

# A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE



THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

DECEMBER 2011



YOUTH AND NATURE

MEET THE GREAT GROWLING GRIZZLIES

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN JASPER

WILDERNESS ENTREPRENEURS

NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER

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Nigel Douglas took this photo of Upper Kananaskis Lakes during the early morning while on a snowshoe/camping trip. He recalls it was a magical cold winter morning with the air full of sparkling ice crystals.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

## FEATURED ARTIST

Diana Templeton was born and raised in Calgary and now lives in Edmonton. After an exciting career in fashion she turned to art to further develop her creative skills. The catalyst for this change came from a seminar about working with cancer patients where the paintings of patients were featured. Their ability to express powerfully their emotions prompted Diana to enroll in classes on drawing, design, and watercolour.

She loves the watercolour medium; she finds it to be a medium that encourages spontaneity and allows her to express her real feelings. Colour motivates everything in Diana's life and inspires her to pick up her brushes, mix her paint with water, and allow them to do what they do best.

The colours in nature and its beauty speak volumes to Diana. Working with colour is a spiritual experience for her. When painting she trusts her inner voice to choreograph the nature's ballet of colour with passion and authenticity.

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# FEELING A BIT LIKE SCROOGE?

With Christmas just a handful of sleeps away I sincerely hope you're not looking in the mirror and seeing Ebenezer Scrooge stare back at you. But, if you are, or know someone who you think may be so afflicted, let the December *Wild Lands Advocate* be your medicinal tonic.

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is as full of moral lessons as the airwaves are full of Christmas music. The most important lessons centre on Scrooge, the character immortalized in the Dickens novel. Over the course of one evening Scrooge is transformed. On Christmas Eve, Scrooge retires for the evening as a mean, miserly man who does not possess any trait of those we call humane. The visits of three Christmas spirits later, Scrooge awakes reborn; kindness and compassion replace meanness; generosity and thoughtfulness supplant greed and miserliness.

Dickens' tale is inspirational. It is a guide for much more than just the Christmas season. We all could do a lot worse in the years ahead of us than to try to practice the values of a Bob Cratchit, or those of Scrooge's nephew, the values Ebenezer himself embraces on Christmas morning.

So what, in heaven's name, does *A Christmas Carol* have to do with this issue of the *Advocate*? Like Dickens' classic, the features in this issue intend to inspire you. They intend to encourage optimism about our future. They aim to demonstrate that the Scrooge in our lives (here I confess to seeing governments, not our readers, as exhibiting a likeness to Ebenezer) can be transformed.

The agents of transformation in this issue of *WLA* are not magical spirits. They are youth. Our young people, instilled with an ethic of caring for the voiceless – flora, fauna, and their habitats, are the key to a brighter ecological future.

Try to tell me that your encounter in our first article with the "Great Growling Grizzlies," grade one and two students from Bragg Creek's Banded Peak Elementary School, doesn't boost your optimism.

Try to tell me that Niki Wilson's story about the experiential education students receive at the Palisades Centre in Jasper National Park doesn't leave you believing that vital, positive connections between youth and nature are being forged there.

Try to tell me that you're not impressed by what Cathie Gould's grade six students

from Calgary's Ranchlands Elementary School accomplished. They carried out a tremendous fundraising effort last year on behalf of Alberta's grizzlies and forests.

I bet you can't.

Even Sean Nichols' account of Gus Yaki's talk about how children are too often disconnected from nature offers a plausible, positive path to counter that disturbing development.

As we prepare, sometimes in too much of a frenzy, for the holidays I hope you will take the short time needed to read and reflect on what we offer you in the last issue of our 2011 publishing year. I hope you will challenge yourself to open your heart and your mind to the inspiration the features here can provide us as we greet 2012. Smile and laugh with the children at the Palisades Centre; be amazed with the elementary students in Bragg Creek; heed the call to action found in the actions of Ranchlands' students.

Last, but by no means least, have a very Merry Christmas and a spectacular beginning to 2012!

- Ian Urquhart, Editor



# LESSONS IN CONSERVATION FROM THE GREAT GROWLING GRIZZLIES

BY CATHY WILSON, MADELINE WILSON, AND NIGEL DOUGLAS



year olds looking to discover more about grizzly bears? Their shining, bright eyes closely examined Nigel’s grizzly artefacts, as he shared many fascinating facts with these inquisitive grade one and two students. Their teacher asked Nigel to field some important questions, many of which the adults present never thought to ask, such as: “Why don’t grizzlies poop while they are hibernating?” “Is it true that while mother grizzlies are hibernating, they sometimes don’t notice they have given birth to twins?” This seven-year old knew that no mother could comfortably snooze through the birth of twins, no matter how deeply she was sleeping!

Little Smoky the bear, AWA’s mascot, even made a guest appearance and led the class in a rousing round of “Little Smoky Says.” Nigel and Little Smoky helped demonstrate what to do (and what not to do) if you encounter a bear while hiking. Not surprisingly, the students knew the best way to make sure people and bears stay safe is to avoid running into bears at all by making lots of noise.

It was amazing to see the depth of their understanding of natural environments. These lucky students live close to nature in the Bragg Creek area and their families likely spend lots of time outdoors. Their teacher did a superb job of fostering environmental learning in a supportive, reflective environment. Yes, these kids were wise beyond their years. They understood the importance of keeping grizzly bears on the landscape and how the actions of adults compromise the important habitat grizzlies need to survive. These Great Growling Grizzlies will likely grow up to be responsible and wise citizens who understand the intrinsic value of wilderness and learn to tread lightly upon the landscape.

## Environmental Education: the Root of Conservation Values

It seems there is a no better way to learn or re-learn some lessons about life than to spend time with children. The Banded Peak students were no exception. We expected to start with some grizzly basics: what bears eat, where they live, and the things they need to survive. Well by the time the students finished telling *us* all about grizzlies, we were about fifteen minutes into our hour-



Our days at AWA can range from attending meetings and workshops, to plugging away in front of a computer screen, to assembling, disassembling and grooming KC, the enormous grizzly bear model who welcomes visitors to the AWA office. In early October, an elementary school teacher approached AWA and invited us to visit her class at Bragg Creek’s Banded Peak Elementary School and offer her students a presentation about grizzly bears. When we learned of the interest with which these grade one and two students had embraced the topic – the students were so enthusiastic they named themselves the “Great Growling Grizzlies” –

AWA knew we had better pay these students a visit. Now we may claim to know a thing or two about grizzly bears, but when confronted with the task of keeping a classroom full of children sitting and listening quietly for sixty excruciating minutes, Madeline decided to call in a real expert. Madeline’s mother, a recently retired elementary school teacher with an eerie ability to command the attention of a room with a mere waggle of “the finger,” agreed to be deputized and accompany AWA on the field trip.

## Reflections from Deputy Cathy Wilson

What could be more heartening for conservationists than 20 enthusiastic seven-



long presentation, and we were obviously going to need to do a lot more to impress these savvy grizzly-enthusiasts!

Upon leaving, we were blown away by the breadth of knowledge and experience these children had of the natural world. They were masters of more than facts and data; they seemed to understand both the problems facing Alberta's grizzly bears, the solutions, and the need to take immediate action. When we began to discuss the fact the grizzly bear has been designated as *Threatened* in Alberta, we were again impressed by how they understood the impact humans have on the environment, how we continue to contribute to grizzly bear decline in the province, and that grizzlies vitally need a safe and secure habitat where they can roam, forage for food, and raise their young. Even if the mother grizzly sleeps through the birth of a cub, her difficult job is just beginning and we should make it easier, not harder!

To really learn and appreciate the natural world, one must experience it firsthand. This was evident as we heard these children draw examples from their own experiences with wilderness and wildlife, some occurring as close as their own backyards. But the landscape in which Banded Peak Elementary School is situated does not resemble that of most schools in your average suburban community and, although the concept of "environmental education" is integrated into the Alberta curriculum, there are no actual requirements for classrooms to participate in hands-on, outdoor education programs. A variety of programs exist that seek to bridge the gap in environmental understanding and education between the highly modified and controlled environment of most classrooms and the inspiring wilderness areas of Alberta. But the impetus to incorporate experience into learning relies upon the initiatives of individual teachers. Without mandatory provisions for outdoor educational activities within elementary curriculum, the existing opportunities may be overlooked because of the long list of subjects teachers must cover. We do elementary students a disservice by continuing to undervalue these necessary opportunities for growth and learning. The roots of conservation values, and the route to future preservation of wild spaces, may begin by encouraging and allowing for the development of a personal relationship with the environments in which we live. What better place to do that than in elementary classrooms.



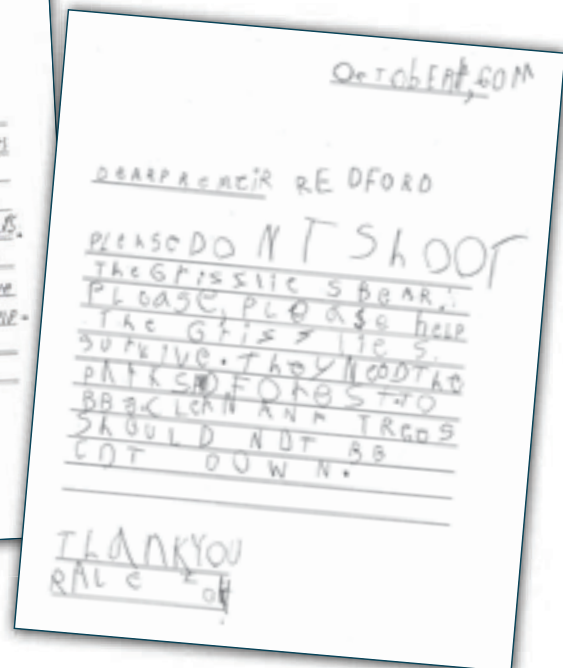
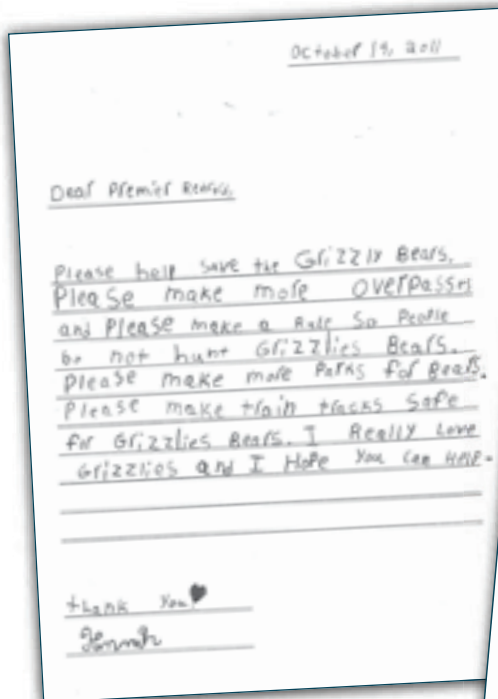
*AWA's Madeline Wilson and Nigel Douglas talk grizzlies to kids from Banded Peak School*  
PHOTO: © S. MASIUK

**A Note from Nigel**

In the end, the Great Growling Grizzlies decided to make their own grizzly bear poster and to write letters to the new Premier Alison Redford. They wanted to tell her how much they love grizzly bears and how important it is to protect bears and the places they live.

