



A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Sunset on Pyramid Peak, Jasper National Park

PHOTO: © R. RASMUSSEN

- AWA BOARD MEMBERS SPEAK OUT ABOUT PARKS / 4
PARKS AND “ANOTHER” DIVERSITY: SOCIAL DIVERSITY / 10
GOING DOWNHILL IN JASPER?: MARMOT VS. CARIBOU / 13
MORE THAN A REPRIEVE FOR ALBERTA’S PARKS? / 16

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2011 • VOL. 19, NO. 1

FEATURES

BOARD THOUGHTS ABOUT PARKS:

- 4 CLIFF WALLIS
- 5 CHRIS SAUNDERS
- 6 OWEN MCGOLDRICK
- 7 VIVIAN PHARIS
- 8 DAN MUHLBACH
- 9 HEINZ UNGER
- 10 EVERYONE BELONGS OUTSIDE.
INCLUSION BELONGS IN PARKS.
- 13 DOWNHILL! JASPER WILDERNESS
VALLEY THREATENED
- 16 TEMPORARY REPRIEVE FOR
ALBERTA PARKS – WILL THE BILL
29 BATTLE NEED TO BE FOUGHT
AGAIN?

ASSOCIATION NEWS

- 19 THE 2010 MARTHA KOSTUCH
LECTURE: THUCYDIDES, GRANT
MACEWAN AND CLIFF WALLIS:
ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP IN A
HOSTILE JURISDICTION
- 20 GREAT GRAY OWL AWARD
- 21 EARTH DAY 2011 – THE 20TH
ANNIVERSARY OF AWA'S CLIMB
AND RUN FOR WILDERNESS

WILDERNESS WATCH

- 23 UPDATES

DEPARTMENTS

- 27 RECALL OF THE WILD
- 28 GEAR
- 29 READER'S CORNER
- 30 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EVENTS

- 31 TUESDAY TALKS; MUSIC FOR THE
WILD

FEATURED ARTIST

Ian Sheldon is well known for his richly layered and colourful landscape paintings in oil. While best known for his prairie storms, he also turns his eye to the shortgrass prairie landscape, and leaps at any opportunity for a canoe trip down the South Saskatchewan River. Ian is deeply moved by the endless rolling grasslands; spending time there is restorative and nourishes his soul.

Ian has had a varied and impressive career. His nature guides grace bookshelves across the continent, and more recently he has decided to focus on butterfly illustrations alone, working with John Acorn on field guides for Canada. Cambridge University Press recently invited Ian to publish his architectural watercolours in a commemorative edition to help celebrate Cambridge University's 800th anniversary. Hot on the heels of this publication, Ian is about to have his next art book published. This coffee-table hardcover book, *Storm Chaser*, is coming out later this year and will feature about 80 of his favourite paintings, accompanied by his own words as well as quotes from some preferred writers that relate to sense of place and the environment.

All of Ian's endeavours can be followed on his website www.iansheldon.com as well as his Facebook fan page.

Editor:
Ian Urquhart

Graphic Design:
Marni Wilson

Printing:

Colour printing and process is sponsored
by Topline Printing

topline
printing inc.



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests, controlled sources and
recycled wood or fiber

www.fsc.org Cert no. SW-COC-001922
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

*"Defending Wild Alberta through
Awareness and Action"*

Alberta Wilderness Association is a
charitable non-government organization
dedicated to the completion of a
protected areas network and the
conservation of wilderness throughout
the province. To support our work
with a tax-deductible donation, call
403-283-2025 or contribute online
at AlbertaWilderness.ca.

Wild Lands Advocate is published
bi-monthly, 6 times a year, by Alberta
Wilderness Association. The opinions
expressed by the authors in this
publication are not necessarily those
of AWA. The editor reserves the right
to edit, reject or withdraw articles and
letters submitted.

Please direct questions and comments to:

403-283-2025 • awa.wla@shaw.ca

Subscriptions to the *WLA* are \$30 per
year. To subscribe, call 403-283-2025
or see AlbertaWilderness.ca.



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Box 6398, Station D,
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1
403-283-2025

Toll-free 1-866-313-0713
www.AlbertaWilderness.ca
awa@shaw.ca

“PARK”: LET’S MAKE IT MORE THAN A FOUR LETTER WORD

The optimist in me hopes history will see the fall of 2010 as an important, positive watershed in the evolution of Alberta’s parks systems. In late November the Hon. Cindy Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, announced she was not going to proceed with Bill 29, the *Alberta Parks Act*. The Minister’s decision was undoubtedly motivated by the belief of many Albertans that the proposed law crippled a key foundation of a healthy Alberta’s parks system – what Minister Ady called “the ecological integrity of our landscapes.”

Given the decision to reconsider Alberta’s parks legislation we felt it would be timely for the Features section of the *Wild Lands Advocate* to devote considerable attention to two general, vital, questions: “Do we need more national and provincial parks in Alberta? What values should our parks respect and promote?”

For my money the best place to start when it comes to answering these questions was with AWA’s own board of directors. Six members of the board were able to outline their thoughts on this subject. As you would expect views vary. But, several themes stand out from what their words and thoughts will suggest to you. One theme is that ecological integrity demands pride of place when it comes to the future of parks in Alberta. Cliff Wallis, AWA’s current President, stresses the need for our parks and protected areas system to strive to meet the biodiversity targets we have been moving further and further away from. Vivian Pharis goes so far as to say that she doesn’t want to see any more parks at all unless they are inspired by the conservation imperative she believes is central to ecological integrity. Dan Muhlbach agrees with Vivian about the importance of ecological integrity – but with a difference. For Dan an expanded park system may be a useful means of reducing the overall

human footprint in protected areas and thereby help to maintain a higher level of ecological integrity.

The ecological integrity theme also animates the thoughts of Chris Saunders, Owen McGoldrick, and Heinz Unger. But, what I found even more striking from their thoughts is what I would call the “restorative” side of non-motorized recreation in our parks for the physically able. Such recreation is good for our physical well-being, for our psyche, for our spirit. Chris speaks to this when he talks about the grandeur of Waterton; Owen speaks to it when he demands long-term thinking about the role of parks, “one of our most direct connections as human beings to the planet”, and Heinz speaks to this...in every word and line of his reflection.

Don Carruthers Den Hoed, of Alberta Parks, offers us another important perspective to consider about our relationship to parks and protected areas. Don asks us to consider another type of diversity – social diversity – when it comes to thinking about the future of parks in Alberta. We must find a way for inclusion and ecological integrity to march into the future together.

Two final pieces round out this extensive look at parks. Jill Seaton offers a compelling account of what seems to be a looming mortal failure of National Parks management – a willingness to sacrifice ecological integrity on the altar of expanding the Marmot Basin ski hill operations. Nigel Douglas reminds us of where our existing provincial parks legislation is much stronger than the proposed Bill 29 and urges all who read this issue of the Advocate to take a few minutes out of busy days to urge Minister Ady to make sure our parks, and the values conservationists ascribe to them, enjoy a bright, robust future.

- Ian Urquhart, Editor

National and Provincial Parks: Why Do We Need More of Them?

By Cliff Wallis, P. Biol., President, AWA

Without protected spaces at Waterton Lakes, Rumsey, Cypress Hills and Hay-Zama Lakes, Albertans would be poorer indeed. Take a look across their boundaries into the unprotected adjoining properties -- in some cases the differences are subtle while in others, dramatic. Industrial development, agriculture and species loss are rampant on unprotected landscapes. Protected areas are our front line in a global war to protect biodiversity.

The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concluded that changes in biodiversity were more rapid in the past 50 years than at any time in human history. Most ecosystems have now been dramatically transformed through human actions. Over the past few hundred years, extinction rates increased by up to a thousand times natural levels. Ten to 50

percent of higher taxonomic groups are now considered threatened.

Canada's National Biodiversity Strategy committed to complete the terrestrial protected area systems by 2000. *This was not done.* Alberta failed to achieve its own minimal and scientifically indefensible protected area targets under Special Places. Alberta Parks acknowledges these targets are only for preservation needs and that recreation and other activities require that targets be adjusted upward. *This has not happened.* The target for protected areas on provincial lands in Alberta is 2.72 percent; this is far below the 12 percent implied by the U.N. Brundtland Commission Report in 1987 and a long distance from what conservation science says.



Other provincial governments are redoubling their efforts with targets for boreal forest protection of up to 50 percent. While National Parks in Alberta bring our total protected area up to around 13 percent several Natural Subregions remain underrepresented. Less than 3 percent was targeted for protection in the Grassland and Parkland Regions, parts of a globally threatened temperate grassland and homes to the greatest concentration of species at risk in Alberta. Remarkably, only 50 percent of the protected area target was achieved in the Grassland and only 25 percent in the Parkland.

Interviews with prominent conservation biologists revealed a consensus that Brundtland's "political" 12 percent target is insufficient to maintain viable populations and adequately represent ecosystems. They suggested that about 50 percent of a natural region should be protected to meet biodiversity conservation needs. *Alberta now has an even longer way to go.*

The pace of protected area approvals must accelerate since such designations seem to take decades, unlike industrial development approvals that often occur in a matter of just weeks or months. It's time to pause and reflect about what we want in our Alberta. Alberta's population and our collective footprint on the land grows daily.

Anyone who has been enthralled by the sweeping vistas and a prairie bell chorus of bird song at the Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve or has been caressed by the west wind and watched a Golden Eagle soar over craggy ridge at the Bob Creek Wildland Park understands the need for more protected areas. They are havens for biodiversity, outlets for non-motorized recreation in a natural setting and sanctuaries to help offset the growing impacts that more people and their activities bring. ▲



September Morning Coulee
30" x 30" oil on canvas

© I. SHELDON

Why Waterton Lakes is My Ideal National Park

By Chris Saunders, Board Member, AWA



I firmly believe Waterton is the ideal National Park. I first set foot in the Park in 1979 and was enchanted by it. It is one of my favourite places, somewhere to which I keep going back.

So what makes Waterton my ideal National Park? First, it has numerous extraordinary natural features found nowhere else. Consider the geology: the way the mountains explode from the prairie, the gloriously bright and varied colours of the exposed rocks, and how some of the oldest rocks in the world overlay much younger rocks. Consider the flora: how verdant the place is with its many unique indigenous plant species. The drive in from the park gates to the townsite takes you past magnificent broad meadows full of flowers throughout the summer. Consider the fauna: Waterton is blessed with unique bird life and relatively high concentrations of larger mammals like grizzly bears and elk. Consider the abundant water resources: the many lakes, rivers, streams and waterfalls. Cameron Falls tumble over some of those ancient rocks mentioned above. So Waterton has magnificent natural attributes that are preserved because it is a national park.

Secondly, Waterton's values as a protected area have not been seriously compromised by the impact of development. There is no major through road, indeed all of the roads in the Park go nowhere other than to places in the Park. The human settlement is quite small and confined to one area. There are some visitor facilities at the townsite and although I have seen them grow substantially since 1979 they are not yet excessive or completely out of keeping with their surroundings.

Thirdly, I believe much of the land surrounding the Park, to the east at least, is something of an exception to the pattern Cliff Wallis noted above. It is quite well managed by landowners who place a high value on preserving the natural continuity of their land with the magnificent landscape to the west. As a result it is largely free from the sort of distasteful tourist development seen around the entrances to some other national parks. The grandeur of the approach to Waterton is a sight rarely forgotten by those who are lucky enough to see it. Further, without that development wildlife have greater freedom of movement to venture in and out of the Park.

Finally, Waterton is a remarkable recreation resource for hiking. There are a huge range of mostly well-maintained trails allowing limited access to valley floors, knife-edge ridges and the areas in between. They provide access into wilderness areas so visitors may experience the features of the Park I described above.

Although I call Waterton my ideal it is not perfect; there are certainly improvements that could and should be made. The Park is probably too small. A real and potentially attainable objective would be to extend the Park north and north west to the Crowsnest Pass thereby incorporating the Castle, an area of great natural beauty which is largely unprotected and has seen a good deal of damage from forestry, natural gas extraction, mining and off-road vehicle activities over many years. That is a goal we should ask our politicians to deliver both for ourselves and for future generations. ▲

Walking the divide between the headwaters of Coral and Job Creeks in the Bighorn Wildland
PHOTO: R. PHARIS



National and Provincial Parks: Why We Need More of Them

By Owen McGoldrick, B.Sc, M.B.A., Optimist, AWA Board Member

When I reflect about national and provincial parks I am concerned about short term thinking within both public and private institutions such as governments and businesses. In my professional life, I often encounter the problem of short-term strategic thinking with respect to senior leadership. The term of the leader in government, for example, is generally four or five years which is the same as a university president. The tenure of a CEO in private business depends significantly on short-term performance (were quarterly and/or annual goals met?); I would suspect a CEO's average tenure is similar to her counterparts in the public sector. Thus I would argue that the common thread joining leadership in both sectors is that strategic decisions are more likely made in reference to short-term, as opposed to long-term, objectives.

