

A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE



THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

AUGUST 2012



ALBERTANS COLLABORATING TO HELP GRIZZLIES
VALUES AND GRIZZLY CONSERVATION
EXTENDING LAKELAND...IT'S JUST COMMON SENSE
MEET ANOTHER AWA WILDERNESS DEFENDER

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AUGUST 2012 • VOL. 20, NO. 4

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COVER PHOTO

A scramble to the top of Mist Mountain is the subject of Nigel Douglas's cover photo. At roughly 12 km (elevation gain of approximately 1,300 metres) this scramble may offer an invigorating day hike this fall.

FEATURED ARTIST

We decided to mix things up a little in this issue of the Advocate. Rather than feature a specific artist we're featuring the powerful posters the creative minds of Calder Bateman have created as part of AWA's grizzly campaign. I know you'll appreciate their creativity and message.

Editor:

Ian Urquhart

Graphic Design:

Marni Wilson

Printing:

Colour printing and process is sponsored by Topline Printing

topline
printing inc.



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ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

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

Please direct questions and comments to:

403-283-2025 • wla@abwild.ca

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



Alberta Wilderness Association

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

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

ISSN 1192-6287

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Gandhi, Warhol, and **Change**

I'll wager it's been awhile since you saw someone looking to Mahatma Gandhi and Andy Warhol for guidance about the future. Change...their views on change is what draws me to them here. These figures, worlds apart in so many respects, both recognized how important personal and collective action are to the lives we lead, the lives we may be able to lead.

Gandhi famously counseled: "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." Warhol observed that: "They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

Such thoughts fit well with what you'll read in our three feature articles in this issue. Nigel Douglas introduces the uninitiated to the Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership. This collaboration between landowners, municipalities, public servants, and environmentalists is changing for the better the prospects of grizzlies who tread on private land once they cross the forest reserve boundary.

Courtney Hughes, a U of A PhD student, opens our eyes to the important

potential role our values may play with regards to long-term grizzly bear conservation in Alberta. If Albertans' values are allowed to inform the policy-making process different value combinations will have different consequences for the future of this threatened species. If we are going to improve the prospect for grizzlies in Alberta we must continue our efforts to inform and persuade our fellow citizens about why increasing the province's grizzly population is admirable.

Carolyn Campbell invites readers (hopefully a few of them are in the provincial and federal governments) to appreciate the ecological and political logics that should lead to establishing and extending wilderness areas in Lakeland east of Lac La Biche.

One of the highlights for me of the August, October, and December issues of the Advocate is the space we devote to our Wilderness Defenders and Great Gray Owls. Their lives have followed the path of Gandhi. They are the change that we wish to see. In this issue Lindsey Wallis

treats you to a look at Lorne Fitch, whose love for wild spaces and knowledge of Alberta's ecology will be familiar to regular readers of *WLA*. Lorne, along with Alison Dinwoodie whom you'll meet in October, is receiving a Wilderness Defenders award this year.

Change of another, sadder, sort initially got me on this track of thought. This summer sees two of AWA's fabulous conservation specialists leave their positions for other pastures. Madeline Wilson, whose energy and passion were infectious, is headed to the University of Victoria to pursue a Master's degree in political ecology. Nigel Douglas, arguably our province's leading champion of grizzly bears, is moving back to the United Kingdom. I'll miss his insights and institutional memory greatly (attempting to reverse the historical UK/Canadian colonial relationship I plan to exploit Nigel for some WLA duties). May the two of them bring their passion for positive change to their new homes.

- Ian Urquhart, Editor

AWA'S 2012 PRIORITIES: Grizzlies and Cold Lake

BY SEAN NICHOLS, AWA Conservation Specialist



White Throated Sparrow in Primrose-Lakeland
PHOTO: © G. WIRUN

Long-time members, as well as many newer ones, will certainly be aware of AWA's long-standing concern for the well-being of Alberta's grizzly population. From virtual official *carte blanche* a few years ago, to the moratorium on the grizzly bear hunt, to a grizzly bear Recovery Plan, and finally to the provincial designation as a threatened species in 2010, we have recently had cause for some optimism. However, the grizzly is far from secure and much remains to be done, both by AWA and especially by the provincial government, leaving the grizzly as one of AWA's top priorities..

The other priority featured in this issue of *WLA* is Cold Lake. Parts of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR) have been identified by AWA as an excellent opportunity to gain wilderness and conservation lands that provide outstanding natural values and habitat to a wide diversity of flora and fauna. Much of the CLAWR sees little-to-no on the ground usage that would be limited by designation as a protected area, yet the benefits of such designation would be huge.

Wanted: Room to Roam

AWA Position: Grizzly bears need secure habitat to allow them to go about their lives free from disturbance. The 2008 Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan makes it clear that "Human use of access (specifically, motorized vehicle routes) is one of the primary threats to grizzly bear persistence." Grizzly mortality in some parts of grizzly bear range remains unsustainably high and minimal progress has been made in

implementing access density targets recommended in the recovery plan. The 2008 plan recommends maximum "open route densities" of 0.6 km/km² in core grizzly areas, and 1.2 km/km² in all other grizzly range. But only minimal progress has been made in applying these targets. AWA and other organizations are calling for the Alberta Government to end new road construction in bear habitat until road density is at or below the amount identified in the provincial Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan.

In this issue: Nigel Douglas writes a welcome good news story about Alberta's grizzlies in "Good News Bears." In the southwestern part of the province, landowners, governments and environmental groups are coming together to develop ways of living with their ursine neighbours rather than treating them as a problem to be done away with, as has often been the case in the past. In his article, Nigel explores some of the work being done by the exemplar Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership. It is not often that we are able to feature a good news story about an issue that AWA considers high-priority. This is one to celebrate.

Also in this issue, Nigel writes about yet another study calling for a reduction in road densities in grizzly bear range. It is well known and well understood that the issue of access is one of the greatest threats to grizzly survival. File this one under "yes we know – let's *do* something about it already!"

Boreal Gem Waiting for Protection

AWA Position: Most of Alberta's southern boreal forest is under heavy

pressure from cumulative forestry and energy industry extraction. The relatively intact, roadless western, northern and eastern portions of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range present an important opportunity to secure habitat in the area. The range features old growth forests, a variety of wetlands, and is rich in moose, deer, bears and migratory birds. Saskatchewan has already designated three protected areas on its portion of the range, two of which lie on the Alberta border. The Alberta portion contains part of the internationally significant Primrose Lake Important Bird Area and six Environmentally Significant Areas of provincial significance, including woodland caribou range, rare plants, and important riparian areas. AWA seeks legislated conservation designation of undisturbed areas within the Alberta range, compatible with ongoing air force use.

In this issue: Carolyn Campbell makes a reasoned proposal for establishing protected areas on the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, extending the existing (but small) Lakeland Provincial Park, and finalizing a long-overdue ecosystem-based management plan for the area. As Carolyn writes, the time is ripe to "move forward with a low impact recreation-oriented Wildland Park designation in these areas, (which) would be a relatively easy and vitally important step by this government."

