responsible. When she first started, the bag of garbage she collected was so heavy that she and a fellow volunteer had to carry it out on a stick slung between them.

She frequently removes random rings of stones used for campfires. One popular illegal campsite is at the conjunction of three main trails (Siffleur Falls, White Rabbit, Survey Hill) which lies over the two bridges that cross the North Saskatchewan and Siffleur Rivers. Ford describes how some users of this traditional equestrian

area – also used by mountain bikers – cut trees, pile up lumber, and make big fires at this spot. Forestry has removed many of the logs, but people drag them back. Last year she rolled away the big logs used for benches. Forestry looks after green zone stewardship sites but Ford, like many other stewards, laments how busy and how few the government personnel are.

Ford often talks to users of the area. One time she and two friends met four men drinking beer and riding horses in a hiking only area, instead of on White Rabbit trail. They professed ignorance, but she noted that one of them was from the area and should know better.

One of the most egregious incidents Ford has observed is the red graffiti spray-painted on the rock wall at Siffleur Falls. She says the person who did it could be tracked down because the message was signed, but no one is going to do that. Her stewardship reports say it must be removed, but she needs a strong person to do it and to take proper care with any chemicals in this sensitive area. She worries about the example the vandalism sets for the many children who visit the falls.

Ford won an Outstanding Individual Steward Award in 2005. "When I joined there were six people signed up for stewardship there," she says, "but I'm the only one who has stuck it out. But I love the area, and I love the bluebirds, so I keep going back."

Bertha Ford

A bluebird rests on one of the bluebird boxes.

Engaging in Special Places

The Volunteer Steward Program expanded to include other protected areas in 1994. The government reorganized the Alberta Environmental Protection Department, transferring the NA program from the Public Lands Division to Parks Services, where it became part of the broader program of protected areas. However, the field supervisors, who were supposed to be the initial contacts for stewards reporting problems or asking for assistance, were still in Public Lands and Forestry.

"This division of authority was not helpful for the stewards," says Dorothy Dickson, a long-time steward of the Innisfail NA southeast of Red Deer, "especially as it became increasingly difficult to make contact when field staff were reduced in many departments. It seemed to us that stewards, who were expected to do regular inspections and reports, were not welcomed by the divisions and committees that remained in control of the day-to-day management." When the Public Lands Division was moved, amidst much controversy, to the Department of Agriculture in 1993, Dickson says it became even more difficult for stewards to get help or decisions.

There was also the advent of "roving stewards," who help out as required – for example, doing extra work at a site or filling in if a steward were ill. Parks also said they were committed to a more protection-oriented focus and to moving away from building intensive facility developments and infrastructure. Stewards were still being encouraged to support and take an active part in the Special Places program (SP2000), for which there was a good deal of early enthusiasm.

Dave Chabillon, Assistant Deputy Minister for Parks Services, thought volunteers should be active managers of sites. "Protected areas are supposed to benefit Albertans now and in the future, and along with the right to have a natural heritage should go the responsibility to take an interest in managing it" (*Environment Views*, Summer 1993). The government expected to invite the public, industry, and non-governmental organizations to be active stewards (*The Steward*, Spring 1994).

Peter Lee, a former Parks employee and representative of WWF in 1999, wrote, "Special Places is about the wonderful wild geographies containing wild species that help define us as a province and as a people – it is a name reflecting our sense of place, our home, our 'geography of hope,' as articulated by Wallace Stegner" (unpublished notes).

But cracks in the government's commitment in 1992 to complete a system of representative protected areas by 2000 appeared early on. They centred around whether industrial activity should be allowed in protected areas. Existing legislation allowed industrial development by not specifically prohibiting it. Lee commented, "The intent of wilderness BY LAW is not to change the 'heart' of society but to restrain the 'heartless,' in relation to the long-term preservation of our natural heritage" (unpublished notes).

In 1994, Premier Klein went from saying that implementation of SP2000 was a high priority, to it "certainly wouldn't satisfy the objective or desires of the oil industry," and he told the Canadian and American Associations of Petroleum Landmen that he didn't know if SP2000 was the solution. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers supported no industrial activity in protected areas or buffer zones, but off-highway vehicle users, the Alberta Cattle Commission, and the Coal Association were concerned about losing more land.

The 1994 report by the SP2000 Advisory Committee was an honest

attempt to be balanced. It had four main goals for protected areas: protection, outdoor recreation, heritage appreciation, and tourism. Among the recommendations were the protection of an additional 3 to 5 percent of the land and the completion of an inventory of Environmentally Sensitive Areas. The report called for no industrial activity in certain areas. Klein did not support the plan as presented and resorted to using the term "sustainable development" frequently to describe what he thought the goal of protected areas should be.

Bertha Ford

Damage from mountain bikes is evident beside the boardwalk on the way to Siffleur Falls.

Albertans, however, agreed that the main priority should be protection. A World Wildlife Fund-commissioned survey by Dunvegan Group showed that 93 percent of Albertans favoured setting aside a representative network of protected areas with no industrial use. Although he had supported the ENGO's initiative to help people prepare SP2000 nominations, Environment Minister Brian Evans later said that in order to avoid conflicts, the government would only designate areas where there were "no discernable" industrial interests. Early enthusiasm was replaced by procrastination, cautious phrases, and dithering over what cabinet would or would not approve in the end.

Evans, considered a very weak environment minister by conservationists, was replaced in late 1994 by Ty Lund, whose inaugural words in the legislature, wrote *Calgary Herald* columnist Don Martin (Nov. 5/94), were considered a Freudian slip: "As minister of the environment, I intend to look after the government," he said. The official Hansard record changed the last word to "environment." Lund told Martin, "I'm opposed to sterilized large tracts of land. I believe in setting aside areas minimal in size."

When the government released its SP2000 strategy in March 1995, Steven Kennett from the Canadian Institute of Resources Law wrote that it "represents a conscious decision to entrench a business-as-usual approach to development on Alberta's public lands," meaning multiple-use (CIRL Newsletter, No. 50). The conservation focus disappeared as the strategy permitted industrial development in protected areas. Site management plans could proscribe it, but plans could be easily altered by the minister without public input or an environmental assessment.

The 10-page document took three years to complete and addressed complex and controversial issues without much detail or sophistication, Kennett observed. Economic development was added to the tourism goal and the primacy of protection was replaced by a "balance among objectives." Alberta's development-oriented definition of "special places" was very different from any usual definition of protected areas anywhere else in the world.

By June, 21 groups had fled the SP2000 process. In August FAN and CPAWS were lured back to join the Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) by Lund's promise to use legislation as the preferred tool to protect areas. Lund amended the *Willmore Wilderness Park Act* to preclude industrial development and promised similar protection for the Elbow-Sheep and Wild Kakwa, areas which had been promised protection in the 1970s.

Lund also said that economic development referred only to ecotourism, but the issue of industrial development remained unresolved. The government said it would honour existing commitments and allow their renewal. Twenty-six new areas were designated, but their relatively small size generated the nickname "Postage Stamps 2000." Twenty of the sites were less than 1,000 ha in size, the internationally accepted minimum size required to ensure ecological integrity.

NAs came under particular scrutiny by the PCC. An October 1995 review noted that "a lack of legislative clarity and little or no management policy or restrictions means that a range of activities has been allowed on Natural Areas, some of which may be inappropriate and environmentally destructive." The PCC recognized that many sites had ecologically inappropriate boundaries or should be in other protected areas categories and recommended that those sites that made no contribution to the goals of SP2000 should be deleted (with public consultation).

The review described three types of legal status for NAs at this point: those under reservation awaiting designation, many of which had conflicting land uses delaying designation; those designated by Order-in-Council prior to 1981 under the *Public Lands Act*, many of which were small and of variable conservation quality; and those designated after 1981 by the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act* (WAERNA), a mix of locally important conservation and recreation areas as

well as significant conservation sites. Only 9 percent of the sites were larger than 1,000 ha.

WAERNA did not list allowed and prohibited activities. The review said it was not unusual for conditions to be applied to lessen the impact of permitted industrial activity, and sometimes certain activities were not allowed in specific sites, but lack of regulations, lack of action on destructive uses, cumulative impacts, and lack of monitoring was resulting in the incremental destruction of certain sites. By late 1995, only one regulation for one site had been passed – OHVs were prohibited in the Beehive NA.

The PCC noted the increasing dependence on volunteer stewards for NA management, with 261 individuals and groups for 197 sites at that time. The Committee recognized their "invaluable contribution" but noted the lack of support for their activities and recommended strengthening support for the volunteers: "The lack of regulations to address inappropriate site uses results in considerable frustration for volunteer stewards if they have reported problems that no action is ever taken to resolve. Equally frustrating to stewards is the lack of accountability on decisions regarding sites and the seeming lack of commitment to protect a site, as industrial or commercial activities are approved."

The PCC also noted that most NAs had local support but few were of value for SP2000. They essentially recommended a clean up and clarification of the NA category, site regulations, better accountability, and public consultation on the changes. "With the lack of legislative clarity as to exactly what is a Natural Area and a general lack of policy on how to deal with Natural Area issues, a 'clean up' is critically necessary to avoid continued deterioration of sites and accelerating public confusion."

Stewards were encouraged to nominate sites, and positive articles about the program appeared in *The Steward*, the government's newsletter for the volunteer stewards. The Winter 1996 issue showcased the government's endorsement of the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy. SP2000 and the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy were held up as specific strategies to protect biodiversity in Alberta and provide guidelines for future conservation initiatives. In the end, conservationists considered both strategies failures.

Bertha Ford

Graffiti mars the rock face at Siffleur Falls.

Almost a year later, in October 1996, the government passed a change in regulations allowing mineral extraction in Kakwa and Elbow-Sheep because, Lund said, the government couldn't afford to buy back the mineral rights. The 1996 Alberta Environmental Protection document *Rationalizing Alberta's Parks Program* showed the 1986/87 budget for parks to be $48,627,108 for 214 sites; in 1996/97 it was $33,618,995 for 578 sites, with further declines projected in the future.

The Fort Assiniboine Sandhills, northwest of Barrhead in the Athabasca River valley, was heralded as one of Alberta's treasures in *The Steward*. When it was designated as a Wildland Provincial Park in 1997, Lund assured Albertans that industrial development would be prohibited and then gave the go-ahead for a company to drill three exploratory wells and build a pipeline. Lund said the lease had been acquired before the park was designated, but it had expired the year before during negotiations to create the park and the government renewed it. Lund also allowed new lease sales in the newly designated Rumsey NA in 1997 in spite of strong public opposition (see *WLA*, Dec. 2004, Feb. 2005).

Lund also opened some NAs to OHV users, saying they did not have enough places to go. These, and many other, disappointing stories did not appear in the stewards' newsletter. But the stewards felt that serious conservation of protected areas would not be the result of SP2000.

Stewards Soldier On

The stewards were busy during the Special Places years. Some worked particularly persistently to monitor areas and find solutions to human-caused problems. Only a few of the many diverse stories can be related here.

As president of the Rainbow Equitation Society, Richard De Smet got the organization to take on stewardship of five NAs, including Halfmoon Lake north of Edmonton. By 1991 they had developed trails, fencing, and two bridges, and had done a biological study at Halfmoon Lake. "The one mistake we made was trying to take on too much," said DeSmet in *The Steward* (July 1991). "We realize now that it isn't imperative to open up the site and that protection should come first."

After much study and consultation by Parks, De Smet was granted a Licence of Occupation to conduct a commercial trail riding venture at Halfmoon Lake. He felt that his regular presence provided more care and attention for the area and allowed the Society to keep a better eye on things.

Like many other stewards, the Society had to deal with the issue of ATV damage. By 1986 there were already 10 established and reserved NAs with significant ATV problems, including North of Bruderheim and Halfmoon Lake. The Society knew that some individuals would ignore requests not to use the site, so they chose instead to meet with users and explain why their actions were inappropriate. In response to this educational approach, the ATVers adjusted their activities, joined the Society, and now help maintain the site. The De Smet family was presented with the 2001 Outstanding Individual Steward award for their work in preserving Halfmoon Lake.

Education is a big part of many stewards' activities in their NAs. John Woitenko, a long-time steward of Riverlot 56, located within the City of St. Albert, says, "Being close to two large urban centres is a main concern. We try to get the public to realize that this is a Natural Area and not a public dumping ground, a party area for bush parties, [or] a dog-walking area."