Shifting focus to the personal level I think about the house I live in. The building probably has a life of no more than a hundred years. Or, I estimate the usable life of my vehicle to be fifteen or twenty years at the most. So anything "large" that I "own" has a relatively short-term usable life. However the

"usable life" of these temporary assets is many multiples of the five-year "frames" used by leaders of public institutions or private businesses.

What does this have to do with National and Provincial Parks? What is the "usable life" of parks – one of our most direct connections as human beings to the planet? I don't believe enough of our leaders take a long-term perspective on this question. I would argue nature is one of our greatest teachers in life and wilderness is priceless. As I write this essay, I review my life as a child, adolescent, and young adult and remember the times I spent in our parks; those memories fill me with feelings of both gratitude and distress. I am grateful the parks are there and that I have been able to spend time in them. I am in great distress about the short-term thinking decision makers demonstrate with respect to the protection of parks. Their short-term thinking is irrevocably changing our priceless landscape.

Why do we need more parks? We need more great teachers and our park system does this when it comes to the natural world. We need wilderness and landscape unaffected by those actions of our fellow

citizens that are driven by the need to boost the bottom line or gain political support before the next shareholders' meeting or election. We need to provide future generations with the opportunity to experience and learn from the natural world. Parks offer that opportunity. We need to set aside the tendency just to think about the next five years and think instead about the next hundred or even thousand years. This will not be easy but it is vital.

A few years ago I was quite irate about something relatively meaningless in the grand scheme of life. Someone I was whining to asked me how this stressful "thing" would affect me days, months, years and decades down the road. Suddenly the "thing" bothering me fell off my radar screen; I realized that, in the long-term, it would be irrelevant. With the parks question the reverse applies. We need to think about their purpose in the long-term and to ensure the continued existence of these great teachers. When it comes to teaching us about the natural world a healthy parks system that represents well our mix of ecosystems and landscapes is without equal. 🌿

Does Alberta Need More Parks?

By Vivian Pharis, AWA Board Member



While I strongly believe Alberta needs much more land protected through a comprehensive plan of interconnected ecological strongholds and migration routes, I would rather these be in protective categories outside national or provincial parks designations. While Alberta already has considerable land designated for recreation - often referred to as “parks”, it has paid little attention to protecting lands systematically to conserve ecological integrity. This is where I believe future efforts and designations must go.

Provincially, conservation may have dodged a bullet this past fall when Bill 29, designed to “streamline” the *Alberta Parks Act* in some distorted way that could have removed existing protective categories, was publically drubbed into the ground. Alberta’s current system of land protection categories that includes ecological reserves, natural and wilderness areas, wildlife reserves and various park categories, follows almost exactly the categories recommended globally by UNESCO. This means that the Alberta Government, through Bill 29,

was preparing to downgrade conservation protection and increase bogus parks that would allow more recreation but without a plan for maintaining biodiversity. I believe what is needed is more wilderness, ecological reserve, wildlife sanctuary and heritage rangelands designated under a comprehensive plan to maintain biodiversity.

National parks are apparently moving in an unfortunate direction when it comes to recreation. This is reflected in the increased emphasis on increasing visitor numbers through the gate and front-country provisions for vehicle-based tourism. Personally I used to frequent Alberta’s national parks by backpacking and by horse. I knew intimately much of the backcountry of Banff and Jasper particularly, and have a history of fighting tenaciously for their maintenance in wilderness condition. But, I stopped using our national parks about 20 years ago due to new restrictions on backcountry equestrian use that makes it “unsafe.”

Some will be alarmed to hear that what I refer to as unsafe is the prohibition on carrying a (sealed) gun on equestrian

trips as was the historic situation in our national parks. I am not referring to needing a weapon for defensive use, but needing it to humanely dispose of a horse that gets into severe strife. It is my unhappy experience to have twice had to “put down” a horse in the backcountry, once due to a broken leg and once to being too caught in muskeg to extricate. As horrible as it is to shoot a faithful animal, I believe it is a far better result than letting the animal suffer.

The trouble is, once you are alienated from using an area, your concern for it lessens and your interests go elsewhere. National parks have become too congested with front-country users and too bureaucratic in the backcountry for me. I see decreasing emphasis on conservation in our national parks and not enough attention on integration with adjacent provincial lands as part of a comprehensive strategy to maintain biodiversity. I am therefore reticent to see more parks in Alberta unless this is inspired by an emphasis on conservation. 🌿

Grassland Greens
30” x 66” oil on canvas
© I. SHELDON



Thinking About Parks

By Dan Muhlbach, AWA Board Member



Albertans have been very vocal in expressing their support for an extensive, intact park system in the province and the need for a balanced approach to non-renewable resource development.

When we think of what a parks system offers in benefits, habitat preservation, wildlife conservation, recreation, tourism and a place for reflection are usually first of mind. Unfortunately, the value of these benefits is often understated when compared to the immediate and visible economic impacts from resource extraction and commercial development. I believe a long-term strategic approach is required to better assess the value of a parks system. In my estimation, parks need to receive more respect from decision makers since they will continue to provide esthetic, environmental and economic value long after non-renewable resources are exhausted. To help achieve this objective I suggest we consider the following:

1. Retain parks in their natural state.

Commercial development too often occurs in the most sensitive areas of wildlife habitat and ecosystems. The growing numbers of eco-tourists want to see parks in their natural

state, not view the construction of shopping and hospitality centres. Tourist accommodations should be located outside of park boundaries. If we want to privilege experiencing the natural environments of our parks we need to “deconstruct” them. Furthermore, maintaining watershed integrity and retaining carbon sinks are added benefits of moving towards a minimal disturbance regime in our parks.

2. Aspire to a system of parks with sufficient size and diversity to maintain ecological integrity.

Parks need to be large enough to maintain stable populations of both plant and animal species. In addition, critical habitat and travel corridors need to be available between park areas to encourage diversity and help sustain strong gene pools. Currently, as Cliff Wallis noted above, the grassland and parkland subregions of the province are severely under-represented when it comes to protected areas and they are home to a number of at-risk species. Even the addition of smaller parcels here would have a positive impact on species. A growing population base

will also increase the demands on our existing parks. Expanding our parks system may help to lighten this human footprint and help to maintain a higher level of ecological integrity.

3. Manage growth carefully around the perimeters of major park areas.

Comprehensive environmental assessments need to be conducted prior to major developments. Buffer zones may be appropriate in some instances. Staged approaches to resource extraction would help to mitigate cumulative impacts as well as ensuring that the economic benefits for Albertans are shared on an intergenerational basis.

4. Allow reasonable public access with emphasis on low impact activities.

A balance needs to be struck between public use and enjoyment of the parks, on the one hand, and maintaining ecological integrity with minimal disturbance for plants and animals on the other hand. Development or expansion of large-scale recreation complexes (such as the proposed ski hill expansion discussed later by Jill Seaton) erodes this need for balance. A different recreational path should be followed; added opportunities for hiking, viewing and low impact activities should be made available for a wide range of people with varying abilities.

A diverse and sustainable parks system benefits everyone. When long-term environmental, economic and social aspects are fairly measured, I know the public will see great value in our protected areas. I hope our politicians will as well. 🌿

AWA offers tours and hikes to some of Alberta's most important protected areas. Leah Truch, near the end of a perfect prairie day, took a moment to reflect on the magnificent landscape of the South Saskatchewan River and Suffield National Wildlife Area.

PHOTO: C. OLSON





Why Albertans Need More Parks

By Heinz Unger, Past-President, AWA



We need more parks in Alberta:

- so we can sit in the sun and watch the clouds go by without being disturbed by sightseeing helicopters flying overhead.
- so we can huddle in the snow on a winter night and hear the wolves howl on the other side of the valley.
- so we can stretch out on a warm rock at the edge of an alpine meadow, smell the many wildflowers and wait for the hoary marmot to come out and do the same.
- so we can paddle across a mirror-like lake in the early morning hours and hear the loons calling to each other without being disturbed by a motor boat, or worse, a jet skier.
- so we hike up a slot canyon and then

through a lush valley with geological treasures without being run down by noisy and rude dirt bikers.

- so we can camp under a big prairie sky and see every star in the Milky Way without them being blotted out by light pollution from a oil well flare.
- so we can hike across the high slopes of Bighorn country without getting stuck in the ruts made by illegal ATV riders.
- so we can explore a prairie gully, almost step on a rattler and, when dodging the snake, fall on thorny cactus.
- so we can kayak down a wild river without cabins and manicured lawns stretching right down to the banks.
- so we can slow down enough and just sit in the sun, take in the scenery and listen to the birds calling to each other.
- so we can tramp through an old-growth

forest grove and stumble on a burbling, mossy spring pouring the cleanest and coolest stream straight out of the floor of the forest.

- so we can work our way across a steep snow field in the high mountains and tell ourselves we are being followed by those bighorn sheep further up in the snow.
- so we can climb up steep slopes to find a lukewarm pool of a small 'hot spring' to soak our tired feet.
- so we can follow the tracks of the mighty grizzly and her cubs, and see how she dug up every rock and anthill along the trail to feed her family.
- so we can, figuratively speaking, lose ourselves in the wilderness and come out a few days later, tired and hungry but pleased to have never used our cell phone. 🐾

Everyone Belongs Outside. Inclusion Belongs in Parks.

By Don Carruthers Den Hoed



I was just a singing, dancing beaver - part of the acclaimed musical theatre interpretive shows put on by Alberta Parks in Kananaskis Country. I gave a voice to animals, plants, and natural processes in the Rocky Mountains. So why did most of my park programs suddenly involve people crying tears of joy, and why was I the one with tears in my eyes now, as I walked across the windswept dam at North Interlakes in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park with my father, desperate to find solid footing on an unfamiliar path?

In 2009, during the second Adaptive Kananaskis Challenge, a decision to cancel a backcountry kayak trip due to weather hammered home the lesson that my mandate to foster inclusion in nature was radically altering the role of parks and challenging my readiness to become more than an environmental educator. I had to learn how to give voice to stories of social diversity alongside stories of biodiversity.

Parks and protected areas face many challenges – whether from maintaining their relevance against a rising tide of environmental issues or from a media-saturated public or from the Herculean task of trying to ensure sustainability in a financially, socially, and ecologically dynamic world. No issue captures this complexity more than the fundamental question: what belongs in parks, and why? While I don't want to dismiss the specific challenges this presents on the ground my answer would be “what belongs in parks is belonging itself.”

Drive along the Bow Valley corridor on any given weekend and the casual observer might infer that the provincial and national parks of the area are saturated with visitors. To a degree they would be correct. From Heart Creek to the Banff Park gates, ditches overflow with vehicles and visitors. Remote back roads experience traffic jams as people try to escape the stress of modern urban life. This exodus to the eastern slopes is

nothing new, and, in fact, was a driving force behind the creation of Kananaskis Country in the 1970s. But the planners of the past likely never imagined usage to get to the scale of double, triple, or quadruple-parked cars at obscure and seemingly random access points. Campgrounds in the Rocky Mountains are equally overwhelmed – finding a last-minute campsite without a reservation usually means a weekend in overflow. It is often said that protected areas get “loved to death” and in the Bow corridor and other high profile sites in this province that would be hard to deny.

But, this is an anomaly, somewhat of an illusion. Park visitation has been generally declining across North America for the past two decades. In Alberta, while many sites are approaching or exceeding capacity, especially since Alberta's recent population growth, there are other parks with little visitation at any given time. Even the most popular sites can seem like ghost towns mid-week or on a cloudy day. Too much use of a particular site strains the landscape, facilities, and the experiences people cherish. But from a slightly different perspective, it's *out of sight, out of mind*: a park that nobody visits risks irrelevance.

The Challenge of Social Diversity

More important than the number of people visiting parks is the social diversity of visitors. The diversity of visitors is disproportionate to the reality of today's changing society. A 2010 Outdoor Foundation report revealed that the majority of visitors to North American parks were white, male, able-bodied, single, and financially stable (this fairly homogeneous user group

participates in a fairly uniform set of activities, mainly photography, wildlife viewing, picnicking, day hiking, and swimming, which also could lead to the isolated crowding noted above). There are many Albertans facing barriers to daily life such as transportation, time, and finances who would give anything to visit even the most overlooked park on the cloudiest day; there are immigrants to Alberta who moved here specifically because of the environment, yet lack the knowledge, resources, or equipment needed to get out to parks.