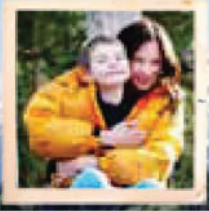
There are times when it can be frustrating working in the environmental field in Alberta, particularly when dealing with government inaction in the face of disappearing wildlife populations. But listening to kids like the

Great Growling Grizzlies filled us with a renewed sense of optimism. They chatted knowledgeably about bears and the places they live and were bursting with enthusiasm to find out what they could do to support bears. If adults (politicians) will listen to the future then that mother grizzly and her cubs may well emerge to see a brighter horizon in Alberta. The children from Banded Peak might not have a vote yet, but they can write letters and they have a voice. And... they sure can grow! 🐾



# CONNECTING YOUTH TO NATURE AT THE PALISADES CENTRE

BY NIKI WILSON



I have caught James Bartram on a rare day – the grounds and classrooms of the Palisades Centre aren't the usual frenzy of teens donning snowshoes, prepping cameras for a scavenger hunt, or meeting with Parks Canada scientists. Bartram is the Education Director at the Parks Canada Palisades Stewardship Education Centre. The Centre runs accredited, curriculum-based courses designed to engage youth from Canada and around the world in week-long interactions with the wilds of Jasper National Park. In its fifth year, the Centre is now taking bookings three years ahead of time.

Bartram takes inspiration from the "Love, Not Loss" campaign spearheaded by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In a video to promote the campaign, the IUCN says "the single most important factor behind taking action is our childhood experience. The well-spring behind our commitment comes from the emotional high we reach when in contact with nature."

The Palisades Centre facilitates these connections by immersing youth in outdoor recreation, wilderness-inspired art, and natural science projects. For example, this summer one group hiked along a trail to set up a motion-triggered camera at a bear rub tree. After testing the camera with photos of themselves, a national park scientist met with the students to show them pictures of a grizzly bear rubbing on that very tree the day before. Jeanine D'Antonio, Stewardship Program Coordinator, says that many of the students are in awe, almost shocked when they realize they've stood in the same place as a grizzly bear. "It's like watching an awakening in some of these kids. It's very rewarding."

The programs are free for Alberta kids. Says Bartram, "We are trying to advantage all kids that come through the system."

In addition to building a sense of stewardship for natural places in general, Bartram hopes the program works toward fostering an interest in national parks. "[Last

year], the average age of a visitor to a national park was 52. We're running towards a cliff. People aren't visiting national parks as families anymore."

Bartram admits that many more students need to be reached for national parks to become relevant to their generation. "We seek to be transformative, and reach a small audience in a profound way" says Bartram. "But a few thousand kids isn't enough. We need to be reaching many, many more."

Bartram says one of the biggest challenges in reaching youth is that programs like those offered at the Palisades are disappearing. "Ten years ago there were probably 20 programs like ours [across the country]. Now there are about three." Bartram points to the North Vancouver Outdoor School and the Arundel Nature Centre in Quebec. "They are the only ones that have a component of formal education, are accredited, and doing multi-day programs."

Bartram is working with leaders at those schools to come up with funding to train



others to run the programs. “We’re trying to grow capacity across mountain parks and North America.” Parks Canada has also started to run mobile programs in partnership with Outward Bound and Robert Bateman’s “Get to Know” program. Mobile courses have been offered in Mount Revelstoke/Glacier National Park, Waterton Lakes National Park, Gulf Islands National Park, and Fort Rod Hill. Bartram hopes to run a program in Toronto next year.

In the meantime, the Palisades continues to provide strong nature-based educational programs for school groups each week and attract dignitaries from around the world (Britain, China, Scandinavia) who are interested in developing similar programs. “We have a winning formula,” says Bartram. “Some of the approaches we are applying are being seen as really effective for a broad cross-section of students.”

Several years ago a group of students paddled down the Athabasca River and camped on Athabasca Island as part of their experience with the Palisades Centre. The students are now grown and attending university. But because of that first experience, they return as a group each year to repeat the paddling trip. “This is how we measure success at the Palisades” says Bartram, adding “ideally some day Parks Canada will get so good at this kind of engagement that I’ll be out of a job.”

*Niki Wilson is a multi-media science communicator and biologist living in Jasper. Visit her at [www.nikiwilson.com](http://www.nikiwilson.com).*



PHOTOS: © PARKS CANADA AND COURTESY OF THE PALISADES CENTRE











# WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHILDREN GONE? -

## THE PERSPECTIVE OF A LONG-TIME CALGARY NATURALIST AND VOLUNTEER

BY  
**SEAN NICHOLS,**  
AWA OUTREACH  
SPECIALIST



“How can it be that a ten year old child has never seen a fox, or a beaver, or a deer?” bemoans Calgary naturalist Gus Yaki.

The renowned birder, plant expert and nature lover was at AWA’s meeting room in our Hillhurst Cottage School on November 29 to give a talk: *Where Have All the Children Gone? Nature Deficit Disorder and How to Combat It*. He drew on his many experiences as a volunteer at Calgary-area parks, schools and other organizations to explore the level of engagement with nature he sees in today’s youth.

Recounting the types of questions he poses to students with whom he works, Gus noted the majority often answer that they have never seen a snake, a fox, a beaver, or a deer. Very few have ever held a frog or seen an owl.

Then Gus came to the real point of his anecdote, describing how when he asks who would like to do so, “every hand shoots up.”

The problem is not that children have no inherent interest in nature, Gus concluded, but rather that they are often denied the opportunity to exercise that interest. He proposed a couple of different reasons why that might be the case, touching on the issue of parental, and societal, apprehension concerning the dangers of unsupervised play beyond the confines of a sanctioned bubble surrounding the home. Gus referenced the results of a study revealing that “the distance British children stray from home on their own has shrunk by 90 percent since the 1970s.”

Eventually, however, he concluded that the main culprit is the super stimuli provided by technology, in the form of electronic worlds and the virtual objects they comprise. He pointed out that electronic media, from television to video games, seduce us by simulating many human activities and experiences.

First, Gus cited a study showing that the human brain is indifferent to whether

the disconnect between children and their natural surroundings. Echoing the anecdote with which he began his talk, he noted a survey conducted in Britain showing that “64 percent of children play outside less than once a week; 28 percent of them haven’t been on a country walk in the past year; and 20 percent of them have never climbed a tree.” He followed up by recounting the amusing, yet distressing, consequence that

the children surveyed wound up with some “odd ideas” about nature such as a belief that cows hibernate in winter.

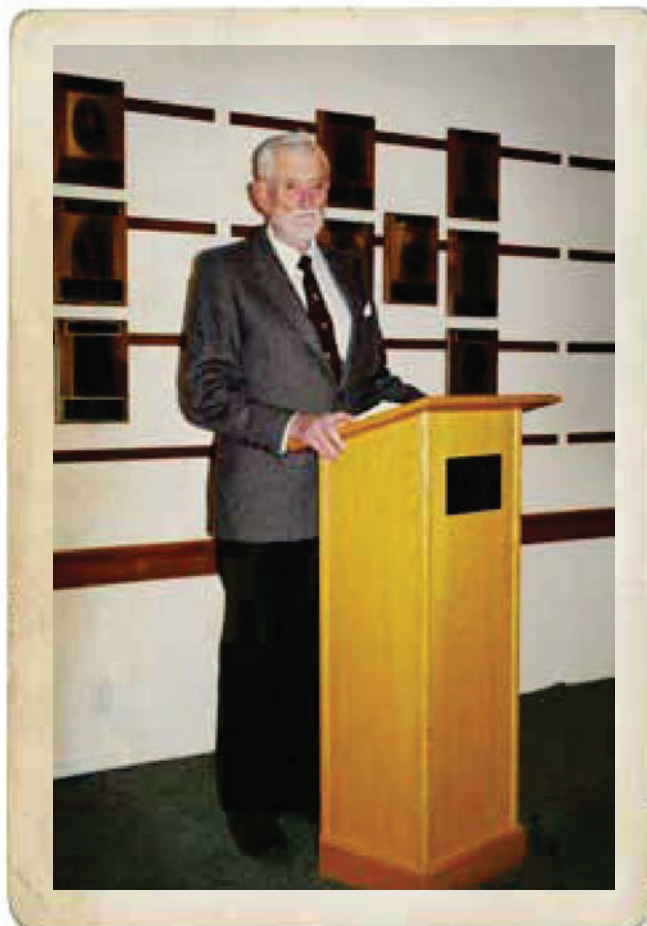
Returning to the theme of his volunteer work in Calgary, Gus reported how although Nature Calgary (formerly the Calgary Field Naturalists’ Society) once had many youthful members, this is no longer the case. They are invisible at their events.

Gus inferred that this disconnect contributed to a number of ills plaguing society. He imparted another story from Robert Bateman. Bateman described how a local elementary school that did not initially have a manufactured playground saw a marked deterioration in the students’ behaviour once funds to build one were found and the students were no longer allowed to play in the neighbouring woods. He emphasized: “This is not about the fact that kids don’t know a blue jay from a sparrow. Scientists, doctors, and mental health experts have been realizing for a while that when kids stop going out into the natural world to play, it affects both their healthy development and society as a whole.”

Gus’ talk, however, was far from a rant about the evils of technology. Throughout he was pointed in providing thoughtful consideration into how technology might also be used to solve some of the problems it has precipitated.

These solutions came in the second half of Gus’ talk. He proposed three general courses of action in the “How to Combat It” part of his presentation.

First, Gus returned to Robert Bateman, highlighting the “Get to Know” program Bateman founded. This “uses an annual calendar contest and several other school-



Gus Yaki  
PHOTO: © C. OLSON

an experience is real or not. He used this information to preface a hypothetical question asked by his friend, the artist Robert Bateman: “Will children care about endangered species or ecosystems when they can call up virtual spotted owls on the screen?”

With further reference to an impressively-researched array of studies and with additional help from Bateman, Gus drew a causal line from that super stimulation to



*Fall Interlude*  
22" x 30" watercolour  
© D. TEMPLETON

based initiatives to encourage Canadian youth to get outside and ‘get to know’ their wild neighbours.” Gus identified this program as exemplifying many similar nature-related partnerships between grassroots organizations and schools/school boards that are cropping up across North America. Other initiatives mentioned include the Earth Rangers; the Childrens’ Nature Network’s “Leave No Child Inside” campaign; and the “Get Outside BC” program for youth. The last of these is a joint effort by CPAWS BC, BC Parks, Parks Canada, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and the Child and Nature Alliance.

Gus noted somewhat sadly that while other provinces, such as BC, play host to a number of such initiatives, there are relatively few operating in Alberta’s larger cities. He indicated that in his experience volunteering with schools, he found many teachers attempting to offer outdoor activities on their own, “to the extent that the curriculum and funding allows.”