With six priorities down and four to go, keep an eye on the October and December issues of *WLA* where we will highlight the remaining issues that AWA is keeping at the forefront of its efforts to defend wild Alberta through awareness and action. ▲



Grizzly Bears in the Kananaskis
PHOTO: © C. BRUUN

Good News Bears



BY NIGEL DOUGLAS, AWA Conservation Specialist



The Waterton region is famous as the place where the mountains meet the prairie. Though two hundred years of human activity have restricted the grizzly bear to the mountains, the call of their ancestral home on the prairies must be loud.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

The future of grizzly bears in southern Alberta is starting to look a little more rosy these days, in large part due to a growing collaboration between landowners, municipalities, environmental groups and government staff working to reduce human/ bear conflicts. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the southwestern corner of the province, where the work of the Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership (DYCP) is beginning to pay dividends.

For many years, the traditional view of grizzlies in this region has been that they are relatively secure in their strongholds in the mountainous and forested public land to the west, but the moment they step eastwards over the forest reserve boundary, they come into conflict with private landowners. The result is either the relocation of these “problem” bears, or worse still, death at the hands of gun-toting supporters of the policy Ralph Klein infamously referred to as “shoot,

shovel and shut up.”

Increasingly however, this picture is being turned on its head. While poorly-managed motorized recreation continues to contribute to unsustainably high grizzly mortality in much of their range on public land, early indications are that grizzlies are beginning to spread out onto adjacent private land to the east. And if initiatives such as the DYCP can continue their work to keep both bears and people safe by reducing the attractants which can bring bears into closer contact with people, then there is no reason why grizzlies cannot be a permanent part of this landscape into the future.

Grizzlies Coming Home

In a way it is not entirely surprising if grizzlies are indeed moving east from the mountains out onto the prairies. When we think of grizzlies today, we tend to associate them with the mountains and foothills, the remote spectacular wilderness landscapes where they are

most likely to be encountered. But it was not always thus. In fact grizzlies are at heart a prairie species; they evolved out on the wide open grasslands, and this is their ancestral home. In southwestern Alberta, where the prairies butt right up against the mountains with a minimal transition zone, it is perhaps not too surprising that grizzlies here are tempted to head east, even into country where they have rarely been recorded in many decades.

For people who have lived and worked on these landscapes for generations, it is not necessarily an easy matter suddenly to have to deal with a large carnivore on their doorstep. But rather than discreetly getting rid of their new ursine neighbours, or clamouring to have Fish and Wildlife staff come and take them away, an increasing number of people are looking at ways to learn to live with them.

On a beautiful early summer’s day south of Pincher Creek, DYCP and

Trout Unlimited hosted a field trip to explain some of their recent initiatives. The Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership was initially formed in response to the floods of 1995, which wreaked havoc on riparian areas throughout the region. Working with groups such as Cows and Fish, they looked at ways to allow riparian areas to recover, including fencing to keep cattle away from regenerating areas at crucial times of year. The lush young cottonwood growth that can be seen today on Tony Bruder's ranch alongside Yarrow Creek is a testament to the success of this program. "The creek banks are starting to stabilize a little bit and it's making a big difference," explains Bruder, president of the DYCP.

But in 2008, DYCP's focus began to expand: "we started to really notice an increase in large carnivore activity in the area," says Bruder. Clearly something was happening to attract more bears onto the landscape, and the prime candidates were quickly identified: dead livestock (or "deadstock"), elderly grain storage bins, silage stores and beehives. The provincial *Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan 2008-2013*, which was released later the same year, recognized attractant management as one of the primary issues that needed to be addressed: "Problem bear issues... are usually a result of improperly stored attractants, and therefore, **improper storage of attractants represents one of the primary threats to grizzly bear persistence**" (emphasis in the Recovery Plan).

Deadstock Removal

Not so long ago, if a cow died, it was a relatively simple and economical process to have the carcass removed and taken to the rendering plant. But Alberta's BSE outbreak in 2003 changed all of that. The increased costs of moving and disposing of dead livestock in the days post-BSE meant that it became too costly to have animals removed. Instead there was little option other than to dig a hole and drop the dead animal in, or maybe burn it. Carnivores, particularly bears, are always on the lookout for an easy meal, and their spectacular sense of smell would have quickly alerted them to the presence of such a rich source of food buried just below the surface. "Once grizzlies find



Tony Bruder demonstrates the electric fencing that is helping to keep bears out of his silage stores and beehives.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS



Carcass disposal bin, provided by Alberta BearSmart. Deadstock can be deposited in the bin and removed before they become an attractant to large carnivores.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

where the carcasses are they come back,” says Mac Main of MX Ranch near Twin Butte.

To help deal with this growing problem, a number of large bear-proof carcass disposal bins have been established at strategic points throughout the landscape; participating landowners can bring their dead animals to be disposed of before they begin to attract the attention of grizzlies. “My opinion is that the deadstock removal program has helped immensely by trying to keep the bears from coming in and creating conflicts,” says Tony Bruder.

Grain, Silage and Bees

DYCP programs have also concentrated on other factors that were attracting bears into conflict situations. Tony Bruder talks about his 92-year-old father who has lived in the area all of his life but never saw a grizzly until 1997. Quickly grizzlies began to cause problems with silage stores; the bears would rip their way into the large plastic silage bags and once open, the contents were wasted. The Bruders could lose 40 tonnes of silage in this way in a single year. True to their cartoon stereotype, the attraction of honey-filled beehives also proved to be irresistible to grizzlies and again the damage could be extensive. The solution turned out to be electric fencing for the silage yards and beehives, though early pilots proved that the power had to be increased on the fencing around beehives to ensure that the bears stayed out. For the past two years, the fencing has been successful in deterring bears, and Bruder has had no bear “incidents.”

Mac Main elected to build one large electrified structure on his land to hold both grain bins and silage bags. As well as bears, elk were a perennial problem on Main’s land, breaking their way into silage bags for a free meal. While standard electric fencing will deter a bear, it will not necessarily prevent an elk from jumping over, thus the seven-foot-high structure that Mac has affectionately dubbed “Jurassic Park.”

On other properties, old-fashioned wooden grain storage bins also proved to be little deterrent to a determined grizzly. But well-constructed electric fencing can help to render them bear-proof and for a more permanent solution, steel granaries are increasingly being used.



Mac Main’s “Jurassic Park” fence serves to keep both bears and elk from his grain and silage stores.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS



Wooden granaries will not stop a hungry grizzly, as is clear from these old bins at Valley View Ranch. But newly-installed electric fencing is proving to be highly successful so far.

PHOTO: © N. DOUGLAS

Beyond the Drywood-Yarrow Region

The one drawback of the DYCP program is its scale: it is a pilot project, which is having noticeable results within one region, but the need for similar programs throughout grizzly bear range in the province is pressing. Many groups have been generous with their funding for projects (see sidebar for supporting groups), but electric fences and steel granaries are expensive, and if grizzlies are to remain on the landscape for the foreseeable future, long-term financing commitments will be essential.

