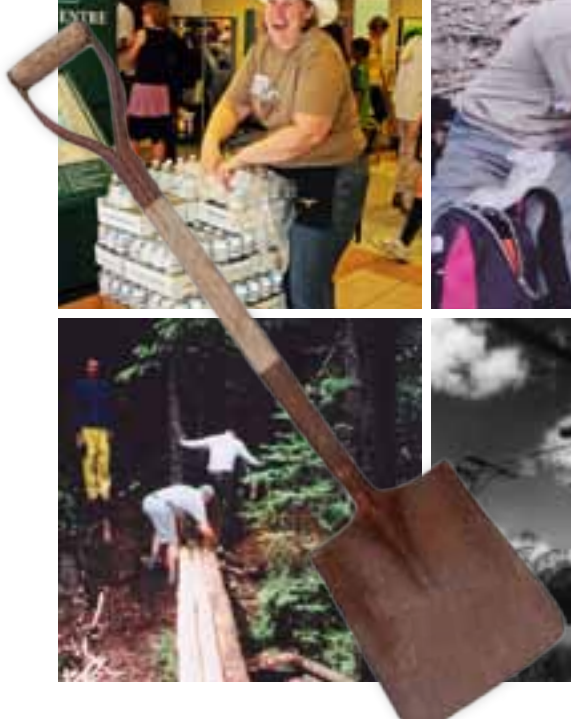




A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2012



NATURE'S VOLUNTEERS

THE WILD IN CALGARY

ALBERTA'S ONLY BIOSPHERE RESERVE

BEARSMART, POACHERS, AND COMMUNITY

TOMORROW'S LEADERS

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For nearly forty-seven years volunteers have played a vital role in pursuing the goals of Alberta Wilderness Association. This month's cover is a collage depicting some of the many ways in which they have furthered our shared vision.

FEATURED ARTIST

For Jeff Collins painting is a playful, honest reaction to his emotions and experiences. It gives him insight, knowledge and a better understanding of his place in this world. His works are his play, his prayers, his meditations... Creating them allows Jeff to discover more and more about the natural world he lives in, about the divine and sacred spirit that permeates it all. He searches for beauty in his work. Painting allows him to share his discoveries with others.

Jeff graduated from Red Deer College (Art and Design) in 1991 at the age of 31 and then studied Fine Arts at the University of Alberta. He works out of his downtown Edmonton studio (ArtsHab 1). He teaches beginner and advanced oil painting there and at the City Art Centre.

Currently Jeff is developing landscape paintings in oils of the four seasons from the Parkland natural region of central Alberta.

More of Jeff's portfolio of work may be seen at www.albertacraft.ab.ca/jeffcollins. He sells his work directly out of his studio and may be contacted at jdcollins@compusmart.ab.ca

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ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

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

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PHOTO: © R. SLOAN

Cargill, General Motors, Alberta Wilderness Association...what organization do you think belongs to the sector making the greatest contribution to the Canadian economy? It couldn't be AWA...could it? It is. In 2007, Statistics Canada reported that, with an economic contribution of \$35.6 billion in 2006, the core non-profit sector of the Canadian economy was 2.5 times larger than the agricultural industry and six times larger than the motor vehicle industry.

If you've ever attended one of AWA's signature events such as the Climb and Run for Wilderness or the Wild West Gala you will have experienced the warmth of AWA's volunteers – the lifeblood of many non-profits such as ours. Have you ever attended a Tuesday Talk? If you have, again you will have heard the insights of a volunteer, a speaker who volunteered her time for your potential benefit. For decades AWA volunteers have been going into the backcountry to clean up the trash others have left behind (the photo above shows AWA volunteers involved in cleaning up Pinto Lake in 1972).

February's features focus on the general theme of volunteerism. The articles survey the motives, rewards, actions, and questions

that characterize volunteering on behalf of Alberta's wilderness. Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett invites you to join her on a journey to bring aspects of the wild into Calgary's urban setting. Nora Manners takes you southwest to the landscape where mountains erupt out of the prairie. There you will read about the Waterton Biosphere Reserve and the important voluntary efforts underway to preserve landscapes and livelihoods in that corner of Alberta.

AWA Conservation Specialist Nigel Douglas then drives you forty minutes west on Highway 3 to Crowsnest Pass. There he details the very successful partnership between Alberta Fish & Wildlife and local conservationists that is the Crowsnest BearSmart program. His colleague Madeline Wilson's report on the province's Report A Poacher program examines the extent to which Albertans assist wildlife officers in protecting wildlife from poaching. Like Nigel's article, Madeline's report also should be seen as one pointing to the importance of government support to successful volunteer actions. Carolyn Campbell, the third AWA Conservation Specialist appearing in the features section, takes you to the vicinity of Rocky Mountain House. She describes how

the "community ownership" of sustainable water and land use is being realized through the activities of the Rocky Riparian Group and its successor, Clear Water Landcare. Finally, Vivian Pharis recounts how AWA gave back to the community by developing tomorrow's conservation leaders through the Conservation Leadership Programme.

It's only fitting that the Association News section, in addition to publishing Krystyna Fedosejevs' winning poem from last year's Climb and Run for Wilderness Poetry contest, recognizes Ed Hergott, one of AWA's outstanding volunteers. Ed is the recipient of the 2011 Great Gray Owl Award.

This issue of the Advocate also presents a sad variation on our regular Recall of the Wild feature. Tom Maccagno, a pillar of the Alberta conservation community, passed away unexpectedly in January. To recognize Tom's passing we offer you "Recall of a Champion of the Wild." Tom was certainly such a champion, perhaps especially of the Lakeland area he loved deeply. There are few people whose boots are too big to fill – Tom was such a person. Although I will miss him dearly I am inspired by my memories of Tom and the values he stood for.

- Ian Urquhart, Editor

BRINGING THE WILD BACK TO THE CITY

BY POLLY L. KNOWLTON COCKETT



© KIRSTEN HOREL

Just what is wilderness? Where is it? And just where do we live relative to the wilderness areas that we – as AWA members, friends, and affiliates – are committed to protecting?

Without belabouring the obvious, most of us probably do not actually live in the wild lands we love, conserve, and visit whenever we can. Thus, if we wish to successfully “defend wild Alberta through awareness and action,” how might we foster a conservation and stewardship ethic within the communities where we do live, work, attend school, and play (when not playing in the wilds)? How can we bring aspects of the wild to our urban spaces and backyards? Why might it be important to do this in the built environment?

I am an inquiry-based learner and educator who rarely answers such questions directly. Instead, let me tell you some of the stories behind Whispering Woods and the Centennial Natureground. They illustrate well how volunteers can

transform a neighbourhood and instill in each other a deeper appreciation of local native biodiversity.

In the 1960s, as Calgary was expanding northwest beyond its young university, a 100 m² parcel of native grassland and aspen parkland somehow escaped being submerged in the surrounding sea of new bungalows below Nose Hill in Brentwood. Its original agricultural zoning code left this westward sloping patch to its own devices between new upper and lower sports fields. This anonymous and overlooked space was nonetheless well loved, especially by local youth, dog walkers, and other passersby. Building temporary tipis with fallen aspen trunks, picnicking in the clearings, playing camouflage, and admiring the prairie crocus, buffalo bean, and wild rose became common pastimes here for many a new neighbour.

Over time though, in blew the litter, in crept the weeds, and long sat the dog leavings. Trails braided after June rains, joy

riders’ doughnuts tore through the native fescue, and arson blackened tree trunks. Rather than coming upon seasonal blossoms, you were more likely to encounter used needles and condoms, broken beer bottles, and discarded household debris. Was this now where we wanted to picnic or have our children run free? Who really cared about this space? Whose responsibility was it? Could anything be done?

Yes, something could be done. The following paragraph, from one of several interpretive signs co-created by students and community members and installed in the area in 2008, helps tell the story:

Whispering Woods, officially named and adopted by students from Dr. E.W. Coffin School in 1995, is sanctuary to a precious remnant of rough fescue grassland. Nestled at the top of this outlier of Nose Hill Park, the inviting Prairie Amphitheatre embraces a magnificent Rocky Mountain view. Here, students and the public learn



Students from Dr. E.W. Coffin School participate in a Weed Awareness Day led by Nature Alberta in the Centennial Natureground on World Environment Day 2006.

PHOTO: © P. KNOWLTON COCKETT



Volunteer-led community-wide Summer Stewardship Bees immerse participants like Valerie Kinnear into peak blossoming in the Natureground and Whispering Woods with fresh coffee awaiting at the post-bee potluck brunches.

PHOTO: © P. KNOWLTON COCKETT

about aspen parkland and grassland ecosystems, conduct science inquiry projects, and engage in community weeding bees. Neighbours and friends work closely and collaboratively with The City of Calgary Parks through the Natural Areas Adopt-a-Park program. The sharing of ideas, visions, and knowledge, while actively protecting native vegetation and wildlife, creates a genuine sense of shared stewardship.

As new Calgarians in the early 1990s, my family and I were also brand new to a prairiescape. With our children attending this neighbourhood school, we are fortunate to have been directly involved in the ongoing care of this wee park for over twenty years now. Little did we know, when we started with simple litter pickups, that our engagement would lead to such close work with the school, wider community, and city government. It also has exposed us to globally relevant issues such as native biodiversity conservation, alien invasive species management, and parks interpretation. Although the work is never done, a cared-for area attracts positive usage and inspires an ethic of care in others.

Through the school we implemented a schoolground naturalization project adjacent to Whispering Woods and brought the native prairie into daily contact with the students. We named this reclaimed space the Centennial Natureground as it was established during Alberta's 100th Anniversary in 2005. We define our coined word as follows:

natureground – *n.* a publicly accessible, reclaimed and reconstructed site-

sustainable ecosystem, featuring native plants which have been rescued, seeded, or planted for the purposes of holistic education and enjoyment, maintained by local stewardship.

Anyone can create a natureground, whether it's in a pot on your windowsill, in your backyard, at your children's school, associated with a community garden, or an enhancement of a local lane, verge, or byway. With a commitment to addressing native biodiversity where you live, and by doing so with your family, neighbours and colleagues, you will support native fauna – such as insects and birds – with native flora wherever you are. And you don't need to be an expert to begin. I knew nothing about grasslands until I moved here and began volunteering with others, learning together as we went along. Now, I often wildly imagine bringing the wild back as part and parcel of the built environment.

The premise of my environmental stewardship volunteerism assumes that the more we understand our ecological and social context, the more we become attached to place, and thus the more likely we will be to participate in sustainable behaviours. But the relationship between education and action is not a one-way street. While some of us may feel a need to be "educated" before we take actions, others will learn through doing. Sustainable actions, in and of themselves, may generate learning and greater understanding.

There are at least two paths then to obtaining a greater attachment to and appreciation of place. All ecological/social educators and leaders would be wise to

adopt the following *modus operandi* in their endeavours. They should, through learning-focused strategies, promote the development of a sense of place. They should also foster opportunities for students and the public to engage in meaningful stewardship activities.

This approach presents a straightforward extension to the consideration of wilderness the conservation on a global scale.

Participatory ecological education – arrived at through integrated curricula, in situ experiential learning, community collaborations, and professional development – is critical for developing a connectedness with place and each other, for nurturing stewardship and sustainability, and for honouring the complexity of ways we can and do understand and interact with our world. 🌱

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Community-Based Stewardship in WATERTON BIOSPHERE RESERVE



BY NORA MANNERS



Ranchlands of the Waterton Park Front – a critical component of the Waterton Biosphere Reserve buffer zone.

PHOTO: © K. PEARSON

Residents of Waterton Biosphere Reserve (WBR) have been working together for more than 30 years to balance biodiversity conservation with sustainable use of the land in southwestern Alberta. Designated in 1979 by UNESCO (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization) as part of the *Man and the Biosphere Program*, WBR was Canada's second biosphere reserve and the first with a national park at its core. WBR is one of 16 biosphere reserves in Canada and is part of the World Biosphere Reserve Network. This network has grown to include 580 biosphere reserves in 114 countries.

Conservation, Sustainability, Capacity Building

Biosphere reserves around the world, including WBR, share three important goals or functions:

- **Conserving Biological Diversity:** to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species, and genetic variation

to help ensure that no species or ecosystem disappears from the face of the earth.

- **Promoting Sustainable Use:** to foster economic and human development that is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable – that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.

- **Logistic Support:** to improve the capacity or capability of people and organizations to positively affect their communities and environment by supporting research, monitoring, education, and information exchange related to issues of conservation and sustainable development.