With the recent spread of acreages

beyond urban boundaries, eating up farmland and impinging on nearby NAs, dogs are also becoming a problem in some areas like Clifford E. Lee and Wagner. But Riverlot 56's proximity to urban centres also allows people to go there in the evenings to experience this island of natural diversity, says Woitenko. "Coming here is a very unique experience" (*Partners in Preservation*, Fall 2002). The Riverlot 56 Society received a Steward Service Excellence Award in 2003 for 20 years of stewardship.

Doris and Eric Hopkins were instrumental in getting the government to set aside a quarter section of Crown land around Coyote Lake as a NA and became its stewards in 1993. They had bought adjacent land around the lake in 1972 and aimed to preserve it as a nature sanctuary. They donated their land to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which had purchased 320 acres on the southeast corner of the lake in 1994, and convinced neighbouring landowners to do likewise. They have been honoured many times for their tremendous stewardship and educational work.

John Kristensen, Assistant Deputy Minister for Parks and Protected Areas and a biologist, is one of the greatest government supporters of the stewardship program and has been a volunteer steward with the Buck for Wildlife program for many years. Introduced by Fish and Wildlife in 1973 to conserve and improve wildlife habitat on public and private land, the program was funded through the sale of hunting and fishing licences and donations from naturalist organizations. It was eventually passed over to the Alberta Conservation Association.

Kristensen's particular area of interest was Bretona Pond, an important waterfowl site in the aspen parkland located in Strathcona County just outside of Edmonton, next door to his family's five-acre property. In 1982 he wrote an article in *Alberta Naturalist* detailing the biological richness of the area and warning of the potential for development due to its proximity to the city. He worked to get the area designated in 1985 as a Buck for Wildlife site – about 60 acres of pond and 135 acres of lowland.

In 1987 the family purchased 100 acres right next to the site and became the first to dedicate the land to wildlife habitat conservation under the ConservACTION Program. They maintained ownership of the land but committed not to alter the land in a manner detrimental to wildlife habitat, signing a five-year renewable agreement with the Buck for Wildlife program. In 1998 that became a 10-year Habitat Retention Agreement with ACA.

Bertha Ford

A sweeping vista of the Kootenay Plains.

Kristensen's advice for potential stewards is to become familiar with the area, feel comfortable with it, and figure out how much time they are able and willing to spend there. Although you don't need to be an expert, he says, you should probably know the difference, say, between a duck and an eagle. He also urges stewards to bring issues to the attention of Parks staff, even though limited resources and personnel make finding time for responses challenging.

The Milk River Management Committee, established in 1990, is an example of group stewardship where participants with differing philosophies worked through some very contentious issues to successfully manage two important grassland areas (see *WLA* October 2001). The Milk River Management Society, consisting of the non-governmental members, including AWA, holds a lease on Milk River Natural Area, once called the most controversial site to be established because of conflicting land use interests, and advises on management of the Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve. Volunteer stewards have been important participants in the monitoring program.

Going Above and Beyond

One of the first things stewards for the Cardinal Divide NA got involved in was an access management plan (AMP) for motorized recreation, as stipulated by the Coal Branch Subregional Integrated Resource Plan in 1990. It was a main motivator for them to get to work on this scenic, fragile, and biodiverse Rocky Mountain alpine area.

Alison Dinwoodie co-stewards the area on behalf of the Alpine Club with the Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC), of which she is also a member. When the NA became part of the Whitehorse Wildland Park in 1999, the stewards expanded their domain and continued to work on the uncompleted AMP.

Access management planning began long before the Cheviot mine was on the horizon, says Dinwoodie, and early discussions never took it into account. A multistakeholder committee was convened (although participants were lucky not to be called stakeholders in those days) with participants from the Federation of Alberta Naturalists, several OHV organizations, the stewards, and government. It was recognized that ATV damage was a concern, and an AMP was seen as the solution and was to be implemented by a forest land use zone (FLUZ) so that it would be legally enforceable.

"Well, they didn't do that and that has been the problem ever since," says Dinwoodie. There was little public advertisement of the AMP process. Dinwoodie's barrage of letters to then-Environment Minister Ralph Klein elicited a series of unfulfilled promises, ending with a decision not to implement the FLUZ, but to rely on education and voluntary compliance through an AMP. These actions were not successful, says Dinwoodie, because the AMP wasn't enforceable without legislative backing.

Dinwoodie credits the Cheviot mine hearings with the establishment of the Whitehorse Wildland Park and the FLUZ because they were part of the Panel's 1997 recommendations. Although OHVs are not allowed in the Park, the stewards are trying to keep them off neighbouring land, including the mine site, and to establish prohibitions that will last after the mine is reclaimed. This would create a needed buffer zone protected from damaging impacts (see *WLA* August 2004). The alpine meadows above the forest line in the Cardinal Divide are too fragile to tolerate OHV damage and do not recover from it. Dinwoodie currently has Parks staff and the Cheviot mine people on board, but says Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) is "just dragging their feet."

Lara Smandych

Alison Dinwoodie in the Cardinal Divide.

She once met the SRD contact person in the area when he was on his ATV surveying some of the Park. He was beyond the limit of where ATVs should be, so she and her group went over and told him. Dinwoodie says it "was obvious from his comments that he couldn't see what all the fuss was about."

The Panel recommended that the Cardinal headwaters, a blind valley filled with wildlife, be incorporated into the Park or at least be given more protection. SRD's answer was to create a large trail that ended up having three-foot deep ruts. Instead of closing it to OHVs, they decided they would try to minimize the damage by gravelling eight km of the 13-km trail and putting in culverts. After one year, one culvert had been washed out and had to be repaired.

After eight km, the trail breaks out from the forest and continues over five km of open alpine tundra. Dinwoodie says the well-marked trail is becoming ever wider. There is nothing to stop ATVers from going anywhere they want in the alpine, and she is worried about how much damage there might be with increasing numbers of recreationists heading up the trail. The FLUZ resulted in a designated trail and better recognition of proper use. "And you stay on it or else. Except the 'or else' never happens," she says.

"I got involved in the stewardship in a rather bigger way than I anticipated when I started," says Dinwoodie, adding that it has been a very rewarding experience that has added much to her knowledge of natural history, ecology, and land management. She received an Outstanding Stewardship Award in 1997.

She has more faith in mine reclamation than recovery from ATV damage. She says the ANPC, with dozens of student volunteers, did seven years of hard revegetation work on ATV-damaged areas, planting individual seedlings carefully grown from seeds collected in the area. But ATVers just ran right through the reclaimed areas making more big ruts.

"This gets really disheartening for any volunteers," Dinwoodie points out. "If the government would just support us on [the issue of] ATVs, they would win so much support." But people will not come out and say anything against ATVs because they're intimidated, she says.

She says the mine companies spend a lot of money on reclamation and revegetation. She notes that even though reclaimed mine sites don't look the same as the original landscape, the wildlife will come back to those areas, but keeping motorized access out is crucial. "When the mine's gone, at least there will be some chance there will be something there for the future. But not if you have the off-highway vehicles."

She wants to focus on the long term. "If we can at least get this access business controlled, it would solve an

Alison Dinwoodie

The main trail from the parking lot to the Cardinal Divide ridge is braided due to ATV use. Here braiding occurs on either side of the trees as well as on the main trail. Although ATVs do not currently use this trail as much, the erosion continues and revegetation struggles.

awful lot of problems." She recognizes that she gets more support for her area because it is a Wildland Park and would like to see stewards get better support for the smaller, scattered NAs. "They are valuable little relics of what's left. People should recognize them and those areas should be given some support," especially protection from motorized recreation. "If there's any sort of easy access to these places, that's likely to be the death of them."

Kristensen notes that motorized use represents a whole different experience that makes sorting out conflicts with non-motorized users a challenge. "It's almost sort of two solitudes," he says thoughtfully. OHVers, he says, tend to say, "'I don't understand why everyone else is not willing to share the trails with us, because we're willing to share all the trails with everyone else.' It really shows the different starting points you're at." With OHVs able to go farther and faster than hikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders, he says it's becoming more of a challenge to figure out how to get enough trails in areas where OHVs would be welcome.

Dinwoodie observes that the government's public relations posters show pretty scenery and sedate pictures of families picnicking, fishing, or cycling. But "there's never, ever any picture of an OHV going through any of these [areas]. Just their very absence should say these things are not supposed to be in these areas, but they won't come out and say so."

Sacred and Sacrificed

In 1997 the government established a Volunteer Co-ordinating Committee to bring together all its volunteer programs, including the NAs and the Volunteer Steward Programs. The Committee, headed by Doug Pilkington, Senior Parkland Region Conservation Officer based in Wetaskiwin, consisted of representatives from various departments and divisions, but no volunteers, and was to prepare a backgrounder and issues statement for the Minister. Besides the stewards, one of the main volunteer groups for Parks was the Campground Hosts program, started in 1984.

At the same time there were staff

J. Kristensen

Bretona Pond

cutbacks and the biologists from the NA program were moved to start the Alberta Natural History Information Centre (ANHIC). Parks staff held discussion sessions, to which some volunteers were invited. Things seemed generally disorganized and morale in the department was very low. A focus group, consisting of Peter Lee, Doug Pilkington and Marilyn Pshyk from Parks and volunteer steward Dorothy Dickson, was formed to discuss issues. In their recommendations to the Recreation and Protected Areas Management Committee, the group emphasized that coordination of responsibilities and clarification of authority between departments, divisions and branches was very much needed.

J. Kristensen

Eared grebes began showing up on Bretona Pond on a regular basis in the late 1980s, perhaps, says biologist and photographer John Kristensen, because the area received limited protection as a Buck for Wildlife area in 1985.

Lund, an enthusiastic supporter of the Campground Hosts, proposed presenting an annual award to them. He was less enthusiastic, recalls Dickson, when it was pointed out that he should also give one to the NA Volunteer Stewards (now called the Protected Areas Volunteer Stewards) as it was their tenth anniversary. It would be different from the rewards system the stewards had had for years, in which the volunteers received such items as clothing, first aid kits, or folding stools for two, five, and 10 years of service.

The chosen award was a print that could be passed on to a winning steward for outstanding contributions each year, with a brass plaque bearing his or her name added to the picture frame. "Obviously, the first nominee from the stewards was one of the longer serving, very active stewards," recalls Dickson. "It was then that it became apparent that the Minister had an 'activist' black list, and they went through several nominees before one was accepted." The first award went to the Hopkinses, who accepted on behalf of all the stewards. Dickson received it the following year.

What was remarkable about the award was the subject of the print – one of Wes Olson's beautiful bison prints called "Sacred and Sacrificed," after Grant MacEwan's 1995 historical account of the bison, in which Olson's drawings were featured. Given the tragic story of the bison – nearly exterminated, then saved, only for most to be enslaved to commercial interests intent on domestication, breeding out their wildness forever – the print provided an unintended, but poignant, statement on protected areas in the Special Places years.

The Passing of an Era

When Peter Lee, the founder of the volunteer steward program, resigned from Parks in September 1997 and joined WWF Canada as the Alberta regional representative, it marked the end of an era. Commenting on the status of SP2000, Lee said, "The seeds of destruction were sown when the government put forward a policy vastly different than its original commitment and different from all the public advice it had been given" (*Alberta Views*, Fall 1998).

In 1998 FAN and CPAWS, realizing that protected areas would not be free of industrial activities or motorized recreation, quit the PCC. Klein and friends purchased a B.C. west coast fishing lodge, prompting readers of the *Edmonton Journal* to suggest that Klein had to go there to find wilderness teeming with wildlife and lack of development.

SP2000 was losing credibility fast. In spite of a 1996 government study which found that conservation paid better dividends than resource use, the disinformation campaign from within the government, spearheaded by Alberta Energy and Forestry, led to economic development interests winning over environmental protection. The government was accused of stacking local committees that were responsible for making recommendations on nominated sites in their area with vested economic interests and rejecting environmental interests. They also encouraged these committees to ignore the science-based recommendations of the PCC and veto nominated areas. Government was easily swayed by companies wanting to develop in nominated areas and refused to consider land/lease swaps by companies wishing to avoid activity in sensitive places.

Ray Rasmussen, who sat on the original SP2000 committee, said government couldn't be trusted to defend the public interest anymore; it was just another commercial interest (*Alberta Views*, Fall 1998). Lund axed the PCC in January of 1999, although the Committee was led to believe it would go another year. Lee said it was proof that the whole project had been a fiasco and called the program "an extraordinary failure."