These, and other, underrepresented communities, foreshadow our demographic future, one where 20 percent of Albertans will be visible minorities or immigrants, where 17 percent of Albertans will experience limitations due to a disability, and where 80 percent of the population will live in cities. These people must be given compelling reasons to be included in parks, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because that diversity will lead to better political, social, and fiscal sustainability within parks themselves. As Fritjof Capra writes in *The Web of Life*: “A diverse community is a resilient community, capable of adapting to changing situations.”

What Is Belonging?

Belonging in parks is not about numbers. When someone visits a park, they develop affinity towards that landscape and that experience. This connection leads to stewardship and choices that benefit ecological integrity, choices such as choosing to recreate away from wildlife corridors, writing feedback letters, or volunteering time to contribute to research or restoration

Some Albertans “may experience an ecological poverty no less significant than financial or social poverty. It is an imperative for park agencies to remove any barriers and provide space for this connection, whether the individual is seeking adventure, escape, or prayer.”



Lakeland sunset

PHOTO: C. WEARMOUTH

projects. Belonging is about building a broader base of support for parks and for the policies and practices necessary to ensure ecological integrity into the future. Visitation to sites like Lake O'Hara in Yoho National Park is already limited, and off-trail recreation is restricted within wildlife corridors and sensitive areas such as parts of Dinosaur Provincial Park. These can be effective conservation strategies but they will only work if people support the regulations through changing their behaviour and adopting compatible values.

Conservation of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is an important role of Alberta's parks and protected areas. So too is providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature-based experiences. This is the constant struggle of park agencies and advocates alike, as the two goals often seem unbalanceable. Ultimately, conservation and recreation both belong in parks. As Philip Dearden argued at the Parks for Tomorrow Conference: "Protected areas have a key role to play in reconnecting Canadians with nature to engender that sense of personal responsibility that will translate

into more responsible activities." Put another way, parks are not just about protecting the landscape, they are about protecting our relationship with the landscape.

There is ample evidence that any connection to nature – even in the city, and especially through recreation – provides significant benefits to mental, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. It stands to reason that anyone who cannot connect with nature to receive these benefits may experience an ecological poverty no less significant than financial or social poverty. It is an imperative for park agencies to remove any barriers and provide space for this connection, whether the individual is seeking adventure, escape, or prayer.

The need for increased levels of environmental citizenship is also clear, and the low-hanging fruit of increased conservation and stewardship is inclusion; we should remove barriers and tap into the vast number of people who have never before been asked to be stewards, or never been shown that outdoor recreation is even possible. As Ross Wein wrote in the June 2010 issue

of the *Advocate*, "the conservation and environmental communities [...] do not appreciate the reservoir of support the disabled could bring to conservation campaigns." The inclusion of diverse communities – whether persons with disabilities, First Nations, new Canadians, youth, or seniors – is an opportunity to enrich our understanding of natural heritage, as these unique perspectives "interpret nature in ways that are refreshing and valuable to the rest of us. They can educate us to "see" nature in new ways." (Vol. 18, Issue 3, page 11) Inclusion is not about convincing various groups to recreate the way current mainstream users do. Rather, it is about inviting participation in new ways that are relevant to these new users and demonstrating that these new participants belong and can contribute as part of the parks community.

Given this, the question is not just "how do you balance conservation and recreation?" It is also "how can conservation serve recreation, recreation serve conservation, and how can both foster stewardship for life?" The answer is to look beyond measures of



Sapphire Lines
24" x 60" oil on canvas

© I. SHELDON

visitor satisfaction, head counts, permit numbers, or funding, or even measures of ecological integrity, carrying capacity, and conservation targets. These are important practical indicators, but they should be augmented by measuring how parks enhance quality of life through transformative park experiences and how effective parks are at fostering stewardship for nature inside *and outside* of parks and mainstream park activities. We must measure how parks broker a renewed sense that nature belongs in everyone's life and everyone belongs in nature, regardless of age, culture, gender, income, postal code, background, or ability.

Accessibility is not new for Alberta's Provincial Parks. William Watson Lodge and a whole network of barrier-free trails and standards were developed in the late 1980s as part of the KananACCESS program. Likewise, there are many organizations who provide exceptional opportunities for outdoor recreation for new Canadians, youth, veterans, and so on (e.g. Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Boys and Girls Club, Outward Bound Canada). However, since the completion of the first Inclusion Strategy for persons with disabilities, and thanks to the many efforts of Alberta park staff, partners, and volunteers, inclusion has moved from isolated projects to core business. Alberta's *Plan for*

Parks contains the strategic priority to: "Implement a province-wide inclusion strategy to increase opportunities for, and invite full participation of, all Albertans."

As of this writing, the inclusion strategy is near completion, and many pilot inclusion initiatives are becoming a regular part of park operations throughout Alberta. The final strategy, "everyone **belongs** outside," will set out practical guidelines and clear principles to removing barriers so that all Albertans can participate in outdoor recreation; connect to their natural and cultural heritage; become park employees or volunteers; and can become the next generation of environmental stewards. More importantly, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation listens to *all* Albertans, regardless of who they are, and acts to make things better. By hearing these voices and sharing their stories, everyone will benefit from the perspectives, experiences, and ideas of people who are as diverse as the landscapes and wildlife in this province.

I was overwhelmed on the dam because I was learning more about the human relationship with nature in a single cancelled event than I had in the previous fifteen years as an environmental educator. I took my access to nature for granted and never really appreciated how many privileges I carry around with me:

I speak and read English, I am male and white, I am able bodied and I have full cognitive abilities (for now). I am mobile, I have a supportive family, I have grown up in the outdoors and am knowledgeable about wildlife safety, renting equipment, driving in the mountains, and preparing for the weather. I have a job, I have a home, and I have the experience and education to hope for a relatively stable future. I am welcomed in parks. Despite all these privileges, I spend far too much time inside my office, my work, and my mind.

Across the dam were people with none of these privileges, and they were outside: they were belonging in parks. Time for me to join them. ♡

Don Carruthers Den Hoed is the Inclusion and Collaboration Team Leader for Alberta Parks, in Kananaskis Country. He is currently working on his PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Calgary, exploring the intersections of nature and society, conservation and inclusion. You can learn about Alberta's latest inclusion programs at pushtoopen.ca and albertaparks.ca/naturelanguage

Downhill! Jasper Wilderness Valley Threatened

By Jill Seaton, Jasper Environmental Association



Introduction

In spite of a strongly critical report from its own biologists, Parks Canada has approved guidelines for Marmot Basin Ski Hill in Jasper National Park allowing it to pursue the possibility of development in a pristine wilderness valley. This valley provides important habitat for the threatened woodland caribou. This could set a dangerous precedent for the future of the three ski hills in Banff National Park.

History

A century ago the federal government justified setting land aside for national parks as a way to bring in tourism dollars. These protected areas of spectacular landscapes became little islands open for business in what was then a sea of wilderness. At that time, little was known about wildlife and their habitat requirements.

As the parks grew in popularity, downhill skiing was welcomed as a winter attraction for tourists. In the 1950s, the national park ski hills – three in Banff and one in Jasper – were small-scale local businesses. But, by the 1970s, these had morphed into larger commercial operations and Canadians began to question what effects they were having on the parks and their wildlife.

In 2000 the government-appointed Panel on Ecological Integrity recommended the national park ski operations be managed as non-conforming uses, curtailing any aspects that affected ecological integrity. Expansions should be prohibited. Ski Area Management Guidelines laid out criteria for Long-Range Plans (LRPs) that would specifically outline each ski area's intentions for the following 10 to 15 years.

Parks Canada and the ski hills have not had an easy relationship. The four operations consistently delayed producing LRPs or even the required Vision Statements, preferring to pressure Parks Canada into allowing incremental development on the grounds of 'safety' or 'environmental concerns'. In many cases Parks acquiesced, seemingly disregarding

the cumulative effects of all this 'two-bitting'.

In pushing for more development the ski hills cited stiff competition from resort operations in adjacent provincial areas. They conveniently ignored that being located in a world-famous national park is an enormous asset in itself; they also acted as if they were unaware of the advertising that Parks Canada does on their behalf.

However, in 2006 a new Conservative government was elected in Ottawa and the Minister of Environment introduced 'refined' Ski Area Management Guidelines on the grounds the ones in place since 2000 were 'too restrictive'. Political winds were starting to blow favourably for the ski hills.

Both the 2000 and the new 2006 management guidelines allowed exceptions to policy by a *reconfiguration* of the lease in exchange for more development elsewhere on the lease providing there were '*substantial environmental gains*'. A '*substantial environmental gain*' is defined as "a leasehold reduction or reconfiguration that results in better protection of sensitive areas in exchange for development in less sensitive areas." This would seem to be a not unreasonable exchange...if followed in good faith. But, the 2006 guidelines also allowed for a *reduction* in the leasehold in exchange for new land adjacent to the lease. The new lands would be managed under a Licence of Occupation.

This change to the guidelines seems to fly in the face of the law. Section 36 (1) of the Canada National Parks Act states: "No lease or licence of occupation may be granted for the purpose of commercial ski facilities on public lands in a park except **within** a commercial ski area described in Schedule 5" (emphasis added). It will be interesting to see how Parks Canada gets around this inconvenience.

These changes to the guidelines sparked an interest from the four ski hills. Marmot Basin Ski Area in Jasper National Park was the first to prepare a Vision Statement – no doubt closely watched by the Banff ski hills.

Marmot Basin

Marmot Basin is a mid-size operation located 22 kilometres south-west of Jasper townsite. It is seen as a laid-back ski hill with 84 runs fairly evenly split between 'easy', 'intermediate' and 'advanced'. Its lease, negotiated in the 1960s, covers 678 hectares most of which is located in a bowl on the east slope of Marmot Mountain. But the lease area also contains an adjacent steep north slope leading down into the pristine Whistlers Creek Valley.

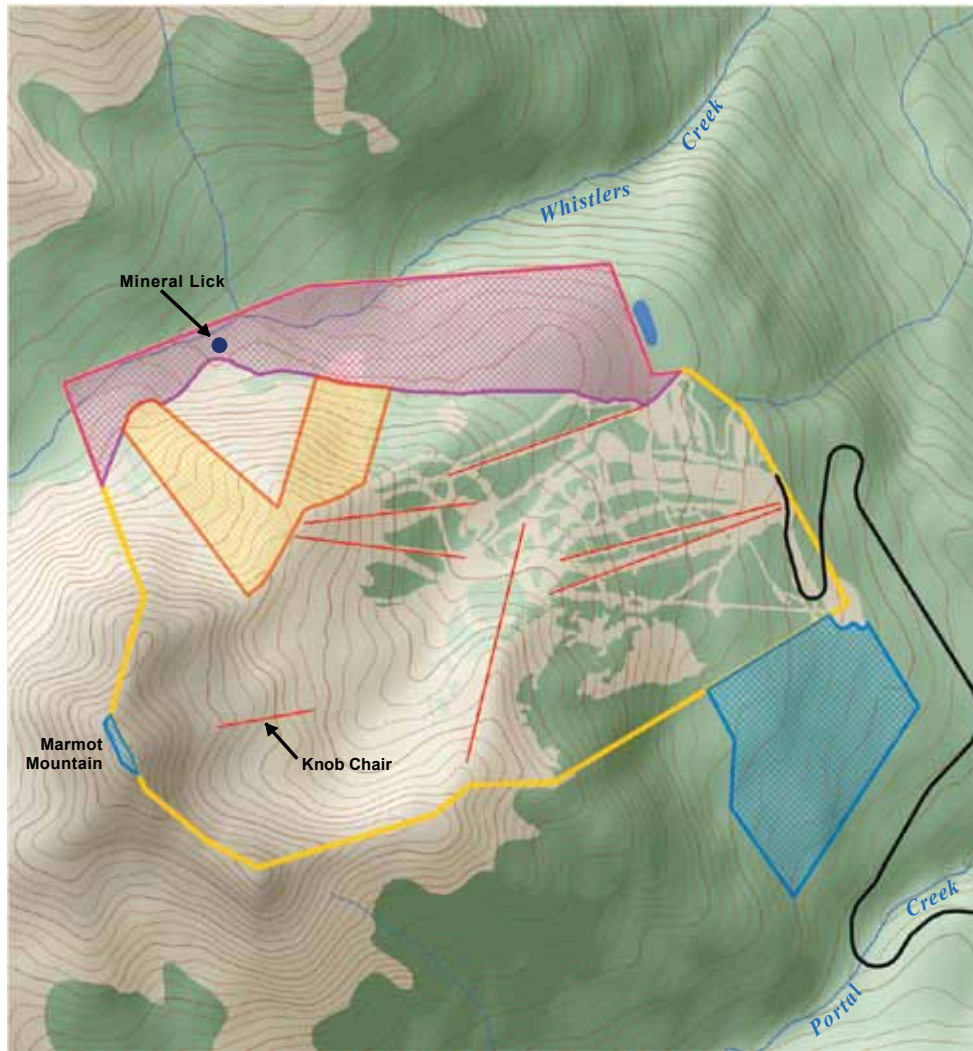
The ski area's leasehold is listed as Zone IV (Recreational). However, it is surrounded on all sides by lands designated as Zone II (Wilderness). These lands provide important habitat for wildlife – including the threatened Southern Mountain Woodland Caribou.