Anchored by Waterton Lakes National Park

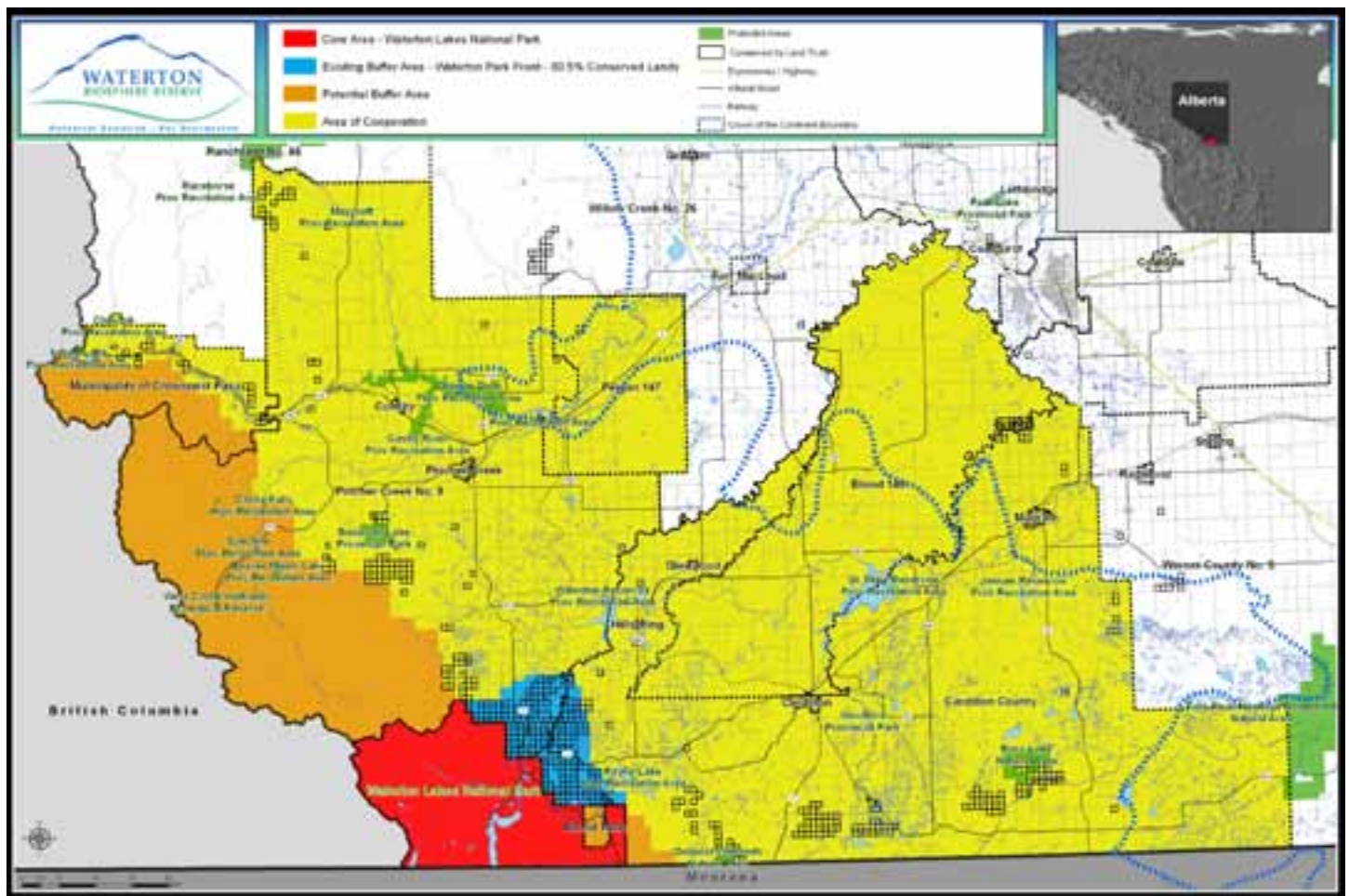
WBR's area encompasses some of the most spectacular and ecologically diverse landscapes in the Canadian Rockies and prairie grasslands. By definition, all biosphere reserves are organized into three zones or areas – a legally protected core area, an adjacent buffer zone with activities

that are compatible with conservation objectives, and a transition zone or “area of cooperation” where sustainable land use is practised.

Waterton Lakes National Park forms the legally protected core of WBR. Several different ecological regions meet and interact in the park, forming a unique landscape shaped by wind, fire and flooding, which is home for many plant and wildlife species. The park serves as a reference point for the natural state of the ecosystems represented by the biosphere reserve. Information from this core area helps in the assessment of the sustainability of activities, and the maintenance of environmental quality, in surrounding areas. Parks Canada has been an active partner in WBR for the last 30 years.

Beyond the core, the areal extent of WBR is not well defined. When UNESCO designated WBR in 1979, zonation requirements for biosphere reserves were more informal than they are now. While the National Park has always been the core of WBR, the buffer and transition zones have never been clearly delineated. Boundaries have been defined more by working relationships than by lines on a map. In order to bring WBR into compliance with the zonation requirement of the world biosphere network, the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association (WBRA) has been reaching out to our partners and inviting them to formalize our working relationships and their involvement in WBR. To aid these discussions, the WBRA has created a map to identify areas that could potentially be included in the buffer and transition zones of WBR.

Extending beyond the protected core area is an area currently identified as the “existing” buffer zone: Since the establishment of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC) Waterton Park Front Project, this area of more than 30,000 acres, primarily ranchland, has been informally regarded as the WBR buffer zone. Over 80 percent of the land in this area has been conserved either by purchase by NCC or by conservation easement. The area is being maintained as a working landscape



where ranching is the dominant land use and is conducted to be compatible with conservation objectives. Other potential buffer zones as indicated on the map include Crown lands within the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve and Poll Haven.

Surrounding the buffer is a broad transition zone or area of cooperation that supports many people in a wide range of economic activities. Currently, the area of cooperation is loosely defined. In WBR, the area of interest extends at least as far as the M.D. of Pincher Creek, Cardston County and Crowsnest Pass. This extension includes the Piikani Nation and Kainai Nation reserves and a portion of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve.

Voluntary Cooperative Area

The biosphere reserve program is entirely voluntary – the reserves themselves are voluntary cooperative areas. They are cooperative in the sense that most initiatives completed in a biosphere reserve are completed through cooperation, collaboration and partnership.

Moreover, biosphere status does not mean that land use in WBR is regulated or restricted in any mandatory way. UNESCO has no authority or regulatory

powers within a biosphere reserve, nor does it wish to have any. Regulatory authority over land and water use does not change when a biosphere reserve is designated in Canada. Government jurisdictions – federal, provincial, municipal and tribal – and private ownership rights remain as they were before designation.

Biosphere reserves also do not create new protected areas. In the context of biosphere reserves, “reserve” does not mean that these places are set aside from human use and development. Human activity and the health of people and communities are essential to the biosphere reserve program.

How the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association Works

WBR is managed by the WBRA, a non-profit organization, that has been active on and off since 1982. The WBRA is not an advocacy group. Rather it’s a grass-roots, volunteer-driven group working closely with local people to integrate conservation values with sustainable livelihoods in the reserve area.

The objectives of the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association are:

- To encourage a sustainable community-based regional economy, with high quality

biodiversity, landscape and social values;

- To promote public awareness of resource management concerns facing residents of the Waterton Biosphere Reserve area;
- To participate with area residents in developing projects to address local concerns;
- To encourage cooperative resource management practices between private landowners and governments by providing a forum for the exchange of information.

Over the past 30 years, the WBRA has supported local communities in many practical ways by providing funding and support for projects, forums, and research that addresses land management concerns. From grazing lease conversion policies, water quality monitoring, wildlife/cattle interaction and haystack depredation, to the control of non-native species that impact our native habitats and farmland, WBR brings residents together to build awareness, share information, and encourage sustainable land management.

Seeking Solutions for Carnivores and Communities

One of the WBRA’s current projects, the Carnivores and Communities initiative, is an example of how communities can work



A sow grizzly and her cub dig up a well-buried horse carcass along the St. Mary's River – bears are utilizing habitats further east in areas where grizzlies have not been common for generations

PHOTO: © L. COOK

together to seek solutions to complex stewardship challenges.

Over the last five years, WBR has supported landowners concerned about the impact of large carnivores on their ranching operations. Grizzly bears in particular are utilizing habitat further eastward, out from public lands of the mountains and foothills onto habitats in private agricultural lands – the “agricultural interface.” Conflicts between large carnivores and people living in the agricultural interface impact both the livelihood of ranchers and farmers and the personal safety of all residents. Examples of the direct impacts of large carnivores include depredation on livestock, stress to livestock, consumption of grain, silage and agricultural fields, and property damage. Carnivore-human conflicts may also result in the death or relocation of the carnivore and thus have consequences for biodiversity conservation. In the case of grizzly bears, southwestern Alberta (Bear Management Area 6) has the highest rate of human-grizzly bear conflict and the highest rate of relocations and mortalities in the province. This is important not only for the Alberta grizzly population. It matters as well to the inter-connected grizzly populations in Montana and southwestern British Columbia. Because of the levels of conflict and resulting mortalities, these agricultural-interface lands may serve as an ecological sink for the connected populations across provincial and international boundaries. Through supporting landowners as they work to

reduce conflicts with large carnivores, the Carnivores and Communities project also hopes to improve habitat stewardship for grizzly bears in southwestern Alberta and help lessen the impact of human-carnivore conflict on these populations.

WBR has partnered with many parties to provide support for landowner-driven projects and efforts that focus on attractant management. The projects include electrical fencing projects, grain bin conversions, dead stock management, and development of an on-line mapping tool to support a pilot project for landowner monitoring of carnivores and carnivore conflicts. Our partners include Alberta Fish & Wildlife, Cardston County, the Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership (formed by the municipal districts of Pincher Creek, Ranchlands and Willow Creek), the NCC, and the Miistakis Institute for the Rockies. On-the-ground work by the Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership, Chief Mountain Landowners Information Network, and landowners and leaseholders in the Waterton Park Front has been critical to project progress.

Currently, WBR is facilitating a community-based project, funded by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, that brings together landowners, municipalities, and Alberta Fish & Wildlife to find ways to reduce conflicts between large carnivores (specifically bears and wolves) and people in southwestern Alberta. WBR has established a community-based, landowner-driven Carnivore Working Group (CWG)

tasked with creating a long-term vision, goals, and plan to reduce human-carnivore conflict issues in Cardston County and the municipal districts of Pincher Creek, Willow Creek, and Ranchlands. The CWG will work with landowners and other stakeholders not only to continue to support landowner projects and efforts to reduce human-carnivore conflicts, but also to develop and deliver a communication and education strategy and build a strong collaboration among producers, agencies, government, and other stakeholders. The economic impact to landowners and options for improving the livestock compensation program will also be explored.

The CWG aims to reduce human-carnivore conflicts, enhance public safety, reduce the economic impact to agricultural producers resulting from sharing their land with large carnivores, work toward improving tolerance towards large carnivores, and ultimately achieve a balance between large carnivore conservation and agriculture in southwestern Alberta.

Strengthening the Stewardship Network

One of the other key activities for the WBRA this year is the development of a cooperation plan that will guide the reserve's future work and direction. While those supporting WBR were a small “voice for the land” when the reserve was formed in 1979, there are now many voices promoting stewardship and sustainability in southwestern Alberta. Together with these individuals, groups, and agencies WBRA will work to map out projects and strategies to address biodiversity and sustainability issues that partners in the region consider to be a priority. The WBRA also hopes to identify how we can all work together to improve the ability and capability of communities to make sound decisions for conservation and a sustainable future in WBR.

For further information about the Waterton Biosphere Reserve visit us at www.watertonbiosphere.com. If you have project ideas or are interested in joining the conversation and helping to determine the future direction of Waterton Biosphere Reserve, please let us know by contacting WBR Coordinator Nora Manners at: nmanners@watertonbiosphere.com.▲

Nora Manners is the Coordinator for the Waterton Biosphere Reserve and ranches southwest of Pincher Creek.

BEARSMART IN THE CROWSNEST PASS

BY NIGEL DOUGLAS, AWA CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



In the past year, the Crowsnest Pass has seen a rash of curious characters behaving rather oddly in the community. Some have been carefully and methodically stripping crab-apple trees of their burgeoning crop of fall fruit; others have stood on a windswept hillside, radio in hand, waving small antennae through the air with an air of suppressed excitement. There are even stories of people chasing bears, shouting and waving their arms and letting off bear bangers. But things are not necessarily as they seem. These are some of the signs of a bear smart community: the Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart program is becoming increasingly active in the community and it is starting to make a difference for both bears and people.

Malcolm MacQuarrie is one of the BearSmart volunteers. He spent a good part of his summer in 2011 tracking two black bears as they moved through and around the community and kept a close eye out for situations where the bears might be putting themselves into potential conflict with local residents. “We got to help process the trapped bears,” says MacQuarrie, “and assist with applying the transmitter and the release. It was the first time I had really touched a bear.”

MacQuarrie is typical of volunteers in similar programs scattered up and down Alberta’s Eastern Slopes. His personal interest in wildlife and in the outdoors led him naturally to become involved with a program seeking to reduce conflicts between bears and people in his own community. “I enjoy wildlife and I hate to see wildlife put down because of the habits of people in the Crowsnest Pass,” says MacQuarrie, thoughtfully. “The BearSmart committee seemed to be a different challenge for me. I saw it as an opportunity to pour my energies in a different direction and get out in the wild. I’m just giving a little back to the community.”

One of the collared bears was a juvenile. More often than not these are the bears which get themselves into trouble as they

try to establish their position on the bear landscape, learning by trial and error which are the good food sources and which are the ones to avoid. The other individual was what MacQuarrie refers to as a “bully bear;” he was a larger male bear, big enough to hold on to his own territory and to keep smaller bears in their place. “He was doing a good job of keeping other bears out of the

be alerted to the presence of bears, and glad there are people here to help.”