Courtesy of S. Myers

In recognition of the program's 10th anniversary, Environment Minister Ty Lund presented the Volunteer Stewards with a beautiful buffalo print by Wes Olson called "Sacred and Sacrificed." Doris and Eric Hopkins, stewards for Coyote Lake Natural Area, accepted the award on behalf of all the stewards.

Stewards Unite

Edgar T. Jones, a world-renowned wildlife photographer and filmmaker, declared that anyone involved in conservation had to be an optimist: "You do what you can to save what you believe in. And if you can convince one more person along the way that what you are concerned about is worth their concern, you've made your efforts worthwhile" (*The Steward*, July 1992).

In 1992 the government acquired property that Jones had owned on the east shore of Hastings Lake in the County of Strathcona and designated it a NA in his name. "One of the best things people can do is get involved," he said. "If each individual considers the environment and the country when making decisions, we can protect the resources we have."

When Lund brought forward the now notorious *Natural Heritage Act* (Bill 15) in 1998, it recommended enshrining the right of industry activity in protected areas regardless of their ecological importance and also proposed eliminating the category of NAs. This raised the ire of volunteer stewards who saw the potential loss of all reserved NAs and even some designated ones.

After several years of talking about forming an independent association for volunteer stewards to exchange expertise and advocate for protected areas, they created the Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association. SAPAA shepherded the stewards through their most difficult years, which were yet to come, and it is to their credit that they never gave up hope.

The third part of our series on the Natural Areas volunteer stewards will appear in our next issue.

Corrections: The Steward *was published until 1997, not 1995 as reported in Part 1. Marilyn Pshyk's last name was incorrectly spelled in the caption on page 8.*

Alberta's Southern Eastern Slopes: Forests or Forestry?

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist

What do you think of when you hear the word "forest?" Do you think of a rich and complex system of trees and shrubs; flowers, mosses and lichens; a matrix of young saplings, mature trees and dead wood? Do you think of the mammals, birds, insects and soil micro-organisms that make a forest their home; as well as the soil, the water and the clean fresh air that fills your very soul on a spring morning? Or do you think of a bunch of trees: "vertical lumber" as some would have it?

The forests of Alberta's southern Eastern Slopes are at a turning point. Currently, the SES forests are being managed principally to provide a sustained yield of timber for the forestry industry.

Forestry is just one important use of natural resources in the Southern Eastern Slopes of Alberta. So is oil and gas development, so are agriculture, recreation and wildlife habitat. And so is the production of a clean abundant water supply across southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

More and more, Albertans are coming to appreciate that Alberta's "multiple use" management of its public lands and its present manifestation as "all things at all times in all places" does not do justice to these spectacular and sensitive landscapes. Forestry operations need to be managed within the context of all of these other values.

Multiple Values

The forests, rivers and mountains of Alberta's southern Eastern Slopes are home to a diverse array of wildlife. Grizzly bears, cougars, wolves and moose call the region home. The remaining fragments of old-growth forest support specialized species such as northern flying squirrel and three-toed woodpecker, which are almost entirely reliant on this disappearing habitat. Bull trout and cutthroat trout spawn in the rivers and streams. Plant life includes everything from the thousand-year-old limber pines of the Montane Subregion to the fragile and specialized alpine plants and wetland specialists growing in the riparian areas.

Nigel Douglas

The forests of the southern Eastern Slopes lie in a thin strip between the mountains and the prairie. The forested slopes of the mountains and foothills clean and store water, and release it slowly into rivers, like the Oldman River pictured here, a role that becomes even more crucial as the glaciers dwindle and the grasslands become drier.

At the same time, the region's natural values are crucially important to people. The forested slopes of the mountains and foothills clean and store water, a role that becomes even more crucial as the glaciers dwindle and the grasslands become drier. They are also the playground for a growing population in southern Alberta, offering a range of recreation opportunities, including hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing and motorized recreation.

So is it appropriate that the forests of Kananaskis Country or the Castle, which mean so much to so many Albertans, are managed principally to produce a sustained supply of timber? Increasingly, it seems that Albertans do not think so. David Swann, environment critic for the Alberta Liberals, received more calls and emails about plans to log in Kananaskis Country than on any other subject, including health care, so presumably this is an issue that resonates with Albertans.

This certainly seems to be supported by the findings of the Alberta Forest Products Association's 2006 Alberta Forest Usage Survey. Of 2881 people surveyed, 90 percent were "concerned" or "very concerned" about management of Alberta's forests. Significantly, 83.58 percent agreed with the statement "Access and use of forests should be based firstly on preserving and protecting the environment and sustaining wild life habitat at the expense of sustained economic benefits and jobs."

Forests and Watersheds

The South Saskatchewan River basin covers a huge area across southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, but more than 85 percent of the basin's water comes from the 12 percent of its landbase that is Alberta's mountains and foothills. These are the forests that supply drinking water to southern Alberta cities including Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. The Elbow River, which flows out of Kananaskis Country, provides nearly a half of Calgary's drinking water.

Forested watersheds are crucial for supplying clean water for communities across western Canada. Healthy forests act as a giant sponge: they soak up water during wet periods, filter out pollutants, and slowly release the water into rivers and streams during the dry summers. After falling as rain or snow, water can take days, even months before it reaches the rivers. Extensive clearcutting, Alberta's preferred forestry practice, prevents much absorption into the soil; water meets little resistance as it rushes down to the rivers, taking topsoil with it.

A study by the University of Calgary's Uldis Silins, reported in

AWA Files

This spruce seedling is growing from a nurse log. The southern Eastern Slopes forests harbour a diverse array of plant life from 1,000-year-old limber pines of the Montane Sub-region to the fragile and specialized alpine plants and wetland species.

NASA World Wind

A satellite photo of the Upper Oldman River showing the patchwork of cutblocks. The cutblocks contrast dramatically with the uncut areas of the protected Beehive Natural Area to the south.

Spray Lake Sawmills' (SLS) 2005 draft management plan for their Forest Management Agreement (FMA), found that clearcutting can increase the total quantity of water in rivers. But the study did not look at the implications of increased flow during wet periods and reduced flow during dry summers, when the water is needed most. In its comments on the draft plan, the City of Calgary pointed this out: "It is well documented that forestry practices can result in accelerated runoffs. Although this may not impact the annual water supply, this could result in water shortages by late summer."

The City of New York led the way in addressing urban water supply in the 1990s. Faced with projected costs of $6-8 billion to build new water treatment facilities, with annual operating costs of $500 million, city administrators decided to take a

Nigel Douglas

A whitebark pine stump

sideways look at the issue, and asked whether it would in fact be cheaper to spend money on protecting the source of their water supply rather than just treating dirty water. Since then, they have spent $140 million per year buying up land in their watershed and coming to management agreements to protect the source of their water.

Other cities across North America, including Vancouver, Seattle and Victoria, have since taken similar approaches. But while some cities were moving in this direction, in 2001 Alberta transferred management of its southern forests, supplier of water to half of the City of Calgary, to a private logging company, SLS, under a twenty-year FMA. Since then, the City of Calgary, which was not consulted by the province in the original FMA decision, has taken a firm interest in its watershed, commenting recently that "runoff events as a result of clear-cutting could result in degraded water quality and flooding. Alternative harvest methods should be considered." But it is the province, not the City which ultimately makes the decisions.

A by-product of Alberta's predilection for clearcut forestry practices is a further contribution to the enormous network of roads and trails which pervade the province's public lands. As well as increasing runoff and sedimentation, roads are increasingly being recognized as the major factor in the declining grizzly bear population in the region. Dr. Chris Servheen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, points to habitat security as the most important factor in the successful grizzly recovery in Yellowstone: "Motorized access compromises habitat security."

Management

The SES forests are managed under two different systems. Kananaskis Country and the Ghost-Waiparous region fall under Spray Lake Sawmills' FMA covering an area of 337,448 hectares. The remaining forests, from the southern border of Kananaskis Country south to Waterton National Park, are managed as the 352,200 hectare C5 Forest Management Unit (FMU). SLS owns 86 percent of the quota for the C5 region.

Both the C5 FMU and the SLS FMA are administered by Alberta's Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). Forestry companies operate according to the rules that SRD determines. Both areas are currently undergoing management planning processes. A draft management plan for the C5 area was made available for public comment in

Cliff Wallis

Fishermen test their prowess in the Oldman River. The southern Eastern Slopes are the playground for a growing population in southern Alberta, offering a range of recreation opportunities, including hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, and motorized recreation.

December 2004; Spray Lake Sawmills' draft Detailed Forest Management Plan for its FMA was published in October 2005. Both plans received a good deal of opposition and neither has yet been ratified.

AWA has serious concerns with both plans, mainly with the continuing emphasis on managing these forests principally to maintain a supply of timber. The draft Spray lake FMA plan states that the primary use of the forest management area is "to establish, grow, harvest and remove timber." Similarly, the draft C5 plan states that the forest will be managed "in a manner that supports opportunities to sustain or enhance forest productivity" and to "maintain or increase the net forest (commercial timber harvesting) land base in the C5 FMU."

Since both draft plans were produced, "Beetlemania" has gripped the province. In reaction to the perceived threat of mountain pine beetles, forest practices are now focusing on cutting down even more pine trees, at the expense of all of the other myriad roles which forests play. SRD's projected budget for pine beetle control in 2006/07 was more than $22 million, and is only likely to increase as the pine beetle situation develops.

What is doubly ironic is that it is past forest management practices which have made the forests so susceptible to beetle attack. Decades of fire suppression and management for large single-age stands of pine have set the table for mountain pine beetle. This fire suppression also comes at a considerable cost to the Alberta taxpayer. SRD spent $197 million in 2004/05 for wildfire management. The cost of fighting the 2003 Lost Creek fire alone has been estimated at $38 million, though the actual cost may have been much higher.

Forests Past and Present

Timber production has always been important in the SES. A 1927 brochure from the federal Department of the Interior stated, "It has been said that one of the primary aims of all National Forests is the production, in perpetuity, of a supply of timber. In mountainous regions the use of the forest may, by necessity, be subservient to another use—that of watershed protection."

The governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan jointly established the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board in 1947. The Board operated on the principle of multiple use, with watershed protection and improvement as priorities, which meant conserving and managing the forests. "When conflicts arise between watershed values and other values, the resource there are sometimes conflicts of interests, such as between lumbering and recreation. Selfish interests should be avoided and the decision made should yield the greatest good to the greatest number."

The Board was dissolved in 1973 and Alberta began the development of its Eastern Slopes Policy, which was completed in 1977 after extensive public consultation. The Policy gave the "highest priority" to watershed management for a reliable supply of clean water for aquatic habitat and downstream users. Even after the government changed the policy in 1984, without public consultation, it still stressed that "the management of renewable resources is the long-term priority of resource management in the Eastern Slopes. Non-renewable resource development will be encouraged in areas where this priority can be maintained."

It is to be hoped that current government initiatives such as Integrated Land Management and the Land-Use Framework will do a better job of translating this policy priority into real action.

S. Bray

Logging along the Forestry Trunk Road in the Livingstone area, October 2006.

Unraveling the Costs and Benefits of Forest Use

According to the Alberta Forest Products Association, in Calgary and southern Alberta, revenue from the forestry industry ("direct" and "indirect and induced") was $3.2 billion in 2004. Alberta's GDP in 2004 was $215.9 billion. Timber royalties and fees that year accounted for $130 million in revenue in Alberta as a whole, according to figures from Alberta SRD.

But delving into forestry economics leads to a tangled web of charges and subsidies, all incredibly difficult to unravel, due in part to the proprietary nature of much of the data. The Alberta Forest Products Association reported that stumpage/protection charges in Alberta as a whole were $71.4 million in 2001. The stumpage/protection charges for Calgary and southern Alberta were $6.1 million.

Nigel Douglas

A recent clearcut in Hidden Creek in the Upper Oldman.

This sounds like a considerable sum of money, but how does it compare to other jurisdictions? A 1995 study by Alberta Environment Network compared an average stumpage rate in British Columbia of $25 per cubic metre. This 12-year-old figure compares with the $0.15 per cubic metre in "holding and forest protection charges" paid by Spray Lake Sawmills when it signed its 2001 FMA agreement with the Alberta government. This fee rose to $0.20 per cubic metre in 2006, still less than 1 percent of the B.C. figure.

These figures obviously don't include the economic value of other services that healthy forests provide, including clean water, clean air and wildlife habitat. AWA believes there is an urgent need for a full independent study of the economics of forestry in the province.

Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities

Whenever discussions begin about environmental changes to forestry practices, the issue of jobs comes to the fore. An estimated 54,000 Albertans are employed in the forest industry. In 1999 the Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA) listed 32 Alberta communities where forestry is a "primary industry or the only industry," including 12 which are "forestry dependent." These included Cowley and Blairmore in the Crowsnest Pass, and Cochrane, home of SLS. Since then, the Johnson Brothers mill in Cowley has closed down in November 2002, and Atlas Lumber in Blairmore was taken over by SLS in 2005, with operations being shifted to Cochrane. In a bitter reaction to the takeover, Ed Fraser, chairperson of the local union, United Steelworkers 1-207, commented, "It's not good government to allow a company to get rid of 40 good paying jobs just so another company can increase their bottom line. Those trees should be processed where they're cut down."

This is part of an ongoing process within the Canadian forestry sector, where production has concentrated on fewer and bigger mills. This has also led to a steady reduction in jobs in the forestry sector, as operations have become more mechanized. Ironically, the more efficient and industrialized forestry operations become, the fewer jobs they provide to those communities which rely on forestry.

At a recent Alberta conference about mountain pine beetles, Douglas Routledge of the Council of Forest Industries stressed that Alberta would be wise to prepare and plan for ensuring that these forestry-dependent communities become diversified now, or at least have a plan to do so after a beetle onslaught. "Workers, businesses and communities [need to] participate in planning to protect the existing forestry economic engine as best as possible while preparing to re-trench and diversify where possible."

Promising Alternatives

Don Roberts, managing director of CIBC World Markets, recently told a group of Canada's Council of Forest Ministers, "The current model is broken. Fine tuning is not enough – dramatic changes are required... for the forest sector to get back in the game."

There are alternatives to the current industrial forestry practices. In 2005, Al-Pac became the first company in Alberta to achieve Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for the management of its forests in northern Alberta.

In December 2006, Limited Brands, parent company of Victoria's Secret catalogues, announced that it would no longer source its paper from the Rocky Mountain foothills and stated a strong preference for fibre from forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, which it described as the "only credible certification for sustainable logging."

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification scheme has the independent, international respectability which other industry certification schemes in use in Alberta – such as the Canadian Standards Association's Sustainable Forest Management (CSA-SFM) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)— do not. FSC standards state that "forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and,

by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest."

What distinguishes both the Al-Pac and Limited Brands initiatives is that they were in response to strong grassroots movements—consumers with a desire to reduce the environmental impacts of their activities. Clearly there is a growing appetite for timber products from sustainably managed forests. In *Corporate Knights* magazine, editor Toby Heaps wrote in 2005, "The bulk of the globe's major retailers of forest products... have stated public procurement preferences for products that have a chain of custody leading back to sustainably certified forests. Home Depot however is afraid to even advertise its Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified product line, because the supply is not there." A wise company will see which way the wind is blowing and recognize that there may be ways to use the sensitive nature of these forests to its advantage.

Heaps also talks about Alberta's role as an exporter of raw wood products—what he describes as a "paupers' game." He points out that there is considerable scope for increasing the value-added wood manufacturing industry, which contributes considerably more to the economy in terms of jobs and income than the logging and paper-manufacturing sectors. Between 1995 and 2004, the low value-added paper manufacturing sector lost 18,100 jobs in Canada; logging operations lost 19,700. In the same time period, the value-added wood product manufacturing sector grew by 53,600 jobs to 185,800.

Another possible model for Alberta's SES forests could be the Community Forests which have operated successfully in British Columbia for many years. Alison Berry, in the *Wall Street Journal*, suggested in 2006 that "Canadian timber tenures allow companies, nonprofit organizations and communities to manage forests for a variety of goals. Although the majority of tenures are held by large, industrial forest companies, a growing number of them are held by community organizations and indigenous groups."

What is Forestry?

A brief web search for definitions of the word "forestry" reveals two contrasting points of view:

- Forestry. "The science, art and practice of managing and using trees, forests and their associated resources for human benefit." California Forest Products Commission
- Forestry. "The art and science of managing forests to produce various products and benefits including timber, wildlife habitat, clean water, biodiversity and recreation." North Carolina Forestry Association

Benefits/Costs to the Alberta taxpayer

- $116 million - Timber royalties and fees, 2004
- $197 million - Expenditures for the Wildfire Management Core Business, 2004-05
- $30.9 million – Alberta SRD Forest management expenditure, 2004-05
- $10 million – Pine beetle control, 2005-06
- $22 million – Projected pine beetle control, 2006-07

(Sources: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Government of Alberta)

Berry refers to the villages of Harrop and Procter in southeastern British Columbia as a good example of a Community Forest Agreement. "In 1999 Harrop-Procter received a Community Forest Pilot Agreement controlling some 27,000 acres of Crown forests and formed a co-op to take over forest operations and economic development. The co-op's first priority in forest management is protection of the community's drinking water... Because Harrop-Procter does not intend to maximize returns from timber, it looks for other ways to generate revenue from the forestland. It is the only timber tenure holder in British Columbia that is actively marketing non-timber forest products and one of the few that sell 'value-added' wood products. Every effort is made to use ecosystem-based forestry techniques and to process forest products locally."

There is also considerable potential for forests to supply what are known as Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFPs). These include wild edible foods, such as berries and honey; landscape and garden products; and even non-consumptive products such as carbon credits and biodiversity. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers estimated in 2006 that nationally the NTFP industry contributes as much as $1 billion annually to the Canadian economy.

There is clearly a range of alternatives to current management practices in the forests of Alberta's southern Eastern Slopes, which focus so myopically on industrial forestry practices to provide a sustainable supply of timber. AWA believes that some forestry and resource extraction can occur in these forests without compromising their quality, but this must be recognized as just one of the multiple uses of this land base, and should be allowed only in a way that does not negatively impact the many other values.

Current government initiatives to improve land-use planning cannot come too soon. The last such process, the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy, stated that "the highest priority in the overall management of the Eastern Slopes is placed on watershed management." But this did little to change on-the-ground operations. Now it is time for the Alberta government to catch up with the parade of Albertans, 83.58 percent of whom told the Alberta Forest Products Association that "Access and use of forests should be based firstly on preserving and protecting the environment and sustaining wild life habitat at the expense of sustained economic benefits and jobs." Surely these forests deserve nothing less.

Logging the Land Unstudied

By David McIntyre

A bitter west wind ripped across Crowsnest Lake, churning its surface into an assault of white-capped waves. I stood in the teeth of this ice-water attack, braced against its knockdown force. Water crashed against the rocky shoreline. It hit in rhythmic surges, driven by a tearing, discordant gale. Unrelenting, the wind slashed at the land in frenzied gusts. Weathering this vicious beating, a wall of stunted pine trees stood resolute, silhouetted against the gray wrath of a winter sky.

D. McIntyre

Maturing at two years of age, whitebark pine cones are unique among North American pines. Why? The cone scales remain almost completely closed (indehiscent) after ripening, thus exposing – without ever releasing – the huge, pea-like seeds. These nutritious seeds are roughly one-fifth protein, one-fifth carbohydrate, and one-half fat.

I'd come to spend time with one of these trees, an ancient, Ent-like limber pine (*Pinus flexilus*), a tree that was more than one thousand years old. I'd discovered the tenacious wind-sculpted bonsai in the early 1990s, but it was its much more recent front-page coverage in the *Calgary Herald* that, overnight, brought this picturesque tree to the attention of the outside world.

This same tree – a single tree – fell under the watchful eye of forest workers employed by the Government of Alberta. They acted quickly, selecting the old pine as a poster child for a program ("Trees of Renown") created to honour unusual trees. The planned media launch was just a day away when I made my pilgrimage to Crowsnest Lake.

A Landscape Filled with Treasure and Intrigue

Standing on the lake's rocky shoreline the day before the scheduled media frenzy, I looked out through a mix of stinging rain and granular snow toward the cloud-shrouded cliff face defining the Palliser Formation. High on that cold Paleozoic wall – a rampart of Mount Tecumseh – was the nest of a golden eagle. At the base of the cliff was a pictograph-decorated cave, and from its mouth, a cascading waterfall representing one of the largest springs in the province thundered out of the mountain and entered the lake. The throaty roar of falling water was muted by the wind, the expanse of open water, and crashing waves.

Behind me, another spectacular waterfall tumbled into the waters of Emerald Lake. And there on the rain-pounded cliffs of Sentry Mountain, high above these rumbling cascades, a void in the sedimentary strata defined the Glittering Ice Palace, one of North America's most visually stunning cave entrances. (The Glittering Ice Palace is part of Canada's largest caving complex – an expanse of karst features that includes storied names such as Cleft, Gargantua, and Yorkshire Pots.)

Amid the rain and waves, I glimpsed something in the lake, an object – almost at my feet – that looked strangely out of place. Timing my advance between surges of breaking water, I stepped forward and reached into the icy water.

My hand closed around an unexpected link with the past – a bone, a bison's right metacarpal. The heavy, mineral-stained bone was an instant reminder that this shoreline also held the remains of a 9,000-year-old fishing camp that belonged to the ancestors of the K'tunaxa.

What do an ancient tree, an eagle nest, colossal springs, caving complexes, and an astonishing array of archaeological sites have in common? They all exist in the land unstudied. Oh, we know a little, but here in the greater Crowsnest Pass, societal knowledge tends to be concentrated on what's underground rather than what's living above the ground. There's also an overwhelming tendency to devalue cultural and natural treasures that elsewhere would receive instant acclaim and protection. I live in this lost expanse. I refer to it as "the land between studied landscapes."

Within this picturesque region of tumultuous topography, society has worked with the premise that it's more important to understand archaeology and geology than it is to know and value Alberta's flora and fauna. Interestingly, society does know that the Crowsnest Pass harbours the greatest concentration and number of prehistoric archaeological sites in the Canadian Rockies. What society doesn't seem to know – or to value – is that this same landscape is also home to the province's rarest, most diverse, and

most threatened forest. We're logging this forest.

On the day the old pine received its official ("Trees of Renown") designation, dozens of people crowded around it. Pictures were taken, speeches made, and then it was over. As the crowd walked back along the lakeshore, I overheard a conversation between government staff. I learned that a parking lot and trail were being planned to draw travelers from the highway to the tree, and that a three-hectare (7.5-acre) reserve would be established.

The vision of a quick-fix parking lot and trail struck me as a thoughtless kiss of death. I envisioned the inevitable trampling of tree roots and other acts of needless desecration. A small land reserve, on the other hand, offered tangible worth. "It's not much," you might say, but it's something, and it made me think about the rarity of the Crowsnest Pass forest.

More Treasures Found

Pondering these thoughts, I turned to the speaker and interjected: "By preserving even a tiny piece of land on this landscape, you're likely to protect something that's rarer than the 1,000-year-old tree you thought you were protecting."

This past summer, seven months after I'd made that statement, I discovered a dozen western redcedars (*Thuja plicata*) and four (much rarer) western white pines (*Pinus monticola*) growing in close proximity to the old limber pine. Western white pine is one of the rarest species in the province. I've found approximately 20 of these trees in Alberta during the past 30 years – the entire known population. Most of these trees have been killed by subsequent forest operations. In fact, prior to 2006, and with the exception of six trees that I had discovered (1977 or 1978) in Beauvais Lake Provincial Park, every single known western white pine in Alberta had been killed. The current population, augmented by trees discovered in 2006, raises the number to a near dozen.

Only one tree species appears to be rarer: the ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). A single ponderosa pine (it appears to be naturally seeded) grows near the confluence of the Carbondale and Castle Rivers in close proximity to a growing array of Shell Canada gas wells and pipelines. Another ponderosa pine growing on a heavily eroded stream bank farther west also appears to be naturally seeded, but its future seems to be in even greater jeopardy.

Looking across the drive lanes of an ancient buffalo jump, Crowsnest Mountain commands the skyline along the upper Crowsnest River valley, home of Alberta's rarest, and most diverse and threatened forest.

Logging the Matchstick Forest

While society might question the wisdom of ignoring, logging, or unknowingly killing rare-in-Alberta trees, an even more pointed question might be asked: why log this landscape at all? Trees can be worth money, but suggesting that a forest's sole value lies in its lumber is like saying that women are good for only one thing.