At the time of Marmot Basin's first planning proposal, in the late 1970s, the highest chair lift – the Knob Chair – ended about 600 metres below the summit ridge of the bowl and there was no development on the north slopes into Whistlers Creek Valley. In the proposal, Marmot wanted to extend the Knob Chair towards the summit, opening the possibility of giving skiers access to the valley where it hoped in the future to develop ski lifts.

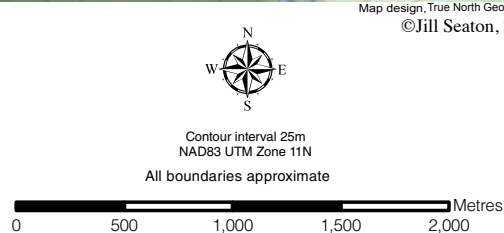
Following an environmental assessment, Parks Canada concluded in 1981 that "any lift proposals that would ease the present difficulty for humans to gain access to any place on the Marmot Mountain skyline and beyond will constitute an unmitigable impact for goats and caribou". The Whistlers Valley slopes and the upper portion of the Marmot bowl were therefore excluded from development considerations. Unstable soils and the adverse effect on the view from the summit above the Jasper Tramway on the far side of the valley were also causes for the rejection.

For the next 20 years Marmot expanded its development in the bowl below the Knob Chair. In 2004 it had nine ski lifts and three lodges and was planning to install snow-making facilities. But there was no sign of the required LRP and

Marmot Ski Hill Lease Area With Proposed Expansion



-  Existing Lease Boundary
-  Surrendered Area
-  Licence Of Occupation Areas
-  Potential Lift Areas
-  Existing Lift Lines
-  Access Road



incremental additions continued.

Then, in 2005 when LRP negotiations were stalled once again, Parks Canada introduced the idea of potential development in the protected Whistlers Creek Valley.

The logjam broke. Negotiations between Parks and Marmot got under way and in January 2006. Marmot produced a Vision Statement setting out its 'wish list' for the next 10 to 15 years including two ski lifts in the protected valley and substantial projects both inside and outside its present developed footprint. It also indicated that summer use was needed to "strengthen the

certainty of Marmot Basin's economic sustainability".

Whistlers Creek Valley

Whistlers Creek Valley is an undisturbed valley running parallel to the busy, dangerous east-west transportation corridor. It lies over a steep ridge to the south of the corridor and serves as a refuge and safe wildlife movement area from the important montane habitat of the Athabasca Valley through to the Tonquin Valley and British Columbia.

The valley provides important – possibly critical – habitat for the woodland caribou. Animals from

the struggling Tonquin herd of the Southern Mountain Woodland Caribou population use the lichen-rich higher slopes just outside the Marmot bowl and groups of them are often sighted there in winter. Historically they used the bowl itself but, as development increased, they were pushed out. Now only their name graces the bowl and ski hill facilities: 'Caribou Ridge', 'Caribou Knoll', 'Caribou Lodge' and 'Caribou Chair'.

Woodland caribou are now a threatened species under the federal *Species At Risk Act* (SARA). The act clearly states: "Canada's protected areas, especially national parks, are vital to the protection and recovery of species at risk".

Other important species in the valley include the sensitive wolverine and grizzly bear – both listed as species 'of concern' by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), as well as mountain goats, lynx, moose, wolves, black bears and white-tailed ptarmigan.

The proposed deal

Marmot offered to 'surrender' 119.6 hectares of pristine land on its northern border at the bottom of its lease in the Whistlers Creek Valley. This 'surrendered' land is a narrow, heavily forested strip of spruce-fir 250 to 600 metres wide and approximately 2,500 metres long; it includes a short stretch of Whistlers creek.

In exchange the ski hill wants 222 hectares of new lands for development including:

- greatly increased development in its footprint
- a 60-ha licence of occupation for Nordic skiing and beginners' area outside its south-east boundary
- an extension of the Knob Chair to the summit ridge of Marmot Peak necessitating another licence of occupation (0.6 ha) for the upper terminal tower
- two ski lifts into Whistlers Creek Valley

In spite of Parks Canada having done no monitoring in the area for the past thirty years and admitting to more than forty knowledge deficiencies, and in spite of strong objections from conservation



Woodland caribou, Jasper National Park

PHOTO: P. SUTHERLAND

groups, the draft guidelines were approved, virtually unchanged. They would allow consideration of the Knob Chair extension and the two Whistlers Creek valley ski lifts dependent on a two-year ‘Caribou Risk Assessment’. Parks Canada, Marmot Basin and ‘an objective third party’ will set the terms-of-reference for this assessment. A mountain goat specialist also will carry out a three-year mountain goat study in the area.

‘Substantial environmental gain’?

The two ski lifts would be on slopes directly above and adjacent to the ‘surrendered’ strip. The potential for snowmobile access to evacuate injured skiers, the noise of avalanche control and machinery as well as summer maintenance will ensure, to my mind, that wildlife will not remain there. Within metres of the upper edge of this contentious strip lies a mineral lick vital to the local – and possibly the regional – population of mountain goats.

Further, an extension of the Knob Chair to the summit of the bowl will allow skiers access to the back side of Marmot Peak into the caribou habitat at the west end of the valley. They also will be able to ski round to the two new ski lifts. In short, Whistlers Creek Valley will be open for business.

The strip is presently fully protected by Parks Canada’s 1981 decision. This raises the question as to how the proposed exchange can possibly be ‘a positive change in key ecological conditions’ as stipulated by the 2006 Ski Area Management Guidelines. Senior Parks Canada managers justify this exchange by stating that surrendering the strip would provide ‘certainty’ that it would **never** be developed. In their view this sleight-of-hand represents the required ‘substantial environmental gain’.

If Parks Canada can circumvent Section 36 (1) of the Canada National Parks

Act to establish licences of occupation outside the ski area boundary, then future managers could also do it – making the word ‘certainty’ no more than a hollow convenience.

Jasper’s specialists disagree

Jasper National Park’s biologists and other specialists disagree with Parks Canada managers. Their report – obtained through federal Access to Information legislation – lists their many concerns with the exchange. These include the loss of high-quality mountain caribou habitat, increased predator access, displacement of caribou and other wildlife species and adverse effects on the mineral lick and habitat for goats.

They conclude that “a lease reduction involving removal of the entire Whistlers Creek drainage would be considered a substantial environmental gain and a preferred option. Removing only a portion of Whistler’s Creek would not be a significant environmental gain given the proposed increase in development.”

Summer use

Summer use of the basin is also on the negotiating table. This is grizzly habitat. Allowing human use there will either mean the bears will no longer use the area or they will become habituated to the human presence and increase the danger of human/wildlife conflict. Summer use also will increase wildlife mortality on the 10 kilometre access road. In 1999 when assessing Marmot’s new Eagle Ridge Chair, Parks Canada took “special note that a summer visitor use program is not being proposed. This is a very important aspect of minimizing direct disturbance and alienation of secure habitat for wary wildlife.” Nothing has changed in the intervening years to allow Parks Canada to ignore its previous statement.

Who makes the final decision?

The Marmot process is half completed but Parks Canada is now attempting to persuade the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) that a final Comprehensive Study should be replaced by a simple screening assessment for all the national parks ski hills’ LRPs, thereby removing CEAA from the equation and leaving Parks Canada as the sole decision-maker. (The Environmental Law Centre opposes this effort by Parks Canada. The Centre’s comments may be seen at <http://elc.ab.ca/pages/InformationResources/BriefsSubmissions.aspx?id=1048>)

Conclusion

A decision on Marmot’s proposed projects cannot be made by Parks Canada until the caribou and mountain-goat studies are completed. Even if the results are unfavourable for Marmot the projects could still be approved with ‘mitigations’ – with Parks Canada likely lacking both the staff and the money needed to enforce them.

Canadians still have an opportunity to speak out against this travesty. Under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Parks Canada will be obliged to seek public input when the environmental assessment is finalized.

However much Parks Canada protests to the contrary, this whole exercise with Marmot Basin – particularly the spurious ‘substantial environmental gain’ – indicates that local commercial interests now trump nature in the minds of Parks Canada managers in Ottawa. This creates a dangerous precedent not just for the three Banff ski hills but also for other management decisions regarding Canada’s mountain national parks and World Heritage Site. 🐾

Temporary Reprieve for Alberta Parks – Will the Bill 29 Battle Need to be Fought Again?

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist



The help of AWA supporters is going to be needed once again to defend our precious parks and protected areas – from our own government. After a temporary reprieve, Bill 29, the proposed *Alberta Parks Act*, is likely to return to the Alberta legislature in the near future. Though the Alberta government has committed to “consulting” with Albertans about revising this frightening piece of legislation, previous experience has showed us that they are considerably better at *consulting* than they are at *listening*. A concerted effort from all Albertans who care about our parks is needed if we are to save our parks from an enormous leap backwards in protection.

In the December 2010 *Wild Lands Advocate* (Bill 29: People Power Does Work, Part 2), we described how a concerted public outcry had led to the suspension of the egregious Bill 29. Albertans spoke out loud and clear to express their outrage about a bill that would have gutted protected areas legislation in the province. Current levels of protection of Alberta’s magnificent Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves would have been removed, with everything downgraded to the “dumbed down” level of protection of Provincial Parks.

But in a notable victory for “People Power,” the Alberta government decided at the eleventh hour to pull the unpopular bill. The many, many AWA supporters who took the time to speak out should be extremely proud of themselves!

But, as is so often the case in environmental issues, the battles which are lost stay lost; the battles that are won often have to be fought again... and again. Bill 29, in fact, never really died. It was never formally terminated or withdrawn after passing second reading in the Legislature on November 22, 2010. Instead, the Hon. Cindy Ady, Minister for Tourism, Parks and Recreation, committed to return to the legislature

in 2011 with “several amendments.” Her plan to bring parks legislation back to the Legislature this spring appears to have been put on hold. On February 4th the Minister declared: “While I had planned to bring park legislation back this Spring, I will spend the time needed to address the main concerns raised by Albertans before moving forward with new legislation.” The best news is that, if there is one thing to be learned from last fall’s Bill 29 campaign it is the fact that, when enough people take the time to speak out loudly and clearly, we can indeed make a difference in Alberta.

While AWA and other groups have spent an enormous amount of time picking through hundreds of pages of legislative gobbledygook, maybe we have been guilty of over-complicating the issue. The message to send to our politicians is really quite simple:

Alberta already has protected areas legislation. It is not perfect, and there is certainly plenty of room for improvement. But if proposed new legislation does not improve on what we already have – which it most certainly does not – then it should be scrapped.

What any new legislation should do is also fairly simple:

- Maintain or improve levels of protection of currently protected areas,
- Improve clarity about the different parks levels: the Act should define exactly what those designations are, what is allowed and what is not allowed,
- Reconfirm that Protected means protected. No new industrial activity

should be allowed in protected areas: existing industrial activity must be phased out,

- Provide a framework for how Alberta’s incomplete protected areas network is going to be completed.

Please consider taking the time to contact your local MLA to call for better protection (not watering down) of our protected areas.

- To find contact information, visit our website and click on the Act Now button. Or call the Alberta government toll-free line at 310-0000.
- For AWA’s more detailed analysis of Bill 29, and recommendations for improved parks legislation, see [www. AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca)... or feel free to call us at (403) 283-2025.
- Don’t forget to copy opposition politicians, and please forward us a copy at awa.nd@shaw.ca

First Aid for Alberta’s protected areas network

Alberta’s protected areas network is sparse, to say the least. Only 4.2 percent of Alberta (27,614 square kilometres) is provincially protected. To put that in perspective, more than seven times that area - 31.3 percent of Alberta (205,930 square kilometres) is committed to the forest industry under Forest Management Agreements. Yes, in Alberta, we allocate seven times as much land to the forestry industry as we do to wildlife and recreation!

