

June 2011 • Vol. 19, No. 3

A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



PHOTO: © J. MILLEN

IN PRAISE OF SAUNTERING / 4

PARKS CANADA AT 100: WHERE TO NEXT? / 6

A WATERTON SUMMER / 9

READY FOR SOME REC-UCATION? / 12

CONTENTS

JUNE 2011 • VOL. 19, NO. 3

FEATURES

- 4 BALANCE (OR IN PRAISE OF A GOOD SAUNTER)
- 6 MARKING 100 YEARS OF PEAKS AND VALLEYS; PARKS CANADA NEEDS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC, NOT VULGARIZE THE GRANDEUR
- 9 MY SUMMER IN WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK – THE SOUL OF THE WORLD
- 12 WHAT DO YOU MISS? TAKE THE REC-UCATION CHALLENGE
- 15 REDUCING ACCESS IS THE ANSWER: NOW WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?
- 18 FROM HIKING TO SCRAMBLING
- 19 THE PREDACEOUS BLACK BEAR REDUX

ASSOCIATION NEWS

- 20 CELEBRATING EARTH DAY'S 40TH BIRTHDAY – AWA'S BEST-EVER CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS!

WILDERNESS WATCH

- 23 UPDATES

DEPARTMENTS

- 27 RECALL OF THE WILD
- 30 READER'S CORNER

EVENTS

- 31 2011 HIKES PROGRAM

COVER PHOTO

Julia Millen captured this image of fellow backpacker Rob Barratt on AWA's White Goat Wilderness backpack trip in August 2009. It is easy to feel awed by the enormous grandeur of the surrounding landscape and deeply appreciative of those who had the vision in the past to protect this unspoiled wilderness.

FEATURED ARTIST

Lucie Bause is this issue's featured artist. She grew up in Stratford Ontario and studied in Ontario, Spain and at Alberta's own Alberta College of Art and Design. As you appreciate pieces from her portfolio here you will see how travel, outdoor adventure and the natural environment inspire this Canmore-based artist. Lucie's artwork is based on nature, landscape and the environment. Natural landscapes are where she discovers a sense of freedom, rejuvenating energy and inspiration.

Lucie is also dedicated to public art. The Town of Canmore commissioned Lucie to prepare an environmental sculpture, entitled Portal XII, located on one of the town's pedestrian pathways.

Lucie's portfolio may be seen on her website www.luciebause.com. You also may see her work in Canmore's Elevation Contemporary Art Gallery and Invermere's Effusion Gallery.

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

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

JUST DO IT – DIFFERENTLY?



Red Falls
24" x 40"
acrylic on canvas
© LUCIE BAUSE

Few television viewers have not seen commercials featuring Nike's famous slogan "Just Do It." This slogan, often associated with celebrity athletes, helped Nike take advantage of the fitness craze of the 1980s; it helped propel the company to be an industry leader and the Nike label to "must have" status in the minds of many consumers.

In some respects the "Just Do It" slogan (certainly not the excessive consumerism companies like Nike cater to) resonates well with the recreation theme we have oriented the June issue of *Wild Lands Advocate* around since 2009. The athletes featured in Nike commercials are skilled, determined and enthusiastic – qualities that certainly animate the people who have featured in

many of the recreation features we have published.

Some of the features in this June's issue ask you to think a bit differently about how we do our recreational passions and pursuits. That difference has to do with education, with thinking about recreation as an activity we should combine with education. I had the pleasure of accompanying Bob Blaxley as he twinned those themes together on a Whaleback hike...err, saunter...in June 2009. I am delighted he found the time to write an article for this issue of the *Advocate* that outlines how his approach to hiking has evolved over the years.

I am also delighted that Ed Struzik, an award-winning writer, and the *Edmonton Journal* gave AWA permission to reprint

Ed's reflections on Parks Canada's 100th birthday. Those reflections include how recreational activities in our parks must be guided by an informed public opinion, a public opinion committed to promoting what our parks are designed to represent.

For my part I inflict a horrible term on your eyes and ears – "rec-ucation." The activity it is meant to capture, venturing into the parks with the assistance of an interpretive guide, is much more pleasant. The serious point is that I think many of our recreational trips to the parks could be richer and more meaningful if we took advantage of the skills and perspectives available through interpretive guides.

Jeff Bone's feature on a summer spent in Waterton National Park reflects the more celebratory reflections on wilderness recreation we have published in the last two years. Nigel Douglas's article reminds us that recreation must respect ecological limits. Although his focus is on the "usual suspects" – motorized vehicles in the backcountry – we also should ask ourselves about where and when limits on other means of access should be considered. Last, but by no means least, Jennifer Douglas invites the more adventurous hikers among us to think of giving scrambling a try.

If you missed April's Climb for Wilderness please read Susan Mate's account of what was a tremendously successful event. If you are thinking of purchasing a guide to birding check out our review of Lone Pine Publishing's *Birds of Canada*. And, if you want to meet a truly amazing pioneer please read our story of Verna Siga – 92 years young and a resident of Jasper for a mere 87 years.

We hope these features and articles plus our regular Wilderness Watch updates will whet some of your appetite for good reading about wilderness issues until the late summer. Until then...

- Ian Urquhart, Editor

FEATURES

Balance (or In Praise of a Good Saunter)

By Bob Blaxley



When I first started walking in the Whaleback I was pretty obsessed with the time trips took. Over years of hiking in the Rockies I had somehow got it into my head that the faster I “did” a particular route the better I was as an outdoors kind of a guy. I also felt that there should be a schedule to a day of walking that fitted in the important things to see and do on a particular route. There has been a change to these ideas over the last decade and a half of leading groups through the area. I’ve noticed lately that I can’t keep a schedule very well. This does create some problems.

Some people try to fit in a day walking with other events afterwards. I’ll usually ask if someone needs to be back by a certain time and try to get them back.

It doesn’t always work out. Wild

flowers will be blooming and people will stop and take pictures, or just want to sit and soak up the scene. Or, a mother grizzly and cubs will show up on the ridge you’re planning to head back on, necessitating a lengthy detour through even more drifts of wildflowers. If you think snowdrifts slow you down, try walking through thousands of blooming balsam roots.

Other people want to go fast and cover a lot of territory. They are very fit and they want a good workout in an attractive landscape. That’s not necessarily what happens on walks I lead.

I have some educational messages I feel are important to deliver. So... we stop for those. There are also unplanned stops. What’s that bird soaring? Is it a golden eagle? What’s making a rustle in the undergrowth? Is that a blue grouse!? Let’s stop and see if it’ll make

its deep thrumming call that seems to come from everywhere at once. What plant is this with its small snowy white flowers growing so close the ground? Moss phlox, the plant guide says, and describes it as plant of the dry plains that also occurs in the foothills. All these “distractions” and many more slow the pace down to what may be described as an amble or saunter.

In the city of Calgary, where I live, many thousands of people recreate in the wild areas that are only a short drive away. The question that preoccupied me in the early 1990s was why those same people didn’t turn out in droves to defend nearby threatened wild places. It seemed they just did not understand how fragile wild landscapes are when subject to industrial development. Many people merely drove through wild areas, never stopping long enough to get a deep



The Livingstone Range as seen from Whaleback Ridge.

PHOTO: B. BLAXLEY



Limber pine stands guard over this view of the Livingstone Gap.
PHOTO: B. BLAXLEY

acquaintance with them. I started looking for a previous model of how conservation minded individuals had attempted to mobilize urban dwellers to the threats to nearby wilderness.

The Sierra Club and its preeminent founder, John Muir, were the inspiration for me to write a walking guide and then to begin leading groups into the Whaleback, an area threatened by development. Starting in the late 1800s, Muir and the Sierra Club took people, especially influential and powerful decision makers, into the wilds to educate them in the beauties of those places and the threats to them from industrial civilization. They used recreation as the incentive for participation in the trip but the overarching goal was to obtain support for preservation.

I tried to make my outings conform to this model. A nice walk in an attractive landscape, describing and explaining features and concepts as we travelled, all with a view to explaining the necessity of preserving what was around us. As I led more walks I began to walk less and stop more. The recreational aspect of the trip was balanced more by the educational and conservation focus. My trips were focused and programmatic.

Still, something was missing from

some of my walks. I would lead a party from place to place and talk about this plant or animal or that management plan but I sometimes felt we were missing something. Too many “to dos” were crowding out something important and vital.

Going back and reading Muir for further enlightenment, it became apparent he had strong ideas and feelings about goal driven movement through the wild. For me, one of the clearest expressions of these is in his reply to a question about hiking. Muir replied:

“Hiking - I don't like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains - not hike! Do you know the origin of that word 'saunter?' It's a beautiful word. Away back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, 'A la sainte terre,' 'To the Holy Land.' And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not 'hike' through them.”

- John Muir, quoted by Albert Palmer in A Parable of Sauntering

I still have the driven, goal oriented side to my personality. Two or three mornings a week, if the weather permits, you can find me running through Fish Creek Park. Most of these gasping efforts cannot in any way be described as a saunter. But most evenings I go back to the park and practise moving slowly and carefully, all senses and thoughts tuned in. Only then do I fully take in the delicate scent of balsam poplar leaves opening or catch the unfolding of the encounter between three hunting coyotes and a group of deer barely visible in the twilight. 🌲

Bob Blaxley, author of The Whaleback: A Walking Guide, has roamed the landscapes of Southern Alberta for over 35 years. Concern for rapidly shrinking wild spaces led him into an Environmental Design Masters Degree in the early 90s and into an intimate relationship with the Whaleback area. When not out walking he can usually be found, fly rod in hand, trying to understand the mysteries of water, bugs and trout.



MARKING 100 YEARS OF PEAKS AND VALLEYS; PARKS CANADA NEEDS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC, NOT VULGARIZE THE GRANDEUR



By Ed Struzik

The text of this article is Copyright © The Edmonton Journal. Alberta Wilderness Association would like to thank Ed Struzik and The Edmonton Journal for their permission to reprint this article (it appeared originally in the Journal on May 14, 2011).

On May 21, Parks Canada will celebrate its 100th birthday with a big media event in Ottawa that will be followed by a number of similar birthday parties, including one here at Elk Island, outside Edmonton.

If you're over 40 and wondering what those national parks centennial celebrations were all about in 1985, you're not alone. The birth of the national parks system actually occurred in 1885 when Banff, Canada's first national park, was established. This centennial celebrates the birth of the department in

1911, nothing new except that we may now be the first country in the world to celebrate the creation of a bureaucracy.

The real reason for this celebration is that Parks Canada is in trouble, or more accurately, it thinks it's in trouble. Senior officials in the agency know that Canada's population has been changing and that fewer people are going to national parks. The centennial celebrations are part of an initiative to reverse that trend.

This initiative has actually been going on for more than a decade. Over the years Parks Canada has hired scores of public relations people, media consultants, marketers and image-makers. It's restructured the bureaucracy, redesigned uniforms, and created so many websites that it would take months to get through them all.

There are many reasons why these investments have failed to raise the

number of visitors.

Most new Canadians come from parts of the world where people can't afford – or have no experience with – camping, canoeing, climbing, or putting 20-kilogram packs on their backs and hiking up mountainsides. They tend not to be birdwatchers. Nor do they fly-fish or cross-country ski.

The reality of this cultural shift came to light several years ago when Parks Canada officials at Point Pelee National Park in southern Ontario interviewed visible minorities to see how they might improve the parks experience. Point Pelee is a very small park, notable for its birds and rare plants. One man, who identified himself as recently coming from East Asia, said he very much enjoyed the hike through the marsh along the park's boardwalk. When asked how Parks Canada might improve it, he thought for a moment and then said, "You know, you

could use a hippopotamus. Come to think about it, two would be better. That would really get people excited.”