The thirsty little lodgepoles that grow in southwestern Alberta survive in a high-altitude, high-elevation, and low-precipitation environment. These trees are plagued with unbelievable adversity. They're frozen, baked, starved, and deprived of water. They're whipped and beaten by hurricane-force winds. Will they make it to market? Not likely! They'll probably be killed by insects or consumed by fire.

How much is a 100-year-old, spindly little lodgepole really worth? How much is it worth if it's dying? And if you had to send out a crew to kill and remove one of these doomed trees – and a hungry dinner party of bark beetles living within it – in an effort (probably futile) to save adjacent lodgepoles, how much would you be willing to spend? How many dying trees would you save? How many millions of dollars would be enough? Fortunately, you don't have to worry about this, except in knowing that society will continue to pick up the tab.

When forest managers attempted to apply the concept of sustainable and economically viable forestry to the wind-whipped mountains of southwestern Alberta, they created a benchmark for up-against-the-wall economic adversity, landscape degradation, and resource abuse. Here, beneath barren peaks, aging little lodgepoles cling precariously to existence. This pygmy forest survives in a veritable desert, high on the cold, thirsty side of the Rocky Mountains. Here trees grow more slowly than you can imagine. The only exceptions to this rule are the forests carpeting the lowest river valleys. I've cored relatively small limber and whitebark pines from this landscape that were more than 600 years old! Most lodgepole pines, on the other hand, don't live to be much more than a hundred.

Within this matchstick forest, beneath the spectacularly beautiful peaks of the Flathead, High Rock, and Livingstone ranges, the most pressing question might simply be: Why has society chosen logging as the core value for this unstudied land? Additional questions: Why has this vision never been questioned? And why have other land values been squandered?

Throughout this priceless landscape, forest reasoning has been scraped out of a never-been-proved hunch from yesterday. Here we've been content to sing a song of recklessness, a song delivered off-key and out of tempo, but with no shortage of volume. The bridge of thought is shaky; it's

covered with ice and the guardrails are missing. Yet society still lines up to hear its melodic, resonating litany of reassuring and well-rehearsed lies. Behind this scene rises a tsunami of inconvenient truth.

Managers of Death and Decline

Time has run out. Reassuring lies no longer resonate. When we examine the legacy generated by decades of managing this land, we see a forest that's grown increasingly – incrementally – ripe for fire and insect attack. We see that we've paid dearly to achieve a frightening outcome that exceeds the threat that would have occurred if we'd simply done nothing at all. Here we've also learned that the product (lodgepole pine) doesn't have to be valuable; it simply has to be seen to have value, or to threaten something that has value (such as a trophy home).

Today, as we march toward a forest apocalypse, we also observe forest managers as they cover their eyes and throw up their hands in futile expressions of grief and sorrow. We notice that they are managing the forest one tree at a time.

These forest managers have become directors of decline. Their focus is no longer on the living forest. Their focus is on death! Society, a spectator to this sorry scene, wrings its hands and sits motionless as these managers seek more money in a vain effort to stop the process they were paid to orchestrate.

Scientists, including foresters and forest pathologists, have long predicted this devastating outcome. Why? One of the first rules of forest management is to ensure that you don't put all your eggs in a one-tree basket. Instead of subscribing to this fundamental logic, we've watched as the managers of Alberta's southwestern forests – trying to turn forest famine into feast – have put all our money on the revered lodgepole. They might better have gone to Las Vegas.

Paving the way for this forest foolishness, we sat and watched as unwanted trees were bulldozed into oblivion. Entire forests were leveled in order to expand the lodgepole's footprint across the land. We were content. We even smiled as our forest managers created a vast lodgepole monoculture, a strategy rooted in the creation and perpetuation of extreme fuel loads and extreme insect vulnerability.

D. McIntyre

The Clark's nutcracker, built to tackle the toughest whitebark pine cone, uses its powerful bill to sever the cone from the tree and then rip off the scales. The hard cones require considerable effort, and the birds – using their feet as anchors – use their entire body strength to drive their bill into the chosen target. This bird's throat and breast feathers are stained red from contact with anthocyanins (red pigments) released from the broken ends of whitebark cone scales.

Burnt Offerings—The Sacrifice of Ancient Treasure

During past decades, I've looked on as the "worthless" forests in southwestern Alberta were bulldozed and burned to make way for the sacred lodgepole. I've watched as thousands of whitebark pines went up in smoke.

Much more recently, additional whitebark pines – some of them many hundreds of years old – were harvested ("mined" is a better word) and turned into cheap (but beautiful) tongue-in-groove lumber. Most of this wood, an estimated one million board feet, moved from the forests of southwestern Alberta to the interior walls of new homes in Fernie, B.C.

The harvest of whitebark pine has since stopped, but two new threats replace it. Today the whitebark pines of southwestern Alberta are being killed by the mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*), and by an introduced (from Europe) forest pathogen, white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*). The former kills all pine trees; the latter, only North America's five-needle pines – in Alberta that translates as limber pine, whitebark pine, and western white pine. The picture isn't pretty, and it's going to get worse.

The whitebark pine – represented by some Alberta trees that are more than 1,000 years old – is a "stone pine," one of five species (world-wide) with a huge, pea-sized wingless seed. These seeds feed a host of wildlife species, including the Clark's nutcracker and the grizzly. The nutcracker is the disseminator of the whitebark seed crop, caching thousands upon thousands of these seeds, often far from their point of harvest. The co-evolution of the Clark's nutcracker and the whitebark pine is a story in itself. The limber pine, a close relative of the whitebark, is not considered a stone pine by most taxonomists, although its seed, also disseminated by the nutcracker, is large, wingless, and pea-like.

Grizzly bears and other wildlife species depend on the whitebark crop, and it's known to be instrumental in determining the grizzly's occupation of the landscape within the greater Yellowstone region. There, a strong and pivotal relationship exists between

the size of the crop and grizzly bear movement and survival.

Additionally, the whitebark's energy-rich seeds are also almost certain to influence the bears' reproductive success. Looking even farther from home for another connecting link, the grizzly bears inhabiting Siberia's Kamchatka Peninsula gorge on as many as three species of stone pine seeds prior to hibernation. Perhaps surprisingly, the silent, stunted stone pines of the Kamchatka may be more important to its bears than the region's showy salmon runs.

Embracing Twisted Logic

Alberta's forest managers were on cruise control – watching their expanding crop of little lodgepoles – when fire broke out. The Lost Creek Fire (2003) sent shockwaves through the Crowsnest River valley. It scared people; it cost tens of millions of dollars to fight; and it killed, within its footprint, the vision of a foreseeable future harvest.

But most surprisingly, instead of enlightening the populace and causing society to realize that it had spent decades paying for an era of extreme fuel loads, extreme fire danger, and extreme insect abundance, the fire appeared to garner support for society's resolve to entrench the precise practices that had delivered the incendiary bombshell: society appeared to be more committed than ever to suppress all fires.

Somehow the populace failed to grasp the concept that a fire-dependent lodgepole forest depends on fire, and that the longer you delay the inevitable, the worse it will be when it comes. Fire happens! It's as essential as rain. Remove either and you'll see the consequences! The primary difference between the removal of fire and rain is that the elimination of rain produces a more readily observed outcome.

Looking at public perception another way, it was people's fear of wildfire that led them to support, through costly manipulation of the environment, a reality that exceeded their original fear. Within society's twisted logic, spawned by decades of Smokey-the-Bear drivel, forest managers, by fighting and presumably "winning" the war against the Lost Creek Fire, were recognized as saving the community of Crowsnest Pass from the approaching "red dragon." As a result, the forest managers created a dramatic social paradox: they saved society from the dragon they had themselves unleashed. Ironically, the greatest casualty of the Lost Creek Fire was a complete lack of relevant, meaningful, and appropriate public education.

William Bowen

Looking south along the Rocky Mountains of southern Alberta and B.C. into northern Montana, Alberta's Crowsnest River valley appears just below the picture's midpoint. The river's headwaters originate in a trio of low mountain passes (Tent Mountain Pass, Crowsnest Pass, and Deadman Pass) that constitute the three lowest (by far) trans-Rocky Mountain passes between New Mexico and Jasper National Park. These mountain passes provide a low elevation, close-link corridor between southwestern Alberta and the adjacent "lowland" forests of B.C.'s Elk River and Kootenay River valleys.

The Oldman Reservoir (the impounded waters of the Castle, Crowsnest, and Oldman Rivers) appears near the extreme left of this image, and the Frank Slide appears to its right (west). Also visible is The Gap (with the Oldman River flowing through it) near the extreme lower left corner. The southern end of the Livingstone Range extends south from The Gap toward the top of the picture, terminating just below (north of) the Frank Slide.

Whitefish Lake (north of Kalispell) appears, left of centre, at the top, while Lake Koocanusa (the impounded Kootenay River) is the linear water feature on the right (west).

The Elk River valley and the Bull River valley are the primary drainages visible in the lower right foreground.

Commanding Control of a Forest Wreck

But who cares about education? Basking in the afterglow of public support, forest managers took centre stage and bowed to a cheering audience. Their exuberance was short-lived. When they got back to their office retreats, wildfire experts whispered a chilling message: "You know, it's going to get much worse. That was only the beginning!"

Graphs and charts were pulled out to dramatize the obvious: an ever-growing glut of forests ripe for fire. A shockwave went through the room. "Sufferin' snake feces," someone gasped. "We could be held responsible for a firebomb!"

"I know what to do," said a calming voice. "We'll launch a Fire Smart program as a smokescreen. It won't really change anything, but it'll create the illusion that we're in the driver's seat. Its real value – its hidden value – will be to serve as a shield. It'll show that we did something. It'll take the pressure off us, while protecting us from tomorrow's inevitable litigation."

After a few seconds of silence, smiles began to emerge around the

The Crowsnest Pass – Home of Alberta's Greatest Tree Species Diversity

If you were to look at the Crowsnest River as the trunk of a giant tree, and the river's tributary streams (including York Creek, Star Creek, McGillivray Creek, Allison Creek, and Ptolemy Creek) as its branches, you would see a tree with its roots in Alberta, its canopy hugging the B.C. border. This hypothetical tree represents the core of Alberta's rarest, most diverse, and most threatened forest community.

The canopy of this tree – hugging the eastern flanks of Tent Mountain, Trail Hill, Loop Loop Ridge, Phillipps Pass, Sentry Mountain, and Mt. Tecumseh – constitutes what might be called the core within the core, the veritable "epicenter" of this constantly compromised forest diversity.

This landscape harbours tree species that are extremely rare in the province, as well as at least two naturally occurring species (the western white pine and ponderosa pine) that are not known to exist in Alberta outside the greater Crowsnest Pass.

Alberta's largest Douglas firs also live here. Some of these trees exceed two metres in diameter, and are at least several hundred years old. The province's oldest trees (limber pines and whitebark pines) grow within this same region. Many of these trees are hundreds of years old; some exceed 1,000 years of age.

Tree species that exist within this landscape include numerous willows, green alder, river alder, trembling aspen, balsam poplar, narrowleaf cottonwood, black cottonwood, paper birch, river birch, bog birch, American mountain ash, Rocky Mountain maple, Douglas fir, western larch, subalpine larch, subalpine fir, white spruce, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, western white pine, limber pine, whitebark pine, ponderosa pine, Rocky Mountain juniper (another candidate for 1,000-year-old trees) and western redcedar. Tree species that may also exist in this same area, due to their known presence in adjacent southeastern B.C., include the western hemlock, grand fir, and western yew.

The Alberta presence of western redcedars (hundreds of these trees exist in the Allison Creek valley), western white pines, ponderosa pines, and other rare-in-Alberta flora within the greater Crowsnest Pass reveals the dramatic climatic influence generated by a trio of low elevation, trans-Rocky Mountain passes (Tent Mountain Pass, Crowsnest Pass, and Deadman Pass), and the critical role these passes play in providing a corridor for mid-latitude (west-to-east) colonization by plants with seed stock originating within the relative "lowlands" (700 m elevation) of the nearby Rocky Mountain Trench (the Kootenay River valley).

At the core of the Crowsnest forest is the community of Crowsnest Pass. Its footprint – a linear corridor centered on the Crowsnest River valley – is roughly two-thirds that of Waterton Lakes National Park. This same community (380 km^2 in size), the veritable trunk of the mythical tree, is currently caught in time, its roots embedded in its coal mining and timber harvesting past, its future shaped by accelerating land values and changing demographics.