As we have seen, the province's 2008 grizzly recovery plan made it clear that "improper storage of attractants" is a primary threat to grizzly bear persistence. Yet implementation of the plan has been erratic, and funding has still not been provided to allow initiatives such as the DYCP to become the norm throughout grizzly bear range. Further north, in the Livingstone Bear Management Area (between Highway 1 and Highway 3) the most recent provincial estimates indicate a population of around 90 grizzlies. But in 2011 alone, six bears were known to have died and another nine were caught and relocated out of the region. Losing 17 percent of the population in one single year is alarming for any species, particularly a slow-breeding *threatened* species such as the grizzly. And the fate of the bears that are captured and removed is highly doubtful. "Relocations are a concern because the survival of these animals is low," the University of Alberta's Dr. Mark Boyce recently told the *Edmonton Journal*. "Many of them are killed or end up going back to the place where they got into trouble."

Clearly the great example being set by DYCP is something that will need to be multiplied over a much wider scale to help communities throughout grizzly range learn to live with their own wildlife issues.

The Future for Southern Alberta's Grizzlies

The overriding impression from talking to some of the passionate individuals involved in the DYCP is one of optimism: people are willing to look at ways to learn to live with grizzlies and other carnivores on the landscape. And the breadth of individuals working to achieve this is impressive. As well

as the many ranchers and landowners who have been carrying out projects on their own land, many conservation organizations are working to provide their support. They include: Alberta BearSmart, Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership, Cows and Fish, Trout Unlimited, and the Alberta Conservation Association. Governments are pitching in too: local Fish and Wildlife offices have been a crucial resource, and indeed they are finding that conflict avoidance measures are a more economic use of resources and staff time than chasing "problem" wildlife. Some local municipalities have been highly supportive of attractant management programs: the MDs of Ranchlands and Cardston already have their own carcass disposal programs (the latter partly funded by the Waterton Biosphere Reserve and the provincial government). Cardston County is even working on an innovative deadstock composting program to make it more financially viable to deal with the dead animals that are removed.

The measures being carried out by the DYCP are entirely consistent with the province's grizzly recovery plan. Though it may not be practical for the provincial government to impose the required attractant management programs upon unwilling local communities, the fact that this community has grabbed the challenge with both hands and is showing a strong sense of leadership is extremely encouraging. Hopefully their leadership will provide a lesson that will be applied by other communities learning to live with carnivores. The prospects for the future are best summed up by Kelly Cooley with the Cowboys and Carnivores project, a partnership between the DYCP and Miistakis Institute: "The finished puzzle is a functioning ecosystem and a healthy community," he says. Who could ask for anything more than that? 🐾

Southwest Alberta's grizzlies

On the DYCP's June field trip Nate Webb, the Alberta government's carnivore specialist, put the position of Alberta's southwestern grizzlies into context:

- In 2007, the Alberta government estimated there were 51 grizzlies in Alberta between Highway 3 and the U.S. border.
- Alberta's grizzlies are part of the larger Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, which supports around 1,000 bears. The population is estimated to be growing by three percent per year, mostly on the fringes.
- Though there is no scientific proof, it is likely that Alberta's grizzlies are also expanding eastwards in this region. Earlier records mostly reported male bears, but now females with cubs are also recorded regularly, suggesting that this is more than just a few seasonally wandering individuals.
- A pilot grizzly DNA study is being carried out in southern Alberta where hair samples are taken from bear rub trees. In 2011, these studies identified 51 individual bears in the forested public lands alone. In 2012 these studies will be extended onto private land.

Funders of the numerous projects profiled during DYCP's June field trip included:

- Trout Unlimited Canada
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Shell Canada
- Alberta Conservation Association
- MultiSAR
- Alberta BearSmart
- Miistakis Institute
- Alberta Beef Producers
- Alberta Ecotrust
- Land Stewardship Centre
- Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership
- Cows and Fish

Values and Their Potential Role in Grizzly Bear Conservation



BY COURTNEY HUGHES

What does the term ‘values’ mean and does the term have different meanings to different people? What do different meanings of the term signify for grizzly bear conservation in Alberta? I am deeply interested in the discussion around the term ‘values’ and what this term means relative to how people ‘value’ wildlife, and in particular grizzly bears, in Alberta. Moreover, I am interested in understanding what different balances in the conception of the term ‘values’ means for the long-term conservation of grizzly bears. Given this interest I have embarked on a PhD journey at the University of Alberta to uncover and understand the ‘values’ people hold with respect to grizzly bears in Alberta and how differing conceptions of ‘value’ might influence or impact the long-term, sustainable persistence of these animals. In this paper I offer some considerations for the term ‘value or ‘values,’ and try to highlight my assumptions around what these conceptions may mean for long-term grizzly bear conservation in Alberta.

According to social psychologist Milton Rokeach, *basic human values* may be broadly described as the “preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, goals, needs, aversions or attractions... [or the] standards of preference” that are applied by people, explicitly or implicitly, to thought and action in daily life. These basic values, which may include respect, honesty, integrity, compassion, accountability, and so on, are learned and constructed through our experiences as individuals and through our family or community interactions. Thus basic values are reinforced by our cultural context; they are not only constructed through our everyday interactions and decision-making processes.

So what do basic human values have to do with the conservation of grizzly bears? Well, literature suggests that the basic values people hold for each other, for human-human interactions, are often

similarly shared for human-wildlife or human-environment interactions. The caveat, as there are always caveats, is that this is, in fact, not always true. There are, for example, conflicts or clashes between values based on any given situation a person is in. If, for example, someone’s personal safety is threatened by a charging grizzly bear their compassion for the bear as a living creature may be forgotten. Self-preservation trumps all other considerations. In another example,



“I suggest that differing conceptions of ‘values’ must be considered in wildlife management. We need to identify and understand the basic human values, the wildlife value orientations, and the more specific functional, economic and socio-cultural values Albertans hold towards grizzly bears.”

a person may respect grizzly bears as a being that exists within an ecosystem and yet still want to hunt and kill the bear as a trophy animal. As such, the term ‘value’ applied at a basic level is still quite subjective and the priority of these different meanings will vary according to specific contexts.

So, what else needs to be described relative to the term ‘value?’ If basic human values are of limited use in helping to explain how people might value grizzly bears (or other species or landscapes for that matter), what other conceptions of the term should be considered? Other studies suggest that basic values give rise to more

specific *value orientations* towards an object or subject. For example, Teel et al found in their 2005 study that in the western United States the public’s wildlife value orientations vary from one state to another. These value orientations generally describe how people think and feel about wildlife and wildlife management. They found the most commonly held dimensions to be utilitarianism, mutualism, pluralism, and distanced. Utilitarianism describes a philosophy of human use of wildlife where individuals strongly support hunting and fishing. Mutualism is where wildlife is considered to be a part of an extended, non-human family; people and wildlife coexist without fear of each other. Pluralism exists where both utilitarian and mutualism value orientations are shared and specific situations dictate what appropriate individual action looks like. Distanced is where neither a utilitarian or mutualism value orientation is held and people tend to have higher concern for personal safety when around wildlife. Generally, Teel et al reported that utilitarians and pluralists are male, older, more likely to hunt, and have lived in their state for longer than those identified as mutualists or distanced.