In October, 2010 the U.N.’s second Convention on Biological Diversity, (to which Canada is signatory), set a new

Alberta already has protected areas legislation. It is not perfect, and there is certainly plenty of room for improvement. But if proposed new legislation does not improve on what we already have – which it most certainly does not – then it should be scrapped.

target of 17 percent of representative landscapes to be protected by 2020, up from the 12.5 percent recommended in 1992. This increased percentage is needed in order to ensure ecological services and environmental stability. In Alberta we clearly have a long way to go. AWA believes that this is the sort of issue which new parks legislation should really be working to address: how do we complete our inadequate parks network?

The Willmore Wilderness is fortunately exempt from the current round of parks upheaval. The next-most protected of Alberta's protected areas are the Wilderness Areas: the 445 km² White Goat, the Siffleur (412 km²) and the 153 km² Ghost River (see the June 2009 *Wild Lands Advocate* for a more detailed description of the Wilderness Areas). Together the three Wilderness Areas make up about 3.7 percent of Alberta's protected areas network.

One thing these areas do have under current legislation, and which they would lose if Bill 29 were to pass, is certainty. The 2000 Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act (WAERNAHR) is very clear about its purpose: "it is in the public interest that certain areas of Alberta be protected and managed for the purpose

of preserving their natural beauty and safeguarding them from impairment and industrial development." WAERNAHR names the three Wilderness Areas, and describes their exact areas. It also defines what is and what is not allowed in Wilderness Areas. For example:

"No person shall

- (a) travel in a wilderness area except on foot,
- (b) hunt or trap animals in a wilderness area ...
- (c) fish in a wilderness area...
- (f) without the permission of the Minister, collect, destroy or remove any plant life or animal life (or bird eggs)...in a wilderness area...
- (g) take into or use in a wilderness area a horse, pack animal, cycle or any motor vehicle"

Similarly, for Ecological Reserves (which make up just one percent of Alberta's protected areas), WAERNAHR is very clear:

"No person shall

- (b) hunt or trap animals in a ... ecological reserve,

- (c) fish in a ... ecological reserve,
- (e) deposit any litter, garbage or refuse in a ... ecological reserve...
- (f) without the permission of the Minister, collect, destroy or remove any plant life or animal life (or bird eggs) in a ... ecological reserve ...
- (g.1) take into or use in an ecological reserve
- (i) a motor boat or off-highway vehicle,
- (ii) a motor vehicle designed primarily for travel on highways other than on a road"

The first principle of first aid is to "do no more harm." Or to put it another way, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The first thing that any new parks legislation should do is to ensure that it does not undermine the protection we do already have. As a bare minimum, these clear conditions found in current legislation must be carried over into any new legislation.

Another principle of first aid, of course, is to "promote recovery." Similarly, new parks legislation should also be working to improve on what we already have. One

Ecological Reserves, such as Plateau Mountain in southern Kananaskis Country, act as a scientific baseline, to serve as the basis for understanding change and impacts on ecosystems. If Bill 29 is passed, protection for Ecological Reserves would be substantially weakened.

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS





Protection of Wilderness Areas, such as the White Goat Wilderness, is strong and explicit in current legislation. Bill 29 would downgrade Wilderness Areas to Provincial Parks and all such certainty in the legislation would be lost.

PHOTO: J. MILLEN

important area where new parks legislation should focus is on providing a similar clarity for other protected areas such as Wildland Parks and Natural Areas which make up 62 percent and 4.7 percent of Alberta's parks system respectively. These are the areas where Albertans need to know what is allowed and what is not allowed. Clear legislation and vastly improved signs and websites would go a long way to achieve this clarity. Scrapping these protected areas and calling them all Provincial Parks, as is proposed in Bill 29, would not.

So the future of Alberta's protected areas once again hangs in the balance. Will AWA supporters and all of the many Albertans who profoundly love our parks be able to make sure that our voice is heard? Will last fall's Bill 29 battle have to be fought all over again? Will Albertans have to once again fight to defend our protected areas from our own government? Or will the Alberta government listen to the hundreds of Albertans who have asked them to protect more land in Alberta, not water down the protection we already have? In the end, it's up to us! 🐾



During recent "consultation" with Albertans over parks, the one clear message which has come through consistently is the need for more protected areas. Wilderness gems such as the Bighorn Wildland have been crying out for protection for decades. Any new parks legislation needs to urgently address these shortcomings in Alberta's parks network.

PHOTO: C. OLSON

The 2010 Martha Kostuch Lecture: Thucydides, Grant MacEwan and Cliff Wallis: Environmental Citizenship in a Hostile Jurisdiction

By Ian Urquhart

Listening to Peter Lee deliver the 2010 Martha Kostuch lecture a voice inside my head told me there was no way Peter could have spent the last 30 years or so deeply involved in Alberta environmental issues. Peter sounded either too damn happy or too damn optimistic; maybe he was both.

His outlook certainly wasn't due to regaling his audience with tale after tale of positive environmental actions by government. Alberta is, in his words, "an environmentally hostile jurisdiction." Troubling signs are aplenty and both senior levels of government in Canada can take blame for them. His list included:

- extirpation of woodland caribou from Banff National Park in just over one human generation;
- the failure of the provincial government to establish an environmentally-sustainable management regime in the Castle Area Forest Land Use Zone;
- the tar sands.

Our governments, both federal and provincial, have not been diligent defenders of the public interest. Governments' approval, enforcement, and monitoring processes have atrophied under the pressure to deregulate and make government regulatory processes more efficient. "The government has lost, or is in the process of losing," Peter suggested, "the personnel and capacity necessary to develop environmental management systems and effectively review projects."

Those comments foreshadowed well Alberta's announcement at the end of January that, with respect to exploiting energy resources, a new government agency will take over



Current AWA President Cliff Wallis presents Peter Lee with his Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award.

PHOTO: K. MILHALCHEON

Alberta Environment's environmental assessment responsibilities plus the regulatory functions now performed by the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB). The president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers celebrated this announcement. It would shorten the regulatory and project approval processes by months. "Don't worry" exclaimed a government spokeswoman; regulatory streamlining would not water down government regulation.

A more skeptical appraisal of this effort at "regulatory enhancement," one very much in tune with Peter's message, came from Claudia Mahn writing for IHS Global Insight. After noting that the recommendations were "welcomed

enthusiastically by the industry" she went on to suggest that "Alberta's move does indeed seem to be a red-herring strategy aimed at securing investment while circumventing inconvenient environmental concerns and opposition."

So, with little to feel good about in tales about woodland caribou, the Castle, the tar sands, or deregulation what animated Peter's optimistic tone? I attributed it to at least three things. His current work as the Executive Director of Global Forest Watch Canada partially explains the optimism. This work takes him outside the borders of Alberta where he is able to see some heartening examples of what fellow Canadians in other jurisdictions are doing to promote ecological integrity. At least as importantly, however, Peter's

work focuses to a considerable extent on the boreal forest, a forest that remains a wonderful conservation opportunity. Canada has 54 percent of the world's intact boreal forest, more than any other country (17 percent more than Russia). There is still time for us to get conservation priorities respected in this vast territory.

The second contributor is attitudinal. It rests, first, in a passionate belief about what citizenship demands and second, in a faith that enough of us will come to share that belief, act on it, and make a positive contribution to a more sustainable future in Alberta.

His thoughts on environmental citizenship begin with the fundamental need for people to participate in governing. Here he paraphrases a quote from Aristotle, the Greek philosopher. Aristotle, in Book I of *Politics*, wrote about our social instinct when he said: "But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is not part of a state."

For Peter this means we have a duty to be part of the state, to take "part in the running of the community's affairs."

We must shake off the political apathy that, more than the Rockies or the foothills or our magnificent skylines, is coming to define Alberta. I, for one, found it hard to dispute the 2007 quote Peter used from Todd Babiak of the *Edmonton Journal*: "Socially and culturally, the majority of Albertans seem about as eager for democratic renewal as the majority of Russians."

This is only part of the ethic of citizenship I heard in Peter's words. By itself it is challenging to many who may simply want to be "left alone" to pursue private interests. To practice this ethic well we must do more; we must be fearless in how we practice our citizenship, in how we play our part in the running of our community's affairs. Fearless doesn't mean reckless, nor does it mean to treat others with a lack of respect – it means instead that we should pursue vigorously the goals we value and not be intimidated by the extensive

opposition we often face. Many AWA members embrace this ethic, none more so than Cliff Wallis (and, believe me, if you saw Cliff in the various states of dress and undress shown during Peter's slideshow you could see why Peter might regard him as fearless...!)

If there was a glint in his eye when Peter drew these connections it came from a third piece of advice he had for those who want to practice this version of environmental citizenship. Have fun. Try to avoid leading what Henry David Thoreau called "a life of quiet desperation." Get outside to see the magnificent sights the natural world offers us; raise a glass to the short-term wins and successes your efforts deliver (the withdrawal of Bill 29 perhaps?).

If there is a more decent and dedicated environmentalist in Alberta than Peter I have yet to meet that soul. I hope this brief summary of his lecture does some justice to the important, and hopeful, message about environmental citizenship he shared with us last November. 🍀

Great Gray Owl Award

By Christyann Olson,
AWA Executive Director

Like the great gray owl, with unending patience and dedication to purpose, these individuals work in quiet wisdom to conserve wilderness habitat and wild creatures. Our success is a reflection of the enduring commitment they have made to Alberta Wilderness Association.

The 2010 Awards Presentation and Annual Lecture launched the Great Gray Owl Award. Inspired in particular by three outstanding women and the significant contribution they have made in the past few years, this award will be presented annually as individuals meet the high standard of volunteerism, dedication and commitment of this year's award winners.

Robert R. Taylor, MPA, RCA, naturalist and photographer kindly gave AWA permission to use the great gray owl image above for our awards. The image was laser carved into the wooden plaque created to recognize the award winners.



Linda Javeri "tenacious, gentle artist"

Linda is AWA's longest-serving volunteer, having started her work with AWA in 1985. Over the decades Linda's adaptability to the varying needs of the association has been remarkable. She has a surprising array of talents that the AWA eagerly taps into, including an ability to graphically design and conceptualize, to organize, to care for plants and her compassion and heartfelt concern for wildlife is beyond compare. She keeps AWA's houseplants healthy, and pursues endless tasks with tenacity. Through the years she has helped maintain membership records, records for the annual climb for wilderness and the gala. Her artistic talents are reflected everywhere within and without AWA's building in the form of colourful signs, special cards and birdhouses. Along with her husband Yusuf, the couple makes and donates beautifully decorated chests for auction each year at AWA's annual Gala. Linda's regular work, organizing endless files within the Wilderness Resource Centre in preparation for on-line cataloguing, along with the various daily tasks that arise means we can achieve so much more. Often seen riding her bicycle to the office, she cheerfully makes deliveries and helps save our precious resources. Linda is an AWA Treasure.



Margaret Main
“meticulous, gracious
teacher”

Fifteen years ago, on a cold November day, Margaret came by the office and was soon volunteering with the Ambassador Program. Taking displays to events and making presentations to schools, she immediately became an important part of the team. She had just retired from teaching elementary school with the Calgary Board of Education. In the years that have come and gone, Margaret has taken on various roles. She was a critical part of the success of our Masters of Teaching Program with the University of Calgary. Each year she masterfully organizes our Mural Painting competition for Earth Day at the Calgary Tower – now known as the *Tallest Art Gallery in the West*, there are more than 100 murals completed on the stairwells thanks to Margaret’s meticulous dedication and support. If Margaret isn’t helping stuff envelopes, organizing donations for the Wild West Gala or putting in the gardens here at the office she is taking on any role she can to help make our days in the office a little easier. Margaret is above all a humble partner in our work, always quietly coming, doing her work with a cheerful bright smile and sometimes with cookies for the cookie jar in hand. She eagerly takes part in public policy discussions and makes a very real difference to AWA.