Just two hours from advancing Calgary, it's becoming a retreat for Alberta's escape from city life. Ironically, it's the changing land values and a newly emerging respect for the land that may, with luck, move society toward a conservation ethic.

boardroom. "Brilliant," shouted forest superintendent Les Blackwood, as he jumped to his feet and raised a burning drip torch in a defiant expression of forest management supremacy.

Society bought the Fire Smart plan. We took it hook, line, and sinker. But that wasn't enough. We stopped at the cash register and, as always, picked up the tab.

Once again, the world seemed peaceful. A few months passed, and then – dang it, another fly in the managers' ointment – someone discovered that massive, off-the-chart forest-harvesting programs were part of the Fire Smart plan. A concerned public raised its fist and pointed a long and accusatory finger.

The forest managers went into retreat. Cornered and publicly criticized, they opted for a new strategy: reticence. "If only we could find a scapegoat," one of them whined over his morning coffee.

That's when a tiny insect showed up on the horizon. It was the mountain pine beetle, the very creature they'd spent millions to feed and foster. Someone took a picture of the little beetle and enlarged it. Suddenly it looked big and threatening. "Hey," one of the managers said, "look at that! All we have to do is get people to look through the forest to see something they can't see, something they'll fear. We'll show them an insidious villain. We'll show them that a demonic beast of immense proportions lives in their backyard."

The forest managers knew they had something. They smiled, winked at each other, and lurched into action. They rose from their collective seats, called the media, and pointed toward the forest. "The culprit," they said in choreographed unison, "is a wicked and malevolent beetle. We'll need millions to fight it."

The message was delivered to a throng of reporters. Forest managers, buoyed by the media response, were able to add a cunning diversionary tactic to their declared campaign. They distanced themselves from the problem by pointing toward Banff, Jasper, and Waterton Lakes National Parks. "That's where a lethal army of little tree assassins is camped," they said. "The national parks are full of 'em." Jaws dropped. Reporters checked their compasses and looked west.

Park staff working in Alberta's mountainous west didn't like having a finger in their faces. They turned and pointed toward British Columbia. B.C. forest workers backed up, spun, and pointed toward global warming. Everyone asked to define the problem pointed at something other than the billions of dollars that society – under the guise of forest management – had spent to create an ever-growing glut of food for hungry little mountain pine

beetles. And no one raised a hand and said, "We don't have a mountain pine beetle infestation; we have a *lodgepole plague*."

Quietly and imperceptibly, the forest managers finished their month-end reports and submitted an invoice for the insects' dinner. It was a big one. Society, ever gullible, paid again, proving one thing: we feed the hand that bites us.

rare trees, other plants, or the litany of abuses that occur. They can't afford to lose sleep over landscape degradation or bother to manage the off-the-chart strife that's created by an army of conflicting forest users. Our resource managers have taken a back seat, next to the exit. There they monitor the situation by simply watching as the forest's many users, all dissatisfied, wage war on centre stage.

creek, camp wherever you like, set up your toilet on a stream bank, cut down trees, create your own roads, dig up rare vegetation, and shoot anything your heart desires. Here in the Crowsnest you can simply throw away the rulebook and take charge. It's your landscape, yours to destroy any way you see fit.

Faux cowboys ride this free range on dirt bikes and quads. Evidence of

The Crowsnest Pass's Threatened Flora

The Crowsnest Pass harbours unexpected floral diversity. Clockwise, from upper left, a mountain lady's slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*) – one of a population estimated to exceed 200 individuals – found on the flanks of Mt. Tecumseh; a centuries-old limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) perched on thrust-faulted Mesozoic strata; a very rare western white pine (*Pinus monticola*); the exquisite bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*); a western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*); and a sunlit subalpine larch (*Larix lyallii*), caught in the last fleeting days of autumn splendour.

D. McIntyre

It's time I made a confession: I don't mourn the death of a 100-year-old lodgepole. I do, however, shed tears over the loss of a 1,000-year-old limber or whitebark pine. Don't worry about my tears. Society will simply throw my concern to the wind, load up the logging trucks, and hit the road for another 700-km (Crowsnest Pass to Cochrane) forest-to-mill round trip. It's all part of the new log-it-before-the-insects-get-it welfare economy. "But who," you ask, "pays for this forest foolishness?" Don't lose sleep over that little detail. That's a question for another day. Your grandchildren can work it out.

Chaos Calls the Shots

Here in the Crowsnest, forest managers don't sweat the small stuff. They don't have time to worry about

Standing in the spotlight, freedom-fighting mountain men (and women) write their own rules while pointing vindictive fingers at the government's pantywaist managers: men and women who are paid to smile in the face of public ridicule and scorn.

Come on down. The show's free, and it's playing daily. You can join us in this chaos. It's all part of a deviant fantasy. Don't worry; you can't upset our little applecart. It has already been flipped and broken into a million splintered pieces.

Here in the Crowsnest, our chanted demand is "Mountain Freedom." It's each person's undeniable right to do anything he (or she) wants on an anything-goes landscape. Here you can hike or ride your horse past screaming dirt bikes. You can smash beer bottles in the

their abuse of the land is everywhere, and it's familiar in the way that a bad neighbour is familiar. But that's okay. That's how we like it.

Society, ever tolerant, tends to sugarcoat this maltreatment by rounding up some billboards and a few 2x4s to prop up a false illusion: that the word "wild" still exists in the Crowsnest wilderness. The message: *At the base of this tree stump is a picture of the living tree that once grew here*.

Despite alluring marketing, the Crowsnest wilderness is an industrial trash bag. It's lined and littered with smashed cans, broken bottles, old refrigerators, and yesterday's oil change. There are tire tracks up the creek. And over in that valley wallowing in what your grandfather called "the finest spring in the Rockies" is a herd of cattle. Do you know how

much water a single cow drinks in a day? Neither do I, but that isn't the problem, is it?

Don't worry. You can still hike through the heart of the anything-goes Crowsnest Pass. You can climb the stunning mountains overlooking the magnificence of The Cow Pie Reserve and Pipeline Provincial Park. You'll simply share this managed forest with logging trucks, Winnebagos, strip mines, gas wells, drilling rigs, equestrian operators, hunters, social deviants, family gatherings, Sunday drivers, dirt bike rallies, and *thousands* of cows. And this heavenly expanse is connected with roads – lotsa roads.

Be careful! You can still get a mosquito bite in this wilderness, and the bite may itch. But if it gets too bad, just hit the throttle. You can get back to town in no time.

I've brought you to the Crowsnest wilderness just in time for a noontime showdown. Facing off at the intersection are trailer-hauling cattle ranchers, rig-hauling gas field workers, and an army of off-road quad riders and dirt bikers. The dust is thick, the coyotes are nervous, and two wide-eyed horses are bucking their way into the shadows. Diverse combatants have met at the Crossroads from Hell. Seconds tick by, and then the rule of the backwoods prevails: the biggest rig goes first!

David McIntyre describes himself as a professional tree hugger, wanderer, and occasional hunter and gatherer. He writes from his root-mass-adorned home in the shadow of the Livingstone Range. (This article is dedicated to individuals – including Government of Alberta staff – who are working to foster an ecologically sound landscape ethic, heritage landscape preservation, and positive social change.)

Alberta's Caribou Recovery Process Descends into Chaos

By Joyce Hildebrand, AWA Conservation Specialist

It reads like a bad novel – complete with duplicitous characters, backroom shenanigans, and innocent victims – but sadly, it's not fiction. As the province's caribou herds continue their steep decline, the Alberta Caribou Committee (ACC), which was set up to plan their recovery, is in chaos. The scapegoat behind which government and industry are hiding is the rice-sized beetle that's eating its way through Alberta's forests, but the real culprits are only too human.

In 2005 the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) adopted the Caribou Recovery Plan, with a crucial exception: he rejected the recommendation of a moratorium on further industrial development on specific caribou ranges. Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA) was a signatory to the Plan, but when the Minister rejected the moratorium, AFPA did an about-face and agreed with him. Dr. Luigi Morgantini, a wildlife biologist with Weyerhaeuser who had signed the Plan on behalf of AFPA, was irate: before signing, he had received a clear mandate from AFPA to endorse the Recovery Plan, including moratoria.

Cyndi Smith

The Caribou Recovery Plan (2005) states that while woodland caribou recovery is feasible, "commitment, collaboration and action by government and involved stakeholders are paramount to successfully recovering this species." As the commitment of government and industry to caribou recovery weakens, caribou populations continue to decline across the province.

In a second flip-flop, AFPA reversed their support of another ACC decision. The West Central interim strategies, supported by all members of the ACC Landscape Team including AFPA, called for no clearcut logging for pine beetle control in caribou range. AWA recently received correspondence from Dave Kmet, director of forestry for AFPA and a member of the ACC, indicating that AFPA no longer supports this recommendation.

It's not only AFPA's duplicity that is jeopardizing the future of caribou. After agreeing with the ACC's recommendation for Level 1 control only (intense monitoring and selective cutting and burning of beetle-affected

trees), SRD directed forestry companies to commence clearcut logging in critical caribou habitat. AWA opposes this practice, since data from B.C. indicate that caribou do not use areas that have been logged for pine beetle control.

According to Cliff Wallis, AWA's representative on the ACC, both SRD and industry say that so much forest is infested, they don't need to go into caribou range. "We've asked them to say this publicly," he says, "but they won't. Someone has to stop the madness and bring order to this chaos." Helene Walsh, boreal campaign director with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, concurs: "There are plenty of places for industry to log to try to prevent pine beetle spread, without going near any caribou range, and the AFPA members know that."

The position of AWA and other environmental representatives has been consistent from square one. "We have tried to do what we've been asked to do – implement the Recovery Plan," says Wallis. "But everyone else has been ducking that responsibility. Nobody is biting the bullet on long-term solutions. There's a long list of bad actors here."

In the interest of getting the process back on track, AWA is calling for the removal of AFPA from the Committee. "AFPA has not shown good faith, transparency, openness, or accountability," says Wallis. "We are saying to government that if you want this process to work, you have to get rid of the people who are standing in the way." Rumour has it that in high-level discussions behind closed doors, AFPA is pushing for the removal of all of the ENGOs from the Committee.

AWA is also asking for government to stop its Janus-faced dance. SRD's agreement to only a Level 1 cut and its contradictory directive to clearcut in caribou habitat sit uncomfortably side by side. We are asking for a clear directive and for a speeding up of the process's glacial pace: more than two years into the process, only one landscape team has been established. AWA continues to be involved in the process for one reason: when the ACC asked the deputy minister if the clearcut moratorium was still on the table, he responded affirmatively, saying that some companies have already deferred some harvesting to protect caribou range.

In its defence, the Alberta government claims that it is trying numerous tactics to help caribou, such as requiring industry to restore linear disturbances, culling wolves to reduce predation, and patrolling highways to reduce caribou-vehicle collisions. Experts agree, however, that these are all simply fiddling while Rome burns. What is needed is habitat protection for this sensitive species.

It's time to stop blaming the pine beetle for everything that's wrong with this province's forests and focus on real solutions: strong and decisive government leadership; transparent, meaningful public input; and genuine concern and habitat protection for our increasingly threatened wildlife.

Southern Foothills Study Moves Forward

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist

The Southern Foothills Study (SFS), which is pushing the boundaries of land-use planning in Alberta, is now entering its third phase. SFS is a broad alliance of municipalities, landowners, industry, and environmentalists, including AWA, formed in 2005 to study current and future land-use trends and to provide a base upon which local landowners and government can plan for the future. The study area comprises 1.22 million hectares of fescue grassland, foothills, forest, and mountains stretching from the B.C. border east to Highway 2 and from Turner Valley south to the Crowsnest Pass.

The first two phases of the study used the renowned ALCES (Alberta Landscape Cumulative Effects Simulator) model to look at the many land uses of the region and predict where "business as usual" would lead us in 50 years' time. Some of the findings were startling, including an energy industry footprint increasing from 4,092 to 11,460 hectares, a roads network expanding from 7,136 to 16,224 km, and the extirpation of grizzly bears from the study area.

This sobering picture was an indication of where we are headed if we continue as we are. Phase 3 of the study will now compare this to what the landscape would look like if we were to adopt "best practices" for the different sectors – energy, forestry, agriculture, recreation/tourism, and residential – operating on the same land base. The credibility of the study – which Dave Coutts, the previous Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, cited as a good starting point for his own department's environmental management – will be further strengthened by broadening its representation to include several more representatives from the energy and forestry sectors.