Extreme as this example is, it shows that Parks Canada’s recent “visitor experience” mantra – “It’s about them. Understand them. Respect their needs, expectations and motivations” – is misplaced. What about educating new Canadians (and old) instead about what national parks represent?

The same might be said about younger Canadians who are not embracing the park experience as enthusiastically as their parents did or still do. Talk to any backcountry specialist and they’ll tell you most people they encounter huffing and puffing along backcountry trails are geezers or quickly moving in that direction. They see almost no one on the more rugged routes such as Jasper’s North Boundary Trail. Parks Canada is not the only national park agency facing these challenges. The U.S. National Park Service has seen a much bigger drop in visitors.

A study published by the Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences blames much of it on videos, iPods and other indoor, sedentary activities. Nature, it seems, doesn’t stand a chance when it comes to competing with Nintendo.

Add to this a high dollar and the skyrocketing price of gas, and prospects of getting more people to come to parks do not look good.

Hoping to reverse this trend, Parks Canada is pushing the limits on what it thinks are appropriate activities in national parks. Earlier this year, it added canopy walks, zip lines, aerial parks and via ferrata (a system of bolted ladders and cables) to its list of approved activities. Via ferrata, Italian for “iron way,” is a concept developed by the Italian military to move troops more quickly through the mountains during the First World War. Since then, it has been adopted by less than highly skilled climbers who would not otherwise ascend rock faces.

Few could argue that the technique doesn’t deface a mountain slope.

To the dismay of many current and former employees, Parks Canada is now considering a skywalk along a glacier in Jasper.

Parks Canada would like the public to believe that former employees such as Gord Anderson who are speaking out about this, are in the minority. Anderson

says employees are riled about the direction Parks is going. “It used to be sadness. Now it’s fear,” he says. “We are scared the mandarins in Ottawa are actually considering outlandish proposals better suited for Disneyland.”

Max Winkler spent a lifetime working in Jasper, Kootenay, Forillon (Quebec) and Waterton Lakes, where he was chief park warden for 15 years. “It would be easy to put this behind me now that I’m retired,” he told me. “But like most people in Parks Canada, I believe that national parks stand for something in this country, and that it is my duty to preserve that ideal for future generations. This idea that parks should be all things to all people is not right.”

Before Parks Canada continues on this path, it might want to examine what CBC did a few years ago when it decided to court younger listeners by transforming CBC Radio Two from a classical music and jazz channel to one more pop-oriented. Almost overnight, gifted hosts such as Tom Allen, who had a highly entertaining program that managed to bring hockey and Holst, cage matches and divas and web goddesses into his morning show, was struggling to tell listeners something new and exciting about the Guess Who, Bob Dylan and Stevie Wonder.

A vast majority of listeners demanded CBC restore the old format. CBC refused. Not only did CBC Radio Two lose listeners, but it also lost a loyal audience who would have gone to the mat to save

the national broadcaster from the severe budgets cuts that are always looming. It’s hard to imagine Guess Who fans going out of their way to save the CBC. It’s just as unimaginable to think that zip liners or paragliders are going to write their MPs the next time someone in government proposes logging in national parks or directional drilling for oil and gas, as was suggested in the 1980s. They can get this kind of entertainment anywhere.

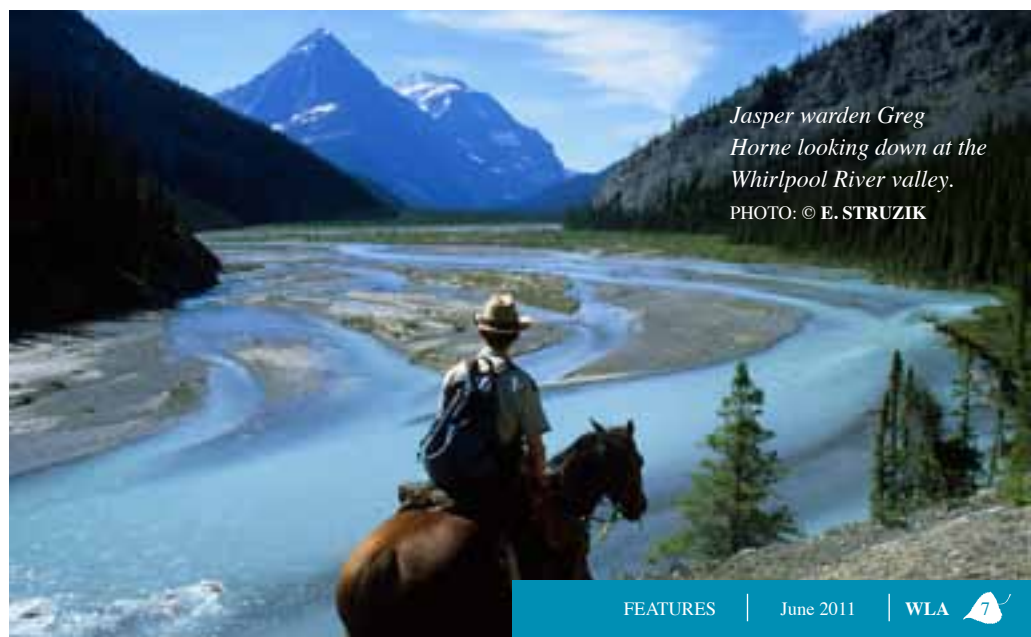
One would have thought this tendency in Parks Canada to flirt with development and amusement park interests would

“Parks Canada’s recent ‘visitor experience’ mantra – ‘It’s about them. Understand them. Respect their needs, expectations and motivations’ - is misplaced. What about educating new Canadians (and old) instead about what national parks represent?”

have ended with the Ecological Integrity Panel that was struck in November 1998 to examine Parks Canada’s approach for maintaining ecological integrity and provide recommendations for improvement. The panel members travelled extensively to speak with park staff and other interested Canadians to see first-hand the problems and stresses that threaten our national parks.

Most everyone was satisfied when Parks Canada responded with a clear plan for limits on development and a strategy for ecological integrity.

In the ensuing years, more scientists were hired to work in parks. Controlled burns were lit to mimic forest fires that



Jasper warden Greg Horne looking down at the Whirlpool River valley.

PHOTO: © E. STRUZIK



*Amethyst Lake,
Jasper National Park*

PHOTO: © E. STRUZIJK

had been suppressed in the past. Elk were no longer allowed to take up residence in Banff and Jasper where they'd be safe from wolves. And recovery plans were put in place for endangered species like the black-footed ferret.

In time, though, some of the tougher challenges such as saving caribou in Banff and Jasper were put on hold. Caribou now have the dubious distinction of having disappeared in Banff, Canada's most famous national park, before disappearing in the oilsands region and the clearcut areas of the Alberta foothills.

Bad as the numbers seem to be, the situation isn't that dire. In Alberta, Jasper has almost the same number of visitors now as it did 10 years ago. Banff is holding its own.

True, Elk Island is struggling with a drop to 185,253 in 2009-10, compared with the 219,000 who visited in 2000-01. But who should be surprised? Down the road, the Blackfoot Grazing Reserve has the same terrain, better snow for skiing, no entry fee and the wildly successful Canadian Birkebeiner race that reminds people of its existence each year.

Nationally, park numbers have gone up and down the past decade, but they are more or less the same as they were a decade ago. More than 12 million people visit each year.

Parks Canada needs to be reminded that most government departments or agencies would kill for that kind of

consistency and for the tremendous approval ratings it gets from users. Among the 120 countries in the world that have a national parks system, Canada has for decades been the undisputed leader. Our national parks are found in every province and territory.

Nowhere in the world can a visitor be wined and dined in the splendour of a Lake O'Hara or Jasper Park Lodge one night and then spend the next part of the visit 2,900 metres high in the rustic comfort of the Alpine Club of Canada hut at Abbot Pass tent or fishing for trout in Amethyst Lake in Jasper.

Several of Canada's parks, including Nahanni, Wood Buffalo and the seven Rocky Mountain parks, are considered so special that they have been declared World Heritage Sites. Parks Canada is perfectly justified in celebrating this legacy. But it might also be worthwhile reflecting on the costly mistakes it has made over the past 100 years.

Jasper is still working hard to improve relations with First Nations and Métis people who were kicked out of the park when it was established a century ago. A lot of money has been spent trying to convince fishermen that the introduction of eastern brook trout to Rocky Mountain lakes to improve recreational opportunities was a bad idea.

Parks Canada is still struggling with a way of dealing with the elk that were brought in from the United States, and

they're now trying to find a way of bringing back caribou that became extinct in Banff two years ago. If taxpayers knew how much has been spent dealing with diseased bison that were shipped to Wood Buffalo in the 1920s, they'd be appalled.

Reading Ted Hart's recent book on J.B. Harkin, the first Commissioner of National Parks, one could imagine what Harkin would have to say about what is happening. Throughout his career, he worried that "increased demands for more and more roads, cheaper forms of amusement, and commercial exploitation," would result in national parks losing the "very thing that distinguished them from the outside world."

"Future generations may wonder at our blindness if we neglect to set them aside before civilization invades them," Harkin wrote. "What is needed in Canada today is an informed public opinion which will voice an indignant protest against any vulgarization of beauty of our national parks or any invasion of their sanctity." 🐾

Ed Struzik, a senior writer at The Edmonton Journal, has been writing about environmental issues for more than 30 years. He has won dozens of writing awards and honours. His third book, The Big Thaw: Travels in the Melting North, was published in 2009.

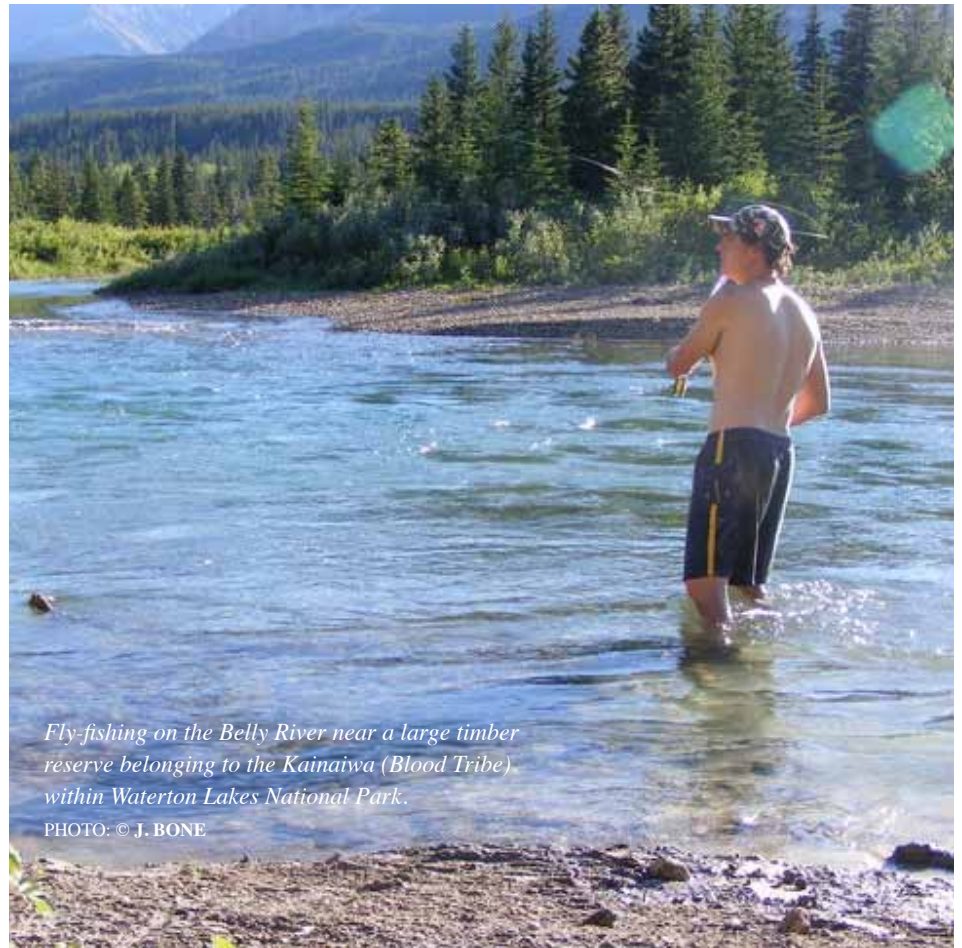
MY SUMMER IN WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK – THE SOUL OF THE WORLD