This observation acted as a segue into his second proposal. Noting that the “few of us that make visits to schools, or scouts and guides groups etc. have an impact that

is almost negligible” he repeatedly insisted that children needed to be exposed to nature for more than an hour or two here and there over the course of a school year.

Instead, Gus claimed, it was essential that access to nature be integrated into the rest of the school curriculum: “I believe you could teach almost every subject outdoors, with better learning results, as students could then see a real application.” In short, he called for the school curriculum to be “entirely rewritten” with a greater focus on allowing children to conduct their studies outdoors “on a daily basis.”

This is, to be sure, no small objective. However, Gus came armed with supporting evidence, providing the illustrative example of Finland, where every 45-minute instructional period is followed by a 15-minute outdoor recess where children are given the opportunity in nature to explore applications of the concepts they have just learned in class. Pointing out that Finnish students spend more time outdoors than those in any other country, he celebrated the fact that they also have the highest academic success in the world. Germany too offered examples where similar programs enjoyed similar success rates.

While Gus recognized that Canada’s less-than-temperate weather could be the source of objection, he noted that Finland has been able to resolve similar problems. “Technology,” Gus concluded, “can now take care of most of these issues.”

This claim introduced the idea that technology could be a great help in finding a solution to children’s disconnect from nature. However he went significantly further with his third proposal.

Gus recognized that technology is ingrained in children’s lives whether we like it or not; fighting technology is a futile endeavour; the best results can only be obtained by embracing technology’s benefits.

However, it is not only the benefits of “technology” in a general sense that we need to look at, but specifically, how youth use technology. What use do today’s children make of technology and how can we engage them at that level?

Gus asked: “Since young people are into social networking, is there some way we can excite them by posting photos and text of local birds on Facebook or Twitter?” He reminded us once again of the essence of the anecdote with which he started his talk.





*Enchanted Forest*  
14" x 21" watercolour  
© D. TEMPLETON

It is not that children do not want to engage with nature, but that they are not given the opportunities. Perhaps the problem is that the opportunities available are not speaking to them in the right language.

He reinforced this point by quoting Gunnar Engblom, a birder from Lima, Peru. Gunnar responds to the idea that birdwatching should be promoted by means of binoculars, notebook and field-guide: “Wrong! That is so 1900s! You have not understood the power of technology! As of this day and age, all a non-birder needs to become a birdwatcher, are an optical ‘point and shoot’ camera, and an internet connection.” That’s all that’s needed to share photos with friends on Facebook and to post the pictures on blogs.

Gus capped off this line of thinking by providing examples of programs where combining technology and naturalism in this manner has met with great success. The Avistar birding festival in São Paulo, Brazil, for example, includes an amateur bird photography competition where, in the contest’s second year, “over 7,000 photos of 650 bird species were submitted by close to 5,000 photographers.” This occurred in a

place where birdwatching “was practically unknown five years ago.”

On a smaller, but more local, scale, the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, of which Gus is an active member, has attracted over 75 participants to an amateur bird photography course, despite almost no promotion. Indeed, it has proved so popular they have had to turn away applicants.

According to Gus, this proves there is a clear interest in relating with nature in this manner. Furthermore, since this dovetails so closely with social media and other forms of virtual, visual communication that make up the world of today’s youth we should embrace that connection. We should try to use these forms of technology to rebuild children’s engagement with nature.

Gus took this intriguing idea one last step further. With point and shoot digital cameras costing as little as \$100 apiece, could they reasonably be supplied on a large scale to schools or other organizations so they could take on a similar role as that of the Friends of Fish Creek? Just as the city of Calgary uses our tax dollars to pay for recreation facilities such as hockey arenas

and ball fields might the City be convinced of the benefits of supporting programs like this that enable children to reconnect with nature?

The solutions proposed are hardly simple; there is no magic wand that can be waved to instantly re-forge this broken connection. Gus’ talk nevertheless made the powerful, clear case that an attempt is necessary. As he pointed out: “If a child can describe how global warming is affecting our planet, but can’t remember the last time he explored a wood or a beach, is he genuinely likely to fully understand and care that much about nature?” Gus sees hope, however, in the fact that many children would like to know more about nature and that, when it is presented in a format they find relevant, they are often avid in their uptake. From this stems a recognition that it is a matter of providing opportunities that are regular, recurring and relevant. Technology has its part to play in the provision of these opportunities as do schools, governments, and grassroots non-governmental organizations. 🌿

# TRIBAL PARKS

BY NIGEL DOUGLAS,  
AWA CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



A clear message is being sent by First Nations in northern Alberta and B.C. that, if provincial and federal governments continue to do nothing to protect wildlife and forests, then the First Nations are willing to take action themselves. Two recent developments involve First Nations taking their own initiative to set land aside and protect it from rampant industrial development.

## Chinchaga “Tribal Park”

In early October the *Globe and Mail* reported that the Doig River band had declared the establishment of a huge “tribal park” spanning their traditional territory in north-east British Columbia and north-west Alberta. The new park, named K’ih t̥saaʔdze (“old spruce” in the Dane-zaa language) covers 90,000 hectares of traditional territory straddling the Alberta/B.C. border north of Grande Prairie. The park includes part of AWA’s Chinchaga Area of Concern.

The old growth forest ecosystems within the park are exceptional, with stands of huge white spruce and aspen trees. Some of the forests are believed never to have been burned. “I have seen few forests – period – that are as biologically diverse and rich as this,” said forest expert Herb Hammond to the *Globe and Mail*. Hammond, of Silva Ecosystem Consultants Ltd., was hired by the band to draft a management plan for the new park. (In 2010, Hammond worked with AWA and the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society in the development of an Ecosystem-based Conservation Plan for the Ghost River watershed - see *WLA*, August 2010).

Not all of the forests in the park are pristine of course and what Hammond refers to as “uncontrolled resource exploitation” continues. He refers to poorly designed and constructed oil and gas access roads as “disgusting.”

Though Tribal Parks do not have any official status with either the federal or provincial governments they have

important precedents. Tribal Parks first came to prominence in B.C. in 1984, when the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation designated the Wah-nah-juss (Meares Island) Tribal Park in Clayoquot Sound. Subsequently an additional 500 km<sup>2</sup> of Tla-o-qui-aht territories were designated as Tribal Park land. This designation included the pristine Clayoquot River Valley.

According to the Tla-o-qui-aht, the vision of Tribal Parks is to “re-establish a healthy integration of economy and environment in which there is a balance of creation and consumption and a continual investment in biological and economic diversity.”

Though the Doig River band has not yet indicated what type of activities might be allowed in K’ih t̥saaʔdze, according to the *Globe and Mail*, they don’t want to halt all development. Instead they want to protect the traditional lands where they have hunted, fished, and trapped for thousands of years. As the newspaper points out, “resource industries should not assume it is business as usual.”

## First Nations “Caribou Preserve”

Hot on the heels of the Doig River band’s new Tribal Park designation, on November 8 news emerged about the proposed creation of a First Nations-designated “caribou preserve” in north-eastern Alberta. The *Slave Lake Journal* detailed a proposal by Pat Marcel, chair of the elders’ committee and chief negotiator for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN), to designate a “caribou preserve” in traditional lands between the Slave River and Saskatchewan border. According to the *Journal*, the area was “set aside in 1935 by the government of Alberta for ACFN’s traditional hunting grounds.”

Marcel said he and other elders knowledgeable about caribou habitat will be drafting the land management proposal to be presented to chief and council in the upcoming months. His proposal comes

in response to an “offensive” response by the Canadian government to calls for Ottawa to address a declining woodland caribou population in north-eastern Alberta. Rather than protecting caribou habitat, the government reportedly elected to kill thousands of wolves instead.

Of course this is not the first time the ACFN has acted to try to protect caribou from governments and industry. In June 2011, along with the Beaver Lake Cree Nation and Enoch Cree Nation, the ACFN filed an application for federal judicial review, asking the Federal Court of Canada to order Canada’s Environment Minister to issue emergency protections for seven caribou herds in north-eastern Alberta. Alberta Wilderness Association, Ecojustice and the Pembina Institute filed a parallel application at the same time.

In a notable victory for the First Nations and environmental organizations, the Federal Court of Canada found the Environment Minister to have erred in not recommending emergency protection for the threatened woodland caribou herds and ordered him to release a draft caribou recovery strategy. But when the strategy was released in early September, it did nothing to protect caribou habitat. It focused instead on killing wolves. ACFN chief Allan Adam called this approach “a slap in the face.”

First Nations and many other Albertans are increasingly feeling excluded from government decision-making which fails to respect the values they hold dear. But the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Doig River band are leading the way in developing new tools to protect wildlife and their habitat. “We’re really facing a hard time when we see the land being destroyed,” ACFN’s Pat Marcel told the *Slave Lake Journal*. “But we’re still there. We haven’t quit fighting.” 🐾



# LOOKING AT ALBERTA: WHAT DO THE SAGE-GROUSE SEE?



BY  
**SEAN NICHOLS,**  
AWA OUTREACH  
SPECIALIST



*A listing of just a “few” of the wells to be found in one section of land.*

PHOTO: © S. NICHOLS

It is easy, sometimes, to lose sight of what is right in front of our eyes. At times it is because we cannot see the forest for the trees. At other times, it is because we are too busy looking elsewhere.

I spent most of my October being busy looking at maps: maps of sage-grouse critical habitat in Alberta’s south-eastern corner, maps of well sites and pipelines, maps of dark green blobs on top of light green blobs on top of sandy-coloured blobs, and maps of lines and angles and thetas and longitudes.

The maps needed, as it happened,

verification that this well site corresponds to that licence. So, with on-site truthing being the best way to verify the maps’ accuracy, Christyann Olson and I packed up my mapwork and drove out to Manyberries to see the ground for ourselves.

It is one thing to see the ground through a map’s eyes; they tell us that every little marker on the map represents a well site; they speak to us intellectually, to our minds only, and tell us there must be access to and utilities servicing that site. I discovered it is quite another to stand at the edge of

an expanse of sagebrush and to have that expanse interrupted by dozens of wells and pumpjacks belching smoke and noise. What undeveloped prairie remained was scarred and slashed with roads, fences and powerlines, trampled by trucks, all as far as the eye could see.

Before departing Calgary, we imagined we might have to do some cross-country hiking to get to the sites we planned to visit. After arriving, we realized what a naive expectation that had been: the territory was so bisected and trisected with wide-open



roads that we could drive right up to any site imaginable. We needed to do no more hiking than we would to get to a friend's house in suburban Calgary.

If one looks at a map of the forty or so townships in the far south-east corner of the province, they look mostly empty and remote. Few highways or towns mark up the map. So here, one might assume you would find undisturbed prairie wilderness. Here would be a promising place to see pronghorn antelope, rough-legged hawk and perhaps even an endangered greater sage-grouse.

But when AWA went there, what we found was an industrial zone. It reminded us of the California oilfields of the 1930s portrayed in the film "There Will Be Blood." What we saw forced us to puzzle: how can

this be happening atop the only habitat for greater sage-grouse in Alberta? Little wonder there are only thirteen left!