Anne Fabris
“devoted financial
whiz”

Ten years ago, Anne willingly agreed to help out when AWA desperately needed an accountant to join the Board of Directors. Her skill and expertise proved invaluable. As the years went by Anne stepped down from her board position to volunteer as AWA’s book keeper. It is not enough to receive financial support from our wonderful donors – we owe them the promise that their investment in us will be spent wisely and accounted for with the highest of accounting skills and principles. At AWA that promise becomes reality in the form of Anne Fabris. Anne’s enormous gift of her expertise in accounting allows our conservation dollars to go much further than if we had a paid person in her role. Anne’s faithful service has meant we have strength in our fiscal plans. She embodies AWA’s mandate and our hopes and helps us remember that if *we take care of the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves*. The continuity of her service and the breadth of her knowledge and support have helped AWA build an excellent reputation for fiscal management and responsibility. Her kind and generous manner, her natural ability with numbers has helped all of us, she makes a difference and is indeed a *Great Gray Owl*.



Earth Day 2011 – The 20th Anniversary of AWA’s Climb and Run for Wilderness

By Christyann Olson, AWA Executive Director

Inspiration, awareness and awe - this is what Earth Day invites us to do. Many of us will be, 802 stairs later, at the top of the Calgary Tower celebrating AWA’s signature Earth Day event. There we will have accepted that invitation by enjoying the unparalleled public mural art gallery of nature as we worked our way to the summit. We will have made new friends and renewed old acquaintances on our climb.

Earth Day is an international event, a time to recognize the strides being made to protect and care for Mother

Earth. On April 26, 1992, AWA began to celebrate Earth Day with our “Climb for Wilderness” – an event that, 20 years young now, is known as “The Best Earth Day Event in the West”! Twenty years ago we partnered with World Wildlife Fund and the Calgary Tower to hold an event similar to the one WWF held at the CN Tower in Toronto. Then we focused on the Special Places 2000 initiative; we wanted to encourage people to be part of the decision making about protected areas in Alberta. From a small display on the sidewalk and a handful



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS

of keen volunteers and climbers this event has grown to host displays from colleagues and those working to help make a difference to our environment from all over Alberta. More than 1,500 people now participate and enjoy the day’s activities, activities as varied as a timed race, a single leisurely climb or a record-breaking 30 climbs in five hours! Nature enthusiasts from two to 93 climb the stairs while musicians entertain, volunteers offer educational displays and we all grow in our appreciation for

people, for the difference they can make, and for our rich and vast landscape and wildlife in Alberta.

The number 20 takes on added significance in our 20th year. We will celebrate with 20 Climb stories from over the years; 20 athletes will participate in the first time trial ever; we will have at least 20 Wild Alberta Expo displays. Our “twenty year theme “ will be trumpeted on social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and our outstanding website climbforwilderness.ca) as part of our effort to reach out to potential supporters. Online registration is now the norm and we hope to increase our participation in this event and the day significantly (400,000 is likely more than we have capacity for at the top of the tower, but we can certainly hope for far more than 1,500 – the *Wild Lands Advocate's* editor, one Ian Urquhart, commits to shaving off his once-golden locks if 4,000 people participate this year!)

Participants, whether in the race, the climb, the time trial, the team challenge or the day in general, all vitalize the ongoing work and dedication of AWA and its staff and volunteers. It invigorates us in our many campaigns, such as the one focusing on our iconic woodland caribou. Your support, financial and otherwise, is crucial to insure that the biodiversity so crucial to our health and that of our fellow species is respected here in Alberta. 🌲



Updates

Is it Too Early to Call the Swift Fox Recovery a “Success Story”?

The fortunes of the swift fox certainly have improved since the early 1900s, when the species was considered “extirpated” (or locally extinct) from Canada. This beautiful and well-named fox, the size of a house cat, is one of four members of the dog family native to Alberta. The victim of over-trapping and the widespread, unselective use of poisons aimed at larger predators, the last swift fox in Canada was recorded near Manyberries in 1938. A reintroduction program, spearheaded by the Cochrane Ecological Institute in 1972, has seen more than 800 foxes reintroduced to the wild in Canada. Now the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has recommended that the status of the swift fox in Canada be downgraded from *endangered* to *threatened*. But AWA is concerned that this downgrading might be somewhat premature.

In 2001 the swift fox population in Canada was estimated at 656 individuals. Yet the November 2010 document, *Consultation on Amending the List of Species under the Species at Risk Act: Terrestrial Species*, states: “Population numbers and distribution have increased since (1983), with the current estimate in Canada having doubled to 647 since the last COSEWIC assessment in 2000.” So AWA is baffled as to how COSEWIC can refer to a population going from 656 individuals to 647 as having “doubled”!

COSEWIC also states: “Since 2001, population numbers and distribution have remained stable and habitat for this species within Canada *appears to be saturated*” (emphasis added). AWA believes that, if “habitat” is interpreted as those areas where swift foxes have been reintroduced, then it may be the case that THIS habitat is “saturated” (though even this may be contended). But the historical range of swift foxes in Canada is far broader than this narrow definition. The



Swift Fox
PHOTO: C. WALLIS

2001 report, *Census of Swift Fox (Vulpes velox) in Canada and Northern Montana: 2000-2001*, recognizes: “Before European settlers arrived, swift foxes were found in Canada from the Pembina Hills in Manitoba across southern Saskatchewan to the southern foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta.” In AWA’s opinion, the recommendation to downgrade protection of swift foxes appears to shut prematurely the door to any further recovery into their former range.

So what does “recovery” of a species actually look like? In the January 2008 Parks Canada report, *Recovery Strategy for the Swift Fox (Vulpes velox) in Canada*, recovery is defined as: “the process by which the decline of an endangered, threatened or extirpated species is arrested or reversed, and threats are removed or reduced to improve the likelihood of the species’ persistence in the wild. A species will be considered recovered when its long-term persistence in the wild has been secured.” But, the COSEWIC report states: “Habitat loss, degradation and disturbance from development activities is a growing concern within Swift Fox Range.”

AWA believes that, in the face of continuing habitat loss and degradation, the downgrading of the Swift fox (from endangered to threatened) is inappropriate.

- By Nigel Douglas

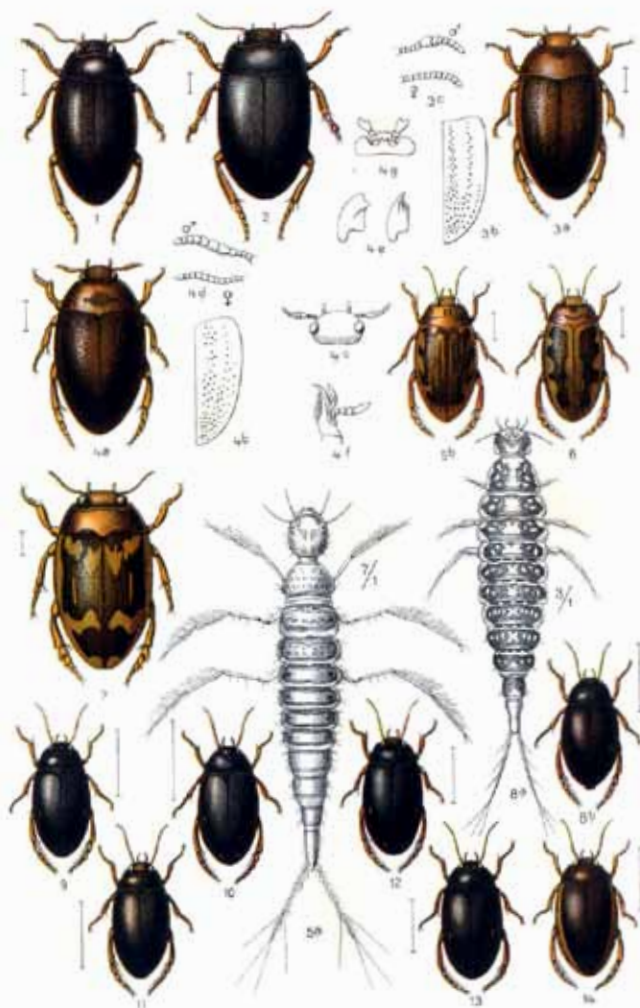
Former Finance Minister Urges Government not to Approve Livingstone Magnetite Mine - Yet

A new welcome opponent recently emerged to a proposed magnetite strip mine in Alberta’s southern Eastern Slopes: Ted Morton, Alberta’s former Finance Minister and a candidate to replace Premier Ed Stelmach as leader of the Progressive Conservative party.

Local opposition to the plans by Micrex Ltd to mine for magnetite on the flanks of the Livingstone Range has been extensive (see *WLA* August 2010). In a January 2011 interview with the *Calgary Herald* Morton waded into the debate. He urged Mel Knight, Morton’s successor as Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), not to approve the proposed mine, at least not until the Land-Use Framework (LUF) plan for the South Saskatchewan region is finalized.

“It would be premature to approve a project like this before the regional plan for the South Saskatchewan region is finalized,” Morton told the *Herald*. “If you look at the policy document for the land-use framework, it identifies the Eastern Slopes in terms of priority uses, as watershed and recreation – not mining.”

The former Finance Minister’s comments are a breath of fresh air compared to the recent words of current SRD Minister Knight. Responding to a question in the Alberta Legislature in early December, Knight commented “the



1. *Hydroporus memnonius*, 2. *melanarius*, 3. *Noterus crassicornis*, 4. *clavicornis*,
5. *Laccophilus hyalinus*, 6. *obscurus*, 7. *variegatus*, 8. *Ilybius fenestratus*, 9. *obscurus*,
10. *ater*, 11. *subaeneus*, 12. *guttiger*, 13. *angustior*, 14. *fuliginosus*.

process going forward would allow for proper exploitation of that resource, and it's a required resource in the region." Later he backtracked somewhat, telling the *Calgary Herald* he had not heard the legislature question correctly: "Magnetite would not qualify as a required resource in the region." He went on to stress: "It is my responsibility to be sure that resources that belong to Albertans should be developed in a way that gives the maximum benefit to Albertans while maintaining a very high standard of conservation and environmental awareness."

A Regional Advisory Council for the LUF's South Saskatchewan Region recently presented draft recommendations for future planning in the region; a government report on these recommendations is due to be released this spring. The LUF recognized: "We have reached a tipping point, where sticking to the old rules will not produce the quality of life we have come to expect. If we want our children to enjoy the same quality of life that current generations have, we need a new land-use system." In AWA's view, if the "old rules" are clearly not working and the "new rules" are currently still being developed, it makes little sense to approve such a significant development before appropriate land-use guidelines for this area are in place.

The local MLA for the proposed strip mine site is also by no means an enthusiastic supporter of the proposal. Livingstone-Macleod MLA Evan Berger told the *Herald* he has been "overwhelmed" by letters from constituents opposed to the Micrex development.

AWA believes the limited economic benefits from any development could never outweigh the considerable costs to the natural beauty of the landscape with its accompanying tourism potential, to the clean surface and groundwater production properties of the land and to the significant wildlife habitat in the region.

There is still no timeline on when a government decision on the proposed magnetite mine is likely to be made.

- By Nigel Douglas

Predaceous Beetle Faces Precarious Battle

What is Alberta's most important wildlife species? Ask a dozen people that question and you will get a dozen different answers. Some might say the grizzly bear; some might say the woodland caribou; others might opt for a grassland specialist such as the burrowing owl.

But I guarantee you nobody would identify the beautifully-named Bert's predaceous diving beetle. And yet you would be justified to argue that this unassuming little invertebrate is one of Alberta's most important wildlife species; it is certainly our most threatened.

Along with the Banff snail, this diving beetle is one of Alberta's few *endemic* species – species that occur in Alberta and nowhere else on earth. And while the entire world population of the Banff snail could reputedly fit into a single

bucket, exhaustive sampling for Bert's predaceous diving beetle in 2008 turned up just two individuals. While the species was presumably never common, it currently teeters on the very edge of existence.

According to an Environment Canada document, *Consultation on Amending the List of Species under the Species at Risk Act* the diving beetle "is known from only two locations in southern Alberta, one of which has been destroyed." Having been removed from its known home on the banks of the Oldman River near Fort Macleod, the species was then rediscovered at its only known current breeding location near Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.

The species is restricted to springs and seepages along the Oldman River. Environment Canada acknowledges that "(t)he most serious threats to these fragile point sources of habitat are lowering

water levels in the Oldman River Basin and aggregation of livestock at these fragile habitats.” Not surprisingly, the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recommends designation of Bert’s predaceous diving beetle as an *endangered* species under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

Other species recommended for inclusion under the act include whitebark pine (*endangered*), and two bird species, the bobolink and chestnut-collared longspur (*threatened*).