By Jeff Bone



I believe in wilderness conservation. The ultimate goal of conservation is to enable us to be of greater service to other living things and to the global environment of which we are temporary trustees. My thoughts about conservation have been shaped by my own personal experiences with nature - in particular, from my time in Waterton Lakes National Park, where visitors may still find some of the most untouched wilderness remaining in Alberta's national parks. Largely because Banff and Jasper are located respectively closer to Calgary and Edmonton, so Alberta's southernmost national park is left for those non-locals with a sense of adventure and a willingness to travel farther. Last summer I had the privilege of living on Crandell Mountain in a semi-wilderness camp fifteen minutes outside the town site in the valley of Mount Blakiston, the highest point in the park. When you are there you feel almost lost in the wilderness, hidden in the Crown of the Continent. My decision to live there was motivated by former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt who, as a young man, left his life and law practice after the death of his wife for the seclusion of a ranch in the Dakotas.

Waterton is a very ecologically important area in the world. This is where the mountains literally erupt from the prairies. There are no “foothills” in Waterton. Its geology features the prairie grasslands hitting the mountains and the inhabitants of both ecosystems living relatively harmoniously together. It was also joined to Montana's Glacier National Park in 1932 to form the world's first international Peace Park. UNESCO describes this Peace Park as “exceptionally rich in plant and mammal species as well as prairie, forest, and



Fly-fishing on the Belly River near a large timber reserve belonging to the Kainaiwa (Blood Tribe) within Waterton Lakes National Park.

PHOTO: © J. BONE

alpine and glacial features.” Since the parks are joined, wildlife moves freely across the 49th parallel. The Peace Park supports quite a healthy grizzly population, an iconic wilderness species that is in serious decline in other parts of the province. Few may realize that human activities in the park have pushed the grizzlies and resident black bears onto private ranchlands surrounding Waterton.

The Waterton parkland terrain was formed by a great continental divide, an abrupt colossal crash that took place over 100 million years ago. This massive tectonic collision resulted in giant blocks of sedimentary layers thrusting on top of one another. It resulted in younger rocks lying underneath much older rock and formed the Rocky Mountains. Waterton sits at the intersection of the Alberta, British Columbia and Montana borders

of this range. Although difficult to comprehend, the history of this land goes back much further than the birth of the Rockies. A thousand million years ago this area was flat and submerged under a shallow sea. Sedimentary layers were laid over the eons of time and eventually formed compressed rock.

Long ago, long before the first humans arrived but after the final of four extensive glacial periods, large blocks of ice melted and cascaded down to form deep and beautiful mountain lakes. Sprinkled throughout these lakes are populations of trout. Crandell Lake is one such place. It is accessible from the Red Rock Parkway and is located in Blakiston valley, out of the so-called Waterton wind corridor.

Crandell Lake provides an opportunity for still-water angling. With a Parks



Summer Meadows

16" x 32" acrylic on canvas

© LUCIE BAUSE

Canada fishing permit it is open season from May 18 to September 2 subject to prescribed limits and prohibitions on catching protected species such as Alberta’s provincial fish, the bull trout. There is no magic in predicting when Crandell Lake will actually thaw, but all bets are off until at least June. Any amateur fisherman or fisherwoman can catch a trout there, particularly if you try late in the evening around dusk. Although barbless hooks are not mandatory I use them to enable me to release fish more quickly and, hopefully, more humanely. I also find that synthetic nuggets are more effective than worms and artificial flies, especially the yellow ones which appear and feel like small marshmallows.

Mountain lakes rarely contain more than one or two species of fish. Crandell Lake is no exception. Today, Crandell is home to eastern brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*). The eastern brook trout, actually a char, is one of three species you often find in Alberta’s mountain lakes. I believe it is the most strikingly beautiful char as it has light spots in contrast to the dark spots of many of its cousins. As the name suggests, eastern

brook trout are native to eastern North America. They were introduced into the Waterton aquatic ecosystem through ecologically modifying fish stocking programs dating back to the early 1900s. For this reason, I like to feel as if I have something in common with the brook trout of Crandell Lake. We are both non-

“as I watch all species in the park, I appreciate their struggles and ability to adapt to and cope with much larger forces, forces they cannot possibly control. I know that this is what we humans should strive towards.”

native species trying to make a home in a foreign land. We are both “strangers in a strange land” as it says in Exodus 2:22, the biblical narrative I often reflect on in the evening by the propane light of my cabin. I feel we both have been introduced into this wilderness and then abandoned to fend for ourselves as best

we can.

Crandell is a lower elevation alpine lake typically characterized by low nutrient production. Therefore, species of fish such as brook trout are often stunted because the growing season of plants and insects is very short. This forces the fish to spend a great deal of energy to feed on a wide variety of small organisms. However, I confess, you can still eat stunted brook trout and be fairly satisfied. I am not battling giant marlins like in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the total opposite in fact, but I think there is pride in still remembering, as Hemingway taught us, that the fish at the end of your line is your friend. We are partners in nature together, and have our respective roles to play.

One of the most unique features of alpine lakes affecting fish comes from their frigid temperatures. Cold water for cold-blooded animals slows their rate of metabolism. The pace of life in alpine lakes is already slow and easy. A fish living in a warm temperature prairie pond will metabolically burn itself out in five years. On account of the cold temperatures and the stunting, mountain

lake fish can reach extreme old age. Stunted lake trout can miraculously live 30 to 40 years. Eastern brook trout may live up to 25 years in Crandell Lake.

The fact these fish can live into their twenties does give me moments for pause. In actuality, I may be taking a fish that was alive when I was a boy. This realization invites me to muse about several other questions. Can a twenty-five year old fish have a personality? Would a fish who lives that long develop the cognitive capacity to understand its own nature? Not to my way of thinking but, as I watch all species in the park, I appreciate their struggles and ability to adapt to and cope with much larger forces, forces they cannot possibly control. I know that this is what we humans should strive towards. We should strive to simply “be” in nature and set aside our ingrained desire to control.

I know when I am happy, and I am happiest alone on Crandell Mountain with only the fish rising and splashing at dusk to keep me company. All this reminds me what a beautiful world it once was and still may be in some places. Some evenings I would look around and truly feel I was in a life size mural: a timeless work of art. I would hope you go visit this very special, quiet corner of the world. Part of me would like to keep it just for myself. I surrender this sanctuary with great reluctance, but know it belongs to everyone and hope those who visit will take care to ensure they do not leave any unnecessary footprints.

When I am in the mountains things seem to slow down. In that stillness I find moments, brief as they may be, of crystallized goodness. On my last day in Waterton as recorded in my journal entry, I woke up and looked around the valley framed by Mount Blakiston. It helped reveal many thoughts that were rolling around inside me. I felt how perfect the setting is, and despite its grandeur, how fragile it is as well. By so many measures this is an important park worth protecting.

Waterton is a land that once belonged to the Blackfoot people and now to all Canadians. The important value that defines a national park is that it belongs to everyone; not just the Crown, the



Few may realize that what people do in Waterton has pushed grizzlies and black bears out of the park onto private lands.

PHOTO: © J. BONE

wealthy or the privileged. The *National Park Act* states that parks are “dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education, and enjoyment”. However, it is often forgotten that it also says parks are to be left “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” This indicates the desire of this generation to explore wilderness and understand it, but reminds us of our promise and obligation to our children and our children’s children.

Today, as our country debates industrializing the last frontier, the North, I wonder if we still believe wilderness exists in natural abundance? This is a question we have to confront, about what wilderness means to us as a non-renewable resource?

For many, wilderness means silence. It is a monastery or a cloistered convent. Yet there are other ways to experience wilderness – wilderness should be a cathedral, a place to celebrate. Wilderness

imparts wisdom, it has many things to say, many things to teach, but it is difficult to know whether it says the same thing to each of us. To me, wilderness asks me to think small, to remember I am a part of everything else, to be more gentle on our connected living ecosystems, to give up the illusions of control I may exercise and to aspire towards an experience of sustainability, wholeness and environmental integrity. The natural beauty of this world is immense. Waterton is a glowing example of that beauty that all Canadians should treasure. We should view this as a responsibility of stewardship and a sustainable commitment for the future. 🌲

Jeff Bone is a lawyer and business law instructor at the University of Alberta. He spent the summer of 2010 living in the wilderness of Waterton Lakes National Park.



WHAT DO YOU MISS? TAKE THE REC-UCATION CHALLENGE



By Ian Urquhart

After settling up with Amanda at O’Shea’s Restaurant in Jasper I told Art Jackson, the owner of Alpine Art Eco Tour Ltd., that I had never seen a grizzly bear in the flesh. Art, one of three interpretive guides I had the pleasure to interview in late May, glanced at his watch and said he thought there was a chance he could find me a bear if I had an hour to spare. I did.

On our way to the south side of Lac Beauvert, Art explained why he was taking me there. Spring’s reluctant arrival meant one of the first places to “green up” was the golf course at Jasper Park Lodge. An unusually high number of bears, grizzlies and blacks alike, were grazing on the rough next to the fairways on several holes. The day before, at about the same time, a grizzly had been doing its best to keep the rough down along the thirteenth hole.

Fifteen minutes later I was looking at my first grizzly. Our first glimpse of the bear was as it stood up on its hind legs to try to get a better look at a foursome

of golfers about 150 yards back up the fairway. The grizzly, satisfied the golfers were not going to try to “play through,” resumed mowing the grass until Parks Canada staff arrived to haze the bear and send it back into the bush. Enjoyment on the Lodge’s human playground could only be interrupted for so long.

Helping Us See

That hour with Art illustrated one reason why you should consider hiring an interpretive guide the next time you take a recreational trip to one of the mountain National Parks. They help you find things. Interested in wildflowers? Interpretive guides can tell you where and when you can indulge your interest and take you there on a half-day or full-day hike.

Finding things is one thing; seeing them is another. This skill makes interpretive guides very valuable. They use it to help deepen our appreciation of nature. They help us see the natural world differently, more richly, than we may be

able to on our own.

I have been in the alpine enough times to recognize that many species of flowers there are both short in stature and spectacular in colour. Why? Kirsten Schmitt, the principal behind Jasper-based company All Things Wild, explained that these are adaptive features alpine flowers have developed in order to survive and thrive in their high elevation haunts. Their short stature enables them to withstand better the severity of their mountain climate; it helps, for example, to reduce the dehydrating impact of mountain winds.