Why does this information matter? Identifying the wildlife value orientations people hold can be used to provide insight into or predict how people might think about or behave towards wildlife or wildlife policy; this information may assist decision-makers in determining what policies might be more socially acceptable in a jurisdiction and what management actions are more likely to be adopted and enacted. However, the methods and tools (e.g. values surveys) used to elicit this information do not necessarily explain the more specific ‘values’ held for grizzly bears; this is in part why I am particularly interested in exploring how and why people might construct differing ‘values’ for grizzly

bears. A distinction needs to be made here, between my use of the term ‘values’ relative to a particular sentiment towards grizzly bears, and what researchers in human dimensions of wildlife would call ‘attitudes.’ I agree people construct and hold broader value orientations towards wildlife, and studies have proven this to be true, as illustrated above. However, I think people can also construct more specific ‘values’ for a particular animal, like grizzly bears, in and of themselves. In literature, these more specific ‘values’ are referred to as attitudes and are thought to guide the behaviors people take towards an animal (Teel et al. 2005). While I generally agree with the values-attitudes-behaviors framework, I do think there is more to how and why people come to value grizzly bears; I explain more below while conceding here that an understanding of the value orientations and attitudes people hold for wildlife will have important implications for long-term conservation, particularly in the policy arena.

In struggling to define what the more specific ‘values’ people hold for grizzly bears actually are, I have developed three general descriptions of ‘values.’ First, I suggest we consider the *functional values* of grizzly bears. These values refer to their biological and ecological significance of these bears as a top predator in an ecosystem. Functional values can be understood as both the ways in which “organisms acquire and then make use of resources in metabolism, movement, growth [and] reproduction” (Wootton 1984), as well as how organisms function in a system and what their interactions produce for, or do to, a system. Within this definition, considerations are given to functional richness, functional evenness and functional divergence, and each can be determined relatively simply (Norman et al. 2005). Through this conception of value, conservation biologists and resource managers may determine the relative importance of a species in a community. Alter or remove the species from the ecosystem and changes to that system are inevitable.

Take trophic cascades as an example; studies support that when top predators are removed from an ecosystem resulting impacts can include growth in native and domestic herbivore populations, release of meso-carnivores, changes in

prey behavior, and even the facilitation of disease or invasive species, locally (Berger et al. 2001). In Alberta, Dr. Scott Nielsen and wildlife biologist Karen Graham, from the University of Alberta’s Applied Conservation Ecology (ACE) Lab and the Foothills Research Institute (FRI), are learning about the functional role of grizzly bears in the southern Canadian Rockies. This work seeks to quantify the extent and intensity of soil disturbance behaviors caused by grizzly bears, as well as to assess how the bears’ activities might regulate local ecosystem processes, the structure of communities, and the composition and diversity of other species. Understanding how grizzly bears affect communities may enable better conservation decisions to be made, where decisions could be based on the possible consequences of losing these bears in a particular place. This is important work indeed, and as Kellert has offered “successful bear management depends... on an accurate understanding of bear biology and ecology” (1994). Better information about the functional value of grizzly bears is one way to strengthen the position of those people who ‘value’ animals this way, in Alberta.

A second consideration for the term ‘value’, and one I suggest is most often at play in the political and to some extent social arena, is the *economic value* of grizzly bears. Economic values are, for the most part, driven by market forces that, generally, are based on the dollar value people as individuals or within groups assign to a good or service. Broadly speaking, there are two types of ‘values;’ use values, which King and Mazzotta define as “the value derived from the actual use of a good or service” (2000) and can include activities such as hunting, hiking or off-road vehicle use in a place. These values include a monetary assessment of the worth the good or service provides to people. Alternatively, they describe nonuse values as the intrinsic importance assigned to a subject or object; they are not associated with a use value (or the option to use). Both use and nonuse values can be measured and both can have a dollar amount ascribed to them; these values can also be conceived of as costs or benefits to people, such as the financial requirements for enforcement activities to conserve grizzly bears, or the revenue generated from recreation or tourism activities in a

place with grizzly bears.

While economic values are important to consider, I suggest they fall short as a social measure of uncovering and making explicit the intangible reasons of what, why, and how people come to “value” an object or subject, or in this case, grizzly bears. While I admit that nonuse measures attempt to identify the intangible values a person ascribes to a subject or object, I believe the attempts to monetize these values does a disservice to their significance.

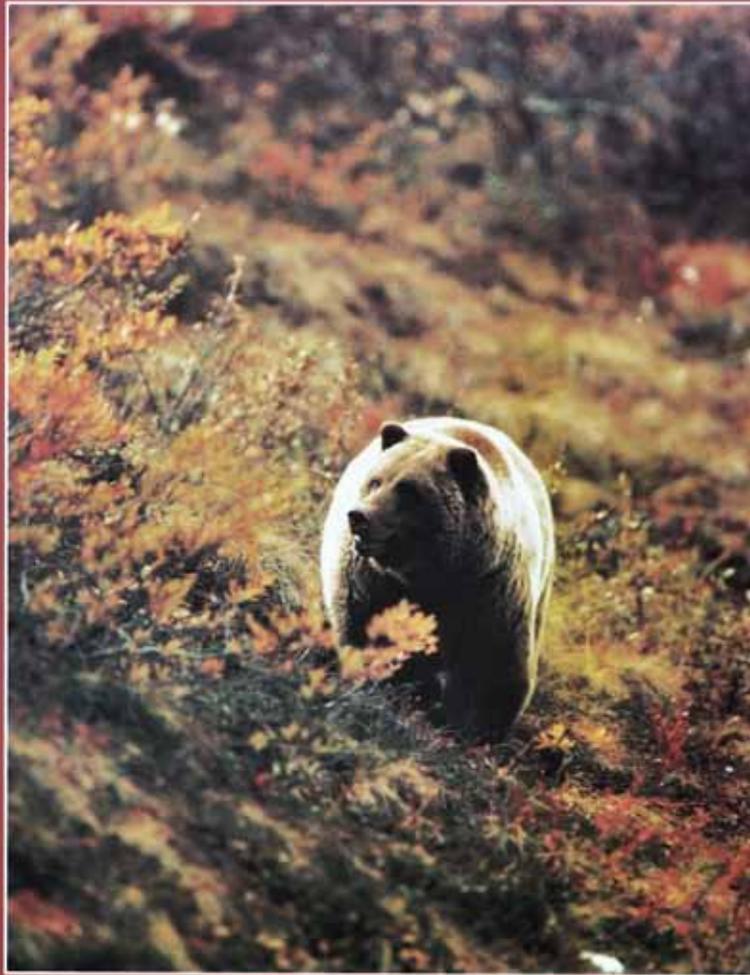
For this reason I offer a third type of ‘value’ to consider, one that describes the construction of meaning of value from a social and cultural, or socio-cultural context. I use the phrase *socio-cultural values* to refer to the intangible, or ‘just because’ reasoning of why people decide grizzly bears are important to them. Socio-cultural values, however, are difficult to clarify because of their very nature; these values are held deep within a person and are oftentimes abstract. Thus, I identify these values as ‘just because’ values, in that a person might come to value something ‘just because’ and this is the best explanation they can give for their decision.