Much of the educational focus of the program is on reducing the attractants that bring bears into closer contact with people in the first place. A key element of this is the garbage bin loan program. BearSmart owns a number of wheeled bear-proof bins, which are circulated through the community on a loan basis. “It could be a response to bears in garbage,” says Anderson, “or for other people in the community who are concerned about preventing problems.” Other programs include the Apple Roundup, which sees Grade 5 students traveling to seniors’ residences to remove the unwanted apples that prove so attractive to hungry bears. There is even an apple exchange program – what Anderson calls a “dating service” – which connects people who have excess apples with others who want them and are willing to come and collect them.

BearSmart volunteers represent a broad spectrum of people in the community: MacQuarrie is a local justice of the peace, Anderson is a biologist, and other members include a social worker, a construction worker and an insurance appraiser. Both MacQuarrie and Anderson emphasize how important this

strong base of local volunteers is to keep the program running.

Equally important in the case of Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart has been the tireless support of John Clarke, Acting District Officer for the Fish & Wildlife office in Blairmore. “The program is reliant on John,” says MacQuarrie simply. “The time commitment he makes, the training: a lot of it is in his own time. He’d monitor for bears on his lunch breaks!” Anderson agrees: “John was huge in starting and maintaining the program,” she says. “He’s been one of the reasons it has been so successful. Now we are starting to give back to him.”

For Clarke, the program started four or five years ago. “For years we have been trying to ‘BearSmart’ communities anyway,” says



BearSmart volunteer Malcolm MacQuarrie keeps a close eye on a sedated young black bear, prior to its release back into its Crowsnest Pass home. Vital signs, including oxygen levels, are monitored while the bear is unconscious.

PHOTO: © M. MACQUARRIE

area, so we wanted him to stay around,” says MacQuarrie.

Elizabeth Anderson is the Program coordinator with the Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart program, which is run under the auspices of the Crowsnest Conservation Society. “The focus is to try to reduce the number of human bear conflicts in the Crowsnest Pass,” she says. When bears are known to be frequenting a particular neighbourhood BearSmart volunteers will mobilize to go knocking on doors, informing residents about their local bears and what they can do themselves to avoid attracting bears to their properties. This high-profile presence is part of the educational component of the program. “I am very happy with the reception we have had,” says Anderson. “People are happy to



With charismatic Crowsnest Mountain as a backdrop, a BearSmart volunteer tracks the movements of one of the program's monitored black bears.

PHOTO: © M. MACQUARRIE

Clarke, but now the Sustainable Resource Development Ministry was looking to formalize the program. Unfortunately, this did not necessarily come with any additional funding. If the BearSmart volunteers are glowing in their compliments of Clarke, he is no less complimentary about their role. "We need volunteers just to do our job," says Clarke. "We finally have an awesome volunteer group. This year has been very successful for us, with the team we have and their commitment."

Clarke has been using Karelian bear dogs in wildlife conditioning for ten years. "Before the dogs the only option for problem bears was to shoot them or move them," he says. "We use dogs for aversion. We get a call, we come out and the dogs chase them back into the woods." The dogs are also what Clarke refers to as "ambassadors for BearSmart." They attend displays and trade shows and visit schools, helping people to think about how their own actions can help keep bears out of trouble.

Not all Fish & Wildlife staff would put as much time and effort into ensuring the success of a BearSmart program as Clarke does. The temptation to take the easy option and shoot bears that are seen to be trouble-makers is a strong one. But Clarke is different: his support goes far beyond the regular work week. "I volunteer tonnes of my time," he says. "I want it to work so I volunteer to help make it work, which is not always the case."

BearSmart Across Alberta

The Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart Program is one of a number of similar

programs operating in Alberta. Following trail-blazing community programs in Bragg Creek and Canmore, they have become established in Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Sundre, Nordegg and Grande Cache, amongst other communities. The goals of the BearSmart program, according to the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development website (www.srd.alberta.ca/RecreationPublicUse/AlbertaBearSmart/Default.aspx) are to:

- Empower Albertans with the information to make safe decisions when in bear territory;
- Help bear populations survive by educating people on how to prevent encounters and how to respond appropriately in a bear encounter;
- Reduce property damage caused by bears.

"Human activities have become more frequent in bear territory," the website notes. "As a result, bear habitats have become more fragmented and encounters between bears and humans more common."

Whether any given community supports a BearSmart program seems largely a matter of chance. Some communities have highly active programs; some have nothing at all. Government support for programs is very limited. Some benefit from staff time, some receive funding for materials including carcass disposal bins, and some get access to official material such as brochures on living with bears. But the programs suffer from lack of any coordinated, coherent government backing. Despite the fact that the 2008 *Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan* recommended a budget of \$225,000

to "create conflict prevention positions," this funding never materialized. While the plan noted that "reducing human/grizzly bear conflicts will help to reduce human-caused grizzly bear mortality," the financial backing to reduce grizzly mortality in this way has been sadly lacking.

So what is the secret to a successful BearSmart program? With minimal financial support from the province, the personal conviction and above-and-beyond support of local Fish & Wildlife staff such as John Clarke is crucial. The programs can clearly never succeed without the teams of volunteers who are prepared to put in the time and, in a broader sense, it is important that they are supported by the community as a whole as is the case in the Crowsnest. Operating under the umbrella of the Crowsnest Conservation Society (itself an organization run by volunteers) has been a boost for Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart. It lends the program credibility and also enables grant applications to be made. Crowsnest BearSmart recently received a \$25,000 grant from Shell Canada, which will help put the program on a sound footing for the next two years.

The future for Crowsnest Conservation BearSmart looks rosy. "Maintain what we have and increase the other initiatives," says Anderson when asked what the future holds. There are proposed by-law changes before the local municipality to help reduce bear attractants. Clarke points out that, currently, "there is minimal legislation to enforce management of attractants." Measures might include restrictions on feeding animals such as deer, seasonal use of bird feeders, as well as rules to ensure that garbage bins cannot be put out at the curb until the morning of pickup, rather than the night before. Anderson is also excited about another project to be added to the repertoire: "In spring we are planning to bring in indoor electric composters to add to the loan program."

It is clear that BearSmart has already benefited the Crowsnest Pass. "I think the program has already made a difference," says MacQuarrie. "People approach us and ask questions. We don't get much rejection talking to people about feeders and garbage." Anderson describes the change as "incremental." Some people are more responsive to change than others. "Residents are often more receptive to understanding this is bear habitat we are living in," she says. "I am optimistic that attitudes are changing." Nobody could ask for more than that! 🐾

TO REPORT, OR NOT TO REPORT? THAT IS THE QUESTION

By MADELINE WILSON, AWA CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



Have you ever wondered what happens when you call the Report-A-Poacher (RAP) hotline? I'm sure we have all seen the recognizable signs, scattered across Alberta highways. But do many people actually make the call? And, when someone calls, what does the government do?

Back to the Beginning

The Report-A-Poacher hotline is one example of a conservation initiative that depends vitally on volunteerism. It will be woefully ineffective if Albertans aren't prepared to volunteer information over the RAP hotline. It is a community-based program, created over 20 years ago, that emphasizes ethical and responsible hunting and fishing behaviour. The program was created to provide Albertans with an avenue to help protect wildlife by reporting suspected illegal activity. The RAP program is run by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) in partnership with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD). ACA is responsible for promotional and educational activities designed to increase public awareness and understanding of poaching. ASRD provides the program's administration and enforcement. The department is responsible for liaising with informants, investigating reports, and taking any enforcement actions. RAP relies upon Alberta's hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts to report suspected illegal activities. These illegal activities could include any number of violations of the Alberta Hunting and Fishing Regulations such as:

- Hunting or fishing out of season or without a licence;
- Night hunting;
- Hunting on private land without permission;
- Exceeding bag limits;
- Selling wildlife or fish illegally;
- Hunting in manners hazardous to the public: while intoxicated, too close to occupied buildings or shooting off main highways;
- Using illegal hunting/fishing devices or baits.

The number **1-800-642-3800** may be called anytime; Fish & Wildlife officers with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This hotline may also be a helpful resource if you require service for other emergencies involving wildlife arising after normal department office hours.

So what happens if you call?

When reporting a poaching incident or another infraction of the Alberta Hunting and Fishing Regulations, be prepared to provide as full an account of the violation as possible. Details such as date, time, location, licence plate and vehicle description, or description of the person(s) involved, will assist Fish & Wildlife officers in investigating the violation. All information about the caller is confidential, and a caller may remain anonymous if they prefer to do so. If the information provided leads to an arrest or fine, a reward may be provided (anonymous callers can still qualify for a reward).

But do people actually report?

Last year, according to the ACA's 2010/11 annual report:

- 8,940 calls were made to the RAP hotline
- 1,563 calls were made to report suspected illegal activity regarding wildlife resources
- 240 offenders were charged with poaching
- \$33,100 in rewards was paid out to individuals whose information led to an arrest or fine.

Public perceptions of RAP program

Not being part of the hunting or fishing community myself, I was interested to find out whether or not the RAP hotline was seen as an effective method of monitoring and deterring poaching. Comments made about the RAP service in an online discussion forum on the *Alberta Outdoorsmen* website indicate that RAP, like so many other government programs, is under-resourced and that there are not enough Fish & Wildlife officers to investigate every tip. Other discussants complained that this lack of capacity is exacerbated by the fact people misuse the service.

As indicated by the statistics above, of the 8,940 calls made to the RAP hotline last year only 1,563 calls were related to public reporting of illegal activities; of those, 240 offenders were charged with poaching. These statistics seem to indicate the hotline is either being used improperly, or that there are not enough officers to investigate the volume of reports being made; likely it is some combination of the two.

Reporting poachers is the responsibility of all Albertans

If you have never witnessed a poaching incident, or another violation of Alberta's Fish and Wildlife Regulations, you may assume that poaching is not a common occurrence in the province. But it would be naive to believe poaching is not a significant threat to many wildlife species in Alberta, including species at risk. According to statements made on the ASRD website, over the last six years an average of fifteen grizzly bears per year are known to have been killed on Alberta provincial lands due to human activities. Of these, 26 percent were considered "illegal kills;" another 42 percent of these deaths were attributed to "self-defence or accidental human-caused mortalities." Mortality statistics for 2011 indicate that, of 42 known grizzly deaths, five were considered "illegal kills." Poaching is evidently still an issue contributing to the decline of Alberta's grizzlies and all Albertans have a role to play in their protection. Of course, similar statistics exist for myriad other wildlife species, the killing of some being more socially acceptable than others. The Report-A-Poacher hotline serves as both a reminder to respect the rules and regulations, and emphasize responsible hunting, and as an accessible method of reporting infractions. If you live, work, or play in wildlife habitat, take some responsibility for their stewardship; the Report-A-Poacher program allows us all to be the eyes on the ground in the places we value. ▲



CLEAR WATER LANDCARE BUILDS COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FOR HEALTHIER HEADWATERS

BY CAROLYN CAMPBELL, AWA CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



How does support for sustainable water management practices grow deep roots in a region? In the case of Clear Water Landcare, it's through

building relationships and sharing practical information. For years, this group has fostered a widening network of community volunteers who demonstrate how good upland and creekside practices can benefit oneself, one's neighbours and the environment.

Clear Water Landcare operates in Clearwater County in west-central Alberta, though they welcome participants from nearby counties. Its predecessor organization, Rocky Riparian Group, was created in 1999. Since then, dozens of volunteers have planned and promoted events, spoken at meetings, and led tours. The group has received important support from Clearwater County through County Agricultural Services staff who help organize events and supply a link to broader networks and resources. Though Clearwater County staff was at the fore of its earliest days, they now take a background role to volunteers.

Land management practices in Clearwater County are vital; for example, they affect downstream water users in Edmonton, Red Deer, and across the central prairies. The county is situated in the Rocky Mountains and Foothills natural regions; its western border is formed by Jasper and Banff National Parks. Clearwater County lands, like the national parks to their west, accumulate snow and store, purify and

release surface and ground water; these lands contain the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River, the Clearwater River (a large tributary of the North Saskatchewan), and the Red Deer River.

Rocky Riparian Group started as a community-based group to foster discussion about water quality and land use practices. An important early project



Rocky Riparian Group, now called Clear Water Landcare, partnered with RiverWatch in 2002 to train local residents in water quality sampling. The volunteers collected samples for three years on tributaries of the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers in Clearwater County.

PHOTO: © CLEARWATER COUNTY

involved residents of several agricultural communities in the eastern part of the county gathering baseline water quality data. County Agricultural Services staff arranged for Alberta's RiverWatch group to train volunteers in concepts and techniques of water quality sampling. From 2002 to 2004, they sampled Horseguard Creek (which flows to the Medicine River and then into the Red Deer River), Cow Creek (a small North Saskatchewan River tributary) and Prairie Creek (a Clearwater River tributary). From that data, an environmental consultant prepared a 2005 report that concluded the overall water quality of Prairie Creek was excellent, Cow

Creek's was good and Horseguard Creek's was fair.