And what about their spectacular colours? It’s only incidentally for our benefit. It’s all about reproduction. With such a short growing season alpine flowers need spectacular colours to attract their pollinators. “You better be good-looking,” Kirsten joked, “given how narrow their reproductive window is.” This sense of seeing the world differently is what animated one of Kirsten’s clients to exclaim: “I would have never figured

that out on my own.”

Anne Williams, whose company is called The Jasper Naturalist, offered another example of how a guided walk or hike may deepen your appreciation of what National Parks have to offer. If you have been to Maligne Canyon you know it is home to a spectacular series of waterfalls. Anne told me that right next to one of those falls (do you know which one?) “is a site where a rufous hummingbird (the smallest bird in Jasper National Park) has nested for several years...it’s nesting right beside the waterfall. But, it’s secretive...while the thing that grabs your attention is awe-inspiring what I am able to show people is where that bird has nested... their jaws drop.” That sort of visitor experience, to help people see a layer or dimension of the parks they were not previously attuned to, is, as Anne put it, “the icing on the cake.”

Anne spoke for all three of the guides I interviewed when she said: “It’s very satisfying to be able to help to guide people to facilitate them seeing things... that they would not have otherwise thought about.”

Taking a guided walk or hike may acquaint you with another type of richness our national parks have to offer – a cultural richness. The contributors to Ian MacLaren’s edited volume, *Culturing Wilderness in Jasper National Park*, introduce their readers to more than 200 years of human history in the watershed of the upper Athabasca River. This is a dimension interpretive guides also may inject into your park experience. Art Jackson likes to introduce his clients to the history of the fur trade in the Jasper region; Anne Williams talks about the “cultural landscape” of the park, about how the upper Athabasca has hosted many cultures and activities over the ages of human occupation.

Helping Us Make Connections

“Connections” was a term that surfaced repeatedly in our conversations. Making connections may be a deeper, more profound, version of seeing things. Or maybe it is qualitatively different – a separate reward that comes from improving our abilities to see things in the park.

Making connections may come

from realizing just how interconnected species – and species health – are to the character and quality of landscapes and ecosystems. To use grizzlies as an illustration here, a guided hike may introduce someone to the foods grizzlies prefer (such as hedysarum roots). The hike also may highlight just how much space grizzlies need and how important it is for that territory not to be fragmented by roads and other human disturbances. Most of Alberta’s grizzlies are found in parks and protected areas and a grizzly’s lifespan tends to be shorter if its home range is outside of the relative sanctuary they provide. Learning this may produce a more personal connection to the natural world if it encourages a greater awareness and appreciation of just how fragile and special the ecosystem/species relationship is. This version of making connections is very cognitive; it results from how guides help us gain knowledge.

An equally rich version of connecting or reconnecting people is much more emotional, much less based on the specific knowledge your guide will pass along to you. Some of the most memorable interpretive guiding experiences I heard about were where these sorts of connections were made. Kirsten’s face beamed when she was talking about people she thinks were transformed by a full-day hike into places such as Wilcox Pass, one of her favourite alpine destinations. The transformation didn’t result from learning the scientific name for the pygmy gentian that smiled at them from beside the trail. It came from the feeling, from the sense of place, stimulated by being in the midst of a sea of wildflowers.

Art shared a particularly touching example of the emotional impact an interpretive walk or hike may have. “One of the big moments that hit me,” Art said, “was when I was with a school group and we were into a beautiful little walk into a spruce bog and it was just lush, thick moss and Labrador tea. As we were in there we just laid back down on the moss... and everyone had a quiet moment and the smell, the softness, the coolness of the forest on a...June day... As we got up to leave this, it was almost like a little fairy ring, surrounded by little stubby black spruce, quiet, peaceful... the scent... and as we were going out... this one little girl was just crying her eyes out.”

“I said...you can’t
play through.”

PHOTO: I. URQUHART





For most National Park visitors, like these hikers in Jasper National Park, it is the very beauty and grandeur of the landscape that is what makes them special.

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS

Art asked if something was wrong. She answered: “No, that was just so beautiful.” This, as well as the more cognitive form of connecting, is what combining your recreation with education may deliver.

There is an even bigger, more rewarding, prize the interpretive guides I spoke to hope goes home with those who rec-ucate. It’s an ethic of care, of appreciation, of greater responsibility and accountability in our daily lives for our parks and for the environment more generally. Elsewhere in this issue of the *WLA* Ed Struzik urges Parks Canada to educate all Canadians about what national parks represent. This is one pillar of the ethic my guides are hoping to promote. They hope their vocation will help build a political constituency to protect an ecologically-centred idea of what our parks should represent. They want Canadians to echo advice that, sadly in one way, may be more likely to spring from the lips of European visitors to Jasper: “Your wilderness is a treasure. Don’t squander it like we have.”

They also hope clients will see how this ethic should animate their daily lives. Shrinking glaciers and mountain pine beetle in our national parks are just two illustrations of circumstances resulting

from our daily needs and wants. As well they hope we will strive to follow this ethic in how we think about our own neighbourhoods.

Kids and the Future of Parks

Robert Bateman, in the foreword to the latest edition of Graeme Pole’s book *Classic Hikes in the Canadian Rockies*, focuses his message on the need to get the younger generation interested in nature. “The typical 14-year old North American,” he writes, “spends more than 7 hours a day staring at electronic screens. If their world is not the real world but has become one of fantasy and entertainment, what kinds of parents and voters will they be... what kinds of stewards for the planet?”

Reaching our children is key to the ambitions of all three of my interviewees. The week I was in Jasper, Anne Williams was on a reconnaissance trip to Athabasca Glacier as part of her preparation to assist in a glacier study project that grade seven students from Athabasca have been conducting for years.

Kirsten Schmitt’s interest is reflected in part by her participation in the environmental education initiatives started by Michal Wasuita of Pine Bungalows. Her contribution to the

Discovery Weekend series offered at the Bungalows is advertised in part as an opportunity to “(I)earn great tricks to turn your kids into hiking enthusiasts!” So how do you do that? Seize on the inquisitiveness of children, turn them into investigators along the trail looking for scat and prints, and make them the guides for parts of the hike – let them tell you what they see (part of my interview recording is garbled so maybe I didn’t hear her chuckle and say “get your kids hiking with someone who’s not their parents...”)

I hope it’s fair to say that, for Art Jackson, children are the key constituency that must be courted when it comes to the future of parks in Canada. Jasper National Park’s Palisades Stewardship Education Centre project is one good initiative that will enable schools to bring students to Jasper for recreational and educational purposes (see www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/jasper/edu/edu5.aspx). But, another Parks Canada policy – charging school groups to enter and use the park – could be a serious disincentive to efforts to encourage youth to become enthusiasts for our national parks.

Take the Rec-ucation Challenge

There was a time in Canada when the federal government flirted with climate change – an issue some European nations and most of the world’s climate scientists actually take seriously. If you are a government that only wants to flirt with an issue who better to hire than a comedian? Enter Rick Mercer and his commercials urging us to take the “one tonne challenge” and find ways of reducing our personal greenhouse gas emissions by that amount. The challenge was a spectacular failure.

If Mr. Mercer is looking for another challenge to promote I hope he will consider my suggestion of the “Rec-ucation Challenge.” At least once a year, take a recreational outing into nature with an interpretive guide. Let’s challenge ourselves to find out more about the places where we like to spend our recreational time and maybe to come to see those places and our connections to them in a richer, deeper way.

We have so much to gain by doing so and, perhaps, so much to lose if we don’t. 🐾

REDUCING ACCESS IS THE ANSWER: NOW WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?

By Nigel Douglas



Peanut

12" x 12" mixed media on panel

© LUCIE BAUSE

Q: What is the single most important thing that needs to be done to recover grizzly bears in Alberta?

A: Reduce Access.

Q: What is the single most important thing that needs to be done to recover caribou in Alberta?

A: Reduce Access.

Q: What is the single most important thing that needs to be done to recover westslope cutthroat trout in Alberta?

A: Reduce Access.

Q: What is the single most important thing that needs to be done to protect our headwaters, source of clean drinking water for most Albertans?

A: Reduce Access.

One answer to so many questions. A surprising number of the environmental issues we face in Alberta today have exactly the same starting point: the rampant spread of industrial access throughout the province and the associated poorly managed recreational motorized access that comes in its wake. The recognition of the scale of the problem has grown enormously over the



“Key priorities have included the protection of the watershed, fisheries and wildlife.”

Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Management Plan

PHOTO: AWA FILES

past few years, but the willingness and the ability to deal with it has moved at a much more sedate pace.

Some will say it is the infrastructure that comes with industrial operations – the roads, the seismic lines, the pipelines – that is the problem. Others will say it is not the access itself that is the problem; it is the way we use that access. It is probably true, for example, that roads can actually “improve” grizzly habitat insofar as they might provide sunshine in previously dense forest, allowing grizzly food plants to thrive. But, they are also extremely good at killing grizzly bears: they are a population sink.

Effective access management ultimately will have to deal with both sides of the coin. The sheer volume of roads and trails and seismic lines will have to be physically reduced, by decommissioning existing access and reducing the amount of new infrastructure being built. And at the same time, use of existing access will have to be better managed, by gated access and better enforcement of regulations.

Two recent reports have highlighted the extent of the problem and the reluctance of the Alberta government to deal with it.

Castle Access Study

In April 2011, Global Forest Watch Canada released a new report, *Castle Area Forest Land Use Zone: Linear Disturbances, Access Densities and Grizzly Bear Habitat Security Areas*.

The report found access densities more than twice those recommended by the province for Core Grizzly Bear Areas. The Castle area, north of Waterton National Park, is part of the area mapped in 2009 by the Alberta government as a *Nationally Environmentally Significant Area* and significant portions of the area are designated as *Prime Protection* and *Critical Wildlife Habitat*.

Global Forest Watch Canada was retained by the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition and Mike Judd, a local resident and outfitter, to conduct a study of linear disturbances in the Castle area as part of their intervention in an Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board hearing into Shell Canada’s proposed Mount Backus well. The report looked at motorized use of linear disturbances in the proposed Castle Wildland, and compared actual use to the Government of Alberta’s management and policy intentions. It also considered the potential implications on grizzly bear recovery and management. Key findings from the report included:

- The total length of roads and trails that are potentially used by off-highway vehicles within the Castle area is 1,283 km, or a density of 1.3 km/km². In some individual watersheds, this density goes up to 2.0 km/km².
- To put that number into context, the Castle falls within one of the *Core Grizzly Bear Areas* recognized by the Alberta government: access

densities in these areas are intended to be no higher than 0.6 km/km². The report points clearly to the fact that the Castle Special Management Area is “no longer secure for grizzly bears” and that “sustainable environmental management of the Castle wilderness is not occurring.”

- Motorized access in the Castle also goes far beyond the designated trail system. Field studies of unofficial trails leaving the main Castle Falls and Lynx Creek roads found that, of 42 disturbances which were not authorized for motorized use, 39 (92.9 percent) had evidence of being used by motorized vehicles.
- Since 1998, when the Alberta Government announced the Castle area as a protected area under their Special Places program, there have been an estimated 81 km of new man-made disturbances.
- There is no evidence of any government monitoring of human use in the Castle.

According to the Government of Alberta website, access in the Castle is managed according to the 1992 *Castle River Access Management Plan*. Somewhat surprisingly, the website goes on to state: “In May 1996, *on a voluntary basis*, the AMP was implemented and *the public was responsible for policing themselves*” (emphasis added). The Global Forest Watch Canada report would suggest that the public are not

doing a very good job of “policing themselves” but unfortunately there does not seem to be a Plan B. Although the government’s stated intention is: “A review of the access management plan will be conducted every 5 years,” fifteen years on, no review has yet been completed.