Notwithstanding this ambiguity I offer the following examples in order to try to provide a bit more clarity. I suggest the intangible, or ‘just because,’ values people hold towards grizzly bears might include the affinity an individual has for these bears, because they feel a connection to this animal. I can empathize as I share a similar connection to felines; I like cats for reasons that are equally easy and difficult for me to explain. Another ‘just because’ value example might be the symbolic significance grizzly bears have to Alberta, as part of cultural heritage; people might value these bears because of what this representative icon means to the province and not because of the potential economic revenue. Again, I recognize economists may argue there is overlap between socio-cultural values and economic nonuse values. I agree to some extent but with this caution: the difference between socio-cultural and economic nonuse values is based on more than just why and how people construct their ‘values’ for grizzly bears. It’s also based on how these values are measured and communicated. While economists may, in fact, be able to monetize the

symbolic value of grizzly bears through tourism revenue, does that necessarily help us explain the full value of grizzly bears to Albertans? Does a monetary measure truly satisfy the scope of and reasoning for holding our value? What does a monetized value do for the sentience of grizzly bears, as a living being? Even if socio-cultural and nonuse economic values are similar, I suggest we avoid monetizing socio-cultural values; I think doing so may pervert the substance of socio-cultural values and reduce or simplify them in unhelpful ways. That said, I suggest policy-level decision-makers and conservation practitioners alike need to consider socio-cultural values at the same level as, and as a complement to, economic values for grizzly bears rather than pit one value type against another.

Overall, I suggest that differing conceptions of ‘values’ must be considered in wildlife management. We need to identify and understand the basic human values, the wildlife value orientations, and the more specific functional, economic and socio-cultural values Albertans hold towards grizzly bears. All value conceptualizations must be equally considered in the decision making realm because all conceptions are important to people. As Kellert suggested 28 years ago, “the recognition and understanding of bear policy as a complex web of interacting scientific,

THE GREAT BEAR



When he's gone~
so is wilderness

Photo by Alan Carey



valuational, and political forces can enhance the chances for developing more successful policies, as well as increase the opportunities for greater professional effectiveness” (1994). Through my PhD research, I hope to shed light on the socio-cultural values Albertans hold towards grizzlies, and what this means in light of our budding understanding of

their functional and economic values. The challenge then, is set for me and for Alberta. 🍌

Courtney Hughes is a PhD student at the University of Alberta studying the influence and impacts of the social landscape on grizzly bear conservation in Alberta. Courtney can be reached at ckhughes@ualberta.ca

Lakeland's Time

BY CAROLYN CAMPBELL, AWA Conservation Specialist



With intense international attention focused on Alberta's oil sands region, there is an opportunity for the new Alberta government to create an outstanding legacy by better protecting one of the treasures of Alberta's southern boreal forest: the Lakeland area.

Lakeland refers to the boreal forest, lakes and wetlands that extend eastward from Lac La Biche across and south of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range to the Saskatchewan border. Lakeland is outstanding within Alberta's entire large boreal mixedwood natural region because of its high diversity of landforms and water forms. Its land and water provide richly varied vegetation habitats which in turn support wildlife ranging from large mammals – such as caribou, moose and black bear – to amphibians and native fish. Lakeland's old growth forests are rich in migratory and resident birds: over 200 species have been identified there, including the Cape May warbler, an Alberta species of special concern that favours old growth conifer forests.

AWA has urged government to protect this ecological gem for decades. In 1983, AWA served on an Alberta government Advisory Committee to review the proposed Lakeland Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan subsequently adopted by Cabinet in 1985. AWA, inspired by the late Tom Maccagno's love for this area, has championed Lakeland wilderness conservation in many consultative processes and has introduced many Albertans to Lakeland through hikes and canoe trips, talks and publications.

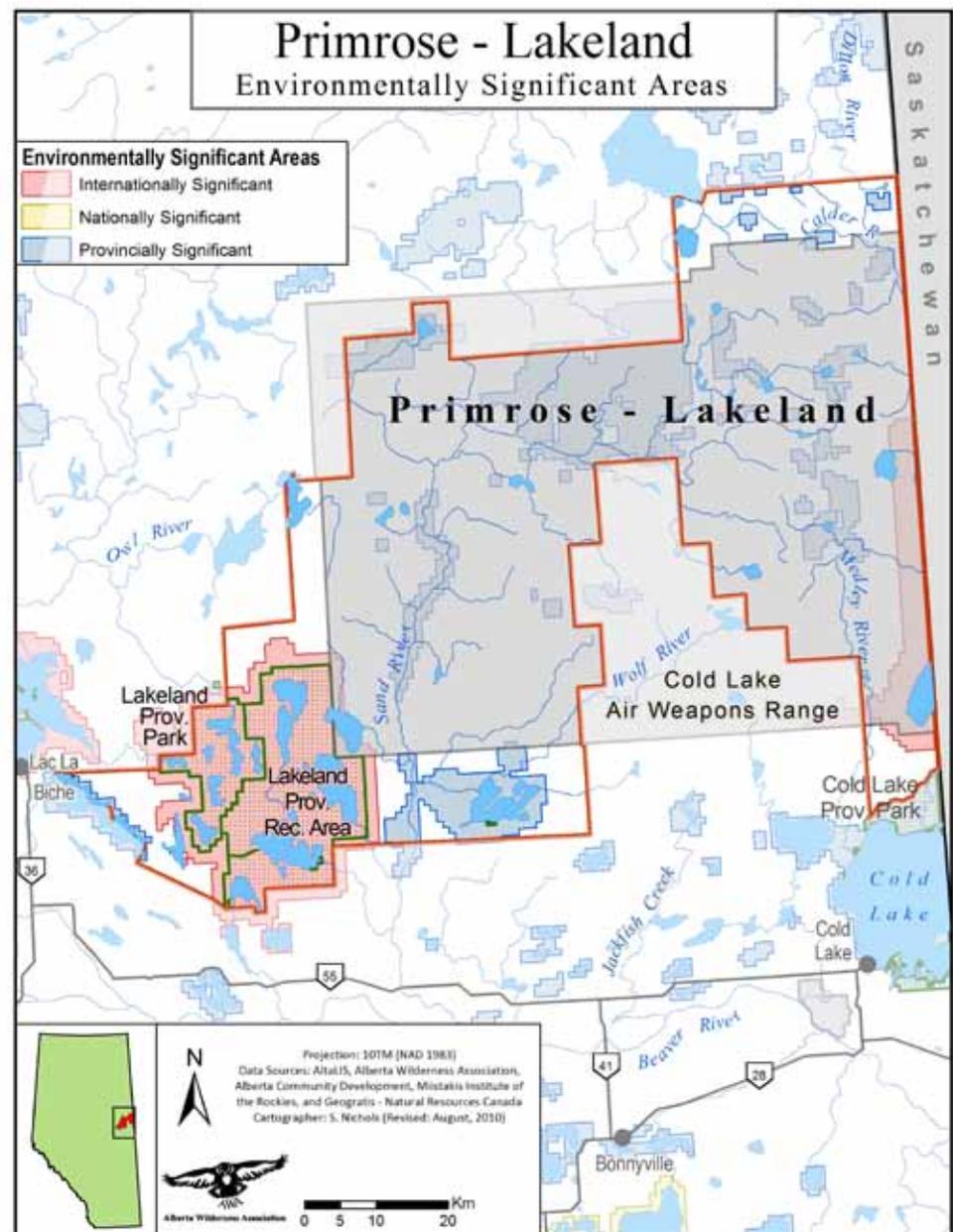
AWA identified an Area of Concern (AOC) for better ecological management and protection covering approximately 6,000 km², much of which overlaps with the 11,600 km² Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (see map). A small but important part of Lakeland (Lakeland Provincial Park and Provincial Recreation Area) received protected areas designation in 1992, but a management plan for these areas has yet to be finalized. Despite historic and ongoing pressures from settlement and industrial disturbance, the rest of the AOC remains an excellent