Roadless Areas – An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Brian Horesji and David Swann

Albertans are increasingly anxious about the growing evidence that we have developed some of our land beyond its carrying capacity and fragmented much of our natural areas and public lands. This means the progressive loss of animal habitat, animal species and populations, wildlands for recreation and tourism, and ecosystem services (like watershed protection and clean air).

Without a provincial land-use plan, there are increasing land-use conflicts between the public and land-owners and oil and gas development and logging. Reports are urgently compelling governments to develop a publicly driven, scientifically sound land-use plan that respects all "capital" (natural, manmade, and financial) and protects our environment, on which all other values depend.

Fragmentation of ecosystems occurs primarily through motorized access, which follows activities such as logging, seismic activity, oil and gas, and human settlements. It is estimated that 80 percent of Alberta is already fragmented by human activity. If wildland is to exist for our children, where must we draw the line? While it is not well established in Canada, the policy of protecting particular areas like animal corridors and watersheds through roadless areas is common.

In the U.S., 54 million acres of roadless area have been set aside under federal regulation, most development has occurred and some through reclamation of roads after industrial activity. The State of Montana recently spent about $30 million to purchase easements on, or to buy outright, more than 10,000 acres of land to protect fish and wildlife habitat, including animal corridors, and to provide public access. Such policy on public land is progressive and intuitive. Alberta should follow suit and lead the way for the rest of Canada.

What Are Roadless Areas?

Roadless areas are natural landscapes 20 km^2 (5,000 acres) or more in area that are free from any human-made development including such things as roads, pipelines, and motorized trails. Even though this is only 3.5 km by 3.5 km, a distance many people can walk across in an hour or two, they are large enough to provide habitat beyond the minimum 500-metre impact associated with human and industrial activity. These areas are relatively uncommon in parts of south and central Alberta, and areas this size may be so rare as to warrant a lower size threshold (anywhere from 4 km^2 [1000 acres] upwards). Inventory will be necessary.

Roads have long been recognized as a source of soil and water disturbance; they contribute to landscape fragmentation, dividing large landscapes into small patches and converting interior forest habitat into edge habitat. They provide avenues for invasion by non-native plants that compete with or displace native plants. They increase the risk of forest fire and promote negative impacts on fish and wildlife populations.

In addition to significant economic value in tourism, ecological services, and saved road maintenance, roadless areas provide the following:

- high quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air
- sources of public drinking water
- diversity of plant and animal communities
- habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, and for populations dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land
- non-motorized and dispersed recreation
- reference landscapes
- natural visual landscapes with high scenic quality
- traditional cultural values, including hunting and fishing
- uncommon features of scientific and ecological value
- barriers to the spread of non-native invasive plant species

With about 4 percent of Alberta's managed public lands protected as provincial parks, there is a great need to expand ecosystem protection. For example, in western Alberta south of the Crowsnest Pass corridor, GIS analysis reveals that at most, 22 percent of the public land base may be classified as roadless. The area immediately north of Waterton Lakes National Park being touted as the Castle Wilderness area is only 35 percent roadless when rock and extreme slopes are excluded.

An Alberta Conservation Endowment Fund from provincial revenue is needed to expand this land base over the next three decades. Will the new premier have the vision and fortitude to commit to this?

In this time of unparalleled growth, wealth, and opportunity lies the real danger of overexploiting and losing our natural areas forever. Roadless areas will preserve our lands in their pristine state for our children and for all time. It is an idea whose time has come.

Dr. Brian Horejsi is a wildlife scientist who writes on land use, wildlife and public process issues and Dr. David Swann is the Alberta Liberal Environment Critic.

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Biologists Dig Deep on Burrowing Owl Conservation Mystery

By Adam Ford

"It doesn't take much of a change in elevation to see a lot of prairie," says Corey Scobie, as he stands high on the back of his half-ton pickup truck. Inside my head I hear someone tell me that age-old prairie joke about watching your dog run away for a week, but we spare each other parched humour on this hot and dry day. Scobie, a field biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service, scans the undulating tawny grass with his binoculars, paying particularly close attention to the bare mounds that are the preferred perching habitat for the most elusive prairie raptor: the burrowing owl.

As Scobie looks for owls, a device shaped like a flashlight – affectionately called a "hooter" – blares out a territorial owl call across the plain. We listen intently, trying to pick up a signal that our quarry is nearby through the cacophony of meadowlark, sparrow, and Sprague's pipit song that fills the air at this time of year. Nothing calls back other than some pronghorn, who grunt at us with curiosity.

"Earlier in the season, before the image of a burrowing owl at 600 metres was burned into my memory, it was not uncommon to spend a lot of time watching cactus owls, rock owls, and meadowlark owls," jokes Scobie. I agree, having seen several dozen owls that fit this description through a spotting scope. Wanting to see something has a way of making it magically appear, and today is the day that I hope to see my first endangered species. It is not to be. This is the last survey of the day for Scobie, and like most days, the search produces no new owl sightings.

In a typical day, Scobie and his field crew may conduct up to 20 surveys, representing an area of over 50 km^2 in each survey. It's not surprising that a bird that prefers to live in a hole in the ground is hard to see from a pickup truck half a kilometre away.

What does strike me about the absence of owls today is that I am literally standing at the limit of the burrowing owl's range in Canada. You know that line on the map in your field guide that shows the geographic extent of where a species is supposed to occur? Well, I am standing on that line for burrowing owls, somewhere south of Drumheller, Alberta. If the trend continues, within the next five years, this very spot will no longer be part of the owl's range: that is, unless they have already left.

According to Operation Burrowing Owl (OBO), owl sightings across Canada have declined precipitously in recent years, with a corresponding contraction in their northernmost range limits. The species is listed as Endangered by the Government of Canada and as a Species of Concern throughout western North America, with a small population in Florida. Scientists from Canada, the U.S., and Mexico are struggling to find the cause for this decline.

Some suspect it is due to climate change, others think it is caused by pollutants or pesticides, and still others suggest it is land management practices. Some, however, argue that the population is rebounding with recent sightings in Manitoba, a province devoid of owls for the past five or six years.

One reason for the lack of consensus on the plight of the burrowing owl in Canada is that this species is very difficult to monitor. Burrowing owls are a neotropical

Adam Ford

An adult female owl, shortly after banding, voices her thoughts on the new ankle jewelry she's wearing that will enable biologists to monitor owl populations.

Adam Ford

Corey Scobie "peeps" an owl nest with an infrared camera attached to a stiff hose. The picture from the camera is transmitted to a headset, but the high prairie sun forces Corey to wear a pillowcase over his head to cut the glare. Who said burrowing owl biologists were shy!

migrant: owls raise their young in Canada from late spring until early fall and then head south to Mexico for the winter. Since only about 20 percent of nests are reoccupied in subsequent years, biologists have to search continually for new occupied nests each field season.

This search consumes modest research budgets quickly, while decreasing the overall quality of data biologists can acquire. Combine a migratory species with naturally low population densities and you have critters that are few and far between. Considering the myriad potential issues these owls encounter during a lifetime journey from Alberta to Latin America and back again, it's no wonder the decline is hard to pinpoint.

Pick up any undergraduate textbook on conservation biology and you will read that in most cases, species endangerment is caused by habitat loss. While no one can argue that habitat loss and modification across Canada's prairie has been anything but annihilation, it may surprise some to hear that habitat loss does not seem to be the main reason for the current decline of the burrowing owl. In fact, unlike most wildlife conservation scenarios, the survival of the burrowing owl may end up depending precisely on economic prosperity.

A link between owl habitat and prairie economics is coming into focus. Owls evolved in a landscape dominated by regular disturbances that kept the native grass short: fire and massive herds of grazing bison, two elements of the prairie that have virtually disappeared from the landscape.

Today cattle grazing is the major disturbance that keeps native grass in a state suitable for burrowing owls; if the grass gets too tall or dense in the absence of grazing, the owls will eventually pack up and go somewhere else. This is why Operation Burrowing Owl gave out bumper stickers telling people that *"Burrowing Owls ♥ Alberta Cows."*

However, as the international market fluctuates, the profitability of Canadian agricultural products – such as cereal grains, potatoes, or cattle – changes. In southeastern Alberta, cattle is king (oil and gas notwithstanding), as it is too dry for reliable crop harvests and profit margins in cropping are weaker than the cattle market. So long as cattle ranching is more profitable than grain or potato crops, we can be reasonably assured that it will be business as usual on the prairie, which is probably good for owls; however, introduce external factors such as a ban on beef exports or a crop failure on grain elsewhere in the world, and our ranchers may be more willing to convert their native prairie into cultivated land, putting owls at further risk of extinction.

Laurie Griffith and her family, long-time residents of Cessford, Alberta, know the subtleties of dry-prairie economics. They balance a cattle and horse operation with oil and gas development throughout their vast property, most of which is still covered by native prairie. Despite the variety of income sources derived from their property, more than 10 pairs of owls have been monitored on Griffith property over the past four years. The Griffiths are also members of Operation Burrowing Owl (now Operation Grassland Community), an organization that works with landowners to protect native prairie ecosystems.

"What most people don't realize is that ranchers are environmentalists. People think we are out here tearing up the land, but if we did that we wouldn't still be here. This land is our bread and butter," says Griffith. "Most people out here know that the native grass is gold, especially later in the season when the crested wheat grass is dried up. We can still get fat calves during a drought if we have native grass."

C. Olson

An active burrowing owl nest. Owls reoccupy old badger or ground squirrel holes and line them with manure to attract prey insects to the nest and to mask the odour of juvenile owls to nearby predators.

The upshot of Griffith's comments is that if burrowing owls are going to have a place to live and raise their young, people need to ensure that the livelihoods of people running grass-fed cattle operations are also protected. This means encouraging both the use of land for cattle grazing and ensuring that the land itself remains a native grassland ecosystem. It takes only one day to turn over a field of sod, but it takes a century to get it back to something resembling native prairie.

While an economic perspective is one way to address endangered species conservation, another consideration is how well our legislation protects this species. After all, burrowing owls are listed as endangered, both provincially and federally. This should get the attention of any law protecting endangered species in Canada, such as Alberta's *Wildlife Act* or the federal *Species At Risk Act* (SARA). SARA is often criticized by conservationists as a paper-dragon because it typically only protects habitat on federal land. The irony of burrowing owl conservation is that SARA may have its greatest effect on owl conservation if ranchers realize just how ineffective this legislation is.

Adam Ford

A juvenile owl, shortly after banding.

A few anonymous ranchers I spoke with mentioned that they are very suspicious of any government involvement on their land. In fact, if the government were going to interfere with their land management practices over owl habitat protection, we could all be assured that government biologists like Scobie would receive little, if any, help from landowners in their monitoring efforts, and some burrowing owls may even be shot instead of being reported to officials.

Hopefully, such harsh talk from landowners will turn out to be similar to SARA itself – more bark than bite. Even now, in its paper-dragon state, SARA has many landowners suspicious of governments and biologists. Scobie mentions that several landowners did not want members of his field crew on their property, even just to get a closer look at a potential owl mound. Rather than turning to the tough hand of the law to solve this problem, perhaps we should focus our efforts on helping groups, such as AWA and OBO, build relationships with individual landowners to reduce unnecessary conflict and the proliferation of misunderstandings.

Ultimately, effective conservation of burrowing owl populations in Canada will come down to our ability to address the cause of their decline, whether that cause is located in Alberta or in the southern wintering ranges. It will also depend on conservationists' ability to show stakeholders that burrowing owl protection can be part of an economically viable enterprise. This may seem ironic, outside the box, and unconventional to some, but then again, we are talking about a bird that lives underground.

Letters to the Editor

National Climate Change Advice Ignores Key Elements

Dear Editor:

The National Round Table on the Environment and Energy (NRTEE) visited Calgary during its cross-Canada tour in November 2006 to discuss advisory material for a national strategy on energy and climate change. I attended as AWA's representative, since climate change affects every one of the issues and areas of concern on AWA's agenda. Not only was there a paucity of environmental representation at the meeting, but I also noticed crucial gaps in the discussion.

One of the topics covered was how to derive economic benefit from cashing in on climate change technology that Canada, with its emphasis on energy production (especially oil sands), should be at the forefront of developing. Participants expressed concern that if we're not pioneers here, our advantage could be lost. There was talk of incentives for industries in order to help them in the development of such new technologies.