The Global Forest Watch Canada report concludes “The Castle Area Forest Land Use Zone is not being managed according to its mandate, regulations or stated purpose. Access is not being controlled, and is a threat to all other public values of this area.”

The full report can be seen on AWA’s website at www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/issues/wildlands/castle/archive-1.

Ghost Access Study

In June 2011, a second report found access densities in the Ghost Watershed which were more than three times those officially recorded by the Alberta government, and more than four times the maximum densities recommended in the province’s *Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan*.

The report, *An Assessment of Cumulative Effects of Land Uses in the Ghost River Watershed, Alberta, Canada* was prepared for the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society by Cornel Yarmoloy and Brad Stelfox of ALCES Landscape and Land-use Ltd. The study is a “quantitative assessment of how past, current and future cumulative impacts of land use within the Ghost-Waiparous watershed could potentially affect sustainability of forests, water, wildlife and recreational resources.” The Ghost River watershed drains into the Bow River, and is thus the source of drinking water for the City of Calgary, and communities across Southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The report looked at how Eastern Slope watersheds such as the Ghost supply us with a variety of services, including recreation, timber production, energy resources, and biological diversity as well as providing ecosystem services such as carbon storage. But, these services all may be impacted by human activities: “human land use development and recreational activities can potentially reduce the effectiveness of these valued services through incremental negative impacts on natural processes.” Key findings from the report include:

- The study area had approximately

2,780 km of linear features, with an average landscape edge density of 5.12 km/km². This compares with an access density of just 1.42 km/km² as measured by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, and a maximum density of 1.2 km/km² as recommended in the province’s 2008 Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. “Sensitive species such as grizzly bear and bull trout may not be able to maintain viable populations in the study area.”

- The report cites a 2006 Alberta Environment report, *Water Quality Study of Waiparous Creek, Fallentimber Creek and Ghost River*, which found “a 10-fold increase in sediment loading in Waiparous Creek that could be attributed to off-highway recreational vehicle (OHRV) activity.”
- The health of native fish communities has declined significantly over the past several decades.
- If existing forestry practices continue, younger forests will come to dominate the landscape in future. The more biologically rich old growth component will become progressively smaller.
- The value of the land for recreational use was estimated to be higher, in dollar terms, than its value for timber production.
- “There is extensive use by OHRVs of closed trails within the study area... The chronic and illegal use of trails and seismic lines by OHRVs also impairs the reclamation of many linear features in the region.”
- “There are many features of the Ghost-Waiparous region that define its limited potential capacity to maintain grizzly bear populations, including high densities and motorized use of linear features, forestry clearcuts, poor management of attractant foods by random campers and lack of food storage and garbage facilities.”
- “Literature review and data from field visits combined with simulation results suggest the need for more effective enforcement of OHRV regulations as a strategy

to help maintain or restore key environmental indicators and recreational opportunities for non-motorized users.”

The full report can be seen on AWA’s website at www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/issues/wildlands/livingstone-porcupine/archive.

Enough Studying: Time for Action!

What is perhaps most surprising about the Castle and Ghost studies is that they are not surprising at all. Intuitively, we have all known for decades that unmanaged motorized recreation in our headwaters is having serious negative impacts on a broad spectrum of things, from drinking water to wildlife to hiking opportunities. The Alberta government has responded in a token way to these pressures. The Castle and the Ghost-Waiparous areas are both designated as Forest Land Use Zones; both have Access Management Plans (but only for motorized access).

The *Ghost-Waiparous Operational Access Management Plan* boldly states “Key priorities have included the protection of the watershed, fisheries and wildlife.” Similarly, the *Castle River Access Management Plan for Motorized Recreational Access* has the goal of “(addressing) motorized recreational access considering the protection of wildlife populations and habitat; fisheries, land and watershed management concerns; wildland and recreational opportunities.”

It would seem that both are failing spectacularly. Until there is a quantum shift in the way that motorized access is managed in Alberta, and a real willingness to get to grips with the issue, then they will continue to fail. In late 2008, at a series of workshops hosted by the Alberta government to discuss access management for grizzlies, there was an impressive amount of consensus among stakeholders – including oil and gas and forestry representatives, scientists and motorized recreationists – that a great deal more could be done to reduce and to better manage access. All participants highlighted lack of enforcement as a significant issue. The Castle and Ghost reports indicate that little has changed since then. 🐾

FROM HIKING TO SCRAMBLING

By Jennifer Douglas



Hiking or scrambling? First of all, what is the difference? Generally very little; many hikes could be described as scrambles and vice versa. For the purposes of this article, scrambling is where you go beyond defined and maintained trails using non-official routes to reach ridges and peaks; it does not require, though, technical knowledge and gear. If you need just your feet you are hiking. If you need your feet and hands you are scrambling. If you need rope, turn back.

My own scrambling grew out of a desire to always see over the next



The final approach to Mist Mountain is a short, sharp scramble, but the stunning views make it all worthwhile.

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS

horizon. I love hiking but I always wondered what I would have been able to see if I had headed for that ridge top rather than staying on the trail, or what the view would be like from that peak just to my left.

So what do you need to do to have a successful summer of scrambling?

1. Be prepared. Scrambling will take you off the beaten track. You may be the only people that day on that route. Therefore you must be self sufficient. Regardless of the conditions or weather forecast, never go without: extra layers of clothing,

toque and gloves, full rain gear, a well-stocked, useful first aid kit that you know how to use, flashlight and a means of lighting a fire. Many off-trail routes involve moving over scree. It is advisable to carry a climbing helmet and use it if there is anyone on the trail above you. (“Luck favours the prepared mind.” Louis Pasteur).

- 2. Be informed.** As close as you can to your setting out time, check local weather reports and trail conditions. Be ready to change your plans if necessary. For instance, if thunderstorms are predicted for the afternoon, check to make sure they won’t coincide with your arrival on a peak or ridge. If they are likely to, change your plans.
- 3. Notify a friend of your plans.** Scrambling is more of a commitment than hiking, with more scope for both adventure and disaster. Leave a detailed plan of where you are going and an expected return time. Leave them with instructions for what you would like them to do should you not return by the expected time. It is also worth leaving them details of any Plan B you might have if, for some reason, your first plan does not work out. Don’t change your plans without letting them know.
- 4. Know how to navigate.** Much scrambling is on non-signposted, non-designated trails, and requires careful and practiced route-finding. Ensure you are carrying the appropriate topographic maps and know how to read them. Carry a compass and be confident with how to use it in conjunction with your maps. If you use a GPS, be familiar with it, carry spare batteries and take a compass anyway. Scrambling is not the time to rely purely on the directions in a guidebook. A slight deviation from a route can easily lead you into a dangerous situation.
- 5. Be happy to turn back.** Many times when I have been out for a

scrambling day, I return having never reached my planned destination. If anything about the day goes off plan, it is always better to turn back. Circumstances that have made me turn back include changing weather conditions, realizing that I didn’t have enough water, discovering that I brought the wrong map, forgetting my waterproof jacket, realizing that I was too tired to continue safely and doubting that I was on the correct route. All of these things on their own may be very trivial, but so many accidents occur after a chain of small incidents like those above. There is no shame in retiring early to the pub and trying again tomorrow. As Laurence Gonzales writes in his fascinating book, *Deep Survival*, “You must hold onto (your) plan with a gentle grip and be willing to let it go.” Remember: it is about the journey, not the destination.

As long as you are appropriately prepared, scrambling can be one of the most intense pleasures imaginable. Nothing else gives quite the same solitude, the beauty and remoteness, and the satisfaction in reaching places that could be reached no other way.

Here are a few of my favourite scrambles in the Canadian Rockies:

- **Mount Allan, Kananaskis Village (9,249 feet).** Although this is a maintained trail, there are a couple of places where you need to use your hands to scramble up and down the rock bands. The scenery is unique, with 60-foot-high conglomerate rock pinnacles. This is Canada’s highest maintained trail.
- **Mist Mountain, Elbow-Sheep Wildland.** A short, steep route to a spectacular 9,753-foot peak. Careful route-finding required.
- **Mount Yamnuska, Canmore.** A good early season opener, with lots of easy trail hiking at the beginning. Turn back if icy.
- **Mount Temple, Banff National**

Park. The king of scrambles! At 11,624 feet, this is a long hard scramble, but incredibly rewarding. (Parks Canada publishes an invaluable brochure, *A Scrambler's Guide to Mount Temple*). Helmet is a necessity. Mount Temple is frequently inaccessible due to poor trail conditions or weather.

Here's a list of different books I use to plan my trips. Remember that every person is different and be conservative when it comes to estimating your own abilities. If the guidebook says easy, that doesn't mean it is necessarily easy for you. Use the maps and your own judgment to assess how challenging you will find it personally and what you think your timeframe would be.

- *Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies*, Alan Kane.
- *More scrambles in the Canadian Rockies*, Andrew Nugara.
- *A hiker's guide to scrambling safely*, Tom Morin.
- *Kananaskis Country trail guide*, Gillean Daffern.
- *Where locals hike in the Canadian Rockies*, Kathy & Craig Copeland.
- *Deep survival*, Laurence Gonzales. 🐾



Conglomerate spires on Centennial Ridge, near Mount Allan, Kananaskis Country.

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS



THE PREDACEOUS BLACK BEAR REDUX

Stephen Herrero, one of the world's leading authorities on bear ecology and behaviour, devotes a chapter in his classic book *Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance* to the predaceous black bear. In the April issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Management* Dr. Herrero joined four other wildlife scientists in publishing an article that revisits the subject of the predaceous black bear. Their research analyzed all the records of fatal attacks by black bears in Canada and the United States from 1900 to 2009; that analysis informs their recommendations on how fatal attacks may be avoided.

Since some of you will be venturing into bear habitat this summer a brief checklist of some of the article's most pertinent conclusions and recommendations follows:

- the risk of a fatal attack is low.
- eighty-six percent of all recorded fatal black bear attacks occurred between 1960 and 2009. The authors

speculate that this statistic is due to the interaction between population growth and increased recreational and industrial activity in bear country.

- the analysis shows a strong correlation between fatal attacks and party size. Fatal attacks on groups of three or more people were much rarer than such attacks on a group of two or a single person (far and away the category suffering the largest number of fatal attacks).
- there appeared to be no identifiable trigger for fatal attacks other than being in bear country.
- food or garbage figured in 38 percent of the fatal attacks.
- no victim of a fatal bear attack had bear spray.
- most fatal attacks were predatory. They were not defensive.
- males were responsible for 92 percent of the fatal attacks.

If you encounter a black bear in the front-country or back-country this summer what are the signs the bear may consider you prey? They write: "Potentially predatory approaches are typically silent, and may include stalking or other following, followed by a fast rush leading to contact."

What should you do if you encounter a potentially predatory black bear? You should use "all possible deterrents such as bear spray, loud noises, fists, firearms, rocks, knives, or clubs." In other words, be prepared to fight like hell. Do not play dead.

If you would like to watch a YouTube video where Dr. Herrero discusses the group's findings and recommends how you should respond in various situations go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7yoIheOrTc

- Ian Urquhart

ASSOCIAT

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY'S 41ST BIRTHDAY – AWA'S BEST-EVER CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS!

By Susan Mate, AWA Volunteer

Jonathan Heinz raced up all 802 stairs to the top of the Calgary Tower on Earth Day April 16 to help raise money and awareness for Alberta's wilderness. Then, he turned right around and did it again - another 30 times.