COSEWIC recommends confirmation of the current status of a number of species, including mountain plover and whooping crane (*endangered*), Sprague’s pipit (*threatened*) and Great Plains toad, yellow rail and monarch butterfly (*special concern*). The protection levels for two Alberta species with apparently increasing populations are recommended for downgrading: swift fox (from *endangered* to *threatened*) and western blue flag (from *threatened* to *special concern*).

- By Nigel Douglas

Meatball Speaks Out on Sports Illustrated “Exposure” in Banff

I dunno... just when I think your species cannot come up with crazier ideas for your National Parks someone proves me wrong. Just a few weeks ago some outfit named Brewster, rebranded now (that must have hurt) as Brewster Travel Canada, released plans for a “Glacier Discovery Walk” on the Icefields Parkway. This puzzled me since I well remember once going on a discovery walk there. My driver Ian let me out to see if I could make it from the parking lot to the toe of the Athabasca Glacier without a rest. Damned if I could since that piece of ice has receded 1.5 kilometres since the late 1890s. Turns out Brewster’s idea of a discovery walk isn’t about walking on or discovering a glacier at all. This scheme to add, in the words of a tourism booster, a “wow” factor for car travelers to stop and gawk at won’t even be anywhere near a glacier. I say “bow wow” to this scheme.

Then I heard about the latest *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue. It features three women, quite gorgeous ones I’m told, in bikinis in and around Banff and Lake Louise. They canoe, they pose



Meatball somewhere on Kootenay Lake

PHOTO: P. APARAZZI

provocatively, a Brazilian surfer even tries her hand at flyfishing. Ian tells me he has never seen anyone on the water in a bikini/thigh high wader combo before. “Crazy,” he said... with a funny sort of smile on his face.

Look, I don’t object to bathing suit shots of attractive female athletes. As you can see above I look pretty sultry myself in my own sassy one-piece Ecogear suit (I am told it really brings out the colour of my ears). I also don’t object to more women in bikinis hiking in the backcountry in search of those natural treasures and experiences our mountain parks should be famous for.

What upsets me is what inspires the hotel and resort owners, the tourism lobby groups, and the media/marketing firms to want to get Banff a place in a magazine that more than 60 million people will read in print or online (not to mention the videos...). For them this initiative evokes the imagery from *The Sunday Times* Jeff Gailus used to introduce his worrisome discussion of ecological integrity in Banff that appeared in the October 2010 issue of the *WLA*. This ambition prays to Mammon, to material – not natural – wealth. For

them success is measured solely by bringing more and more people into the frontcountry of the mountain parks, to encouraging exactly the sorts of human pressures that threaten ecological values.

In quotes from those who hope this will draw thousands and thousands of new visitors to Banff this year I see this coverage described as “simply priceless;” I see it described as a great “non-traditional” way to aid Canada as we struggle to be relevant to visitors; I see it as promoting the mountain parks as “a sexy destination” or as “a pretty cool place to visit.” Nowhere do I see a word of caution raised about what realizing their material ambitions will do to the foundations of ecological integrity. The very real possibility this “simply priceless” coverage will accelerate the rate by which we love our parks to death doesn’t rate a whisper.

Why did our Creator place you at the top of the food chain and anoint you as the steward of a World Heritage site in the Rocky Mountains of Canada? Beats me.

- By Meatball

What's in a Name?: Brewster's "Glacier Discovery Walk"

Brewster Travel Canada, a company whose history in the Mountain Parks goes back to the 1890s, recently held a series of four open houses in Jasper, Banff, Calgary and Edmonton to sell Albertans on its latest commercial proposal – a "Glacier Discovery Walk." This Walk would be constructed along the Icefields Parkway, nine kilometres away from the closest glaciers, on Tangle Hill 6.5 kilometres north of the Columbia Icefield Centre. It would be nearly four football fields long and end in a glass-floored observation deck.

Mountain goats, as anyone who is familiar with AWA's reports about Caw Ridge will know, are very sensitive to human disturbances. They will not react

well as construction crews blast and drill into the cliff to provide the anchors for a 400 metre steel and glass walkway.

AWA has written to the federal Environment Minister, the Hon. Peter Kent, expressing intense disapproval over this "entirely inappropriate" project. Given AWA's participation in the public review of the Draft Management Plan for Jasper National Park we are very surprised that Parks Canada is even considering this type of "development."

AWA sees little reason not to agree with the Jasper Environmental Association's suspicion that this may be just a desperate attempt to prop up the commercial viability of this aspect of Brewster's business. AWA believes this project compromises ecological integrity and that "(i)t is not Parks Canada's role to

compromise this integrity in an attempt to boost the economic viability of companies..."

Furthermore, AWA agrees with the JEA's Jill Seaton that approving this proposal would set "a very dangerous precedent as Brewsters will get a licence-of-occupation that will virtually privatize that part of the highway. Other businesses will expect the same favour." This privatization of public land also would mean that public parking would no longer be allowed at the existing Tangle Ridge Viewpoint.

All AWA sees in the name given to this proposal is a view the *Edmonton Journal* attributed to the proposal's critics: "crass commercialization of a national park."

- By Ian Urquhart



Mountain goats

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS

Recall of the Wild

Phyllis Hart: A Guide for Us All By Polly Knowlton Cockett

It was the Stairs!

Phyllis Hart was 92 years old the last time she climbed the Calgary Tower in 2007. She went up only once, as her cardiologist had said, “Phyllis, don’t push it.” At first she thought the Calgary Tower had a spiral staircase, so she didn’t want to climb it because she didn’t want to hold anyone up. When she found out the stairs weren’t continuous, but had landings every 15 steps where she and several others could rest while those faster passed by, she started climbing it for the Alberta Wilderness Association’s annual Earth Day event. She was in her 70s or 80s then, and climbed it two times each year, and one year did it five times. It was a great way to keep her arthritis in check – 15 steps at a time. Meeting people in the stairwell during the climb became a joy too, especially as she became known as the oldest climber. She always was happy to say hello to fellow Tower climbers. As a former mountain climber, Phyllis was not daunted by such trifling heights as the Tower’s mere 802 steps.

It was Remembrance Day when I went to visit Phyllis for the conversation that led to this article. She was proudly wearing a red poppy and began talking about her own experiences during the war when she became a telegraph operator. After the war, the hotels in the Rockies reopened and in 1946 Phyllis went to Lake Louise as a telegraph agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was there where she learned to climb with the Swiss Guides who also were hired by the CPR to take guests up the mountains.

Born in Stettler, Phyllis grew up nearby in Gadsby where her father ran a drug store and where she attended Grades 1-12. Then long walks were a routine part of life. She walked about a mile to school – twice a day – as she would go home for lunch. Then there were more walks after school to violin and piano lessons. Phyllis loved learning music when she was young and she continues to greatly



Phyllis Hart, September 1, 1997, at 82 ½ years young at the summit of Mt. Temple. Phyllis was thrilled to have Murray Toft as her guide that day. His patience and wonderful support helped make this an excellent day to enjoy wild Alberta.

PHOTO: M. TOFT

appreciate and enjoy it. For several years, Phyllis worked as a schoolteacher, first just outside of Cochrane, and then for a couple of years down at Milk River – lots of good walking there along the river! By then Phyllis used exercise to keep her developing arthritis at bay. But standing for long stretches of time bothered her when she was a teacher. So what could she do for a different job? During the war she went down to Medicine Hat and took the opportunity to become a teletype operator, as this technology was replacing the Morse code operators.

Later she became the first teletype operator in Lake Louise, where she had visited as a tourist but was completely unfamiliar with the mountains. Phyllis was very proactive about managing her chronic arthritis. For three years she walked daily along the lakeshore, gradually going a little further, and a little further. The Guides noticed her habitually walking by herself and invited her to join them. She wasn’t the least bit sure she could get up the mountains but one Sunday morning she was ready at 7 a.m., and up she went, ropes and everything, and down again – not even stiff. The Guides would ask her to go along with them again and again, exclaiming,

“Phyllis, you must be part Swiss!”

Phyllis attributes her lack of stiffness to her accommodations at Lake Louise. At first she was housed in the staff quarters with the hotel employees. But after a few years, the staff grew so large there was no longer room for her or the other CPR employees. So they put her up in the hotel on the 6th floor and she had strict instructions not to use the elevator – only hotel guests had that privilege! So she used the stairway, up and down and up and down, developing the strong thighs that would eventually take her up myriad mountains with the Swiss Guides.

Can you come out tomorrow, Phil?

Phyllis enjoyed these outings very much indeed. The Guides would drop by the telegraph office, asking her to go along for the next day’s climb. Sometimes they were joined by three or four other climbers; sometimes just Phyllis went, especially if it was a harder hike, as every person on a rope meant another half hour to the top. Usually they made it to the top, but they always went down in plenty of time before a storm struck – whether they had summited or not. Phyllis had complete confidence



Phyllis Hart, an inspiration and role model for so many, at her home, November 2010 at 95 years.

PHOTO: K. MIHALCHEON

in the Guides when it came to safety. "They're the most valuable insurance that anyone could have."

Often they'd get up at 4:30 a.m., but were always back before 4:00 p.m. with just enough time for Phyllis to bathe and change and get to the telegraph office in time for her afternoon shift which ended at midnight. She and her fellow workers cooperated on the shift work whenever Phyllis was out on the mountains. She loved the naturalness of the mountains and wilderness areas and encouraged others to help keep it that way. Phyllis taught herself the names of the native plants and kept a book at work. She became known for her expertise and when guests came in, wondering what plants they had seen, they were directed to "that girl at the telegraph office."

Lake O'Hara was one of Phyllis' favourite areas for hiking. The paths were kept in good order and were always good to go. "There's such lovely scenery there and good climbing. We used to hike the 7.5 miles in and out or go in over Abbot Pass from Lake Louise." Over the years, they got a van to take them in and bring them out, but they still had to walk the 7.5 miles. Then they had to hitchhike on the #1 Highway to Lake Louise in time for supper.

The last time Phyllis was at the top of Mount Temple was at the age of 82, with Murray Toft as her guide. They knew they had to start down by 2:30 p.m. in order to get back before dark. At 11,000' by noon they pressed on, and by 1:45 they were finally standing on the top. There was a cold wind blowing as Phyllis looked around at all the mountains, naming every one of them, and reciting which Guide she had gone to each with. Some other climbers, huddled nearby on the glacier, heard Phyllis talking, and were most impressed that she knew these famous Guides – revered names they had only read in books. One of the best parts of Phyllis' life was when she was able to climb with the Swiss Guides. "They're the best!" And so, I would suggest, is she. ▲

Gear

Snowshoeing: Walking in a Winter Wonderland.

By Jennifer Douglas

Once you've given it a go, it's really easy to see why snowshoeing is a fast growing sport in North America. If you've yet to try it out I strongly encourage you to do so as soon as possible – it's such fun! I no longer dread the end of the hiking season, but look forward to the snow flying. There is nothing quite so magical as a winter woodland walk or so breathtakingly beautiful as the snow-covered Rocky Mountains glittering in the sunlight.

Getting started

The best thing about snowshoeing is that you don't need training courses to learn how to do it. If you can walk, you can strap on a pair of snowshoes and

away you go. Obviously, you need a pair of snowshoes. The price range for a good pair is between \$150 and \$300. Look for shoes that have a binding you can do up with mitts on, that have good traction and that are the right size for you. Store staff should be able to help you with this.

Unless you plan to do lots of steep, hilly walks, basic ones are adequate for most people. If you want to tackle steep hills look for shoes with a heel bar. This will enable you to go up more easily, comfortably and quickly. They cost a bit more, but it's well worth it.

If you'd like to try before you buy you can rent them at either the Calgary or Edmonton branches of Mountain Equipment Co-op (403-269-2420 for the Calgary store; 780-488-6614 for Edmonton), or from the University of Calgary outdoor program (403-220-5038). A list of outdoor rental possibilities in Banff, Canmore, Jasper and Kananaskis may be found at http://www.out-there.com/canada_outdoor_gear_rentals.htm#Alberta



If you stop hiking in the winter, you miss out on months of beautiful wilderness opportunities. Get a pair of snowshoes, and get out there!

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS

The best footwear is a pair of winter hiking boots. These are designed to protect your feet from snow, have thermal insulating properties and many of them have ridges to help keep snowshoe straps in place. You also can use your regular hiking boots if they are waterproof or your Sorel style winter boots. Regular hiking boots can be a little cool and big winter boots can be a bit uncomfortable over time. They can also be a little big for the bindings, especially if you are a fellow with large feet.

Hiking poles are a great help but, as with hiking, optional. Fitting them with large baskets helps prevent them disappearing into deep snow.