The wonder quickly turned to exasperation at how this could be allowed to happen. How is it that between government and landowners – all the parties that supposedly are stewards of this land – we have not noticed that we have turned the only remaining habitat for Alberta's most endangered species into a giant factory? How have we missed this?

It is easy, after all, to lose sight of what is right in front of our eyes. At times it is because we cannot see the forest for the trees. At other times, it is because we are too busy looking elsewhere. ♣



*Top: Even on a Sunday the ground was crawling with trucks and workers hammering away at the land.*

PHOTO: © C. OLSON

*Middle: Underground disturbances show on the surface too, such as the foreign vegetation intruding where a pipeline has been buried and re-covered.*

PHOTO: © C. OLSON

*Left: The undisturbed grasslands we had naively hoped to see.*

PHOTO: © C. OLSON



# SUSTAINABLE FORESTS, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES. THE FUTURE OF ALBERTA'S SOUTHWESTERN FORESTS

BY NIGEL DOUGLAS, AWA CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



Management of forests in southwestern Alberta – or more frequently their mismanagement – has been in the news often over the past five or six years. Communities from the Ghost to Bragg Creek to the Crowsnest to Beaver Mines have spoken out clearly to oppose plans for clearcut logging programs in their local forests. The imminent clearcut logging plans for the Castle region have been the most recent plans to raise the ire of residents throughout the south-west.

Increasingly people realize that these are not just local issues: they are symptoms of a bigger problem with the way our southern forests are managed. Essentially Alberta manages these forests first and foremost to supply timber. All of the ecological services that forests provide – production of clean drinking water, habitat for wildlife, recreation opportunities – come a distant second.

The forests of southwest Alberta occupy a relatively thin strip of land between the mountains and the grasslands. Their ecological importance is far greater than their physical area. These forests are “water towers;” they ensure clean, abundant drinking water for communities across southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba where water is a scarce resource. They provide habitat for a rich array of flora and fauna, including threatened and endangered species such as grizzly bear, cutthroat trout and limber pine. They are also a prime recreational area for more than one million Albertans.

AWA has been pleased to host a number of environmental groups, landowner organizations, watershed groups and

businesses, working to present an alternative model of forest management in Alberta. The new report, *Sustainable Forests, Sustainable Communities: The Future of Alberta's Southwestern Forests*, was released on October 25, 2011 and outlines a number of recommendations. They include:

- “The first priority of forest management in southwestern Alberta forests will be the conservation of the ecological values of the forest, including provision of clean, abundant water, diverse forest ecosystems, wildlife habitat and connectivity, and natural carbon capture and storage.”
- “The second priority will be appropriate human use of the same forested landscape, including appropriate recreation and tourism, and sustainable forestry.”
- “Public consultation processes will be accessible, accountable and transparent.”

The groups are very clear that they are not opposed to logging. But they are opposed to current logging practices, particularly the huge cutblocks which have become a normal feature of so many of our public land forests. Recent public opinion polls suggest that the majority of Albertans agree: polls carried out in 2011 first in the communities of Lethbridge and Coaldale, and second in Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod, and Crowsnest Pass found that 80 percent and 77 percent of people respectively would support no commercial logging (surveys conducted by Lethbridge Citizen Society Research Lab and Praxis survey respectively).

Two things are particularly striking about

the groups who have signed on to these recommendations. First is the geographical spread of these groups: organizations from the Castle all the way up to Bragg Creek and the Ghost are calling for very similar things. Second, the diversity of the voices speaking out, including tourism groups, local businesses and landowner groups, is impressive. A growing list of businesses and organizations are still signing on to these recommendations. They include:

- Alberta Wilderness Association
- Beaver Mines Store
- Bert Riggall Environmental Foundation
- Bow Valley Naturalists
- Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Southern Alberta Chapter)
- Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition
- Crowsnest Conservation Society
- Full Circle Adventures
- Ghost Watershed Alliance Society
- Livingstone Landowners Group
- South Porcupine Hills Stewardship Association
- Southern Alberta Group for the Environment
- Stop the Castle Logging Group
- Trail of the Great Bear
- Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

The recommendations have been sent to Premier Redford. There is certainly some optimism that, with a renewed commitment to “transparency and accountability,” this government will be willing to look at a new more constructive and balanced approach to managing forests, one that respects all of their values and not just the dollar value of the timber that can be removed. ▲

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF FOREST MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA. WE ENVISION A NEW MODEL, BASED ON ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT, GUIDED BY INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE AND AUGMENTED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND BENEFIT. WE ARE NOT OPPOSED TO ALL LOGGING. INSTEAD WE SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FOREST MANAGEMENT MODEL THAT MAINTAINS HEALTHY FOREST ECOSYSTEMS AS ITS PRIMARY FUNCTION, AND OFFERS SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES FROM THE WISE USE OF THESE FORESTS.

- SUSTAINABLE FORESTS, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: THE FUTURE OF ALBERTA'S SOUTHWESTERN FORESTS

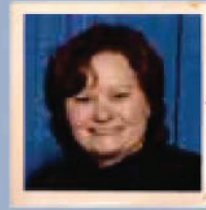
*Alberta's forests deserve so much more than these unsubtle clearcut blocks in southern Kananaskis Country.*

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

## FINANCES

# HOW MANY BUCKS DOES IT TAKE?

BY CHRISTYANN OLSON, AWA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Last year it took more than \$571,000 – 571,300 bucks to be precise – to finance the work we do at Alberta Wilderness Association. Those bucks were carefully spent in three main areas. The main focus of AWA – wilderness stewardship, conservation, and outreach – took 78 percent of the bucks. General and administrative costs have remained remarkably low for years and consumed only 11 percent of our expenses. This testifies to AWA’s status as an efficient, carefully managed association. That we are able to devote such a small percentage of our expenses to these costs also testifies to the significance of volunteerism and goodwill to our activities. Development, building our donor base, and creating broader awareness of AWA and our mandate, “Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action,” made up the balance of our expenses.

Knowing how we spend the bucks begs the question of where we get them. Donations from members, supporters and fundraising provided 79 percent of the

bucks we needed this year. *Thank you!* Obviously, without your generosity we could not do the work we do; we simply could not manage without you. Eighteen percent of our revenue came from grants and we are grateful to glasswaters foundation, the Alberta Government’s Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP), Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Royal Bank of Canada’s RBC Blue Water Community Grants and The Calgary Foundation for supporting our work this past year.

When it comes to membership statistics AWA has 4,362 individuals who represent 185 communities in Alberta in addition to national and international members. That total jumps to approximately 7,500 when donors are added to this total (donors is the label we have given to those who donate to AWA but are not members). If every one of our members and supporters could donate 75 bucks we could nearly meet our frugal budget. The reality is that only a small number (about 10 percent) of members

donate annually and their individual gifts range from \$10 to \$30,000.

Fundraising and gifts from donors allow AWA to be financially independent and free to speak out for wilderness protection. Your help means we can continue to represent you and the public interest for our wilderness, our wildlife and our wild water successfully.

If you haven’t made your gift this year, or if you could send a little more as the end of the year approaches, *please do*. Every gift means a great deal and you can be assured you are investing in a passionate and dedicated team that will use your gift wisely. Please use the form inserted into the *Wild Lands Advocate* to mail your gift; or, we have a secure online donation site at [www.gowildAlberta.ca](http://www.gowildAlberta.ca). We love to hear from you at the office so feel free to give us a call at either (403) 283-2025 or 1-866-313-0713 and make your donation over the phone. *Make no mistake we do need your donation! Thanks for helping AWA speak out on behalf of Alberta’s natural treasures!* 🍄







# GIFTS IN MEMORIAM 2010 – 2011

AWA IS HONOURED AND GRATEFUL TO HAVE RECEIVED GIFTS IN MEMORY OF THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS DURING THE PAST YEAR.

**David Cote** 1930 - 2010  
**Bonnie Dunford** 1996 - 2011  
**Viola Fyfe** 1925 - 2010  
**Louise Guy** 1918 - 2011  
**Clarence Hamilton** 2011  
**Rory Hendrickson** 2010  
**Rita Jackson** 2011  
**Ron Jenkins** 1927 - 2011  
**Tad Kawasaki** 2002 - 2007  
**Janne Lanz** 2011  
**Ted Malone** 1925 - 2010  
**Linda Mellish** 1949 - 2010  
**George Mihalcheon** 1929 - 2011  
**Mr. Ngoroje** 2011  
**Mina Peterson** 1938 - 2011  
**Alex Polowick** 1924 - 2011  
**Ranger Raye Olson** 1996 - 2011  
**Laurence Richards** 1946 - 2011  
**Ian Ross** 1958 - 2003  
**Peter Saunders** 1924 - 2010  
**Barbara Sherrington** 1947 - 2008  
**Murray Spangler** 1931 - 2011  
**Donna Smith** 2010  
**Steve Solvason** 1918 - 2010  
**Rosemary Storsberg** 1930 - 2011  
**Dolores Trettel** 1927 - 2011

# ALBERTA'S PUBLIC LAND CRISIS:

## THE FOURTH ANNUAL MARTHA KOSTUCH LECTURE



BY IAN URQUHART

Technology is double-edged. It excites and sometimes helps me do my work; it scares me too – in the case of this article – when technology seems to think I couldn't attend Bob Scammell's Martha Kostuch lecture in November but, courtesy of servers, file transfer protocols and people who know much more about such things than me, I was able to listen to Bob's remarks. I downloaded the lecture and proceeded to iTunes to open the audio file. When I found the audio file I noticed iTunes, in its wisdom, already had decided what genre it should assign to Bob's lecture – the blues.

I started then to listen to "The Battle for No-Man's Land," Bob's lecture about public lands in Alberta, with some trepidation. iTunes' selection of the blues genre was scarily perceptive. It foreshadowed some of the message Bob shared with a standing room only audience on November 18. Some of the lecture was true to the melancholy and sadness found in many great blues tracks. Bob told a story of great loss. He told his audience that Albertans had lost access to public land through the grazing lease system. He spoke passionately about how this system also has cost Albertans millions and millions of dollars.

But Bob's passionate speech about Alberta's public land was much more than a lament. It was a call for action, a call for Albertans who care about public lands and the organizations they support (such as AWA and Alberta Fish and Game Association) to commit themselves to ensure the owners of those lands – you and me – benefit adequately from them in the future. It was

a lecture that, as one member of the audience noted, was inspirational.

Given Bob's enthusiasm for hunting, it may be especially appropriate to suggest he brought a double-barreled perspective to thinking about Alberta's public land. The first barrel came courtesy of what Bob's father taught him more than 60 years ago. The elder Scammell relished the freedom to hunt and fish on Alberta's public lands, freedom the Old Country's elitism refused to someone of his social standing. His father introduced Bob to the joys of rambling through Alberta's countryside. Those outings were where his father outlined a short, sharp, simple land ethic for the stewardship of both public and private lands: "Look after

THE TRUE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS OF PUBLIC LAND IS REALLY NOT A TRAGEDY AT ALL BUT THE FARCE OF UNCARING, NEGLIGENT GOVERNMENTS WHO DO NOT MANAGE AND STEWARD THE LAND REMOTELY COMPETENTLY.