The Calgary student was among more than 1,300 people who spent a big part of Earth Weekend 2011 at the downtown landmark to help raise nearly \$142,000 during the Alberta Wilderness Association's Climb & Run for Wilderness. It was the largest turnout and biggest fundraiser since the event began on Earth Day in 1992 as a partnership with the World Wildlife Fund and the Calgary Tower (modeled after a successful WWF event at the CN Tower in Toronto).

Conservation-minded couch potatoes and extreme athletes used leg power, endurance and passion for the environment to create and sustain awareness about conservation and wildlife. This year's event focused on the plight of the caribou - an icon for the health of Alberta's wilderness, other wildlife and wild water.

The six-hour event drew both individuals and 26 corporate teams (Shell, the event's platinum sponsor, had five teams in the running). Participants included runners, walkers, climbers and even a competitor who was carried to the top in a wheelchair. These enthusiasts for wilderness - who ranged in age from infants toted on climbers' backs to 94 years - completed an astounding 1,970 ascents of the tower.

"It's a good cause and a good challenge," said Calgarian Aryn Mything, who ran up and then back down the stairwell 12 times with friend Wendy James. "That's 20,852 stairs - up and down," said James.



The start of our 20th anniversary celebration; a great enthusiastic crowd set the stage for the most successful AWA Earth Day event yet.

PHOTO: K. MIHALCHEON



Jonathan Heinz accepts one of his many awards from AWA's Christyann Olson at the 2011 Climb for Wilderness.

PHOTO: D. OLSON



Ally Tailfeathers and friend (Little Smoky the Bear) provide entertainment and education for climb participants.

PHOTO: D. OLSON



Business analyst Ken Myers travelled from Philadelphia to climb the tower 19 times. Why 19? “Because I didn’t have time to do 20,” said the athlete, who climbs buildings competitively and is training for an ultra-marathon in Germany in a year.

Along with the tower climb, many people also took part in the Run for Wilderness, a one-kilometre race through the city core to warm up for the Saturday stairwell challenge. Twenty-two people also took part in an inaugural time trial race up the tower stairwell (160 metres or 525 feet) on the Friday morning.

Most of the 22 people did the climb again at least once on the second day, while some – like Calgaryian Robin Rootes – used the time trial to gather pledges because she was unable to take part in the Saturday event. It was her third year participating.

“I do it to raise money and awareness for this important cause, and for the animals,” said Rootes, who had to stop every 100 steps to use her asthma inhaler. To bring home her point, the securities cage stockbroker, 35, wore a t-shirt promoting another cause dear to her heart – the Animal Rescue Foundation.

While the climb participants were a tremendous source of inspiration, so too were the volunteers – an incredible corps of 114 big-hearted souls who did everything from set up displays and direct climbers to registering participants and staffing information booths.

With a festival-like flair, entertainment throughout the day featured local performers and included everything from martial arts demonstrations to belly dancers to clowns, mascots and face-painters. More than 30 groups took part in the Wild Alberta Expo fair, with the Ranchlands Elementary School Tree Huggers winning the coveted Barbara Sherrington Memorial prize for the best



And they're off! The 2011 Run for Wilderness begins.
PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ

Robin Rootes waits at the bottom of the stairwell to take her place in the Time Trial event.
PHOTO: D. OLSON



Calgary Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra presents an award to the QuIC Mountain Goats team for the most climbs by a team (70 climbs!).
PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ

overall exhibit.

For the second year in a row, Jonathan Heinz took home the prize as the fastest racer and climber with a time of seven minutes and 50 seconds. He also won the one-kilometre foot race, but was modest about his accomplishments – speaking afterward only about the importance of the event in creating awareness about wilderness.

The fastest female racer was Jane Ebborn, who finished in nine minutes and 25 seconds.

OTHER AWARD WINNERS INCLUDED:

- Andrew Gillis (most climbs by male age 15-18)
- Gillian Taylor (most climbs by female age 15-18)
- Jared Gillis (most climbs by male youth 14 and under)
- Mahni Bruce (most climbs by female youth 14 and under)
- Val Scholefield (most climbs by senior female, age 75 and older - seven)
- Bob McPherson (most climbs by senior male, age 75 and older - three)

The AWA is grateful to its many sponsors, volunteers and the hundreds of supporters who made this event such a success. Please see our website for a complete list of winners and updates on funds raised. www.climbforwilderness.ca/results.asp



Volunteer cheerleaders greet the climbers as they reach the top of the Tower.

PHOTO: D. OLSON

Yes we can can! Participants in the inaugural Time Trial event. The event was won by – you guessed it – Jonathan Heinz, who sprinted to the top of the Tower in a remarkable 4 minutes, 27 seconds.

PHOTO: C. OLSON



AWA's Paul Sutherland talks to his early-morning group of volunteers prior to the Run for Wilderness.

PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ



Ranchlands Elementary School charmed participants in the Wild Alberta Expo, and were the winners of the Barbara Sherrington Memorial prize for the best overall exhibit.

PHOTO: K. MIHALCHEON

A Magazine Award Finalist!



AWA is very pleased that Michelle Morris, who wrote "Climate Change and Water in Alberta: Are we Dammed?" for the December 2010 issue of the Advocate, is a finalist in the Student Writing category sponsored by the Western Magazine Awards Foundation.

The winner will be announced at the 2011 Western Magazine Awards gala to be held on Friday, June 17, 2011 at the Renaissance Vancouver Hotel Harbourside.

This September Michelle will be starting a PhD in the Department of Resources and Environment at the University of Waterloo.

Albertans Oppose Logging in the Castle, Support Protection

People in southern Alberta are strongly opposed to proposed logging in the Castle region and are equally in favour of legislated protection. Two new opinion polls have underlined exactly what previous polls have made clear.

In April 2011, the Praxis Group of Calgary published the findings of an opinion poll survey of residents living close to the Castle (in the Livingstone Macleod riding of MLA Evan Berger). Of the 774 residents surveyed 74 percent agreed that the province should legally establish a 1,023 km² Wildland Park to better protect the Castle Special Place. Seventy-seven percent opposed plans by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Spray Lake Sawmills to clear-cut log the area between Beaver Mines Lake, Castle Falls and Lynx Creek, starting in June 2011.

An earlier survey of Lethbridge and Coaldale residents, carried out by the Citizen Society Research Lab at Lethbridge College, found even stronger support for better protection in the Castle. More than 85 percent of those surveyed oppose the clear-cut logging in the area, while 87 percent of residents surveyed support establishment of a Wildland Park in the area.

These findings are entirely consistent with the results of the Alberta government's own surveys of the opinions of Albertans. The 2007 *Land-Use Framework Workbook Summary* report found that 68 percent of Albertans would be "willing to accept limits to forestry activity to allow for more protected areas." And 74.3 percent of Albertans believed that "at present the balance between developing and using our land versus conservation... is too focused on economic development and growth."

Ironically, in between these surveys, the Alberta government published its interpretation of the draft recommendations from the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for the South Saskatchewan Region. The multi-stakeholder RAC, which

included a representative from Spray Lake Sawmills, recommended that the government should "effectively manage the Castle without necessarily designating it as a provincial park." Is it too much to ask that the government's final Regional Plan will respect the clearly-expressed wishes of Albertans?

- Nigel Douglas

Spill on Rainbow Pipeline Reveals Gaps in Management and Monitoring

Increasing national and international focus on environmental impacts of current pipeline proposals has created mounting public concern regarding pipeline integrity and the responses to spills from operators and regulators. The increasing occurrence of pipeline failures, or increasing public awareness of such failures, makes it difficult to believe some corporate claims that pipelines are safe. The recent failure of the 45-year old Plains All American Rainbow pipeline in northwestern Alberta, which discharged 4.5 million litres (28,000 barrels) of crude oil into boreal wetlands and forest, is only one such example.

The 220,000 barrel-a-day Rainbow line, owned by a Canadian subsidiary of Houston-based Plains All American Pipeline L.P., began to leak on April 28. The result? The largest spill the province has seen since 1975. According to company statements, improper 2010 repair procedures created stress on the pipeline. The pipeline operator detected "an unstable condition" on April 28 at 7 p.m., but it took nearly eight hours to determine that a "release" had occurred. The pipeline was closed soon after, but the shutoff valves nearest the rupture were reportedly 137 kilometres apart on the 770-kilometre pipeline.

The ruptured Rainbow pipeline discharged millions of litres of oil into surrounding wetlands. Despite the Energy Resource Conservation Board's (ERCB) description of this area in a news release as "nearby [sic] stands of stagnant water", boreal peat wetlands make up at least 40 percent of northern Alberta's landscape, are rich in species diversity, and provide critical links between surface



Crews work to clean up the Rainbow Pipeline oil spill, the worst Alberta oil spill in 35 years.

PHOTO: © ROGU COLLECTI/GREENPEACE

water and groundwater. The ERCB is an independent agency of the Government of Alberta responsible for the regulation of Alberta's energy resources. Statements such as this made by representatives from a government agency only serve to reinforce the erroneous view that natural wetlands are of no ecological consequence.

Both the pipeline spill circumstances and the regulatory response suggest that risks to Alberta wilderness areas as well as potentially to the health of nearby communities are managed poorly. It is crucial that lessons are learned from mistakes made in managing this incident. In particular, Plains Midstream Canada has proposed to construct a new 301-kilometre pipeline beside its existing pipeline, to carry diluent (a petroleum product used to dilute heavy crude oil and bitumen so it will flow in pipelines) from Edmonton to oilsands producers in



The Divide
36" x 48" acrylic on canvas
© LUCIE BAUSE

the Peace River-Utikuma Lake area. The company hopes to begin construction of the Rainbow II Pipeline by the third quarter of 2011. But, before proceeding with this project, it is imperative that existing monitoring and safety issues are acknowledged and addressed.

In July 2010, an Enbridge pipeline leak in Michigan spilled over 4 million litres of oil into the Kalamazoo River. In response to this event, Albertans were reassured by ERCB spokesperson Bob Curran: "It's unlikely that there would be many segments in Alberta that are decades old, unless they're on the types of lines where they're not really prone to corrosion or leaks." "Or," he offered, "they're carrying substances that wouldn't cause a lot of problems if there was a leak."

Recent events suggest these words offer nothing more than a false sense of security. Forty percent of Alberta's pipeline system was built before 1990;

the Rainbow line was built in 1966. The ERCB estimates that for every 1,000 kilometres of pipeline, about two failures happen each year. Considering the province is criss-crossed by over 400,000 kilometres of pipeline, this estimate predicts approximately 800 failures a year.

In response to this incident, AWA has called for an immediate and transparent investigation into the safety and health risks raised by this incident by both Alberta Environment and the ERCB. This information must be used to significantly reduce pipeline spill risks. The current management and monitoring standards of the ERCB are clearly unable to prevent large-scale damage and, once again, the health and integrity of valuable ecosystems foot the bill of seemingly 'cheap' energy.

- Madeline Wilson

Brewster Transportation...Meet Monty Python

In February's WLA we directed a few critical words at Brewster Transportation's proposal to blast and build a Glacier Discovery Walk near the Columbia Icefield Centre. The project represents a threat to ecological integrity and the public character of Jasper National Park. We don't want it.

I don't know what John Cleese, of Monty Python and Fawlty Towers fame, would think about this Glacier Discovery Walk madness. The Jasper residents who organized a "Silly Walk" in Jasper on May 10, International Monty Python Day, may not know either. But, what they do know is that Cleese's famous "Silly Walk" sketch is an apt metaphor for what they think of Brewster's proposal. It's just plain silly.