candidate for long-term ecological protection: the Weapons Range portion would be compatible with continued military use and the portion outside the Range could be managed to generate significant sustainable economic benefits for the surrounding communities.

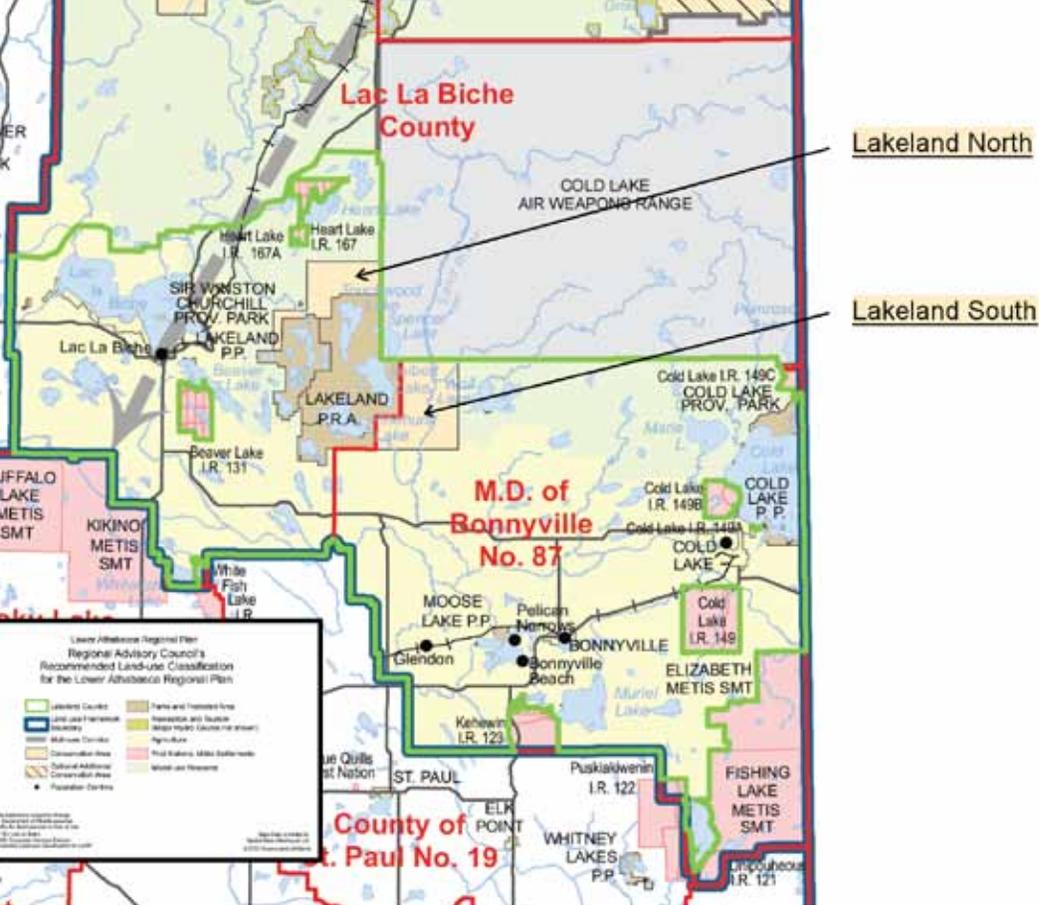
Alberta's southern boreal is under intensive, escalating pressure from the cumulative effects of agricultural, forestry and energy development. In 2009, Peter Lee, Executive Director of Global Forest Watch Canada, told AWA

that: "Our mapping of ecologically intact forest landscapes clearly demonstrates that, compared to other jurisdictions, Alberta has lost much of its ecologically intact forest landscapes in a short time." Restoring and maintaining a healthy boreal ecosystem the size of Lakeland would provide a vital scale of habitat connectedness for an outstanding area of Alberta's southern boreal forest as it faces multiple pressures from climate change and development.

Three important components of



AWA's "Primrose-Lakeland" Area of Concern map showing ecologically significant areas of opportunity.



Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council's recommended Conservation Areas for Lakeland North and South, which have not yet been adopted.

Lakeland protection include extending protected areas outside the Air Weapons Range, establishing Ecological Reserves inside the Air Weapons Range, and finalizing an ecosystem-based management plan. Each option offers considerable opportunities for the new Redford government to pursue now.

Extend Lakeland Park

Lakeland Provincial Park (147 km²) and Lakeland Provincial Recreation Area (443 km²) were created in 1992. While an important step forward, this initiative was only half the protected area size recommended by a government-commissioned scientific assessment and supported by the 1990 government-commissioned Lakeland Public Opinion Survey.

The 1991 scientific study recommended extending the protected area east to include the Sand River Valley, which was also supported by public opinion. The Sand River is a major headwaters tributary originating in the Air Weapons Range that contributes 50 percent of the flow of the Beaver River. It is one of the most intact and diverse river valleys in Alberta's boreal forest

and an important wildlife corridor. It has important moose wintering grounds and has been identified as one of Alberta's most important river otter habitat areas. Woodland caribou tracks were recorded there south of the Weapons Range in 1990.

Another logical extension of the protected area is to the north of the existing Park and Provincial Recreation Area (PRA) boundaries. AWA and local park advocates have championed this area because of its rich old growth forest. In 2005, as part of its Forest Stewardship Council certification application, Al-Pac Industries deferred logging in the Touchwood Road area north of the PRA.