- BOB SCAMMELL

the land and it will look after you."

Bob has lived those words. His love of the land animated this poignant declaration: "Alberta's public land has meant a good part of life itself to me. What I miss most because of my mobility problems is wandering and wading to beloved places I'll probably never see again, most on public land."

The other barrel came courtesy of the late Martha Kostuch herself, that giant of Canadian conservationism, who Bob so properly called our "Great Earth Mother." "What," Bob asked, "would Martha do about our perennial public land problem?"

### Public Land in Alberta: Scope, Status, and Controversies

Bob devoted most of his speech to building a fearless, provocative critique of public land management in Alberta. His specific focus was the grazing lease system on public land – the Alberta government's rules for leasing grazing rights to Alberta ranchers. Michael Wenig wrote in 2005 that, in 2003, there were 5,700 grazing leases in Alberta that covered nearly 5 million acres of public land; they accounted for over 60 percent of the public land agricultural dispositions made by government.

Bob prefaced his critique by reminding his audience about the significance of public land to recreation and wilderness. At least 75 percent of outdoors recreation in Alberta takes place on there. Since most of Alberta's wild spaces are found on public land the preservation of this space is vital to AWA's wilderness agenda.

Over the 45 years in which his weekly outdoors column has appeared in the *Red Deer Advocate*

Bob has written on dozens of occasions about public land. There he has made a special point of alerting his readers to the legal rights they have when it comes to the land they share in common with all other Albertans. Arlene Kwasniak's 1993 work for the Environmental Law Centre, establishing the public right to access Crown land leased for grazing purposes, supported well this perspective.

It is an understatement to say, as Bob did during his lecture, that his columns and articles on access to public land issue garnered a "major response." His words hit a raw nerve; they shone light on an issue some grazing leaseholders wanted to keep



in the dark.irate ranchers hurled threats and insults at him. But his words also won him the evidence he needed to know his instincts were right – “plain brown envelopes from anonymous government employees and officials documenting how our governments have been deliberately misleading Albertans for years as to what their access rights were to grazing leases on public land.”

Ranchers with leases were more likely to object, rudely or reasonably, to Bob’s unwelcome probing than were those who didn’t have leases. Why? For Bob the answer likely revolves around much more than the public access issue. It seems to go to the other benefits the provincial government has bestowed on leaseholders. As Wenig pointed out, grazing leases on public land raise a number of controversies in addition to access: lease rental rates, lease transferability, lease land purchases by lease holders, access by other commercial actors (e.g. petroleum) to lease land, and the matter of who receives the financial compensation payments made by those other actors.

The financial aspects or controversies of Alberta’s grazing lease system occupied most of Bob’s attention. He made it very clear near the outset of his talk that he was not criticizing the stewardship of grasslands by leaseholders. He didn’t have any evidence of overgrazing or abuse of those lands.

### **Cowboy Welfare?**

The financial dimensions, however, infuriate him. He sees it as a “cowboy welfare” system for that minority of ranchers who are privileged to hold these cattle grazing rights. The analogy to welfare grows out of several claims. The first claim is that public land leaseholders pay much less for the right to graze cattle on public land than they would pay for a lease to graze those same cattle on private land.

The claim begs the question of whether the actor with the duty of serving the best interest of all Albertans – the Government of Alberta – is doing so when it comes to setting grazing lease fees. This assertion about discrepancies between public and private grazing lease fees is strikingly similar to the advice former Premier Peter Lougheed offered with respect to developing the oil sands: think like an owner.

The audience heard a substantial list of ways in which the government fails to behave like any prudent owner of private land. I suspect three other financial aspects of the grazing lease system angered Bob even



*Bob Scammell (left), recipient of an AWA Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award, and Wayne Lowry, Alberta Fish and Game Association.*

PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON

more than below market-value lease fees. Two of these practices, land disturbance compensation payments and the sale/transfer of grazing leases, stood out. “Gradually I realized that,” Bob said, “parsing the words of section 102, the ‘best use’ of public land under grazing lease is not just for cheap grass for the grazing of livestock at all but for the mining of windfall, buckshee money. It is a cash cow to put it bluntly.” This is where the pejorative meaning of welfare, namely that it is undeserved, received perhaps its strongest expression.

In Alberta, rights to explore for and exploit sub-surface resources such as oil and gas do not belong to private landowners. The Crown retains those rights. But, if a company comes onto private land to search for or develop sub-surface riches, the private landowner receives financial compensation from the company for whatever surface disturbances their actions cause.

This is not the case on public land leased for cattle grazing. There the owner of the land, the public, does not receive compensation payments for surface disturbances. Instead those payments go to whoever holds the grazing lease. Lessees of public land, not

the owners, receive that compensation.

Anecdotally, these payments may be very sizeable. Some people claimed to Bob that they know of individual ranchers who make more than \$100,000 per year from the payments they receive from oil and gas activities on the grazing lands they have leased from Albertans.

Fuel is poured onto this grievance by the ability of grazing leaseholders freely to sell or transfer their leases if and when they want to. Leases with oil and gas operations fetch a pretty penny indeed. They “routinely sell for around 125 to 130 dollars an acre – not bad buckshee money for a mere license to graze the grass on land you don’t even own.”

The final object of this financial critique was the Government of Alberta. Bob used the phrase “gross negligence” at one point in his talk. That characterization must have been aimed at the provincial government. The government apparently has no solid estimate of how much money is exchanged between the petroleum industry and grazing leaseholders. At a time when the provincial government is running multi-billion dollar deficits and is threatening to cut public



Stephen Hererro, recipient of an AWA Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award, and AWA's Nigel Douglas.

PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON

services such as ignorance may strike some readers as especially scandalous.

Potatogate testified to the government's blindness on this matter. Dave Ealey, spokesperson for Sustainable Resource Development, told Bob he could not tell him how much money grazing leaseholders received from resource companies on the 16,000 acres of land the government proposed to sell. He simply didn't know.

The information Bob sought is private; it's between the leaseholder and the companies. This exchange buttressed the charge that "our government has no idea how much

money is lost annually to provincial coffers by allowing grazing leaseholders to keep surface disturbance payments..." Based on data compiled some years ago by the Association of Professional Landmen the province was likely losing tens of millions of dollars...then...years ago.

Bob then tried to estimate what the government's refusal to collect these compensation payments might mean today to the provincial treasury. The estimate came from data published by the 5,500 acre Antelope Creek Ranch located 18 kilometres west of Brooks and the Eastern

Irrigation District that sprawls roughly through southeastern Alberta from Bassano in the west to the Saskatchewan border and between the Red Deer River to the north and the Bow River to the south. Using the per acre petroleum compensation payments received by these institutions Bob estimated that this practice alone could be costing the people of Alberta \$130 million per year. This estimate is nearly 30 percent greater than the \$107 million in education funding Premier Redford restored after becoming leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

### What Would Martha Do?

Early in the evening Bob posed the question to his audience: "What would Martha do about our perennial public land problem?" He concluded his remarks by invoking Martha's spirit and outlining a series of actions he believes she would pursue if she still walked among us.

First, we should follow the money and find out just how much the government's grazing lease system costs Albertans. The province's *Freedom of Information Act* should be employed to this end. A freedom of information request would be valuable even if it failed to produce the numbers. "It would likely demonstrate something even worse," Bob suggested, "that our government has no idea about how much of our money it has negligently wasted..."

Second, AWA should join other conservation groups and approach the new premier to see if her administration will break with the past and show some real interest in recovering these lost revenues.

Third, the provincial auditor general should be contacted and we should request he use his powers to try to get to the bottom of financial costs of the grazing lease system.

Fourth, conservationists should reach out to the Canadian Association of Professional Landmen and the Government of Saskatchewan to see what data they have regarding compensation payments for surface disturbances.

“THE DIRECTOR MAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS PART LEASE PUBLIC LAND FOR A TERM NOT EXCEEDING 20 YEARS FOR THE PURPOSE OF GRAZING LIVESTOCK WHEN, IN THE DIRECTOR'S OPINION, THE BEST USE THAT MAY BE MADE OF THE LAND IS THE GRAZING OF LIVESTOCK.

- SECTION 102(1), PUBLIC LANDS ACT





Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Albertans “must start demanding better management, administration, and stewardship of our public land generally...Public land is a public trust and it should be managed and administered as such by a board of trustees selected from among the owners – the people of Alberta.”

I was told Bob promised AWA a barn-burning Martha Kostuch lecture. He certainly delivered one. I suspect the spot on the floor in AWA’s meeting room where he stood to deliver his remarks is still warm to the touch.

Both the substance and style of Bob’s lecture were provocative. I hope they produce the strong reaction I believe he was looking for. I hope they provoke, at the very least, a wide-ranging debate about the stewardship of public land in Alberta.

Such a debate would provide an opportunity for any number of important questions and possible tradeoffs to be considered. For example, would below market-value lease payments or leaseholder retention of a portion of petroleum compensation payments be warranted in return for excellent ecological stewardship and commitments to public access?

I would hope it also would provide an opportunity for constructive partnerships to be formed between the ranching and conservation communities. These communities, as Nigel Douglas later underlines in his update on the Alberta Utilities Commission transmission line decision in southwestern Alberta, share important perspectives on how Alberta’s landscapes should be treated. ▲



*Captivating*  
14" x 10" watercolour  
© D. TEMPLETON

Shaw TV in Calgary (channel 10) will be rebroadcasting the Martha Kostuch Annual Lecture according to the following schedule. The lecture will not be shown on the days when Shaw’s holiday favourite, the Yule Log, is running.

**Mondays**

(beginning on Dec. 5 and ending on Jan. 30): 4:00 to 5:00 pm

**Wednesdays**

(beginning on Dec. 7 and ending on Jan. 25): 2:00 to 3:00 am

**Thursdays**

(beginning on Dec. 8 and ending on Jan. 26): 9:00 pm to 10:00 pm

**Fridays**

(beginning on Dec. 9 and ending on Jan. 27): 2:00 am to 3:00 am

**Sundays**

(beginning on Dec. 11 and ending on Jan. 29): 2:00 am to 3:00 am

**Sundays**

(beginning on Dec. 11 and ending on Jan. 29): 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

# UPDATES

## Albertans Can Help Ensure Conserved Water Benefits Rivers

In mid-October 2011, AWA and other environmental organizations released an open letter to Albertans advising that decisions to improve water efficiency in the province appear to be bypassing important opportunities to improve aquatic ecosystems.

Major water-using sectors including municipalities, irrigation districts, electricity generation and energy industries are now developing provincial water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Plans (CEP Plans). Under Alberta's Water for Life strategy, these plans should aim to improve sectors' water-use efficiency by 30 percent by 2015. In 2008, major water users agreed to prepare plans with information about stressed water sources in their operating areas and to provide creative ideas for environmental improvement with some of the water saved from improving the water efficiency of their operations.