In a bit of satirical street theatre, opponents of Brewster shared their silliest walks with onlookers on Patricia



Evening Sisters
24" x 40" acrylic on canvas
© LUCIE BAUSE



Jasper's Silly Walk.
PHOTO: JILL SEATON

Street as they made their way to the Jasper Information Centre. There they met B. Rooster...and presented this huge chicken with the Silliest Walk of the Century Award (see the accompanying photo).

If you think you share the concern AWA and environmentally-conscious Jasper residents have with Brewster's proposal please check out the No Glacier Discovery Walk website at <http://noglacierdiscoverywalk.ca>

- Meatball

Sprague's Pipit

You can't protect an animal without protecting its habitat. Any Grade 3 student would be able to tell you this. But, this fairly obvious statement does not seem to have been taken on board by those federal departments nominally charged with recovering endangered species. Though recovery strategies for different species at risk are required to

identify, and protect, *critical habitat* for those species, federal agencies have shown a notable reluctance to identify such habitat, even when the information is well known.

Another example of this unfortunate state of affairs was provided recently by a draft of a new revised recovery strategy for the Sprague's pipit. The Sprague's pipit is a rare and declining prairie songbird which in Alberta is now restricted to the southeast corner of the province. It nests mostly in native grasslands, avoiding cultivated grasslands, and nesting at much lower densities in grasslands where native grasses have been replaced by introduced species.

The first version of the Sprague's pipit recovery strategy came out in March 2008. AWA commented then that there was no reason why critical habitat should not be identified quickly. "We believe that the fieldwork required to identify

much of the critical habitat could be carried out this breeding season (April to July, 2008) and that critical habitat could be identified in all large parcels of native grassland on federal crown land across most of the Canadian breeding range of Sprague's pipit, by spring 2009 at the latest."

Three years on, a revised report, the *Amendment to the final Recovery Strategy for the Sprague's Pipit (Anthus spragueii) in Canada* identifies critical habitat only on federal land in the Suffield National Wildlife Area: provincial lands are ignored.

In a May 6 letter to Environment Canada, the Suffield Coalition, (comprising Alberta Wilderness Association, Grasslands Naturalists, Nature Alberta, Nature Saskatchewan, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment, WWF Canada and Nature Canada) wrote: "the Coalition is gravely concerned by the ongoing delays in identifying critical habitat for Sprague's pipit and by the failure, despite available information, to identify critical habitat elsewhere in Alberta and in both federal and non-federal lands." Whether the province of Alberta is refusing to release scientific information to federal scientists, or the federal agencies have never taken the time to ask is not clear, but there is certainly a failure of communication taking place.

The Sprague's pipit recovery strategy is by no means the first to fail to identify critical habitat, despite having ample scientific evidence to do so. In 2009, a federal court judge ruled that the federal Minister of the Environment, Jim Prentice, broke the law by refusing to identify critical habitat in a recovery plan for the endangered greater sage-grouse. The judge agreed with the environmental groups that it was "unreasonable" for the government to claim it couldn't identify breeding grounds when knowledge of their locations was "notorious."

Although the federal *Species at Risk Act* provides the tools to allow the federal government to adopt real measures to recover endangered species, this painful reluctance to use them, and the apparent necessity to drag them through the courts before any progress can be made, does nothing to serve the interests of endangered wildlife.

- Nigel Douglas

Kananaskis Country Receives Temporary Reprieve from Sour Gas Development

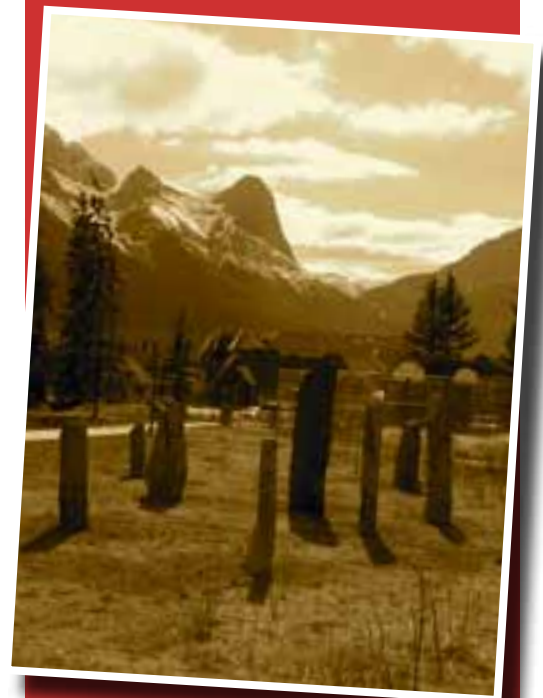
Though Suncor Energy received Energy Resource Conservation Board (ERCB) approval in 2010 to go ahead with its planned Sullivan development in southern Kananaskis Country, the company appears not to have any plans to begin construction any time soon.

ERCB's June 2010 *Decision 2010-022* approved the plans to drill 11 sour gas wells and build 37 km of pipeline across a swathe of relatively pristine Kananaskis land. This came despite considerable objections from local First Nations and ranchers and in fact the decision is currently facing a legal challenge from the Stoney Indian Band based on the question "Did the Board err in law by failing to characterize the Eden Valley Reserve as an urban centre?" Setback requirements are considerably less stringent for communities not defined as urban centres.

AWA's opposition cited the potential effects of the development on wildlife, including grizzlies and cutthroat trout. Although ERCB agreed that "Given Petro-Canada's analysis that indicated effects on mortality will be large in magnitude, long term, and regional in extent, it appears that there is potential for the Project to contribute significantly to grizzly bear mortality," they still issued an approval.

In theory, the company could still go ahead with the work, despite the ongoing legal challenge. But Suncor seem less keen on the development than their predecessor Petro-Canada, who filed the original application. Gas prices are also not as high as they were when the project was originally planned several years ago. But only time will tell how long this temporary reprieve for southern Kananaskis Country will last.

- Nigel Douglas



Environmental Sculpture to be Unveiled In Canmore

The Town of Canmore commissioned Lucie Bause to create an environmental sculpture, which she has entitled Portal XII, as part of the Town's Public Art program. Lucie's winning sculpture is made with 15 tons of Rundle Rock boulders arranged in an interactive spiral. The design, as Lucie puts it, is simple, universal, timeless. It is an example of the "place marking" tradition. Her design integrates three of these traditions: Standing Stones, Arctic Inukshuks, and Japanese Zen Garden.

The sculpture will be unveiled on Friday June 17 at the west entrance of the Trans Canada Highway pedestrian underpass in Canmore.



The Sprague's pipit is a native grassland specialist. While discreet in appearance, it has a loud and enthusiastic trilling song.

PHOTO: C. WERSHLER

DEPARTMENTS

RECALL OF THE WILD

Bears, Bergs and Bonding: Verna Siga's Life in Jasper

By Ian Urquhart

Sometimes within seconds of meeting people you know how special they are and that the time you spend with them will be memorable. Verna Siga is one such person. Verna, now 92 years old, is the person today who has lived in the mountain town of Jasper the longest. With eyes as lively and blue as the waters of Lac Beauvert, Verna is a wonderful window on what life was like in Jasper three generations ago.

In 1922 Hal Bowen, Verna's father, left the family home in east-central Alberta very near the Saskatchewan border to join the company of workers hired to build and expand Jasper Park Lodge, Canadian National Railways' bid to compete with Canadian Pacific Railways' Banff Springs Hotel for railway tourism dollars. The family joined him in 1924 just after Verna had turned five years old. When she got off the train her eyes strained to see what I hope any five year old would want to see – bears. "The first thing I wanted to see was the bears," she chuckled, "but there weren't any bears at the station that day." If Verna wasn't impressed by the fact no bears greeted her at the train station she was certainly struck by one difference between Jasper and the central parkland she had called home until then – she now was in a land of Christmas trees.

As we talked in Verna's apartment it struck me that some of the excitement of her youth was tied tightly to failures of the region's resource development ventures to deliver the good livelihoods people gambled for. Pocahontas is a case in point. Carved out of the wilderness near the eastern boundary of what was then Jasper Forest Park in 1908, Pocahontas became a booming coalmining town of nearly 2,000 people during the First World War. When the war ended the demand and prices for the coal mined there fell sharply. The mine closed in 1921.

By the time Verna and her family moved to Jasper "Poco" was a ghost



Verna Siga, 92 years young, is joined here by a photo of Mount Robson – the site for many adventures in her youth.

PHOTO: I. URQUHART

town. But the old railway grade became a local road and the drive to Pocahontas was a popular family day trip in part because it afforded the chance to visit Punchbowl Falls. But, the ghost town and the abandoned mine had a real appeal to the children too. Verna recalls how the company houses simply had been abandoned; time cards, hard hats, stands for washbasins were all left behind. The opening to the coal mine also was still accessible and added an element of risk to the visit – at least as far as Verna's father was concerned. "Don't go near there" she said authoritatively, doing a good job of affecting both her father's deep voice and his warning to his children.

Verna's early years in Jasper were ones when transportation routes and connections between settlements were both very different from today and were changing dramatically. Few visitors to Miette Hot Springs today, for example,

may realize what Verna told me about how popular the hot springs were to the miners in Mountain Park – just southeast of Jasper Park – who came to the springs over Whitehorse (Fiddle) Pass. Verna describes the hot springs pool that the miners crafted out of logs. It sat further up Sulphur Creek, closer to the source of the hot springs, than where the pool is located today.

Arguably Verna grew up while a transportation revolution shook Alberta's mountain National Parks – the building of the Icefields Parkway. This highway, a Great Depression public works project completed in 1940, also plays a part in some of Verna's memories of growing up in Jasper. Verna's father, who became the Imperial Oil agent in Jasper, supplied fuel for the highway construction crews and their equipment. One day Johnny, her older brother, took Verna and their sister Edna with him south in the Bowens' fuel



Verna climbing Mount Rearguard.
PHOTO: V. ARSENAULT

delivery truck. Their destination was a highway construction camp south of the Athabasca Glacier. When Verna recounts that trip today her voice still is full of the excitement she felt in the 1930s when she saw the icefields for the first time. “It was a thrill to see it (the icefield) you know. I thought it looked like a cupcake with icing on the top.”

If that was how she saw the icefields her story makes it very clear that “cupcake” was not a word to use to describe other parts of the trip. The tote (supply) road they had to take once they were off the highway got steeper, skinnier and more treacherous the further south they went; eventually Edna had had enough: “Edna wanted to get out of that

truck when she could see straight down about a thousand feet I guess. And so he stopped and let her out.” Verna, however, stayed in the truck with her brother... “I said... so if Johnny goes over then I’m going too!”

That adventurous spirit may have found its best outlet some years later when Verna started to work during the summers at the Berg Lake Chalet in Mount Robson Provincial Park. The Hargreaves brothers (Roy, Frank, Jack, George and Dick) all homesteaded at Mount Robson and started a guiding and outfitting business from Robson Ranch. Roy took out a five-acre lease on Berg Lake and built the Berg Lake Chalet there in 1927.

In the early 1940s, Sophie Hargreaves, Roy’s wife, had offered a job to one of Verna’s sisters to work at the chalet, but she couldn’t accept it. Verna delivered the news. Mrs. Hargreaves asked Verna if she would like to try it: “Dear, would you come out for a few days and see how you like it? Well,” Verna laughs, “I went out and stayed for about four months, most of it up at Berg Lake.”

Verna loved it out there as you can infer clearly from the look on her face in the accompanying photo of one of her climbs up Mount Rearguard. There she formed a lifelong friendship with Ishbel Hargreaves who eventually came to manage Mount Robson Ranch with her husband Murray Cochrane.