It looked as though Touchwood and Sand River valley protection were close at hand when, in 2010, the government-appointed multi-stakeholder Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council (RAC) recommended Conservation Areas connected to the Park and PRA called "Lakeland North" and "Lakeland South" (see map). These would include the Touchwood and Sand River valley areas, and would extend the protected area connected to the Air Weapons Range. To date, the government has not moved

forward in establishing these important extensions of wilderness habitat. Given the recent cross-sector support reflected in the RAC's proposal, moving forward with a low impact recreation-oriented Wildland Park designation in these areas would be a relatively easy and vitally important step by this government.

Establish Protected Areas on the Air Weapons Range

A second important Lakeland opportunity is for Alberta to follow Saskatchewan's lead and establish Ecological Reserves on the Alberta side of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR). The range of the CLAWR population of endangered woodland caribou is currently mapped as covering most of the northern and central parts of the Alberta side of the Weapons Range. A 213-km² area adjacent to the Saskatchewan border is part of the Primrose Lake Important Bird Area and is rated as internationally significant under Alberta's Environmentally Significant Areas designation. While the Range's central area is under the boots of industry as a result of Alberta government's permitting of oilsands "in situ" exploration and development, many other portions of the Range remain high quality habitat because Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake strictly limits access and requires large roadless areas on the Range.

AWA commissioned a study by ecologist Kevin Timoney of Alberta's CLAWR biodiversity conservation potential in 2004. He concluded that "the available data indicate that the region is biologically diverse, relatively unfragmented and worthy of protection." Timoney noted forestry impacts were minimal and military landscape disturbance appeared insignificant: the growing forest fragmentation due to energy industry exploration and development was the only significant disturbance. Timoney drew on an unpublished 1994 environmental assessment of CLAWR by Westworth and Associates, commissioned by the Department of National Defence (DND), for some biodiversity information. That study noted that a significant portion of the Range's total old growth aspen forest and white spruce mixedwood forests occurred on the Alberta side, particularly in the southwest and southeast quadrants.

Peat wetlands dominate elsewhere, with fens (peatlands fed by surface water or shallow groundwater) being the most abundant type. Timoney recommended further fieldwork on habitat and wildlife to guide conservation planning on the Alberta side.

The Air Weapons Range is provincially owned land under lease to the federal government. Just as Alberta opened some of the Range to energy development, it could partner with DND in a conservation initiative to protect the best ecological areas on the Range, which would not displace Canadian forces use or existing industry. It would be a widely praised and vitally important step by this government.

Saskatchewan added about 1,600 km² to its protected areas network from the Saskatchewan side of CLAWR. I recently spoke to Marlon Klassen of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment about these Ecological Reserves.

Although he was not involved in the designation, he generously reviewed their internal documentation in order to discuss the process with AWA. Klassen stated that there were two years of negotiations from 1996 to 1998. The scope of their process included some First Nations access issues that had previously arisen, as well as federal and provincial government interests. The Saskatchewan government had endorsed a Representative Areas Network program, and based on the 1994 Westworth study, the Environment Ministry saw the lands as high quality. They chose the McCusker area in the northeast part of the Range, partly due to its caribou habitat, and chose the Primrose Lake area near the Alberta border due to its important bird habitat. There was relatively low potential in both areas for oil and gas operations so, after consultation with Saskatchewan's Ministry of Energy and Resources, the province agreed to prevent any subsurface exploration or development. On the federal government side, DND did not want the designations to hinder their operations at all, but once the details were hammered out, they were very supportive.

A 2008 study for Saskatchewan Environment estimated the intactness of Primrose Lake Ecological Reserve at 96%, and that of McCusker at 84%. AWA strongly encourages the new Alberta government to show similar leadership to that exhibited by Saskatchewan



Lakeland's diverse forests, wetlands and lakes are important habitat for a multitude of wildlife species.

PHOTO: © M. MATHEWSON

and commence a process to establish Ecological Reserves on the Alberta side of the Air Weapons Range.

Finalize an Ecosystem-based Management plan

As noted above, Lakeland Provincial Park and PRA were established in 1992. Lakeland Provincial Park contains Alberta's only recognized canoe circuit, with maintained portage routes facilitated by signage and carts. Sadly, most Albertans are still unaware of the circuit and of the wonderful hiking and backpacking wilderness opportunities to be found in Lakeland Park.

The Park and PRA still lack a formal management plan to ensure that the primary conservation and wilderness-based recreation motives that gave rise to these areas are sustained for the long term. The Lakeland Public Advisory Committee (PAC), appointed by the Alberta Government, deliberated over 18 months in the mid-1990s, and issued recommendations, which were promptly ignored and are still gathering dust. Given the severe pressures on Alberta's southern boreal forest, it is imperative that the Alberta government finalize an ecologically sensitive management plan for these protected areas, including

the extensions north and to the Sand Valley. Recovery of lands altered by industry, low impact recreation, and healthy ecosystems to sustain its great diversity of wildlife populations should be prioritized.

Conclusion

There is an outstanding opportunity to protect and manage Lakeland for watershed health, wildlife and low impact nature-based recreation. Long-term protection of roadless areas of the Air Weapons Range, the Touchwood North area and the Sand River would create a major positive legacy for Alberta's southern boreal forest, which is now suffering from the cumulative effects of the agriculture, forestry, and energy industries. An ecosystem-based approved management plan for the areas outside the Range would provide long-term sustainable benefits to watersheds, wildlife and surrounding communities. AWA has been working to ensure that new MLAs and decision makers are well aware of Lakeland's importance.

Restoring and maintaining a healthy boreal ecosystem in Lakeland is possible, and the time is right for the Alberta government to make this happen. 🌲

Lorne Fitch: An Extraordinary Advocate for Alberta's Wild Spaces

BY LINDSEY WALLIS



Enjoying the view from his and Cheryl's land near Pincher Creek.
PHOTO: © L. WALLIS

One runs certain risks when having a conversation with AWA's 2012 Wilderness Defender, Lorne Fitch. You will definitely be entertained. You will probably learn something you didn't know. And you may end up laughing out loud – possibly so hard that there are tears streaming down your face and your belly hurts.

Lorne brings his extensive and expansive knowledge, as well as his wonderful sense of humour, to every subject he tackles, whether he is drawing parallels between the dearth of his mother-in-law's strawberry jam in his larder and the economic crisis ("oh Lord give me another boom..."); comparing the lessons learned from a pie-pilfering porcupine to the attitude of the Alberta government ("gluttony is its own reward"); or expounding on Pakistani toilet paper (it's John Wayne t.p. – rough and tough and don't take crap from no one).

It's no accident that Lorne is such a fantastic communicator. He has spent years honing his skills and Alberta's

wild places have reaped the rewards. Whether he is working with ranchers and landowners through the Cows and Fish program, talking to stakeholders about land-use issues or mentoring young professionals, Lorne constantly strives to increase ecological literacy and awareness in Alberta.

"The woods were my Ritalin. Nature calmed me, focused me, and yet excited my senses." Richard Louv

Growing up on a farm near Red Deer, Lorne was lucky to be able to commune with the Alberta wilderness on a regular basis, whether it was through hunting, fishing or playing in the miles of pristine aspen parkland near their house. "I had a rich opportunity to grow up at a time in Central Alberta when there was still wild left," he says. "It was a wonderful place because the wild was all around me."