Unfortunately, the premise of the meeting was seriously flawed: the letter inviting AWA to participate talked about establishing a sustainable climate change and energy efficiency scenario based on maintaining steady population and economic growth. Oil sands development could continue apace, its effects being mitigated through new technology to deal with increased greenhouse gases. These goals appear to be mutually incompatible. How can we continue with our present rate of growth and at the same time achieve energy consumption reduction or production sustainability, much less slow climate change to sustainable levels?

Models being developed by the NRTEE are based on growth in Canada toward a population of 46 million by 2050. It's difficult to imagine how we can reduce carbon output by the proposed 60 percent while increasing our population by half again, as well as maintaining or exceeding GDP. When I asked the question, I was told that debate about growth was beyond the committee's present mandate.

The other fundamental area that was not being factored into NRTEE climate change scenarios is

natural systems. While a fair amount of discussion focused on gaining transportation efficiencies, building energy efficiencies, and developing alternative energy sources, almost no consideration was given to the positive contributions of agricultural crops in sequestering carbon, much less the contribution of native plant systems, peat ecosystems, and oceans.

Through the day-long meeting, there was no mention in either the discussion or the literature provided of the importance of plant systems, natural and cultivated, as part of the overall climate change fighting scenario. Finally I asked the question, only to be told that the role of plant systems and other natural carbon sequesters had been raised at other meetings too, and NRTEE was under advisement to factor these into their strategy. How can we come up with valid energy and climate change advice while leaving out biology?

The NRTEE climate change process is only one of many that will advise our governments. Undoubtedly others will thoroughly factor in natural systems, and some will see the contradiction between constant growth and the limitations of the biosphere of one small planet. Our increasingly unruly climate is already telling us we have overburdened it, and time may be limited for experimenting with technological fixes that the NRTEE seems so reliant upon.

— Vivian Pharis, *AWA Director*

What's in your glass of drinking water?

Dear Editor:

Last year, I wrote a letter to the editor expressing concerns about this community's drinking water. I tried to downplay my articulated concerns in order to stimulate meaningful dialogue and insight. I hoped to initiate discourse without generating fear, or undue concern. In retrospect, it would appear that I might as well have flushed my worries down the toilet.

I reported that Devon Canada Corp. had spilled sulfaline and diisopropanolamine (DIPA) in the Crowsnest aquifer. I also reported that hundreds of creosote-laden railway ties (presumably belonging to CPR) were in the water along the eastern shore of Crowsnest Lake and I expressed concern that there were additional sources of groundwater contamination within the Crowsnest aquifer.

Backing up a bit, perhaps I should report that last summer (June 26, to be exact), I delivered chemical samples from Crowsnest Lake to the municipality. At that same time, I also wrote letters of concern to our MLA, our MP and several provincial cabinet ministers. I did this in an effort to apprise these individuals of my specific concerns with water quality in Crowsnest Lake and the entire Crowsnest aquifer. My primary worry: the quality of drinking water in this community.

You, too, may wish to be apprised of the quality of this community's drinking water. You may wish to know the names of the "little extras" that are in our aquifer, and you may desire to know the concentrations of these freebies. Would an accurate report alleviate your concerns, or would it exacerbate them? I don't know the answer to that question. I don't know exactly what we're dealing with. I do know that the silence this matter has generated is disturbing. It has elevated my worst fears.

I don't know much about the Crowsnest aquifer. Here's what I *do* know that concerns me: I know that so much sulphur has been released into the waters of Crowsnest Lake (presumably from CPR) that it can be picked up in chunks along the lake's eastern shoreline. I know that CPR maintains a disgusting and messy lube site that's located directly over the lake. I know that it's more than likely that CPR, in addition to the ongoing spilling of tons of grain and other foods along its right-of-way, is also likely to be responsible for the spilling of hazardous and/or toxic chemicals.

I know that I was accurate in all respects of the reported (by me) Devon Canada chemical spill. I know that the soil around Natal Forest Products (within close proximity to a municipal water well) is contaminated with pentachlorophenol (PCP) and cromated copper arsenate. I know that the decommissioned Luscar plant (in close proximity to this same water well) is home to a host of potential concerns, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), other solvents (and other chemicals), hydrocarbons, fuels, salts, aluminum, barium, bicarbonate, calcium, copper, lead, magnesium, mercury, nickel, selenium and zinc.

If you want to know more about the named elements and compounds, or if you simply share my concerns, please contact the Crowsnest Pass Municipal office, your MLA, your MP, any provincial cabinet ministers and/or the premier.

— David McIntyre,
Crowsnest Pass

Like Thoreau and Frost, Alberta Artist Follows the Path Less Travelled

By John Geary

Grandmothers generally give great presents at Christmas, but their gifts do not always end up influencing their grandchildren's careers. That did prove to be the case with Calgary artist Darren Haley, however, who traces his passion for drawing and painting back to his annual childhood Christmas presents. "My grandmother used to give me art materials for Christmas, and she'd always check up on my progress," he says. "She'd give me a sketch book and some coloured pencils or charcoal pencils."

Those gifts helped develop his passion for art, which followed him for the rest of his life. While he became a little discouraged in high school as his art teachers tried to impose unwelcome conventions upon him, he was allowed to do some of his own projects without having to follow the class curriculum too strictly. That desire to follow his own path – or, to paraphrase Thoreau, "to march to the beat of a different drum" – probably helped inspire him to eventually take up professional painting full-time.

But Haley did not go straight from high school into the world of professional art. Instead, he went to university and studied piping design, which led to a career in the petrochemical industry, and continued to paint as a hobby. In 1990 he worked on a project in South Africa, but after spending eight months there, he decided to return early. When he got back to Canada, the energy industry slumped and he no longer had a job. At that point, he decided to put more time and energy into painting. He took some works to a gallery and the rest, as they say, is history.

Darren Haley

When the energy sector took an economic upturn several years later, Haley decided to continue painting full-time rather than go back to his old occupation. "I really like working for myself," he says. Although occasionally the money offered tempts him to go back to his old job, just for short-term contracts, he always talks himself out of it. "This [painting] is my last job," he says. "They say everyone has two-and-a-half careers during their life – and I've already had three, so I figure this is a good place to stop."

While Haley says wildlife is one of his favourite subjects, he doesn't limit himself to that. "I started out painting wildlife, because it was at the top of the list of my interests," he says. "The first criterion of art is to buy what you like, and on the flip side of the coin, you have to paint what you like. Otherwise you're not giving it all, you're not fully involved with it."

In painting wildlife, Haley is also capturing a subject that is not guaranteed to be around for future generations to see in the wild. "All that is shrinking for us. Unless a lot of things change really quickly, wildlife is something we might not have. There'll be fewer species of wildlife when our grandchildren are around."

To help stem that tide, Haley works with conservation organizations, particularly Ducks Unlimited Canada (DU). Several of his artworks have been included in DU portfolios and have won him awards. He was the DU Alberta Artist of the Year in 1999 and earned the same honour for all of Canada in 2000. He also exhibited at the Calgary Stampede art exhibition for five consecutive years, where he won the Best of Show Award once and the Collector's Choice Award three times.

Wildlife art happens to be one of the most marketable genres, but Haley, working primarily in acrylics but also in oils, paints many other subjects: horses and other domestic animals, copies of old masters, even motor vehicles. He currently has several commissioned works on his palette. "I like to do the wildlife, but I also like to switch up every now and then; it keeps me fresh."

Keeping fresh is important for any artist. But there is one rule, one factor, that perhaps plays an even greater role in the success of an artist, a rule that Haley abides by almost religiously. "Learn the limitations of your medium," he says. "The most limiting factor to art is the medium that you use." To use a medium to its fullest extent, you have to be willing to make mistakes and learn from them, or as Haley says, just "do it, day in and day out, a sketch or two a day, and keep practising." Like any successful professional in any field, it comes down to practise-practise-practise.

That certainly makes sense. After all, if you're going to march to the beat of a different drum, you have to practise that rhythm as often as you can.

Open House Program
Calgary
Location:AWA, 455 – 12th St NW
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Cost:$5.00 per person
$1.00 for children
Contact:(403) 283-2025
Pre-registration is advised for all talks

Tuesday, March 6, 2007
Youth Animation Project

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Saturday, May 26, 2007
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With Nigel Douglas
Cost: Members $20 per person
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For more information and to register: (403) 283-2025
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wild about wilderness

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Spring 2007

Join us for AWA's Spring Gala – an evening of great food, fine wine, live auction, raffles and entertainment.

Location:
Royal Glenora Club, Edmonton
11160 River Valley Road

Time:
Cocktails & appetizers – 6:00 p.m.
Dinner to follow
Dress: Semi-formal

Cost: Members $85
Non-members $100
The purchase of this ticket includes two passes to the Devonian Botanic Garden.

Contact: 1 (866) 313-0713, or
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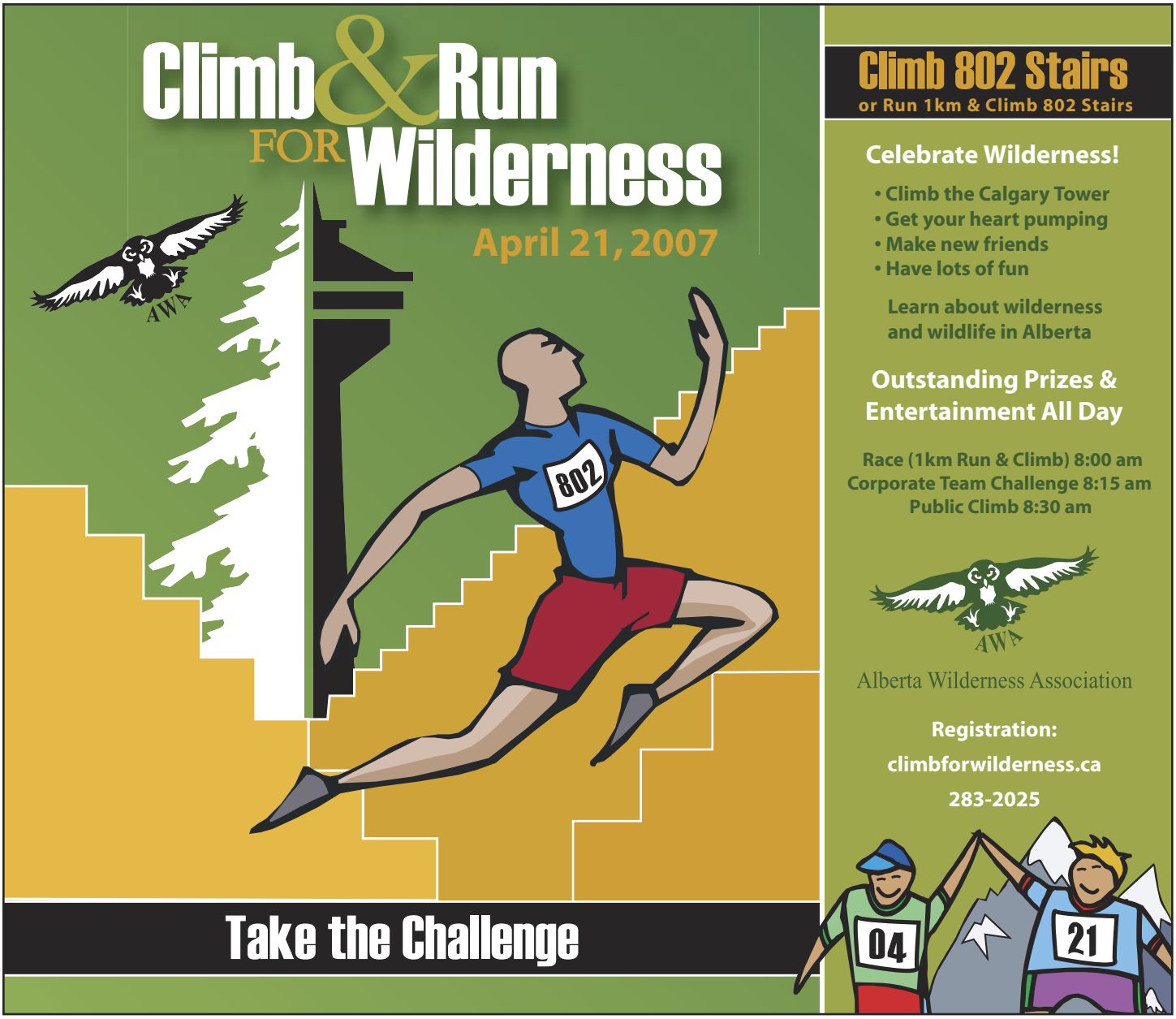

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