Unfortunately, these voluntary "sector-owned" plans are not doing this; they are not committing to environmental improvements. As a result, we are missing important opportunities to use conserved water to improve degraded aquatic ecosystems in the over-allocated Oldman, Bow and South Saskatchewan rivers. These ecological opportunities also are being denied to northern rivers jeopardized by reductions in restorative spring floods, groundwater recharge and winter flows.

The plans being created by major water users focus on directing conserved water to their own expansion or to trade. They don't commit to returning any conserved water to Alberta's rivers. Since irrigation districts and municipalities receive substantial provincial funding to conserve water they should take the lead and commit some of their water-use efficiency gains to improving river health. We encourage Albertans to urge major water users in their region to implement clear CEP Plans that reduce ecosystem risk and protect source water. We encourage you to ask MLAs and nominated provincial candidates to include ecosystem health as a goal when they try to ensure the health of our rivers for all Albertans.

- Carolyn Campbell

## "Potatogate" Land Sale Is Scrapped Again. This Time Let's Hope It Is For Good!

The notorious "Potatogate" proposal to sell off 16,000 acres of public land has once again been cancelled, and this time it looks as though it might be for good. On October 19, in a brief statement, the Alberta government announced: "A Request for Proposals is cancelled that would have sold 16,000 acres in southern Alberta for irrigated agricultural development. Government cancelled the RFP after people expressed concerns that there was no public input into using a Request for Proposals and that there might be an impact on water and on the ranching community."

Although the fact that AWA's Wilderness and Wildlife Defenders received a request to write to the premier just one day before the announcement may just be a coincidence of timing, the main reason the land sale was cancelled was the enormous outpouring of opposition to the secretive land sale from a broad and diverse range of Albertans. Environmentalists, hunters, ranchers and even the government's own staff all opposed the sale.

Madeline Wilson has described (see "Potatogate: Round Two," *Wild Lands Advocate*, October 2011) how the on-again-off-again Potatogate sale of native prairie, known to be habitat for a number of endangered species, had been revived in August 2011. This was despite the fact that this relatively intact piece of native grassland was identified for conservation by the South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council in a report submitted to government earlier this year as part of the Land-Use Framework Regional Planning process.

Once again, Albertans came out in droves to oppose the deeply unpopular land sale. One notable opponent was Alison Redford, candidate for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative party, who committed to "suspend the sale of 16,000 acres of ecologically sensitive crown land near Bow Island and wait for the South Saskatchewan Basin Regional Advisory Council to present its final report on the best use of that parcel." As newly-elected premier, Redford remained true to her word.

We are quick to write to our politicians to complain, so we should also be prompt in writing to them to thank them for their good decisions. AWA has written to Premier Redford to congratulate her on the

decision to halt the Potatogate land sale. But it is also important to remember that the system which allows public land to be sold off without any public input remains in place: there is nothing to prevent more Potatogates happening in future. So AWA's letter to the premier includes a series of recommendations for a process to ensure that public land remains public into the future, and that the Alberta public has a say in decisions which are made affecting this land.

But for now it is time to celebrate a good decision, and to thank all of those who took the time to write to politicians and newspapers to oppose Potatogate. Your voices really do count!

- Nigel Douglas

## Auditors Find Federal Regulators Not Addressing Tar Sands Industry Cumulative Effects

Federal law demands that Ottawa adequately assess the cumulative environmental effects of tar sands mining projects; the federal government has not met this legal requirement. This was the October 2011 audit finding of the federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The report adds to the significant body of evidence presented in the past year by scientific panels that neither the federal nor Alberta governments have yet demonstrated the ability to determine the Alberta oil sands industry's environmental impacts.

This latest federal audit focused on how the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA), Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment Canada were assessing cumulative effects of mines as required under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. They reviewed the assessment and follow up of five bitumen mining projects approved between 1999 and 2007.

The audit found that there was insufficient baseline data, insufficient monitoring, and inadequate information on the carrying capacity of the ecosystems affected by the mines. To their credit, federal officials had repeatedly pointed out gaps in the environmental data and scientific information needed to evaluate cumulative impacts to water quantity and quality, fish and fish habitat, land, wildlife, and air. However, even though the federal government subsequently worked



with regional monitoring organizations, government departments acknowledged to auditors that information gaps for considering cumulative environmental effects still remained.

In addition, for the four projects subject to a joint review panel process, the terms of reference issued for companies' environmental impact statements did not change to fill information gaps; instead, generic terms of reference continued to be issued. Federal authorities did not confirm that the terms of reference met federal requirements, as they were required to do under the Canada-Alberta Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation. In "some cases," Environment Canada had informed the CEAA that terms of reference didn't meet their information requirements. But it went no further than that. The terms weren't changed; supplemental terms weren't issued.

As the audit report said: "Failure to predict cumulative environmental effects and incorporate appropriate mitigation measures into the design and implementation of a project before the project is constructed can lead to significant environmental degradation as well as increased costs." This report confirms that projects have been approved without the requisite environmental safeguards. The audit confirms yet again that oil sands development has proceeded without paying adequate attention to its environmental consequences.

- Carolyn Campbell

(Updates cont. page 26)



*Aurora*  
21" x 14" watercolour  
© D. TEMPLETON

*Guardians*  
14" x 21" watercolour  
© D. TEMPLETON



## Hydroelectric Regulatory Process Review – AUC's Report Made Public

In late August 2011, the Government of Alberta released the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) report summarizing its inquiry into regulatory processes for hydroelectric power developments. The AUC had submitted its report to the government in February. AWA participated in this inquiry in the summer and autumn of 2010: we commissioned two original reports, presented to the commission and submitted final comments. We called for an overarching protected areas strategy to precede siting of hydro developments, plus rigorous environmental assessment and cumulative effects management of large and small-scale hydroelectric developments.

No formal recommendations, only “key observations,” were made in the Commission’s report. We were encouraged by four of those observations. First, all such proposed projects should be reviewed. The AUC observed that participants accepted that the substantive regulatory requirements of federal and provincial agencies that review hydro developments address legitimate public policy concerns. Therefore, AUC concluded: “the principal issue for this inquiry then is not whether some subjects should be reviewed at all but rather how all of the reviews can be performed most efficiently and effectively.”

Second, the AUC noted that it is very useful to have Alberta Environment and other relevant government departments attend and participate in hearings to clarify and resolve issues that arise. Third, the AUC noted a need for follow through to include “instream flow needs assessment” in cumulative effects management. This would provide useful information on impacts to aquatic ecosystems of potential hydroelectric-related water diversions. Fourth, the AUC heard many participants emphasize that projects should be assessed based upon their individual circumstances and overall impact at a specific site; regulatory processes should not be established only based on generating capacity. These are important observations to have on the public record.

On the other hand, the inquiry was mandated in its terms of reference to “identify overlaps, barriers, conflicts, or other impediments of regulatory approval requirements.” Comments in the report such as “there is also an opportunity for the federal and provincial governments to coordinate review processes and ensure that approvals are granted in a timely manner” do not reflect an impartial public interest assessment perspective. AWA will continue to press for cumulative effects management and rigorous environmental assessment of hydroelectric projects in Alberta.

- Carolyn Campbell

# LETTERS

## Three Cheers for Howard Beale

Thank you ... for daring to touch the outrage that is just below the surface (not if you ask the Occupy movement across the world!). There is a growing unease that our elected officials are a) too afraid b) too ignorant c) too self-interested or d) all of the above to do their job to act in the long-term public (environmental) interest...

Regular as clockwork AWA puts out the evidence which indicates that governments are unable or unwilling to act preventively and protect our habitat – yes, OUR HABITAT. We share the same air, water and land with those species that are, in their extinction, giving us the truth about our way of life.

What we now know is that information – what I call “turning on the light” is absolutely necessary for good decisions to be made, but not sufficient! Citizens must also “turn up the heat” on their elected representative.

“What can I do about such negligence” I am asked? Your representative doesn’t know how habitat, for example, ranks among your priorities unless you tell him/her. Once he or she knows, the next step is to hold them accountable for speaking and acting to do the right thing with the information. If not, then he/she needs to know their job is on the line and someone will be working to displace them in the next election. For a politician, that’s “heat” – people expressing dissatisfaction personally, publicly and electorally.

It’s going to take many more people to say, with Howard Beale, “I’m as mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore” AND visit their provincial and federal representatives to discuss their future in politics!

Keep up the great work at AWA!  
**David Swann, M.D.**  
*Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary Mountain View*



## A Tale of Two Banffs

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

- Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

+++++

It was the first of parks; would it become the worst of parks? Was it the age of wisdom and integrity or of avarice and short sightedness? Was it the epoch of ecological integrity, or was it the epoch of overarching commitment to commercial tourism? In short, will the Banff of the future be anything like the Banff National Park of the past?

After dealing with the plight of peasants demoralized by French aristocracy in advance of the revolution, Charles Dickens would have had a field day documenting how adherents to Banff's traditional and authentic park values are being demoralized by the Park's catering to commercialism, mission drift, and flirtation with frivolity over substance.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

It is obvious that we have two "Banff" entities in the Bow Valley. Each entity was born at the founding of Banff National Park. Each claims a degree of popular support. They share a history of antagonism as well as cooperation. A reconciliation of their conflicting values, needs and expectations is essential if Banff National Park is to reach its full potential as Canada's first and premier national park. We hope this reconciliation would favour the legal requirements and timeless values of our national park system. And we think this is possible.

The first entity, Banff National Park, is committed to "ecological integrity" as its "first priority" (as mandated by Parliament) and to informing, influencing and involving visitors to achieve its mission. The second entity, comprising local businesses, offers important visitor services and is committed (according to their own published statements)

to "generating revenue" and "economic growth."

The priority values of Parks Canada and of local businesses are not identical, yet need not be totally incompatible. Most businesses are not opposed to maintaining ecological integrity within the park; and Parks Canada need not stand in the way of profit-making enterprise. But the history of interaction between these "two Banffs," with the conservation community as an additional player, is marked by conflicts that limit the potential of our Park for all stakeholders.

In this context, Parks Canada's recent decision to allow summer use at Norquay is most troubling. Twenty-two years ago, Parks Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, approved a binding agreement that provided certain benefits to Norquay in exchange for foregone summer use. Parks Canada's actions to prevent subsequent Norquay owners from pursuing summer uses have been upheld by federal courts. Twenty-two years on, Norquay still enjoys those benefits. Yet the benefits that once flowed to the park and the Canadian people were put up for grabs. And Parks Canada encouraged Norquay to claw back those benefits. Whose interest does Parks Canada serve?

Parks Canada supports its decision by concocting a novel "overarching commitment" to guide its Norquay decision and, plausibly, all future decisions in Banff National Park. But there is absolutely no foundation in the Canada National Parks Act for any "overarching commitment" to commercial tourism as alleged in the Norquay guidelines. In fact, this contrived "overarching commitment" is contrary to the legislated priority mandate to maintain or restore ecological integrity in our national parks.