Those results built an interest not only in improving the "fair" and the "good" assessments, but for valuing what contributes to "excellent" conditions. More events were organized to learn about possibilities, and to hear or see what various producers were trying and how it was working. In 2008, the group also linked with the Junior Forest Wardens program to provide volunteer support for tree and shrub planting programs designed to stabilize streamside banks. The shared vision was for the agricultural community to be a leader in protecting and preserving this headwaters region.

Glenn Mainland, a board member of Clear Water Landcare, was involved with Rocky Riparian Group from its beginnings. His own story of watershed beneficial practices dates from the mid-1980s; he took early retirement from an energy company and moved from Calgary to land along the North Raven River to try his hand at raising

cattle. The North Raven, renowned for its abundant brown trout, offers one of Alberta's premier fly-fishing opportunities. Glenn's river side lands had been damaged from past practices, as well as from the cattle he was starting to raise. Glenn recalls that "soon after I bought my land, I had Alberta government people on the phone encouraging me to put up a five wire high-tensile fence." Instead he put up a single wire electric fence which was effective at a much lower cost. "There's no question, the way the cattle were moving, it was badly damaging the banks."

Glenn got involved with Rocky Riparian Group after hearing about it through the

regional forage association that assists producers who manage pasture land and graze livestock on it. “I think the benefit of Rocky Riparian Group and Clear Water Landcare has been to create an awareness of the damage that can be done to soft banks of prairie creeks, and to create support for the need for protection. And I give full marks to Clearwater County councilors and staff for their support.” Glenn has a spot on the river where he crosses his cattle to move from one part of his land to another. Over the years he has placed a lot of rocks at the bottom to create a hard footing, and carried out downstream water quality sampling to be sure about the impacts. Neighbours have helped neighbours with various changes. “Now we have very good protection along the river.”

Rick Anderson worked in range management on a provincial grazing reserve north of Rocky Mountain House in the early 2000s; environmental considerations were a key part of his responsibilities. For Rick, one big impact of Rocky Riparian Group was learning how good riparian management promotes positive water recharge and groundwater movement, which in turn has important uplands benefits. “I was quite interested and supportive, soaking up information, implementing wherever I could, sometimes presenting and setting up demonstration projects.” Rick recalls when he took the step to manage cattle to keep them out of water dugouts. Within the season, there was a noticeable difference in how much cleaner the dugout water was, and how long the water stayed. Other practices took a few years, such as health improvements in stream banks where cattle access was minimized. “The things I did as a land manager had not just an environmental impact, but benefits to me and the business. So there’s a strong business case for good practices.”

Rick now consults on integrated land use issues but it made sense to him to stay involved with Rocky Riparian Group and

continue as it transitioned to Clear Water Landcare. He sees a lot more awareness compared to fifteen years ago of how an individual’s actions affect neighbours and the water, and how people are actively managing for better water quality. “There’s a lot of off-stream watering systems now. There’s more use of portable wind breaks that provide shelter to cattle in uplands areas and prevent one area from being overused. One important approach of the group was that the information presented was always looking at options and implications. Anyone could be involved: you could ease into it or dive into it. A huge part of the success is that there’s quite a bit of peer-to-peer activity, supporting each other in on-the-ground trials and efforts.”



A demonstration off-site livestock watering system managed by Rocky Riparian Group, now Clear Water Landcare. For five years, this solar-powered system was loaned out to help people discover the technology’s potential.

PHOTO: © CLEARWATER COUNTY

In 2010, Rocky Riparian Group changed its name to Clear Water Landcare. The Landcare name and concept is adopted from very successful groups in Australia that work on a broad spectrum of land care issues with the whole community of rural and urban residents that impact the land. As Clear Water Landcare, the group has sponsored more demonstrations to involve the acreage owner, such as groundwater well care. For years, Rocky Riparian Group’s successful annual spring fair held in Caroline was called “Cows and Creeks, the Best for Both.” In 2010, the event name changed to “Cows, Creeks and Communities” to signal that everyone in the community plays a

role in healthy watersheds, not just those alongside the creeks.

In 2011 Clear Water Landcare elected its first volunteer Board and launched an autumn celebration day to share stories of success from around the region. In 2012 it will be increasing the frequency and breadth of newsletters and meetings. Glenn Mainland says: “We’re still feeling our way. We’ll continue our emphasis on creeks and our groundwater well care, possibly do more water sampling, and look at other ways to stay active and on the ground in the headwaters.”

Gary Lewis, with Clearwater County’s Agricultural Services department, first got involved with the group in 2004. He continues to provide support to Clear Water

Landcare’s activities – his title, which is Landcare Coordinator, underlines the county’s ongoing commitment. For him, the key to success has been working alongside people and building good relationships. “We will continue to emphasize relationships, celebrate success, and let the men and women of the community tell their story of what they’re doing and why.” Board member Rick Anderson looks to the future in this way: “We’ll go beyond the creekside focus to the whole land base and whole community. So there will be more understanding of a whole-watershed approach to think and plan, with water the end impact. It

will be important to keep our grass roots focus and the opportunities for all of us to participate.”

There are many good local watershed initiatives around the province. Clear Water Landcare is to be congratulated for real progress in making healthy headwaters a community “owned” issue, and thus benefitting so many downstream water users. If you are interested in finding out more about them, Clear Water Landcare’s annual fair “Cows, Creeks and Communities” will be held April 26, 2012 in Caroline. Their autumn “Celebrating our Success” event will be in Rocky Mountain House on November 15, 2012.▲

AWA PRESENTS DAY-LONG ADVOCACY WORKSHOP FOR INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By VIVIAN PHARIS, AWA BOARD MEMBER



For the second year in a row AWA was invited to and presented an advocacy-related workshop to students from around the world who were participating in the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP).

CLP initiated its program in 1985 in order to make substantial grants to teams of young conservationists from all around the world, to offer personal awards to promising

Wildlife Conservation Society. CLP has so far given \$4 million in grants, awards, ongoing support and access to networks to help young conservationists gain the skills that will make them and their projects successful.

Each year CLP hosts a two-week workshop somewhere in the world. The workshop invites a representative from each team that has in the past year received a CLP grant to carry out a practical conservation project in their local area. Teams apply for grants of up to \$15,000, based on the project's merits, and a

In 2010 AWA participated in a half day workshop on how advocacy has been applied in Alberta on behalf of the grizzly bear and its habitat. On the strength of this presentation, AWA was invited back in 2011 to conduct a day-long workshop on how AWA has used advocacy to advance its campaigns. Executive Director Christyann Olson and board member Vivian Pharis jointly developed a program of case studies exploring the use of advocacy as a primary campaign tool. We also developed a group exercise in advocacy strategy that involved participant feedback through presentations. Finally, participants were introduced to an advocacy campaign planning tool developed earlier by AWA and were encouraged to adopt and adapt it for their own use.

The day was long and full but this eager bunch of budding conservationists from far-flung and exotic places, and for which English was often a second or third language, absorbed our lessons and came back to us in their questions and group presentations with thoughtful, witty and uncommon candour. They were attentive and responsive, even as the day waned. It helped that most were in their 20s, even early 30s and were not young teenagers; in fact most already had at least one university degree. Participants hailed from 19 different countries as diverse as Armenia and Belize. All seemed thrilled to become acquainted with the Canadian wilds at Kananaskis.

Since AWA has a long history of advocacy we decided that descriptions of how some of our campaigns evolved could be instructive to others. We chose three case studies, two of which were substantially related to each other although nearly 25 years separated them; they dealt with AWA's engagement with Shell Canada over their activities on Prairie Bluff in the Castle. The third case, entitled "Seeds of Opportunity" and dealing with the Hay-Zama Lakes, became a good news story after some 15 years of negotiations with the oil and gas industry and First Nations. The negotiations protected a remote and biologically important site in northwestern Alberta. It's a story that eventually took on an international element involving



Lake Isle (Parkland Study)

8" x 12" oil on board

© J. COLLINS

leaders and to organize educational workshops for them. CLP is a partnership of long-established conservation groups, two based in the United Kingdom and two in the United States. Its mandate is to promote the development of future conservation leaders and to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to address the most pressing conservation issues of our time. The two British groups contributing to CLP are BirdLife International and Fauna & Flora International; the two American groups are Conservation International and

representative is selected from each team to participate in the intensive two-week leadership workshop.

The 2010 and 2011 workshops were both held at the University of Calgary's Barrier Lake research and education facility in Kananaskis Country. This facility is ideally suited to CLP's needs and group size. This year there were 28 participants and four team leaders. Kananaskis Country became their field school and local workshop expertise was drawn from university staff and other organizations such as AWA.



Sunset at Lake Isle (Parkland Study)

36" x 30" oil on canvas

© J. COLLINS

the indigenous peoples of Mongolia. The story of protecting Hay-Zama Lakes and twinning them with the Dalai Lakes of Chinese Inner Mongolia is a fascinating one involving unrelenting advocacy. The CLP group appreciated hearing it.

Case studies #1 and #2, although widely separated by time, involved similar elements. They were intended to offer insight into how a small mainly volunteer group was able to mount, conduct and successfully conclude campaigns through focus, dedication and reliance on logic and science. We highlighted how this was possible even when operating under severe time, financial and personnel constraints, and showed how strategic planning and a focus on outcome were key tools.

We called case #1 "In Defence of Policy." It was the classic story of how Shell Canada

came to drill three sour gas wells on top of Prairie Bluff near Waterton. The drilling took place in the Prime Protection Zone of the Eastern Slopes and on lands the Deputy Minister of Lands had told Shell were "out of bounds" because of protective zoning and high aesthetic values. The company went over the deputy minister's head to the minister, who granted the drilling permits. An Energy Resources Conservation Board hearing was called and since AWA was considered "not directly affected" we couldn't get any financial help to prepare and present. Our key witness, had he been allowed to speak, had knowledge of a new form of drilling known as directional drilling, that could have saved Shell millions of dollars and spared Prairie Bluff un-mitigable road and wellsite scars. Several years later a Shell representative

apologized to AWA's president, telling her that she had been right – Shell had been unwise to have pressed ahead on the top of Prairie Bluff before directional drilling was proven.

Although AWA lost this conservation battle, it won the admiration and support from many in the media and the public because of its principled stand and tenacious approach. This tenacity included a 6-day blockade of bulldozers, presentations at a regulatory hearing stacked against AWA and a consistent focus on the big picture. In very short order, AWA had inspired support on the ground from university students and local citizens; the media had adopted the David and Goliath story and many questions were raised by the media and others about how a publicly developed land policy could be cast aside.



Raven Before the Storm (Parkland Study)

36" x 42" oil on canvas

© J. COLLINS

All that had happened back in 1987-88. Case #2, called “Ghosts of 1987 in 2011,” occurred this past spring on lands just a few kilometres away from Prairie Bluff. Shell once again proposed a drilling program. It wanted to drill on lands designated as a Special Place and as Critical Wildlife Habitat under the Eastern Slopes Policy. Local opposition to the exploratory well mounted. Landowners and conservation group ENGOs feared habitat loss, the loss of rare plants, more roads and pipelines intruding on their lives, and the threats to their health and safety that could arise due to leaks and lethal hydrogen sulfide (or “sour gas”).

As the local situation became charged, Shell wanted to drill an exploratory well to prove a new gas pool but previous spills and leaks in the area had people on edge. Grizzly bear dens were reported as being located nearby and a botanist acting for landowners

and ENGOs found rare plants on the proposed wellsite. An Energy Resources Conservation Board hearing was called.

At this point in the case study’s timeline we paused (later we related the unusual ERCB finding in this still evolving case to the participants – ERCB approved the test well but didn’t approve the pipeline needed to transport gas if the test drilling succeeded). We broke the 28 CLP participants into five groups, asking each to plan advocacy strategies on behalf of the landowners, ENGOs and industry involved in this recent exploratory gas well development case. We wanted these student conservationists to apply advocacy planning to a real life situation. Within each group, members were to take on the three different roles. At the end of a discussion and planning period, they would present their positions and strategy. Presentations were to be through role playing, or through

explanation, with white boards at their disposal. The groups diligently set to work and as the leaders made their rounds amongst them, we could hear vehement, heavily accented arguments coming from each concerted huddle.

Surprisingly to us, most groups chose to make their advocacy cases through role-playing, something apparently quite natural to them. The participants had taken our task to heart and enthusiastically played out their considered – if arguably naïve and unrealistically charitable – advocacy stances and scenarios. Some presentations became hilarious because of the enthusiasm, the vehement counter arguments amongst landowners, ENGOs and industry, or the deliberate insertion of humour.