At the chalet Verna was really a “Jacqueline of all trades.” She helped cook for the hunters, climbers and other adventurers the Hargreaves catered to. She tended to the horses that were vital to the outfitting operation.

And, she helped deliver ice to the chalet’s ice house. The source of the ice? The ice that calved from Berg Glacier into the lake. A rowboat would go out onto the lake and tow the ice back to the chalet where it provided the refrigeration.

One of the real pleasures of my early afternoon visit with Verna and her daughter Vonna was watching the two of them pour over and reminisce about dozens of photos from various limbs of Verna’s family tree. One thing that experience taught me about was the bonding possibilities nature offers. Here I don’t mean when you or I feel closer to, or more a part of, the natural world. I mean instead family bonding. Nature and activities in the outdoors may be a catalyst for bringing families closer together. In Verna’s life Jasper’s natural amenities, whether in the guise of a trip to a hot springs, or a ski race through the townsite, or a skate on a frozen pond or lake, strengthened many branches of her family tree.

Verna told me how, as a kid, she couldn’t wait for the ponds to freeze so she could go skating. This passion was one she then tried to instill in her children. It worked. Vonna says that she is still one of the first ones out on the ice in early winter. Both women celebrated how special it is to be out on a lake such as Lake Edith when the ice surface is like glass and trout tease you from the water below. I wish you could have

heard the excitement in Verna's voice when she offered to pull out another album of photos recording her family on the ice. When Verna was too old to skate this didn't stop her children and grandchildren from taking her out on the frozen playground she loved dearly. A toboggan replaced her skates and the younger generations pulled her around on the ice.

By the final minutes of our interview I thought I had learned enough about Verna's love for the Jasper area not to be surprised when I heard she was nearly 70 when she had taken her last 20 kilometre ski trip into the Tonquin Valley. Nor was I surprised to hear that this excursion was a family event. Nature, love, family – I think they are inseparable in Verna's world.

I think, if there's a thread running through all the interviews we conduct for "Recall of the Wild," it's a thread with continuity at one end and change at the other. Most times, the changes are easy to recognize. Today bears, for example, are not the perennial squatters and beggars in the Jasper townsite, in Jasper gardens and on the verandas of Jasper Park Lodge bungalows that they were decades ago. Probably few people today feed deer at the backdoor like Verna and many of her contemporaries did. She showed me a photo of a magnificent mule deer buck at her backdoor – no more than an arm's length away from the camera – and anticipated my question when she offered: "I think he would have come in the house but I got a little nervous then." The multi-day or day trips of years ago Verna described to me may just take us minutes or at most a few hours now.

But certain continuities often animate these recollections as well. And, if sometimes we express concern about changes over time we should think about whether we should be concerned as well about some of these continuities.

Verna's memories, for example, speak volumes to the desire in days gone by to make nature conform to our expectations. She gave big and small examples of that desire. The smaller expressions of the desire to shape where we live and play according to our norms may strike some as trivial in the greater scheme of things. We should smile good-naturedly at some examples. For instance, Verna was talking about just how rocky the townsite of Jasper was. By rocky she



Verna and her brother Chess on Jasper's main street.

PHOTO: V. ARSENAULT

didn't mean pebbly or gravelly. She meant "boulderly!" Her parents' yard on Connaught Drive exemplified this. Her father had what appeared to be a good solution to the boulder's clash with societal norms of what a backyard should look like. "We had a great big stone... in our backyard with a sledgehammer beside it," Verna said. "When the boys started fighting Daddy would say, 'take your muscles and go out and hit that stone'." The boulder eventually disappeared.

Other examples are neither small scale nor light-hearted. Verna told me that much of the soil for the Jasper Park Lodge golf course came to Jasper, not courtesy of local geological forces, but courtesy of Canadian National Railways (C. J. Taylor states that the CNR brought in 40 freight car-loads of topsoil). Those

nasty local rock outcroppings, one that the Bowen boys were urged to hit with a sledge, were blasted away to aid Stanley Thompson's efforts to make a fabulous golf course that well-heeled railway tourists would come to play.

This attitude, to make Jasper a playground that will appeal to certain types of visitors is just as much a part of Jasper today as it was generations ago. The current debate over Brewster's Glacier Discovery Walk affirms this continuity (on the Brewster plan see page 24 and 25 in this *Advocate* and pp. 25 and 26 of the February 2011 *WLA*). I think I know what Verna must think of this absurd proposal – just that, it's absurd. I also know that, for me, Brewster's madness is an affront to the values pioneers like Verna stand for. Let's hope her values triumph in the end. 🍂

Birds of Canada

Tyler L. Hoar, Ken De Smet, R. Wayne Campbell and Gregory Kennedy

(Edmonton: Lone Pine Publishing, 2010)

Reviewed by Ian Urquhart

Alberta's Lone Pine Publishing sets a standard few other Canadian publishers can match when it comes to publishing widely and well about nature. To this novice birder, *Birds of Canada*, written by Tyler Hoar, Ken De Smet, Wayne Campbell and Gregory Kennedy, appears to be a worthy addition to the more than twenty Canadian bird titles already listed in the Lone Pine catalogue.

The book's introduction may be inspired by Canadian geography – it covers a wide swath of territory. The reader gets brief accounts of Canadian ecoregions, conservation and protected spaces, and suggested spots to go birding in the provinces and territories. Birding techniques and birding activities are also discussed here as are what the reader will find in the species accounts that follow the introduction.

The authors organize their information about the 451 species of birds they discuss according to where the species are located in the standard sequence of bird orders developed by ornithologists. Orders of birds are arranged according to the extent they differ from the oldest ancestors of our feathered friends of today. Waterfowl (order *Anseriformes*), those species most like the ancients, lead the procession while members of the order *Passeriformes* (such as chickadees, wood-warblers, and finchlike birds), the order thought to have evolved the furthest from the original form, bring it to a close.

Approximately the first two-thirds of this 528-page volume are devoted to nonpasserine birds. The nonpasserines constitute 17 of the 18 orders of Canadian birds; they represent 60 percent of all the species found here. The bulk of the remainder of the book is devoted to the passerines, those species most readers are likely to call songbirds.

Colour is used very well in *Birds of Canada* to make it easier and quicker to locate information about different species of birds. The 17-page reference guide at the beginning of the book uses brightly coloured sidebars to help the reader to identify first, a particular grouping of

birds and second, where to go in the volume to get detailed information on the members of that grouping. Its 17 pages also offer illustrations of all of the Canadian bird species discussed in detail later.

Is that a red-tailed hawk or a ferruginous hawk you see when walking along the North Saskatchewan River east of Edmonton? Use the coloured sidebars to jump to the birds of prey section in the reference guide and compare the illustrations there. If you're still unsure the reference guide will direct you to the pages with more details about the two species. One of those details that might be very valuable in this particular case would be the species range maps provided. The range maps for these species will suggest strongly that, since you are not in southeastern Alberta, you are probably looking at a red-tailed hawk.

These coloured sidebars become handy coloured tabs in the remainder of the text and, once you know what colour associate with what group, navigating to particular "chapters" of the book is very quick and easy indeed.

Several features of the descriptions of individual species stood out for me. First, I appreciated the authors' decision to include both an illustration and a photograph of each species they discuss. As useful as I find illustrations I don't think there is any substitute for a good, clear photograph when I am trying to identify a bird. I also thought the identification information, habitat requirements, feeding habits, and the information about how to distinguish between similar species found in each individual description should make birding a more enjoyable and rewarding activity.

As impressive as I found the book to be I think it has two important weaknesses. One critique of the book comes from a conservation perspective. Lone Pine's website trumpets that *Birds of Canada* includes "(c)onservation activities underway in all provinces." This claim is exaggerated; the book devotes one-half of one page to discussing conservation and protected spaces.

At least as importantly, there is a serious disconnect between what little the book says about the general



state of Canada's bird populations in the introduction and what is reported in individual descriptions of bird species in the remainder. For example, the description of the olive-sided flycatcher notes that the population is now threatened because the population has declined by 29 percent in the last decade; the description of the Western wood-pewee notes that riparian habitat destruction has been linked to significant declines in the species' population; Sprague's pipit is threatened because of the taming of native prairie grasslands. These are just a few examples of species whose future is threatened by what we are doing to their habitats. Maybe it's time, or long past the time, when guides to Canadian bird populations such as this one should add another list – a list of threatened and endangered species – to their collection.

I wish the book had seized the opportunity to highlight and underline the plight faced by a growing number of species of birds in Canada. I wish it had offered a strong statement on behalf of conservation.

I also wish it wasn't so darn heavy! Something that would encourage me to use this book as a "prior to or after the expedition" resource is its weight. The hardcover edition I read is simply too heavy for this middle-aged soul to toss into his daypack.

Birds of Canada, these objections notwithstanding, is a comprehensive, beautifully-illustrated addition to the Lone Pine nature catalogue. I look forward to putting my copy on the coffee table right beside my binoculars at the family cabin at the lake. 🍌

EVENTS

2011 HIKES PROGRAM:

TUESDAY JULY 12, 2011

Dry Island

Explore the wonders of Alberta's Red Deer River valley. Climb to the top of the "dry island," an untouched remnant of natural fescue grassland.

SATURDAY JULY 16, 2011

Ya-Ha-Tinda

Hike leader Will Davies will guide you through the truly unique environment of the Stoney's "Mountain Prairie," located on the upper Red Deer River west of Sundre, Alberta.

SATURDAY JULY 23, 2011

Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve

Join hike leader Cliff Wallis in an exploration of one of the world's last large remnants of the aspen parkland.

SATURDAY JULY 30, 2011

Sage Creek

Hiking in the grasslands? Why not? Alberta's natural grasslands are one of the most threatened ecosystems in the province. Come and enjoy the many hidden wonders of this region, located south of Medicine Hat.

MONDAY AUGUST 15, 2011

Ghost Waiparous Bus Trip

A guided bus tour of the forests of the Ghost Waiparous. See www.AlbertaWilderness.ca for details and pricing.

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2011

Beehive Natural Area - SOLD OUT

This protected area of subalpine and alpine wilderness is located on the upper Oldman River. Explore fall beauty in the world of Rocky Mountain bighorns, pikas, marmots, and golden eagles.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

Fall in the Whaleback

Softened by fall colours, this montane environment will impress you with its one-of-a-kind attributes. Fees for all hikes are: \$20 AWA members; \$25 non-members.

BACKPACK TRIPS:

JULY 19 TO 21, 2011

Castle Backpack

Join leader Reg Ernst and spend two days and nights exploring Southern Alberta's Castle River region. You must supply your own camping gear and food. Cost: Members \$100; Non-members \$125.

AUGUST 4 TO 7, 2011 - SOLD OUT

White Goat Wilderness Backpack

Experience the unmatched wonders of this true Alberta wilderness area, located adjacent to Banff and Jasper National Parks. Four days and three nights. You must supply your own camping gear and food. Cost: Members \$100; Non-members \$125.

Once again, AWA is offering a summer program of hikes and backpack trips. Please watch for more events to be published on our website www.AlbertaWilderness.ca. Pre-registration is required for all events. For more information, or to register: 1-866-313-0713 or AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

PHOTO: N. DOUGLAS



OFFICIALLY "THREATENED", NOW WHAT?
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 6398 STATION D CALGARY ALBERTA T2P 2E1
WWW.AWA.CA
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
1-800-392-6128

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:



Alberta Wilderness Association

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



Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40065626 ISSN 485535