In my opinion, the Norquay decision marks a "reconciliation" that favours more narrow business interests at the expense of broader public interest, clear legislated mandates, national park values, and even agency integrity. No, this is not the preferred direction.

Can profit-oriented Banff co-exist with park-oriented Banff? It can. In fact, there is ample evidence that Canadians and other visitors prefer a natural national park to contrived commercial amusement. Former Superintendent Kevin van Tighem pointed the way in his warning to senior Parks Canada staff:

Mostly we are hearing **concerns about**

**crowding and commercialization**, plus predictions that these sorts of initiatives risk pushing some of our ecological integrity accomplishments backwards. ... It does seem that **people are looking at this place as being defined by its wildlife and nature, its alpine beauty, its mountain culture and its wilderness adventure** – and worrying that we could be drifting from those defining elements. ... If they think Banff has gotten strange or is becoming an unpleasant place to be, they can just go somewhere else. If that is the case, then further confusing our brand identity with things that people don't associate with their concept of a park experience could cost us further loss of market share, **not gain us increased market share.** (*December 28, 2009 memo to senior Parks Canada staff regarding public consultation and comments on the 2010 park management plan; emphasis added*)

We are convinced that success requires more understanding, appreciation and innovation from the business community and less capitulation, backsliding in the face of legislation, and mission drift from Parks Canada. Many aspects of business operations in Banff already foreshadow what a more collaborative future might look like. And, while it needn't ensure business success, Parks Canada can refrain from pointless and arbitrary regulations that may unnecessarily hobble Banff businesses.

Consider recent record visitation to Yellowstone National Park, where visitors are attracted – not by contrived commercial gimmicks, golf tournaments, triathlons, dragon-boat races and vie ferrate – but by unadorned geysers, grizzlies, wolves, scenery and Yellowstone-only opportunities. We also can look to Waterton Lakes National Park, where special events celebrating spring wildflowers and bugling bull elk attract and inspire visitors.

Enthusiastic visitors, rewarded by authentic and inspiring opportunities in Canada's premier national park, will meet the expectations of both Parks Canada and Banff's business community. And, as we now appreciate the wisdom and foresight of the initial founders and protectors of Banff National Park, our grandchildren will honour our commitment to the timeless values of Canada's first national protected area.

*Jim Pissot, Wild Canada Conservation Alliance*

# RECALL OF THE WILD

**Zoë Preston – WW II Decoder, Avro Arrow Design Artist, Builder of K.C. the Bear**

*By Vivian Pharis, AWA Director*

Just before this past Remembrance Day, I interviewed Zoë Preston, unaware of the strategic role she had played in ending WW II and defeating Nazi Germany. This story unfolded matter-of-factly, as just another event in her long and varied life.

Now nearly 92, this diminutive woman is well-known to AWA and other Calgary area conservation groups for her feisty defense of the boreal forest and for using her artistic talents to single-handedly build K.C. (for “Kananaskis Country”) – the giant replica grizzly bear that so often presides at AWA functions and events involving wildlife.

When I brought Zoë to AWA for a photo session it had been quite a few years since she had seen K.C. in his assembled glory. She was astounded by his size and kept exclaiming “*how could I have built him – he’s so much bigger than I am!*” Then she recalled the year she spent designing and constructing K.C. in

her living room. Never having seen a live bear Zoë relied on the intimate knowledge of human and horse anatomy learned during eight years of studying art as a girl in England. Zoë was fascinated to learn that the bear’s skeleton is more like that of a human than that of a horse. The front legs are like grasping arms and a bear’s paws are so hand-like they can hold a fish. A bear’s pelvis, upright as a human’s, allows a bear to stand. All these features had to be incorporated to make K.C. as realistic as he is. For a full year K.C. occupied Zoë’s living room; his nose touched one wall and his tail the other. Zoë had to crawl under the bear to access her china and cutlery at the far end of the living room.

Today Zoë has replaced K.C. in her living

room with many art projects. They, like K.C. before them, occupy most of the room. She says of herself, “*I’ve come to the conclusion that I am not an ordinary person.*” She attributes much of the flow of her life to having followed intuition and chance. She takes environmental cues from her garden by observing how patterns of weather and climate are reflected in trees and in the behaviour of her garden plants.



*Zoë and K.C.*  
PHOTO: © C. OLSON

In the late 1980s Zoë sometimes flew north by bush plane to visit one of her sons who was working in remote locations in the Northwest Territories and northern Saskatchewan. These flights gave her a bird’s eye view of the vast forest mosaic below her, of the patterns of water and of the occasional sharp intrusions by humans in the form of roads, clear cuts and well sites. There is no more impressive way to understand the state of the land than to see it from above. Zoë saw and realized this landscape was beginning to feel many such sharp intrusions.

In the late 1980s the Alberta Government, with Ralph Klein as Environment Minister, quietly advertised Alberta’s forests to world investors. This incensed Zoë. She wrote

letters to the *Calgary Herald* and attended some of the swell of public meetings that momentarily appeared as Albertans realized what their government was doing. To this day, Ralph Klein’s name riles Zoë because of the key role he played in the great forest giveaway. A vivid recollection for her is of television footage showing Ralph Klein walking through an Alberta aspen forest with Japanese investors. The Japanese

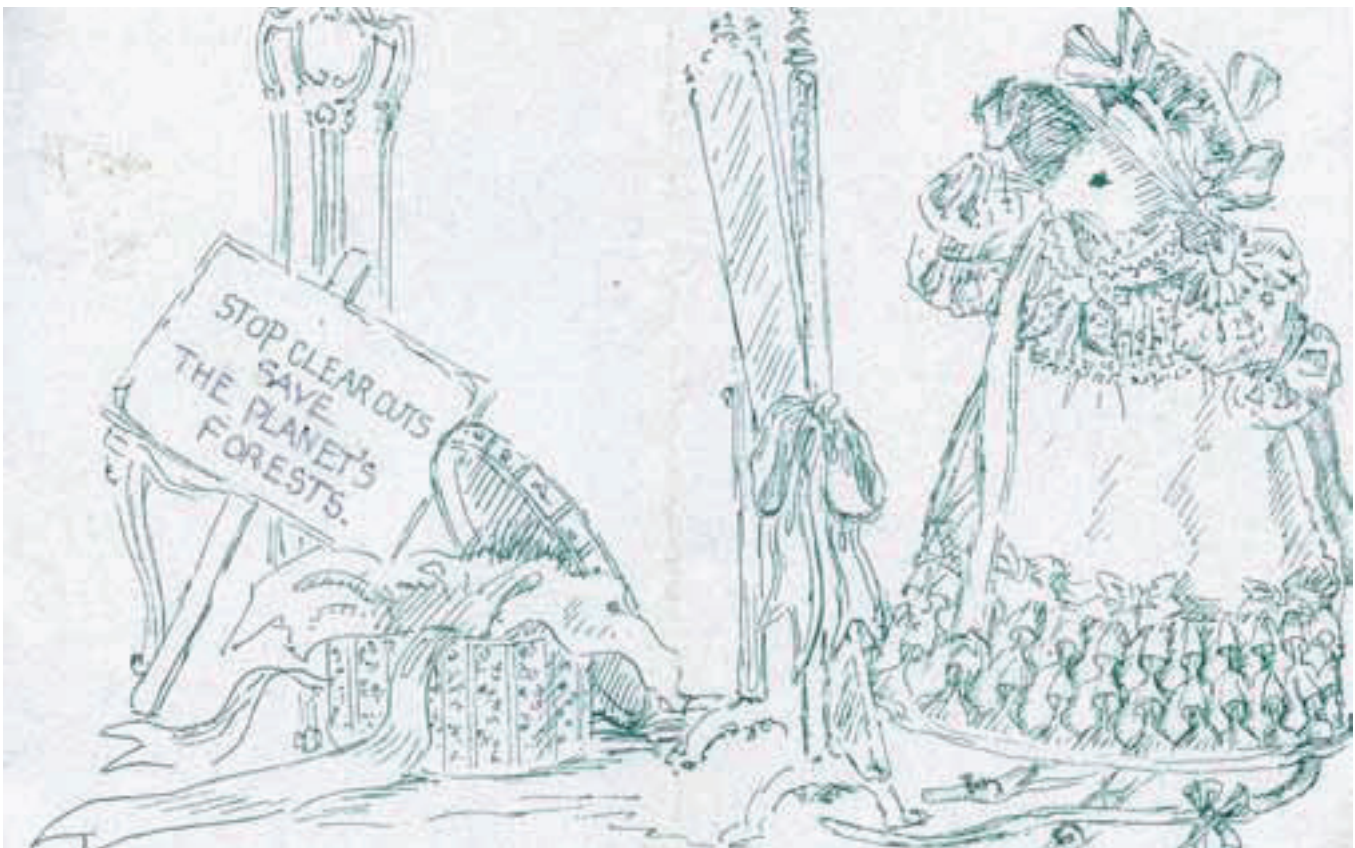
were saying “very nice, very nice” as Klein told them they “*were more than welcome to ‘Alberta’s weeds.’*” Zoë reacted as only she could by building an amazing larger-than-life puppet effigy of Ralph Klein that made the rounds of public meetings and protest rallies. It became a media hit.

What circumstances created this feisty artist-activist? Zoë was born in Brisbane, Queensland into a family of rambling characters, with a mother of wealth and an inventor father who came and went through their lives, three sisters, a brother and extended family living on cattle stations. Her childhood was chaotic and unbounded. Between the ages of five and ten Zoë lived at Terrica Station, one of Australia’s most beautiful and prestigious sheep stations, where she had been taken to recover from diphtheria

and to be a companion to the owner’s son who was her age.

While a governess-teacher was wholly responsible for their care and gave them exceptional schooling, the children were allowed great freedoms, especially during holidays. Zoë embraced station life. She learned to ride, to muster and dip sheep, and even to class wool. Each evening the governess read the children stories from the classics. Life was ideal. But, at age 10, this idyllic childhood ended suddenly. The Duke and Duchess of York and their entourage were invited to Terrica and all available rooms were needed to accommodate them. Back in Brisbane, the wild child Zoë had difficulty adjusting to regimented school life. She focused on amassing a





One example of Zoë's passion for combining art and politics.

© Z. PRESTON

large collection of bottled insects, spiders, snakes and an aviary of live birds that people remember her for to this day.

Zoë's inventor father preceded the family to England in 1932. When it became apparent he was not returning to Australia, Zoë's mother packed up her family and moved them across the waters to a home outside of London. Zoë was now fifteen and it was time for a career. Her mother suggested she become a riding instructor at a nearby stable, but Zoë surprised herself and her family by announcing she wanted to attend art school.

The nearest school was the Kingston School of Fine Art. She attended the school for five years and won a scholarship from Kingston to the prestigious Royal College of Art in the north of England. With World War II imminent, able-bodied British men were being conscripted. They included all the "Masters" of the art schools. Zoë is scathing in her reflections that those left to instruct had no real knowledge of painting or of the theory of colour. If it had not been for her discovery of pastels (all the colours there in chalk form) she fears she would have been stuck forever in a world of black and white. For five years at Kingston, Zoë drew the human body from every angle and from bones through to skin – a grounding that was to serve her well.