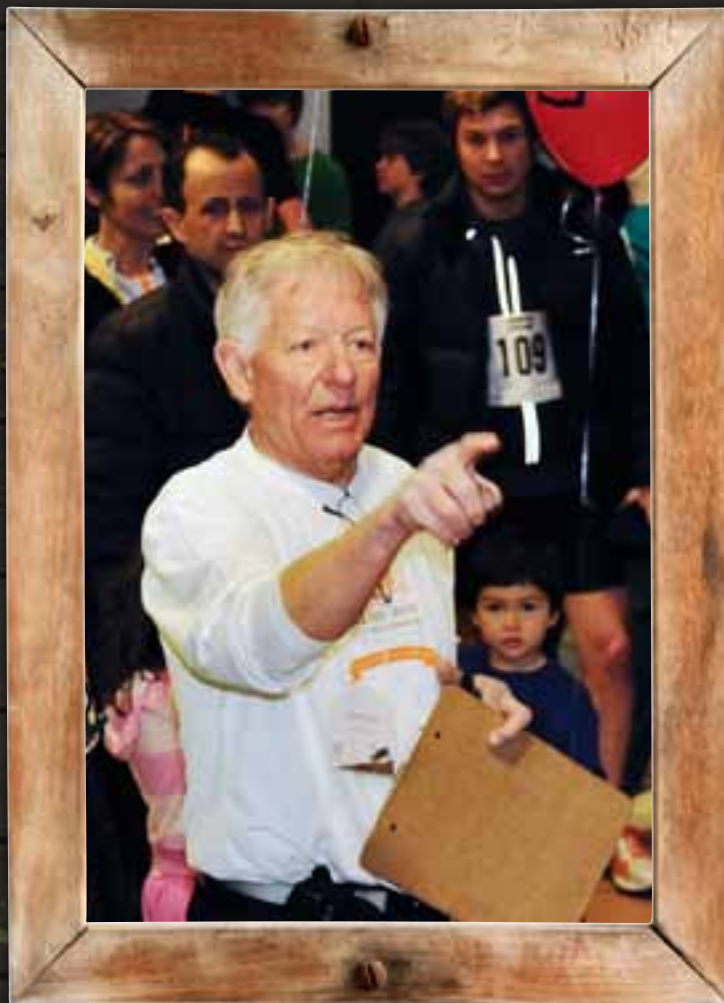
By the end of the day Christyann and I felt satisfied we had contributed to the education and experience of a wonderful group of young world leaders. 🐼



GREAT GRAY OWL AWARD 2011

Like the great gray owl the recipients of AWA's Great Gray Owl Award possess remarkable patience and dedication to purpose as they promote wildlife and wilderness habitat conservation. AWA couldn't succeed without them.

At the 2011 Awards Presentation and Annual Lecture Ed Hergott received this award in recognition of his volunteerism, dedication, and commitment.



Ed Hergott in action at the Climb for Wilderness.

PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON

Robert R. Taylor, MPA, RCA, naturalist, and photographer kindly gave AWA permission to use the great gray owl image above for this award. The image is laser carved into the wooden plaque that hangs on the wall in the Hillhurst room of the AWA office.

Ed Hergott

"Wise, enduring friend"

All too rarely we are fortunate beyond words to have someone who exceeds all expectations as a volunteer for our mission. This rare soul's passion for wilderness, wildlife, and wild water conservation is so intense they will spring up before the crack of dawn to organize a troop of volunteers. Ed Hergott is such a treasure. This is exactly what he did last year to help ensure the *Best Earth Day event in the West* was a safe, fun-filled, very successful day.

Ed Hergott is one of a kind. His enthusiasm, tenacity, and wisdom enrich AWA. Through the years Ed has assumed a number of important tasks and roles to help staff and board members do their work. For example, Ed was a burr under the saddle of the Energy Minister when we were working on petroleum leases in sensitive landscapes. Through his work we learned more about the oil and gas industry and the government's lease approval process.

Ed is a consummate organizer. I never worry whether he will do what he promises. He always delivers. And he is gentleman in the best sense of the word and is so deserving of the fine friends and wonderful family who surround him.

We are proud that Ed is part of our work, that he is always there, and that he helps us make a difference. Ed is a vital part of the positive change AWA makes; he is a "wise, enduring friend" and we are honoured to recognize him as a Great Gray Owl. ▲

- Christyann Olson

LOUISE GUY POETRY CONTEST:

KRISTYNA W. FEDOSEJEVS WINS THE INAUGURAL COMPETITION

AWA is pleased to announce that Ms. Krystyna W. Fedosejevs is the winner of the inaugural Louise Guy poetry contest. Krystyna's winning poem follows:

An Early Spring Hike

Heavy, ripple-soled hiking boots
harness my woman's small feet,
grind vulnerable pebbles unleashed
from winter's relenting cover,
move me along an outdoor Alberta trail.

Radiant morning sunrays flicker
between branches of awakening
aspens touched by a tepid breeze.
Sunrays that arouse my drowsy senses,
my determination to explore
unfamiliar territory.

A sparkling rivulet trickles towards me.
My boots crunch its patchy ice coating.
The musty smell of fresh mud,
squirrels running wildly in circles,
distant crows calling out piercing caws –
signs of early spring.

The trail changes. Brightness fades.
Towering conifers cast sinister shadows.
Sheet ice before me. Snow banks on either side.

Panic! My heartbeat quickens. I gasp for air.

Nature's wildness.
Will I adapt to its sudden dangers?

I step into footprints carved in deep snow,
hardened by last night's ice crystals.
Imprints of boots similar to mine, worn by
yesterday's hikers determined to strive.

The trail swings the other way. Final stretch.
Sun returns to light my direction
on the gravel terrain.

I reach the summit.
I am in harmony with nature.



Fall Colours Across the Tracks (Parkland Study)
30" x 60" oil on canvas
© J. COLLINS

2ND ANNUAL LOUISE GUY POETRY PRIZE ANNOUNCED

In celebration of Louise Guy, a truly remarkable woman who at 92 was a role model to young and old alike, AWA is proud to announce its **2nd Annual Climb and Run for Wilderness Poetry Contest**.

As part of our annual Earth Day celebration, the **Louise Guy Poetry Prize** is awarded to the winner of the Climb and Run for Wilderness Poetry Contest. Louise's athletic strength and endurance was exceeded only by her appreciation for wildness, wildlife and wild water, and how willingly she gave her beautiful smile as a gift to others.

People of all ages are invited to submit entries. We would like you to use wildness as the theme of your poem. Wildness means many different things to everyone and all interpretations are welcome entries.

The Louise Guy Poetry Prize winner will be announced at the Awards Ceremony of the Climb and Run for Wilderness on April 21, 2012, at the Calgary Tower at 1:30 p.m. The winner will receive a Climb for Wilderness medallion, a subscription to *Wild Lands Advocate* and an AWA **VIP** Climb for Wilderness cap. The winning poem will be published in *Wild Lands Advocate*, and will also be transcribed and posted in the stairwell of the Calgary Tower as a lasting tribute to Louise's intellect, strength, and love.

Full poetry contest information and entry details are now posted at:
<http://www.climbforwilderness.ca/poetry>

We will be accepting electronic submissions until April 12, 2012 at 10 a.m. MDT. 🍀

UPDATES

Clearcut Logging Plans for the Castle Continue, Despite Extensive Opposition

Despite thousands of letters, calls and emails to the Premier's office, supplemented with peaceful protests, the government's clearcut logging program for the Castle area has started.

Local opposition to the logging plans has been extensive. Local residents set up a protest camp on site in January 2012 and maintained their presence at the camp throughout the bitter -35 degree temperatures in the early part of the month. A January 22 protest near the proposed logging site was attended by more than 150 protesters. On February 1 four peaceful protesters were arrested for failing to obey a court order to move.

More generally, opposition to the logging plans in southern Alberta is well-recognized. In an April 2011 survey by the Praxis Group, 79.5 percent of the survey's 771 respondents were either "strongly opposed" or "somewhat opposed" to commercial logging in the Castle. An earlier survey of Lethbridge and Coaldale residents by the Lethbridge Citizen Society Research Lab reported that more than 85 percent of those surveyed opposed the clearcut logging in the area.

AWA does not oppose all forestry activity in sensitive forests such as the Castle, but we do oppose the current industrial logging techniques that put timber value above all of the other values of forests. Those values include their watershed value and their value as wildlife habitat. Opposition to logging in the Castle is being echoed by similar local opposition to clearcut logging plans near Bragg Creek and in the Livingstone area. Increasingly, local residents and businesses are calling for a new model of forest management in southern Alberta, one that manages forests as complex ecosystems, rather than merely a source of sustained vertical lumber.

The Castle wilderness is currently



More than 150 protesters attended the January 22 rally outside Beaver Mines to add their voices to the extensive public opposition to the government's clearcut logging plans for the Castle.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

designated a Special Management Area under the control of Alberta's Sustainable Resource Ministry. AWA has been fighting for decades to see the Castle better protected as a Wildland Park but our calls and those of many other groups continue to fall upon deaf ears. As a January 8 *Calgary Herald* article pointed out, "The Castle remains an environmental orphan, in danger of slow death by a thousand cuts."

- Nigel Douglas

Environmentalists petition Minister Kent for emergency sage-grouse protection

In the face of dwindling Canadian greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus urophasianus*) populations and blatant inaction from both provincial and federal levels of government, environmental groups have taken steps necessary to prevent the imminent extinction of the iconic prairie bird. Last November Ecojustice submitted a legal petition to federal Environment Minister Peter Kent demanding he take immediate action to protect sage-grouse by recommending an emergency protection order under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Signatories to this petition

include Alberta Wilderness Association, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Wilderness Committee, the Society of Grasslands Naturalists, Lethbridge Naturalists Society, Sierra Club of Canada - Prairie Chapter, Nature Alberta, Nature Saskatchewan, Nature Canada, National Audubon Society - Rockies, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, and WildEarth Guardians. Additionally, in order to provide sufficient protection for sage-grouse, the petitioners demanded prompt action be taken to further identify the essential critical habitat needed for their survival and recovery.

In Canada, sage-grouse populations persist only in the most southeastern corner of Alberta and southwestern corner of Saskatchewan. They are barely hanging on. According to the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), from 1988 to 2006 the total Canadian greater sage-grouse population declined by 88 percent. By 2011 only 13 males were counted at leks (mating grounds) in Alberta. In 2001, sage-grouse scientists predicted that fewer than 190 birds would be left in Canada by 2018; but clearly, tragically, the speed and extent of the sage-grouse's population decline have far exceeded this estimate. Based on the current trajectory of decline it is



Slough Near Redwater (Parkland Study)
16" x 24" oil on canvas
© J. COLLINS

predicted that, without drastic measures, the Alberta population will be extirpated imminently; Saskatchewan's will follow within a decade.

The main cause of sage-grouse decline is no mystery to sage-grouse scientists, nor is it to government officials; habitat degradation and fragmentation due to extensive energy development in southern Alberta has essentially impacted all remaining habitat. "We have strong science telling us how and where oil and gas development must be regulated if sage-grouse are to survive in Canada, but the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the oil and gas industry are refusing to act on it," said Dr. Mark Boyce, sage-grouse expert and professor at the University of Alberta. "Unless they change course immediately, sage-grouse will become the first species extirpated from Canada because of the oil and gas industry."

In the November 2011 petition, environmental groups demanded that Minister Kent recommend an emergency protection order for sage-grouse. According to his duties under SARA, "the competent minister must make the recommendation if

he or she is of the opinion that the species faces imminent threat to its survival or recovery." Surely this is the fate sage-grouse face. In addition, the Minister has a mandatory, not discretionary, duty to prepare a recovery strategy for sage-grouse that identifies its critical habitat "to the extent possible." Although some critical habitat has been identified in the species' recovery strategy, this habitat is insufficient for sage-grouse survival and recovery. The federal government possesses the information necessary to designate additional sage-grouse critical habitat, but has thus far failed to do so.

"The decline of Canada's sage-grouse is an emergency that demands the federal government's immediate attention," said Sean Nixon, Ecojustice staff lawyer. "The recent decline of sage-grouse presents perhaps the most compelling case for federal intervention in the history of SARA. The provinces have turned a blind eye to this crisis and if left under their watch, these birds will be on a short road to extinction." If the federal government refuses to intervene to prevent the imminent extirpation of sage-grouse, the emergency

order provisions of SARA would appear to be entirely meaningless.

As the 2012 breeding season approaches the federal government's response mimics the silence we are likely to witness on Alberta's leks this year. More than two months have passed since Ecojustice filed the legal petition. Ottawa still has not responded to it despite a January 16, 2012 deadline to respond. The plight of the sage-grouse is without a doubt that of a species imminently facing extirpation in Canada. The evidence supporting the call for immediate action is overwhelming; it is comprehensive, based on peer-reviewed scientific studies; it shows extreme population declines, lek abandonment and habitat degradation. It undoubtedly indicates the exacerbation of these declines is primarily due to the effects of industrial development. In light of Environment Minister Kent's failure to voluntarily respond to the petition, AWA will pursue all available legal options. In the latest chapter of the greater sage-grouse story in Canada, Ottawa's silence speaks louder than words.

- Madeline Wilson

Bow Valley Parkway: Parks Canada Puts Wildlife Ahead of Commercial Interests

In a bold decision, Parks Canada announced in December 2011 that it will be implementing seasonal travel restrictions on Highway 1A, the Bow Valley Parkway, between Banff and Johnston Canyon. The traffic ban on the 17-kilometre stretch of highway will begin in 2013 and will apply from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. between March 1 and June 25 each year. AWA congratulates Parks Canada for putting the interests of wildlife first on this section of highway.