So, you've got the stuff together; where do you go?

There are plenty of places in Calgary – big parks and I'm told many folks head for the golf courses. If you are more adventurous you should literally head for the hills. Many hiking trails may double as snowshoe trails. However, be smart and check with the local parks office to ensure there is no avalanche danger in the area you are planning to head for.

Some nordic skiing areas, like West Bragg Creek, have designated snowshoe areas. Please observe trail etiquette and don't walk in the tracks that have been set for the skiers.

Two or three kilometres is a good distance for the first time and then you can extend your trips as you gain confidence. Before you know it you'll be off on multi day snowshoeing backpacking trips.

And...

Snowshoeing requires a little more effort than regular walking. It is a great way to work off any extra weight you still may be carrying around after Christmas indulgences.

For the runners out there, you can get snow running shoes that are super small and light with bindings suitable for your Goretex runners. It's a fantastic way to add excitement to your winter training. Snowshoe racing is also becoming increasingly popular.

So, get out there and see why this is such a popular winter sport.

Jennifer works at Mountain Equipment Co-op in Calgary.

Reader's Corner

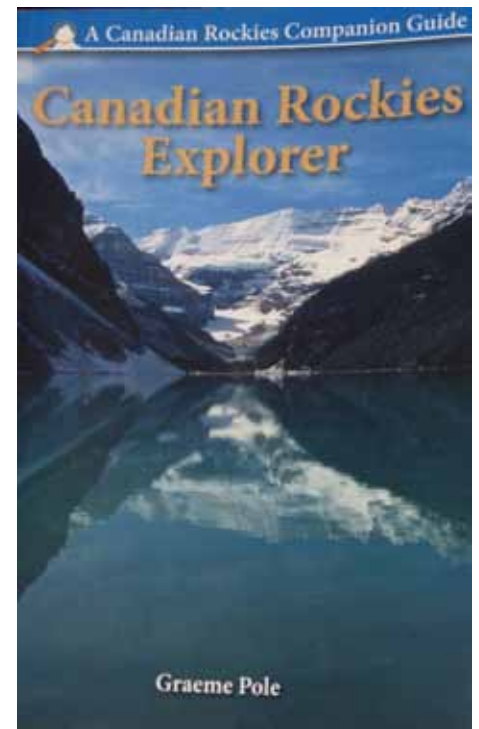
Graeme Pole, *Canadian Rockies Explorer*, (Mountain Vision Publishing, 2010)

Reviewed by Fred Judson

Graeme Pole has written a genuine love letter to the Canadian Rockies with his twelfth book on the human and natural history of Western Canada. It's careful, comprehensive and committed. And right from the preface, it is suffused with his mountain-influenced spirit, keeping before the reader what this experienced rambler, historian and photographer wants to convey: that everyone can have a "rich, life-giving, awe inspiring association" with the Rockies. As Pole says, "we each explore differently, and for each of us the Canadian Rockies promise to reward us in ways that we can but imagine". His several decades of exploring represent the limitless possibilities for human enrichment these mountains offer.

This book achieves a number of felicitous balances. It's easier to handle and carry than Ben Gadd's benchmark *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies* (the 'Bible' for mountain aficionados, enthusiastically acknowledged as such by Pole). It is just as serious as Gadd's book about the natural history and composition of the mountains and the life forms in them. It keeps the geological details present, quietly familiarizing the reader with just enough technical terminology, one piece at a time, to be confident with the vocabulary. Respect for the facts is leavened with clear writing and easy humour: "Rock Talk", for example, is a chapter title. Climate, elevation/vegetation zones, the animal communities, types of forests, wetlands and above-treeline terrain are all discussed and the reader senses the grandeur of inter-dependent ecosystems.

Pole the historian might well have made the 'guide-book' author's mistake of providing more history than his readership for *Explorer* would appreciate. But while his historical coverage is comprehensive and authoritative, it is deftly woven into the fabric of the book. He presents compact foundational chapters to present the "many landscapes" of the Rockies, their geological history and composition, and



their "life zones". A fourth short chapter (there are a total of 23 in a book of just over 300 pages) establishes the human historical parameters that commenced around 10,000 BC following the Late Wisconsin Glaciation period, i.e. "the First, First Peoples". Hunting, trading and long-distance routes had been in place for millennia prior to the 1700s' influx of First Nations peoples from the east joined by the first Europeans. The chapter contains a modern human history timeline from the 1750s of The Fur Trade, Exploration, The Canadian Pacific Railway, Parks-Peaks-Pack Trains, Parks and Prosperity, Preservation and Development. Brief excerpts from the journals and writings of four 19th and 20th century explorers are judiciously located in the chapter, as in all succeeding chapters. Resource extraction interests, transportation, mountaineering and tourism, the axes of the modern human history of what became the five National Parks and the three contiguous provincial parks located in the Rockies, are then tracked through the body of *Explorer*.

Following the initial four chapters, the remaining ones cover 'place' from Banff to Waterton, Radium to Robson, the Icefields to Kananaskis. Edge-of-page coloration and numerous compact sub-sections in these chapters are the template; the result is that each is a guide to the natural and human history of the 'place' (Kootenay National Park, for

example), but focuses on the ‘rewards of exploration’ a visitor to the mountains can find there. What is presented in the foundational chapters is echoed and deepened with specific examples, whether it be geological formations, bird migration routes, weather patterns, hanging valley lakes or National Parks’ prescribed burn policies. The individual explorers, mountaineers, painters, early concession-holders or railroad builders who shaped the area, and the way the area is now perceived are given a presence in these chapters. Opportunities for the casual tourist, the hiker/backpacker, the birder, the canoeist, the skier, the photographer, even the meditator - to touch that “life-giving...association” with the mountains are scattered evenly through the chapters. Appropriate maps, historical references, period photos and succinct information (e.g. “Lake Louise: Twenty Questions” or “The Un-Common Raven”) are in

each. For a reader, each chapter is an easily digestible unit; each reflects the unique characteristics of the area being examined. Information is both segmented and flowing.

Graeme Pole’s artistry of organization is sustained through all the ‘place’ chapters and that reflects his experience as a writer. But there is another artistry present – his superb photography. Mountain peaks, lakes, rivers, geological features, birds, animals, flowers, trees mentioned in the chapters are likely to have a illustrative photo or even several. They vary in size, but virtually every page has one or more of his hundreds. So the reader, immersed in information about the Rockies, is also treated to a corresponding parade of images. Voices of explorers, mountaineers, artists, entrepreneurs and administrators are heard. And Pole, in an understated way, accompanies the reader, occasionally recalling a hike here, a morning

photograph of caribou there, or a threatening avalanche situation.

The passion and the knowledge of Graeme Pole are central to *Canadian Rockies Explorer*. Whether readers have a high degree of familiarity with the Canadian Rockies or are barely aware of their existence, it will be a delight to let him be their guide. Gently, but firmly too, he impresses upon us the fragility of these landscapes and their ecology. As lovers of mountains and all the life forms they sustain, but also as citizens and human beings, we are responsible for them. Climate change, commercial forces, natural areas policies, human impacts on wildlife, watercourses and vegetation: Pole calls on us to be informed and be involved. He is grateful. He writes in the Acknowledgements, to those with a “consistent commitment to honouring what is sacred about the Canadian Rockies...” Readers will be grateful to Graeme Pole. ▲

Letters to the Editor

Re: Negativity - Again

Susan Wagner is a concerned and accomplished social activist. Her letter notes that AWA reportage often lacks glee while other organizations she supports appear more positive which Susan finds easier to read. Susan is critical of the AWA for this reason and I take exception to her concern for the reason that AWA, I believe, must take a stronger position about the lack of stewardship that our provincial government shows our environment. Whether it is due to our population’s profligate consumption and reckless utilization or rampant industrialization pressures, the AWA’s charge is to find mechanisms to not just despair in the omnipresence of this situation but to forthrightly face it. AWA’s charter precludes political advocacy (which has little effectiveness in Alberta anyway) but why not be a courageous community of disobedient believers: we can be humorous, or theatrical, or endlessly creative... but not tolerant. Tim Grier, Bellevue, Alberta

Re Population Growth:

In the December issue of *Wild Lands Advocate*, I read with interest the opposing positions of Vivian Pharis and Ian Urquhart on population growth. Although Ian makes some valid points, the most important being political will, I must confess that Vivian stated in unequivocal terms, exactly what I feel with regards to population growth. The thing I find most concerning is the continued race by Albertans to buy stuff, to the detriment of family, health, well-being and the environment. Children, especially, don’t get the opportunity to enjoy nature—take a walk, study a wild flower, gaze into the water of a spring-time pond at the great fecundity of life; they are too “busy” playing video games, on the internet or working to make money to buy more “stuff”. I work in a high school, so I know the amount of “stuff” kids believe it is their right to be able to buy, use and throw away as something new hits the market.

I believe that, with political will, Alberta could become the first province in Canada to duplicate Norway’s “Nature Index;” we also could take steps to boost our Heritage Trust Fund. But, I believe sadly that the political atmosphere of

Alberta will continue along its present path of ‘growth equals prosperity equals growth equals prosperity.’ That this seemingly never-ending circle will one day crack does not give me comfort. By then our natural ecosystems in Alberta and our biodiversity will no longer be sustainable – just as the bison herds of the Prairies are but a distant memory.

I feel despair and hope at the same time. Thank you Vivian, for saying what needs to be said about population growth. May many more Albertans have the courage, enthusiasm, tenacity and energy to embrace this belief and spread it to others.

Barbara Collier
Bon Accord, Alberta

Editor’s note: Ms. Collier’s letter also called for the repeal of Bill 29 and more parks.

Hats off to Vivian Pharis for the “Growth Is All Good, Right?” article in the December *Advocate*. It is encouraging to see that she has the wisdom and foresight to recognize that population growth in Alberta, as elsewhere, is undermining our attempts to protect our environment.

My twenty-five years of working on environmental issues has brought me to the same conclusion, as I have watched in despair as conditions continually worsened.

People moving to Alberta each year are placing enormous demands on our life support systems, wildlife habitat, natural resources, and water supplies –

even though 90 percent are settling in our cities. This additional pressure on urban areas is causing some of our best agricultural land to be paved over to accommodate sprawling residential and industrial growth.

As the 1992 World Scientists' Warning to Humanity, signed by some 1,700 leading scientists, including a majority

of Nobel prize winners from the sciences, stated: "Pressures resulting from unrestrained population growth put demands on the natural world that can overwhelm any efforts to achieve a sustainable future. If we are to halt the destruction of our environment, we must accept limits to that growth."

Valorie M. Allen

EVENTS

TUESDAY TALKS

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

"Living With Coyotes"

Join Dr. Shelley Alexander as she describes her ground-breaking work on the Calgary Regional Coyote Project. Developed in collaboration with the Miistakis Institute in response to citizen concerns about coyotes, this project is responding to some citizen concerns: What is the nature of coyotes' presence in Calgary? What are the challenges for coexistence? What education initiatives are available to inform citizens?

\$5 Adults, \$1 Children

7:00 PM, 455 – 12 St. NW, Calgary



Urban coyotes have no problem living with us. But can we live with them?

PHOTO: C. OLSON

MUSIC FOR THE WILD

Saturday February 26, 2010

Jim McLennan [with guests The June Bugs]

AWA is proud to present Longview guitarist Jim McLennan. Jim McLennan is one of Alberta's finest finger-style guitarists and arrangers, specializing in coaxing piano and big band music out of his acoustic guitar. Opening act The June Bugs are five women who sing beautiful harmonies and play saucy bluegrass, upbeat gospel and traditional folk music.

Doors open at 7:00 PM

Music starts at 7:30 PM

Cost: \$15

Pre-Registration Is Required

Online: www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

or By phone: (403) 283-2025

Toll Free: 1-866-313-0713

2011 SUMMER HIKES PROGRAM –

Once again AWA is offering a great variety of summer hiking opportunities. We are working on a schedule that will offer opportunities for every wilderness interest: foothills, alpine ridges, grasslands, boreal forest and river valleys.

Watch for the 2011 summer hikes program in the April edition of the Advocate!



OFFICIALLY "THREATENED": NOW WHAT?
HABITAT LOSS HAS ENDANGERED ALBERTA'S GRIZZLIES.
FEWER THAN 800 REMAIN | HELP SAVE OUR LAST GRIZZLIES
AT SAVE THE GRIZZLY.CA
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
1-888-215-0762

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:



Alberta Wilderness Association
Box 6398, Station D
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1
awa@shaw.ca