After a further three years of study at the Royal College of Art, Zoë was ready to start her career but it was not to be in art. With Britain at war even girls were being conscripted into the Wrens (Women's Royal Naval Service). Zoë was among them. She was assigned to a bunker location and a position so secretive she could not even tell her parents. She would become a decoder – part of the legendary Enigma Project at Bletchley Park that used a finely engineered early computer to decipher coded German messages. For the last two years of the war Zoë worked at a large machine with another young woman. One fed in messages through keys as on a typewriter, adjusting three inner cogs that re-set the keys and the other adjusted a set of wire plugs. The ability to decode German messages is credited as one key to Britain and its allies winning the war. Bletchley Park has recently been declared a historic site because of its strategic role during the war.

When the war ended Zoë met and married a tall Canadian who had served on British submarines and moved with him to Toronto. Two sons soon arrived and with money scarce for the growing family Zoë took a job as a design artist. Her employer was the ignominious Avro Arrow project, Canada's attempt to build a technologically advanced aircraft. Chance had again allowed Zoë

to play a part in a strategic development. The arrival of a third son ended her design career and soon her marriage ended too. Now on her own with three boys, the ever-resourceful Zoë took on a variety of jobs in rural Ontario, always supplementing her income by raising a large garden and a pen of chickens.

Eventually her sons dispersed west and Zoë moved to be near them. She came to Calgary just as Alberta's boreal forest was being put up for wholesale disposal to the forest products industry. She sums up her environmental sentiments in a poignant question: "*Why can't politicians love their country enough to protect its environment first and foremost?*"

Presently Zoë is scrambling to finish projects and shares my common complaint about having too little time. She is writing her memoirs for her sons and grandchildren and is researching an invention of her father's – a pump used in breweries around the world which she thinks has been adapted into a heart-lung machine used to this day during heart replacement procedures. And she is trying to complete an incredible, fanciful children's book, illustrated by drawings made from the staged arrangements of a coterie of intricate mouse-human puppets she has constructed. 🍌

# READER'S CORNER

**Staying Safe in Bear Country (DVD),  
Safety in Bear Country Society,  
2008.**

**By Nigel Douglas**

You are walking along a hiking trail, thoughts a thousand miles away, when suddenly you look up and there is a bear on the trail. So what do you? Do you make yourself look big? Do you play dead? Do you look for a tree to climb? Is it a black bear or a grizzly bear? Does it matter? Many of us have read about a “bluff-charging” bear but how do you know that bear running towards you is bluffing? And what does a predatory bear look like?

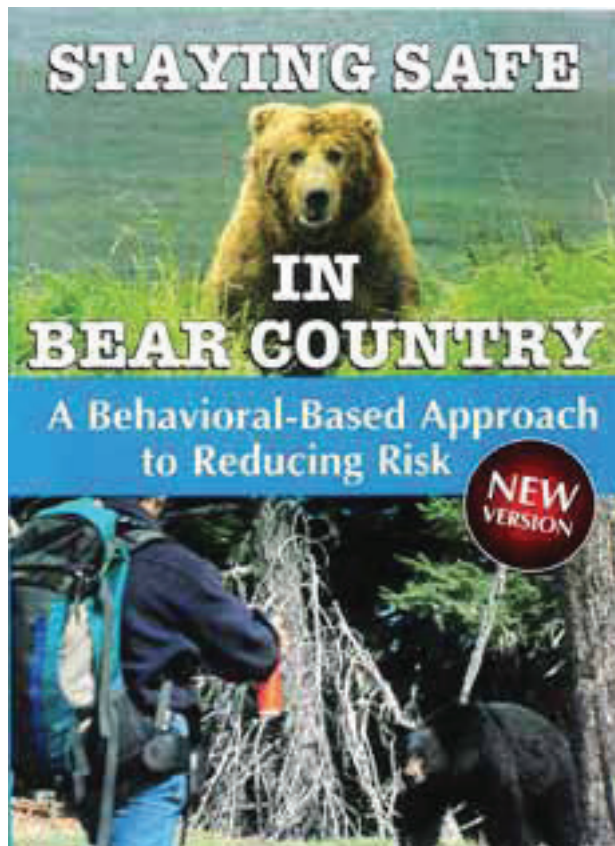
These and many other bear-related questions are answered in a superb 30-minute DVD, *Staying Safe in Bear Country*. Presented by the Safety in Bear Country Society, this DVD serves as a companion to Stephen Herrero's excellent book, *Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance*. If you have ever hiked in bear country or ever plan to hike in bear country you should watch this DVD – it could just be the best 30 minutes you ever spend.

The DVD offers a behavioural approach toward human safety around grizzly and black bears. The more you know about bears, the more you can do to avoid encountering them and the better prepared you will be for how to respond if you do meet a bear. The DVD certainly lives up to the promise on its cover, that it will “increase your knowledge of bear behaviour and help you prevent bear encounters and attacks. It will allow you to appreciate bears and the places where they live.” Better knowledge about bears will improve your safety and that of the bears as well.

The DVD avoids sensationalism, focusing instead on keeping a sense of proportion. “Countless interactions between people and bears occur without any harm: a meeting, a mutual departure, no attack, no injury, no news.” While people often tend to focus on what they would do were they to meet a bear, the first focus should always be avoidance: “to avoid troublesome encounters with bears

the best strategy is to avoid confronting them in the first place.” This DVD will help you learn how to do just that.

A lot of what we know about bear safety comes from observations of how bears interact with each other. “Most encounters between bears involve caution and avoidance,” the DVD points out. “But if one ignores the other's warnings or crowds



its personal space the situation can suddenly turn nasty.”

So if a bear approaches you, what is it doing? What is it after? Building on the themes of Stephen Herrero's *Bear Attacks*, the DVD describes “defensive” encounters – where the bear perceives you as a threat to itself or to its cubs or to its food source. And then there are “non-defensive” encounters: the bear may be curious and checking you out or it may be after your food or even testing its dominance. You don't know the past history of a bear – has it been fed by people in the past? Are you the fifth person to disturb it from its berry-eating that afternoon? How you should respond to a bear depends to a large extent on how the

bear is behaving towards you. What makes this DVD so important is that you actually get to see what a curious bear looks like, or a bluff-charging bear, or even a predatory bear.

The DVD points out that all of the bear footage is of wild bears. This makes some of the subsequent footage particularly striking. When watching an actress being charged by a female grizzly with cubs, I couldn't help hoping that she was being paid well for her time! (“Though most defensive interactions with bears stop short of contact...” the commentary cheerfully points out in the background, “they do sometimes result in attacks”).

*Staying Safe in Bear Country* is one of a trilogy of bear safety videos produced by the Staying Safe in Bear Country Society – the others are *Working in Bear Country* and *Living in Bear Country*. These videos have become a staple for many firms with staff who regularly work in bear country. But they are also invaluable to anybody who spends any time hiking, not just in the back country, but in any place where bears might turn up.

Shortly after watching the DVD, I bumped into a black bear while walking my dogs in the town of Black Diamond. OK, so standing looking gormless with your mouth open is not an ideal response to meeting a bear, but at least I had the confidence to appreciate that this wasn't an aggressive bear and it was as startled as I was. It stood hugging the base of a tree, ready to climb up

if necessary, and watched as I backed away, talking reassuringly all the time. As the DVD says, “a meeting, a mutual departure, no attack, no injury, no news.” 🐾

*Kodiak Wildlife Products, a Canmore company, sells this video as well as others in the “Bear Country” series. Information regarding ordering the DVD from Kodiak Wildlife Products may be found at [www.macecanada.com/canada/video1.htm](http://www.macecanada.com/canada/video1.htm) Mountain Equipment Coop and Campers Village stores carry the DVD during bear “season” but you may need to order it in advance.*



# EVENTS

## **TALK:** A Million Steps to Make a Mile: The Life of the Pronghorn on the Prairie

with **Paul Jones**

**Thursday January 29, 2011**

Alberta Conservation Association biologist Paul Jones promises an insightful talk on how human development is affecting wildlife migration patterns, including those of the pronghorn antelope, in south-east Alberta.

**Location:** 455 – 12th Street NW, Calgary

**Talk starts at** 7:00 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$5.00

**Registration:** 403 - 283-2025

**Online:** [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events)

## **TALK:** Empire of the Beetle

with **Andrew Nikiforuk**

**Tuesday February 28, 2012**

Following a well-received evening in Edmonton in November, Andrew Nikiforuk will be hosting a talk related to his newest book, *Empire of the Beetle: How Human Folly and a Tiny Bug are Killing North America's Great Forests* for a Calgary audience.

**Location:** 455 – 12th Street NW, Calgary

**Talk starts at** 7:00 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$5.00

**Registration:** 403 -283-2025

**Online:** [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events)

## **TALK:** Tracking the Golden Eagle

with **Peter Sherrington**

**Tuesday May 1, 2012**

This spring will mark 20 years of golden eagle migration monitoring. Peter will give a fascinating talk about the trends and patterns that have emerged over that time. He will also give an update on some recent DNA work which has been done on golden eagles: how closely related are the eagles that migrate up and down the rocky Mountains every year to the resident birds that stay put all year around?

**Location:** 455 – 12th Street NW, Calgary

**Talk starts at** 7:00 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$5.00

**Registration:** (403) 283-2025

**Online:** [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events)

## **Music For the Wild**

**Saturday, February 4, 2012**

**Robbie and Will**

They play Celtic, swing, and folk on guitar, mandola and accordion—and they leave audiences dazzled wherever they go. There was a real buzz of excitement in the room when they finished their set in 2010 as the audience marvelled at their musicianship, good songs, and good humour.

**Opening Act:** Twisted Roots

**Doors open at** 7:00 p.m.

**Music starts at** 7:30 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$15.00

**Pre-registration is required:** (403) 283-2025

**Online:** [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events)

## **Special Event: Film Screening**

**Saturday, February 11, 2012**

Join us for this wonderful addition to our 2012 event lineup!

**White Water, Black Gold**

Canada is now the #1 supplier of oil to the United States. Most of that oil comes from the tar sands in Alberta, processed by an industry with an insatiable thirst for water. Following the journey taken by a drop of water from Mount Snow Dome in the Columbia Icefield to Lake Athabasca, and exploring what happens to it along the way, filmmaker David Lavallee asks: "Are the powers that be turning the truth into a liquid that slides through your fingers?"

**Presentation starts at** 7:00 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$10.00

**Pre-registration is required:** (403) 283-2025

**Online:** [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events)

**Correction:** Our apologies to Graham Woolgar for mistakenly identifying him as John Woolgar in the October issue of the Advocate.



**SAGE-GROUSE HAVE BEEN ENDANGERED FOR MANY YEARS  
BUT GOVERNMENTS HAVE DONE VERY LITTLE TO ELIMINATE  
HUMAN DISTURBANCES IN CRITICAL SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT.**

**ONLY 13 MALES LEFT**

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