The importance of this stretch of highway for wildlife was described by Kevin Van Tighem, then-Superintendent of Banff National Park, in a February 2011 article in the *Rocky Mountain Outlook*. "In early spring, as the sun warms south-facing slopes and montane meadows, the eastern half of the parkway becomes particularly important to wildlife," wrote Van Tighem. "Winter-weakened elk, deer and bighorn sheep fatten on the new greenery before giving birth to another crop of offspring. Wolves return, cautiously, to denning areas to raise new pups. Grizzly and black bears escape the snowy high country to forage along the roadside and on nearby slopes."

Past travel restrictions on this section of highway have been entirely voluntary and thus poorly observed. So, in 2010, a multi-stakeholder working group including scientists, businesses, and environmentalists, was established to pull together recommendations for how to improve on these voluntary restrictions.

Jim Pissot represented AWA on the working group and is delighted that the group's recommendations were adopted. "This is very, very good news," says Pissot. "Parks have been wrestling with this issue for fifteen years. But now they have taken the necessary measures to improve habitat security and enhance visitor experience and that is great news."

Opposition to the travel restrictions came from some local businesses and business associations, which saw any new restrictions as having a negative impact on their operations. But other businesses, such as the Business Group of Professional Photographers and Videographers in the Bow Valley, saw things differently. While recognizing that any road closure would "have a severe, long-standing effect on our businesses," the group still strongly supported the seasonal closure. "For those

businesses that are affected, like our own, we feel that this is something that needs to be done to protect the integrity of the centerpiece of Canada's premier World Heritage Site."

The travel restrictions are by no means perfect; they represent a compromise solution. AWA would have liked to have seen the travel restriction extended later in the morning. We also believe there is certainly a need for similar travel restrictions in the fall. And AWA is hopeful that the delay in implementing the restrictions – until March 2013 – will not leave the door open to backtracking on these commitments.

As Kevin Van Tighem put it back in February 2011: "Giving animals peace and security when, and where, they most need it is how Banff keeps its promise to the world: that this national park will always have ecological integrity."

- Nigel Douglas

If I Had a Billion Dollars...

The Kakwa region lies just north of Willmore Wilderness area where mountainous terrain and alpine meadows form the most northerly portion of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta. The area provides habitat for many flora and fauna; mammals, rodents, songbirds, wildflowers, lichens, and insects can be observed throughout the year. The area is an important migration corridor for the endangered woodland caribou and threatened mammal species such as the grizzly bear and wolverine. These species call Kakwa home because it offers them what they require – large tracts of intact habitat free from industrial activity. Its many streams and waterways contain bull trout, grayling and mountain whitefish, all designated as vulnerable species in Alberta.

Of particular ecological significance, the alpine environment of Caw Ridge lies within the southernmost portion of Kakwa. Caw Ridge is noted as being one of the six remaining unprotected biological hotspots in the Rocky Mountain region and is home to Alberta's largest herd of mountain goats. In light of this long list of attributes, AWA has had a long-standing interest in these wilderness areas and has advocated for the Kakwa's formal protection and preservation since the 1960s.

Though it may sound as if this area is a refuge for Alberta's wildlife the Kakwa also

is home to significant levels of industrial development. Coal leases formerly held by Alberta-based Grande Cache Coal (GCC) cover more than 22,000 hectares in the Smoky River coal field of north-western Alberta, directly adjacent to the Kakwa wilderness area. Recently, GCC was bought for \$1 billion "in cash" by China's Winsway Coking Coal Holdings Ltd. and Japan's Marubeni Corporation.

Though this language may evoke imagery of a black suitcase being covertly exchanged in a dark alley AWA feels this ownership change presents an opportunity to reevaluate the major anthropogenic disturbance which that accompanies coal extraction. AWA has repeatedly requested that the Alberta government conduct a transparent public inquiry into the cumulative effects of coal mining and other resource extraction activities upon this sensitive region and would welcome legislative protection for Caw Ridge from any further development and degradation. Despite the fact there has been mining in this coal field for over 40 years, a cumulative impacts assessment of this region has never been completed. Now seems like an especially fitting moment to reflect upon the significance and value, both ecological and economic, of the sensitive areas adjacent to such highly destructive industrial development.

- Madeline Wilson

Southern Foothills Community Stewardship Initiative

Alberta's southern foothills are a special landscape. A transition zone between the awe inspiring Rocky Mountains and the seemingly endless rolling prairies, the foothills support an extraordinary diversity of habitats from cool dark forests to broad open grasslands, to secretive, winding river valleys. And the people who call this spectacular area home are very clear about exactly what they value about this landscape and how it should be managed to protect and sustain these values.

The local passion for the southern foothills landscape was once again underlined with the recent publication of the results from the Southern Foothills Community Stewardship Initiative (SFCSI), a year-long grassroots initiative led by the Pekisko Group and the Chinook Institute for Community Stewardship. The report, *Values and Voices: Stewardship Priorities*



Limber pine on Little Whaleback Ridge.
PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

for the Southern Alberta Foothills, was released in November 2011.

According to the report, the initiative sought to “create an open and transparent process for a dialogue of citizens, which would chart a direction for planning and stewardship efforts by provincial and municipal governments as well as non-government organizations, in order to protect and enhance the integrity of the Southern Foothills landscape.”

The southern foothills are no stranger to community planning initiatives. The Southern Foothills Study, which began in 2005, was a pioneering process that looked at the cumulative impacts of numerous developments on one finite land base. *The Changing Landscape of the Southern Alberta Foothills*, the 2007 report from the Southern Foothills Study, played no small part in the development of the province’s own Land-use Framework (LUF) initiative. And now that the LUF’s planning process for the South Saskatchewan region is

beginning to make some slow progress, the SFCSI has taken the community planning process one step further. The Initiative asks local residents to express their own priorities for the area: what are the most important values of the landscape and what are the best ways to preserve those values?

Between November 2010 and June 2011 a series of public meetings was held in communities throughout the southern foothills area, including Nanton, High River and Turner Valley. Around 300 people from a range of backgrounds attended these meetings and a healthy variety of issues was discussed.

In the first round of meetings, participants focused on identifying landscape values. The 2011 *Values and Voices* report identifies eight values that participants associated with the southern foothills landscape:

- **Water security**, defined as “the reliable supply of clean water produced by a properly functioning landscape.”
- **Traditional lifestyle and culture**, as

“epitomized by ranching and farming in wide-open spaces.”

- **Aesthetics**, specifically “the breathtaking beauty of the unbroken Southern Foothills landscape.”
- **Wildlife**, including “the region’s diversity of wildlife species, and the healthy habitat that sustains that wildlife.”
- **Opportunities for low-impact recreation.**
- **Clean air.**
- **Food production**, referred to as “the sustainable production of food that is possible on the healthy foothills landscape.”
- **Stewardship Ethic**, which is “shared among many of the region’s residents.”

A second round of meetings then asked participants to make recommendations on how these values should be maintained in the future. These recommendations were distilled into six broad groups:



Pekisko Heritage Rangeland

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

1. **Integrate Land and water planning**, including the adoption of “meaningful, inclusive local consultation and sound interdisciplinary science.”
2. **Protect the watershed**, following the principle that “watershed protection should take priority over industrial, agricultural, residential and recreational land uses.”
3. **Manage for connected landscapes**, “as a prime way of supporting healthy ecosystems, as well as the traditional economies and culture in this region.”
4. **Develop stewardship capacity**, including the development of “community education that promotes an awareness of water and land stewardship as a shared responsibility.”
5. **Set thresholds for managing cumulative effects**, as “land- and water-management strategies must include thresholds for the amounts and types of human use and development permitted in this region.”

6. **Develop economic incentives for stewardship**. “Market-based economic incentives are needed for local landowners and residents who steward the land for the provision of ecological goods and services.”

“The future ecological integrity of Alberta’s Southern Foothills depends upon on a combination of forward-thinking provincial and municipal governance, and ground-up local stewardship,” the report concludes. “Based on the collective voice of Southern Foothills Community Stewardship Initiative participants, the foundation of sustainability in the region is a healthy, functioning landscape that supports the full diversity of ecosystems and traditional cultures that exist today.”

The full report can be seen on AWA’s website at www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

- *Nigel Douglas*

Southern Saskatchewan Regional Planning process

Public comment on the long drawn-out South Saskatchewan regional planning process has now been pushed back until April 2012. Planning recommendations from the hand-picked Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for the South Saskatchewan were originally released back in March 2011. A public consultation process was promised for the fall of 2011, and an on-line comments workbook was posted, with a closing date for comments of December 2011. But, as the closing date approached with no sign of the promised consultation process, it became clear that things were not going to proceed as scheduled.

Finally, at the eleventh hour, the public consultation process was postponed: Albertans now have until April 30, 2012 to offer their input. According to a December 16 government news release, “Public and stakeholder consultation sessions on this advice will start in late February.”



Lake Isle (Parkland Study)

17" x 55" oil on board

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So where does this leave us? According to the province's Land-use Framework, each of the province's seven planning regions will undergo a planning process – the Lower Athabasca and the South Saskatchewan are the first on the block. Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) are selected and invited to make recommendations for a future regional plan. These recommendations then are considered during a consultation process and the government will write the final authoritative regional plan. The following is crucial: the government may adopt the RAC recommendations and the public comments or it may not.

AWA has closely reviewed the RAC recommendations for the South Saskatchewan region. Rather than allowing ourselves to be constrained by the format of an online workbook, AWA has submitted its comments on the recommendations in a traditional letter to the Premier. We believe there are many positive elements to the recommendations of the South Saskatchewan RAC, including recommendations to:

- “Manage land in the headwaters (e.g., Eastern Slopes and Cypress Hills areas) so that maintaining watershed integrity is given highest priority by considering impacts of land disturbance in management decisions;”
- “Conserve important wetland and riparian areas for their biodiversity,

water security features and recreation/tourism values;”

- “Minimize the conversion of native landscapes and maintain the natural range of vegetative communities and succession patterns;” and
- “Reduce the risk to biodiversity, native landscapes and wildlife populations, minimize the conversion of native landscapes.”

But the recommendations also contain inconsistencies and shortcomings; these failings need to be urgently addressed before any final regional plan is developed. AWA reactions include:

- “The SSRAC recommendations fail utterly to address cumulative effects management, and avoid any attempt to prioritize different activities in different areas...The fact that choices will have to be made between different activities is studiously avoided throughout the RAC recommendations, and they are considerably weakened as a result.”
- Apparently contradictory statements abound throughout the recommendations. For example, one recommendation calls to “support irrigation expansion within districts as an important economic driver for rural communities...” while, in the next breath, it seeks to “minimize the conversion of native landscapes and maintain the natural range of vegetative

communities and succession patterns.”

- The RAC recommends designating certain important areas of the region as Conservation Areas but, as these areas are undefined, it leaves the door wide open for a host of activities within these areas, including industrial activity. How these Conservation Areas will differ from the surrounding landscape is never really explained.
- Wildlife are also given short shrift in the RAC recommendations. Threatened grizzly bears and cutthroat trout are barely mentioned. There also is a badly missed opportunity to begin to implement some of the measures called for in the provincial grizzly recovery plan.

AWA offers its comments on the South Saskatchewan RAC's recommendations in the hope that the final regional plan for the South Saskatchewan region will be strengthened. We are at a time in our province's evolution where we must make tough decisions and set standards that will ensure a vibrant, healthy province in the years to come.

AWA's comments on the South Saskatchewan RAC recommendations can be seen in full on the AWA website at www.albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlands/public-lands/archive. 🍓

- Nigel Douglas

LETTERS

Responses to Bob Scammell's Lecture

Mr. Editor:

If I may I would like to make a comment on a commentary appearing in the December issue of *Wild Lands Advocate*. The article is Dr. Ian Urquhart's synopsis of the Fourth Annual Martha Kostuch Lecture, entitled "Alberta's Public Land Crisis." It is important the reader understand this letter is my personal viewpoint as a rancher and range management specialist. I am not attempting to answer on behalf of the industry.

Alberta's Public Lands are a significant resource for all Albertans and all Albertans should feel free to express their concerns over the management of this resource. However, as a resource manager, I believe much of this debate is taking place with little regard to the facts. In my opinion, the presentation "Alberta's Public Land Crisis" given as the Fourth Annual Martha Kostuch Lecture, as presented by Bob Scammell, is a very good example of this.

As I read the synopsis, I noticed there were three primary issues of concern presented in the article: 1) compensation from oil and gas companies, 2) recreational access and 3) the grazing fee structure. What follows is my viewpoint on these issues.

Compensation from oil and gas companies.

It is true there are leaseholders who receive over \$100,000 from oil and gas companies. However, on average the compensation received by leaseholders ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000, just enough

to pay for the land taxes and grazing fees. Nevertheless, Mr. Scammell raises a valid point: the compensation process lacks transparency and there should be adequate guidelines to make sure this process is fair and open to public scrutiny.

The grazing fee structure.

I believe the comparison of the grazing fees on Public Land to those charged by private landowners is an invalid comparison.

Economics (supply and demand) set the grazing fees on private leases. Consequently, these fees will vary from year to year. In dry years (when a large number of ranchers are looking for grass), rental fees on private leases tend to rise to rates that are higher than those on Public Lands. In wet years (when the demand for grass is lower), the grazing fees charged by private landowners may be lower than grazing leases on Public Land. Since economics is the determining factor in setting stocking on private grazing leases, it is common to see private grazing leases stocked at ecologically unsustainable stocking rates.

Grazing fees for grazing leases on Public Land vary from area to area and vary between types of lease dispositions. A formula, taking into account the price of livestock, a royalty fee, and the expected weight gain of livestock, determines the grazing fee for grazing leases (grassland and forest grazing) on public lands. In addition to the grazing fee, the lessee pays the municipal taxes assigned by the county or municipal district. Unlike private grazing leases, the Ecologically Sustainable Carrying

Capacity (ESCC) of the grazing lease, as determined by the lease inspector (SRD – Public Lands), determines the stocking rate for that grazing lease.

Since there is an economic formula to determine the grazing fee for a grazing lease, economics is not the determining factor in setting stocking rates on grazing leases. It is also important to note stocking rates

for grazing leases on public land are significantly lower than stocking rates on private grazing leases because of the terms set in the lease agreements.

Access for recreation.

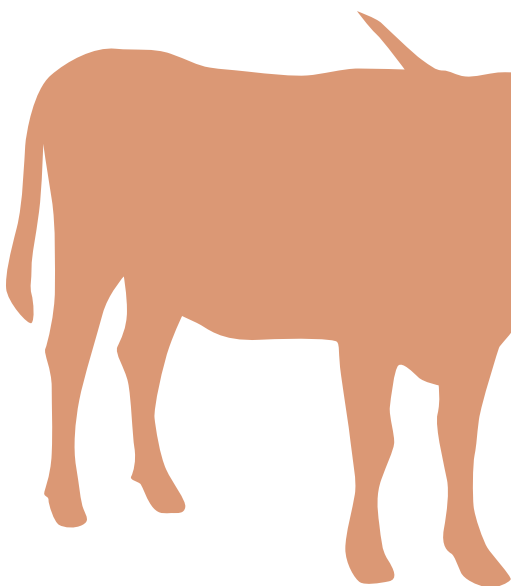
It is my belief, as a resource manager, recreationalists and environmentalists are making a valid point when they call for freer access to Alberta's Public Lands. What these groups fail to realize is most ranchers are patiently waiting from them to answer a fundamental question: what is the ecologically sustainable level for recreation on a particular lease?

While it is a relatively simple task to determine the ESCC of a grazing lease, neither the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) nor the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) have put forward an objective protocol to measure the ecological impact of their respective recreational activities. Consequently, most leaseholders tend to manage for recreation in a very cautious fashion.

There is little doubt in my mind the present policies on managing Alberta's Public Lands need to be updated. As I have stated, public input is fundamental to making this process happen and the opinions of groups like AWA and the AFGA are important. However, if this input is to be of any value all the stakeholders need to realize the issues surrounding the management of Alberta's Public Lands are going to be resolved with a combination of economic, ecological, and social strategies. While groups such as AWA and the AFGA show a deep understanding and appreciation of the ecology of Alberta's Public Lands, their understanding of the economic factors influencing the management of this resource is clearly lacking. In this respect, I urge these organizations to become more acquainted with the economic and management aspects of the ranching industry, particularly that segment with grazing leases on public land.

Sincerely Yours,

Hyland Armstrong



Dear Wilderness Association members,

We are writing to you to address some concerns we have with recent comments given by Mr. Bob Scammell at a function of yours with regards to grazing leases in the province of Alberta. While Mr. Scammell is entitled to his opinion, we feel it is important to correct some of the information being passed along as factual. In our view an individual is only as credible as the story being projected. While we recognize grazing leases are an on-going issue for many groups and Mr. Scammell it should be imperative that the issues be brought in the light of what is happening today, not the same arguments that were used and confused 20 years ago.

Firstly, let's lay the groundwork. There are roughly 5,700 grazing leases (Crown Lands under agricultural disposition) in Alberta. This is about 5.2 million acres. Alberta's land mass is estimated at 150,000,000 acres... not including water. This would put the grazing lease acreage at less than 5 percent of the land base. The beef cattle industry generates roughly \$3 billion in farm cash receipts. The success of the industry relies on an efficient and productive cow herd with access to an extensive feed supply. Approximately 20 percent of this feed comes from the use of Crown grazing leases. These Crown lands have a designated priority use for agriculture and most are best suited to cattle grazing. The average lease in Alberta is just over a section and supports approximately 50 cows.

Mr. Scammell's view that there is a "Public Land Problem" is based merely on a subjective view he has held for decades. The controversies that he perceives can be dealt with one at a time.

Lease rental rates are only one of a number of costs associated with holding a grazing lease. Total costs are a complex compilation of an acquisition fee, lease rental, taxes, building and maintaining fences and handling facilities, providing water and other improvements on the lease. Coupled with this are costs required in managing both recreation as well as industrial development to assure the least possible impact on the resource.

Transferability of the lease happens when a lessee decides to retire, move, expand or downsize. Grazing leases are deemed real property and have a value. Part of the value is the security of tenure (10 year renewable lease is the norm), which is necessary for

a return on capital invested to make the operation work. Transfer or assignment fees are payable to the government when the rights change hands. In the S.W. corner of the province, these fees amount to \$100/Animal Unit Month or \$50/acre. This level of cost significantly reduces the transfers between one producer and another.

Purchases of Crown grazing leases occur occasionally in the northern portion of the province and are generally based on need and the belief that there needs to be some development in that area. The lands are assessed to ensure that they meet the criteria that Sustainable Resource Development has for that area and parcel.

Industrial or commercial activity on these leases happens because of a sub-surface resource being present, i.e. oil, gas, gravel & other minerals. The government sells the sub-surface rights to the industrial developer who then goes ahead and negotiates surface rights compensation. These payments are divided between the government and the lessee. The compensation paid to the lessee is for loss of use and inconvenience or adverse effect. Those principles are consistent with the Surface Rights Act and are due to the leaseholder, not the government. In these instances the "owner" (government) does not qualify for either loss of use or adverse effect, hence that portion goes to the lessee. The government, as the owner, collects their share through surface rental on the development. The government can adjust this rental when they deem appropriate and also collect royalties on production and taxes.

The term "Cowboy Welfare" is disturbing because it is not supported by facts. Mr. Scammell erroneously extrapolates the payments that the Fish & Game operation on the Antelope Creek ranch receives to all other leases in the province. That is absolutely wrong, less than one-half of all grazing leases have any compensation from oil & gas activity and very few have compensation to the extent that Antelope Creek has. Therefore the figures Mr. Scammell uses are grossly distorted and naturally lead to conclusions that cannot be supported by factual evidence.

With regards to the perception that a grazing lease only confers the right to the grass as Arlene Kwasniuk and Mr. Scammell purport, the courts have not agreed with that position and subsequent legislation has modified the issue of access since that time. Bill 16, Part B has dealt with access on these lands and has been supported by Alberta Fish & Game as well as leaseholders and industrial users. It grants reasonable access conditions on both parties. Unfettered access is a recipe for complete destruction; have a look at MacLean Creek and other areas where recreation has gone mad.

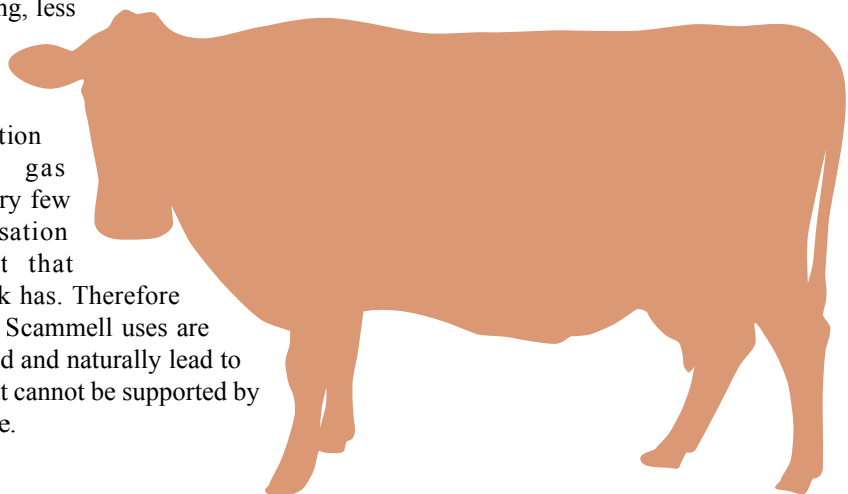
As for the suggestion that a board of directors should be in charge of the management of Crown Lands under agricultural disposition, our answer is: stewardship is best left in the hands of the day to day managers. They are the ones that know and understand what is going on and how best to protect the resource.

Some of these leases have been used for 130 years with little or no negative change in the environment sustaining the grass, water and other habitat that makes up a lease. Sustainable Resource Development has worked together with the cattle industry to develop a Code of Practice and a guide that offers direction for industrial development as well. These are proactive initiatives supported and developed cooperatively with Public lands managers that have had very positive results. Thank-you for the opportunity to address our concerns.

Yours truly,

Larry Sears, Chairman,

Alberta Grazing Leaseholders



RECALL OF THE WILD

Recall of (a Champion of) the Wild

It may be trite to say that Life may deal us some cruel blows but Tom Maccagno's untimely passing from this earth was such an event for me. I met Tom through work I did several years ago on AWA's Lakeland campaign. He was generous, knowledgeable, and passionate. I learned a great deal from him.

In the years I have been *WLA* editor I occasionally thought we should interview Tom for Recall of the Wild. I always rejected the thought because I felt that interview would be more appropriate to do ten years from now. I was wrong.

If you never knew Tom you may never know what you missed. I hope the eulogy delivered by his son Morris at his funeral in Lac La Biche and the reflections of Aaron Davies, someone I regard as Tom's apprentice, will give you some measure of the man.

- Ian Urquhart

Eulogy for Tom Maccagno (12 January 2012, Lac La Biche)

***Do not go where the path may lead,
go instead where there is no path
and leave a trail.***

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our dad Tom Maccagno cut new trails for others to follow in many different ways. Through his intellect, passion, and energy, he was a leader in the Lac La Biche community for many years. He put his energy to a range of causes. He understood well the values of community service, cultural heritage, and the good stewardship of all life on earth. He was not driven by his own gain, but wanted to help build a better world for us all.

His list of accomplishments is long, as is the list of recognitions that he received. His interests and pursuits spanned widely.

He was first person at Lac la Biche to take a law degree. Early in his professional career, he took cases that advanced social justice, and defended the interests of those with few advantages. He volunteered many hours to Catholic Social Services. We often heard that he was the "go-to guy" when a loved-one was in difficulty in hospital.

Later, as his career matured, he broadened his community service. As Mayor...he became involved in a Charter challenge

... Lakeland Park became a reality... he helped the Mission ...he was key to the designation of Portage la Biche he led the celebration of the 200th anniversary of David Thompson's arrival ... he was key to the expansion of Churchill Park to include all of the islands. He worked with First Nations and Metis people ... the Beaver Lake Cree Nation considered him a "light in the darkness" ... He discovered new orchid species in Lakeland Park.

He was ahead of his time. 30 years ago, he opposed turning a beautiful little lake into a sewage lagoon, and some thought he was crazy. Today, in contrast, to turn a lake into a sewage lagoon would be considered crazy.

Since retirement, he worked more deeply on Western Canadian history, and published articles in several journals. Until the end, he fought for the Lac la Biche Big Dock ... and we hope that this project won't die with him.

As one of his brothers once said, "Tom flies with the eagles." But, our dad also knew the deepest of pain. He understood the lines of Aeschylus that Bobby Kennedy memorized: "He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."

Our dad was a caring brother and husband, and wonderful father and grandfather. Growing up, our house was filled with art,

music, and books. He shared in our joys, and guided us through difficult periods with wisdom and love. His thoughts and opinions were the result of contemplation, understanding, and wisdom.

We had glorious days together... fishing, hunting, and discovering the natural treasures of the area. He taught us sailing. We water-skied and cross-country skied together. We found arrowheads together. We gazed at the stars. He provided us with many, many rich experiences that we will be eternally grateful for.

He was a spiritual person, grateful for his many talents and gifts, and also generous with these talents and gifts. He had a good soul and strong connection with our Lord and Creator.

He left this world a better place. Upon hearing of our dad's passing, a long-time friend offered the following passage (from Douglas Hutton):

"During each autumn, the leaves of Canada's ... trees fall to the forest floor soon to be covered by a blanket of snow. Each spring the warmth of the sun grows new buds within the rhythms of a new season. As the people who have enriched our lives throughout history have come and gone, new pages of life go on each day with hopes and dreams that begin with another dawning and the promise of tomorrow."

Thank you Dad, we love you, and may God care for you. 🍀



Aaron and Tom somewhere in Lakeland

Remembering Tom

By Aaron Davies

I had the good fortune of meeting Tom Maccagno on an AWA day hike he led in Lakeland Provincial Park several years ago. I was amazed at how much he knew and cared about the area. Despite growing up and living in Edmonton, I had spent a lot of time in Lakeland with my family. Tom and I instantly made a connection rooted in a mutual love of the area's natural history. We kept in contact and I later moved to Lac La Biche where we became good friends and shared many memorable times fishing, orchid hunting, bird watching, berry picking and exploring the wilderness in and around the Lakeland region.

My favorite memory of Tom took place in the Garner orchid fen, a quiet Natural Area outside of Plamondon, which Tom was responsible for having protected. This dark and humid thicket of black spruce and mineral springs was an area Tom and I explored frequently. We searched for orchids and other rare plants, often getting lost or separated after roaming the woods

with our heads down, focused exclusively on scanning the moss.

On one occasion, we both ended up stepping off the narrow and winding game trails and were forced to separately find our way back to the main road. I eventually managed to find my way, but waited for Tom for nearly an hour before he stumbled out on the road a half a mile up from where we originally parked. He told me he had wandered around in circles and at some point lost his glasses. Although disappointed, he shrugged the loss off, along with the possibility of ever finding them again.

A few weeks later we returned with the intention of checking on the sparrow's egg lady's slippers which were set to bloom, and measuring the diameter of a birch tree which we suspected could be the largest in the province. After photographing the lady's slippers, we made our way to the very back of the fen to the birch tree. It is a long and arduous trek in which you must cross a large and muddy spring. It is an area that rarely sees human footprints.

After taking some measurements and more photos, we began to make our way back. We stopped and rested under a large spruce tree and casually chatted about planning our next adventure. I looked down to my right and to my amazement, saw his long lost glasses sitting in the grass. I held them up slowly. We stared at each other in silent bewilderment, no doubt simultaneously calculating the odds of finding them by accident in the jungle-like environment of the fen. After contemplating the seemingly impossible reality, we both agreed that the moment we just shared was special. Then we laughed. And laughed.

Over the years Tom and I shared numerous experiences like this one. Along the way he shared with me a lifetime's worth of knowledge about the area. It is difficult to summarize the impact he has had on my life. He was thoughtful, articulate, and gentle, but relentless in his pursuits. All other things aside, the lakes and woods will simply not be the same without him. Rest in peace, my friend. 🍓

READER'S CORNER

George Beccaloni,
Biggest Bugs Life-Size,
(Buffalo: Firefly Books, 2010).

Reviewed by the students and teachers of St. Teresa's Elementary School, Edmonton.

Do you know someone who loves creepy crawlers? Do you know someone who would like to know where to find the biggest bugs in the world? *Biggest Bugs Life-Size* may be the perfect addition to that person's library. Author George Beccaloni has had a life-long fascination with bugs. The ten year old who collected critters in Zimbabwe grew up to become an insect curator at the Natural History Museum in London. He has written four books and many scientific and popular articles about the subjects that fascinate him.

Biggest Bugs Life-Size features the largest members of all the major groups (orders) of insects, arachnids (spiders and their kin), and myriapods (centipedes and millipedes). But in order to join Beccaloni's club of bugs an order must have at least one species with a minimum adult body length of 50 mm (1¾ in.). And yes, Beccaloni includes life-size photos of the biggest bugs in his book (Chan's Megastick, the world's longest insect, measures 357 mm; its photo required a foldout page!). Would you suggest anything less than life-size if you met a group of biggest bugs to discuss publishing layout ideas?

Thirty-one bugs belong to the biggest bug club. Most live between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn in what we could characterize approximately as the equatorial portion of the globe. North America only can claim one of these bugs. The Giant Vinegaroon (*Mastigoproctus giganteus*) is the world's biggest uropygid and may be found in southern Florida and from the American southwest to southern Mexico. Uropygids defend themselves by spraying a chemical cocktail at their would-be predators. The Vinegaroon's common name comes from the prominence of acetic acid (the main ingredient in vinegar) in its spray.

AWA felt that, for this book review, we needed the best experts we could gather to assess *Biggest Bugs'* strengths and weaknesses. So we turned to elementary

school students and their teachers to give us their views. The book circulated for several days among students and staff at St. Teresa's Elementary School in Edmonton. Applause for the book was virtually universal.

The exotic nature of the bugs (in terms of their locale and characteristics) fascinated the students; teachers used it to good effect. The text and photo captions were very clear and reader-friendly. The book very accessibly offers important details about "a bug's life" – details such as where it lives, when it's active, what it feeds on, and how it acquires its food are easy to understand in the two-page descriptions of the bugs covered in the book. The predator-prey relationships outlined in the book struck one teacher as offering the basis for a very good teaching strategy. Many characteristics of these bugs, such as their use of camouflage and defensive mechanisms such as the Giant Vinegaroon's acidic spray, could be highlighted through such a strategy.

The maps, identifying where each of

the world's biggest bugs could be found, impressed one and all. So too did the photography. The photos of creepy crawlers are spectacular. The inclusion of so many life-size photos made the photographic representations of the bugs even more powerful. One youngster summed up the consensus view when he described the book as "Awwwwssssuuuummmmm."

Our reviewers felt that if the book ignored one subject they really wanted to see covered it was local bugs – North American bugs, Canadian bugs, Alberta bugs. As mentioned above, enthusiastic applause for the book was not always forthcoming. One teacher asked her class if there were any students who didn't like the book. A few girls put up their hands. When asked why they didn't like it, one replied: "It's about bugs." In addition to providing a wonderful introduction into the realm of bugs George Beccaloni's book may also demonstrate that some gender differences are still with us. ▲



**Candace Savage,
Prairie: A Natural History.
Updated edition.**

**(Vancouver: Greystone Books/
David Suzuki Foundation, 2011),
xi + 305 pp.**

Reviewed by Roger Epp

The Great Plains region of North America, as the opening pages of this book remind us, has been overlooked or disparaged for at least two centuries of European presence. It once looked to settlers like a “vacant space . . . in desperate need of improvement.” It is still “the Big Empty in the middle of the continent.” It lacks the easy glamour of mountains and oceans, even for many of its inhabitants.

As compensation, however, the Great Plains region can also claim more than its mathematical share of writers – poets, storytellers, naturalists – whose attentiveness to both its tiny details and the big-sky scale of its landscapes invites readers to look again, and then again, more carefully, patiently, affectionately. Candace Savage is surely one of them.

Prairie is an updated edition of a book first published to considerable acclaim in 2004. The author’s new preface points to the urgency of a “no-regrets” conservation strategy in the face of increasingly intense industrial activity, especially in the agriculture and energy sectors. Indeed, her references to the natural history of Nebraska’s fragile sand hills ecosystem will have a special significance as long as the Keystone XL pipeline project is debated. But no matter the reason, re-issue means that booksellers will stock the book on their shelves and new readers will have reason to encounter it.

Prairie is a beautiful book. Its text, photographs and maps, taken together, are as evocative and sensitive as the world they represent. As a natural history, it skillfully bridges three common divides. First, Savage moves easily across the 49th parallel, treating the prairie region as a single piece whose secondary variations are a product of weather, water and rock rather than the political fences erected in the most recent geological instant. Second, she synthesizes research from a number of scientific specializations. Finally, she writes about natural history with an uncommon artfulness, clarity and sense of personality. For all those reasons, *Prairie* could serve as a wonderful textual foundation for the kind of enlightened course in the ecology of

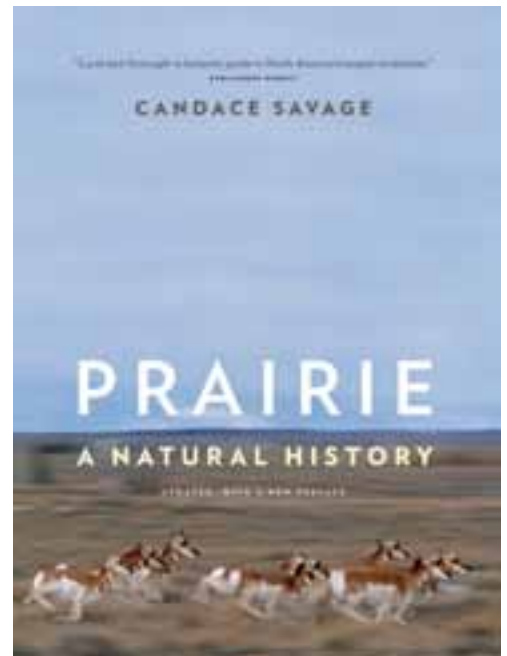
place that ought to be part of the curriculum – the required “literacy” – for high-school or university students from Alberta to Texas. For the same reasons, it should be on the desks of political leaders and policymakers. Perhaps it should be put in the hands of newcomers.

Savage’s prairie is forever precarious and resilient. It has been many things in its long history: seabed, gravel pit, desert, ice-block and “empire of grass.” Since the onset of European homestead settlement, it has been “one of the most extensively altered ecosystems on Earth,” with “scarcely a patch of ground where we have not left our footprints.” Yet, she writes, it is “still very much alive and worth caring about.” It is marked by a relatively high level of biodiversity and adaptation to a climate of extremes. Its survivors – bison, pronghorns, coyotes, prairie-dogs, grasshoppers, cranes, and, of course, grasses – have often been demonized to justify their elimination or else just displaced by the path to progress. Savage retells their stories as part of a complex, dynamic ecosystem.

She is particularly clear on the ways in which the settlement imperatives of suppressing flood and fire have deprived the prairie, over time, of its two primary modes of natural regeneration. Her book, in turn, will change the way readers not only think about floods and fire, but also see such commonplaces as potholes, topsoil and roadside habitat. It will make them attentive to diminished stream-flows, dying cottonwoods, rising temperatures and disappearing grassland birds (the “prairie canaries”).

One of her justifiable targets here is agricultural mono-cropping – the antithesis of complexity – and the recent re-cultivation of marginal lands in response to higher grain prices and the promise of biofuel: “We can rip up 10,000-year-old grassland in an instant,” she writes, “but it is beyond our powers to create it” (253).

Despite the trends, however, Savage calls the prairies a “landscape of hope,” “a country filled with light,” one that can still “inspire us with its splendor” and its “immensities of space and time.” Her tone matches Trevor Herriot’s call in *Grass, Sky, Song* for “the opposite of accusation” – that is, for a “humble re-entry into community and creation” and an acceptance that all of us are part of a “circle of shared responsibility.” *Prairie* reveals her as a reconciler, not a divider. By example, she combines a critical affection with a respect



for both science and livelihood; but her message is no less urgent for all that.

Some of the forces that will shape the prairie’s future are, of course, larger than the region itself. Climate change is the most notable. As Savage notes, relatively small shifts in the not-so-distant past resulted in prolonged, inhospitable periods of glaciation and drought. By implication, there is no good reason to take current conditions for granted – resilient as the prairie, as a whole, might be.

But this is not a book for arm-chair fatalists. In her conclusion, Savage recalls the first, fumbling efforts that saved the bison from extinction more than a century ago. She anticipates that more such “imperfect collaborations” will be necessary, enlisting farmers, city-dwellers, aboriginal peoples, civil servants and others who have made a home in the region. At the top of her ecological priority-list is the restoration of working prairie grassland in large enough blocks to reverse the loss of key species habitat. In that work, Savage identifies plenty of common ground particularly between ranchers (who are, she reminds us, also an endangered species) and other conservationists.

Prairie, in short, is a book bursting with knowledge and encouragement. It leaves no excuse for caricatures of its subject as flat, empty, uninteresting space to cross on the way to someplace else. 🍎

Roger Epp is professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta and author of We Are All Treaty People: Prairie Essays.

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 an outing 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

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$5.00

Registration: (403) 283-2025

Online: www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

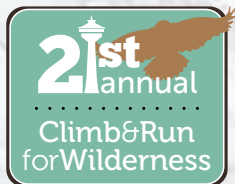
21st Annual Climb and Run for Wilderness

Saturday April 21, 2012 at the Calgary Tower

10th Annual Mural Competition

Saturday March 24, 2012

Come join us for the biggest and best Climb and Run for Wilderness yet! We are now taking online registrations: sign up at ClimbForWilderness.ca to climb the 802 steps of the Calgary Tower. The tower will be open to climbers from 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.



We are also taking applications for the 10th annual Mural Competition. Come display your artwork in the tallest gallery in the west!

Registration and Information: (403) 283-2025

Online: www.ClimbForWilderness.ca

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

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$5.00

Registration: (403) 283-2025

Online: www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

Music For the Wild

Saturday, May 12, 2012

The Wardens

Three Parks Canada wardens sharing their stories through song. Backcountry horse patrols, mountain rescues and wildlife conflict all provide inspiration for these singing wardens whose “tales of adventure and misadventure” in the Rocky Mountain national parks have been set to music and verse. The evening’s songs are accompanied by visuals and stories that give the audience an unforgettable way to experience what life is actually like for a park warden.

Opening Act: to be announced

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

Summer Hikes Programme

We’re busy gearing up our hikes programme for the Summer of 2012!

We have a great selection of outdoor events planned, mixing old favourites such as our ever-popular Whaleback hikes with some new outings like a camping and birding trip to the Suffield grasslands.

A detailed schedule is coming in the April *Wild Lands Advocate* – stay tuned!

Cavell Glacier, Jasper National Park

PHOTO: © M. WILSON

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21st annual
Climb & Run
for Wilderness

APRIL 21ST, 2012


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