An interest in hunting and fishing led Lorne to join the local fish and game club. He met one of his early mentors when Elmer Kure spoke about Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* at a Fish and

Game Club meeting. Lorne describes Elmer as a very articulate man who, in part, inspired Lorne to pursue a career in conservation. Now, a mentor himself, he thinks of that moment often. "You never know where and when the spark might happen to motivate people to become interested in the world around them," he says.

"If evolution had a purpose in equipping us with a neck, it was surely for us to stick it out." Arthur Koestler

In 1971, while a student at the University of Calgary, Lorne took a summer position in the Alberta government's Fish and Wildlife department. It turned out to be "nearly a life sentence," as after a few years of contract positions he would go on to work full-time with them in Lethbridge in 1976 and stay until his retirement in 2006. He spent his first ten years as a fisheries researcher and inventory biologist. In his job, Lorne had the opportunity to literally walk from the headwaters to the mouths of most of the

streams of the Eastern Slopes. “It gave me a real appreciation for the landscape, landscape processes and land use issues,” he says. In his early career he says he made the mistake of thinking that “if we counted better and counted more the world would be a better place.”

Eventually, Lorne moved into the Habitat branch of Fish and Wildlife, before it was axed by the government in the early 1990s. One of his success stories from this period is Antelope Creek Ranch – a demonstration ranch in mixed grass prairie near Brooks that is still operating. The project was certainly a learning experience. “It’s one thing to tell people how the land should be managed, another to be actively engaged in its management,” Lorne says. But, during the droughts of the 1980s, he and his team managed to bring the ranch, where a pintail couldn’t find enough vegetation to hide her eggs, back to a productive state for both wildlife and livestock. That ranch and Cows and Fish are two initiatives Lorne feels have met the tests of conservation – continuity and persistence.

Lorne met his wife and fellow Wilderness Defender Cheryl Bradley in 1988 at an Alberta Irrigation Projects Association annual meeting. A botanist, Cheryl’s cautious optimism and righteous indignation complements and balances Lorne’s tenacity and occasional cynicism.

“Resist much, obey little” Walt Whitman

Lorne first became involved with AWA while working on integrated land use management plans, interacting with people like Dianne Pachal and Vivian Pharis. Not that his bosses in the government were thrilled – back in those days (and today perhaps more so) fraternizing with “radical” environmentalists like those at AWA was frowned upon. “For many years my dealings with AWA were clandestine,” he says. “It seemed to me AWA was an ally not an adversary. What I saw in AWA was an organization that had the same philosophy and same desire for outcomes that I did.”

Lorne also butted heads with his bosses on other issues – more and more of them as resource development in Alberta ramped up in the late 1980s. “It dawned on me after a while that even though I thought Fish and Wildlife was the place for people with an ecological conscience,



Lorne and Chip Weber, Forest Supervisor of the Flathead National Forest in Montana, share light-hearted conversation during the 2012 Waterton-Glacier Superintendent’s Hike.

PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

it is still an arm of government,” he says. “One could see the conflict growing year by year – the land-use pressures and our fleeting attempt to manage those impacts to protect fish and wildlife and habitat. Our goals (at Fish and Wildlife) were not matched very well with the Alberta government’s goals and that inevitably brings you into conflict.”

Some government initiatives, such as the Oldman Dam and the Whaleback, Lorne felt were “just wrong” and he came out strongly against them. “I found out there were a lot of ways they could punish you – especially when they realize they can’t fire you for doing your job,” he says. From not being invited to meetings, having out-of-province travel requests denied and subscriptions to professional journals cancelled, Lorne built up a lot of scar tissue over the years. When asked how he persevered his answer is: “A fair amount of bloody-mindedness helps.” His colleagues also provided him with enough inspiration to stay and, in true Lorne style, he says he found a perverse sense of pleasure in staying when his bosses wished he would just fade away.

The constraints on government staff haven’t eased since Lorne retired. If anything he thinks they have gotten worse, and the civil service has become more politicized and less transparent. “That doesn’t bode well for ethical, committed Fish and Wildlife staff who want to do the right thing,” he says. In

his Fish and Wildlife retirement speech, Lorne urged his younger co-workers to “wear your letters of reprimand as badges of honour.”

“Unless you can engage the minds, beliefs and the will of others to support your work: then even after you have done all that you can do your work will not live after you; it may not even outlive you.” Unattributed

In the early 1990s Lorne had an epiphany about how to accomplish his environmental goals. It was to work with landowners and communities to instill in them both a desire to see their landscapes healthy and the motivation to change. Part of this philosophy comes from the work of another of Lorne’s heroes, Aldo Leopold, whose writings on land stewardship and wilderness ethics have long been Lorne’s “philosophical touchstone – a place to reaffirm (his) obligations.” His copy of Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* is dog-eared and tattered by many readings.

In pursuit of landowner awareness and ecological literacy, Lorne and co-worker Barry Adams founded Cows and Fish in 1991. The program works with communities and ranchers to foster an understanding of how changes in management of riparian areas can help keep these areas healthy for ranchers, agricultural producers, communities and wildlife. Lorne believes you only have



Lorne's passion for bull trout is familiar to readers of the Advocate.

PHOTO: © L. FITCH

so many bullets in your career and one must choose carefully when using them. The most effective bullets for him were the ones stamped awareness, he says. "It's only with an ecologically literate constituency that we will see resolution to any of the issues we currently face with biodiversity and landscape integrity."

Reviews of the Cows and Fish program have shown that this way of engaging and interacting with people has a tangible legacy because it builds a stewardship ethic. "If you build a foundation of stewardship starting with awareness and working at a community level, that seems to have a much greater persistence than any sort of subsidy," Lorne says.

***"Always do the right thing. It will gratify some folks and astonish the rest."* Mark Twain**

Ensuring a future for wild places in Alberta takes all of us, according to Lorne. "We have to step up to the plate," he says. "As citizens we need to take a role because we can't wait for governments to do it; it's pointless waiting for corporations to do it, because they never will; and the conservation groups are too underfunded and under-resourced." One of the things he would

like to see change is the profusion of nature deficit disorder, not just in children, but in adults. "We have a very poor level of ecological literacy," he says. "People don't have an appreciation of the impacts they're having on their own watershed."

He also hopes the Alberta government will begin to acknowledge cumulative impacts. "Their additive quality will eat us up if we don't pay attention to them," Lorne says. "Without the use of cumulative effects tools we get into a constantly sliding benchmark where we think that we have a full pie worth of resources available to us but the reality is it is only a slice and that slice is getting thinner."

***"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."* Rachel Carson**

Though Lorne "retired" in 2006 he has been far from idle. He continues to keep close ties with the Cows and Fish program, working part time there as well as sitting on the boards of five conservation organizations. He also writes, mentors natural resource professionals, teaches a series of

workshops on communications skills, and spends time on Cheryl's and his land near Pincher Creek (mostly pulling thistles). "I hope that what I've done and continue to do will ensure that my grand nephew and grand niece and other children don't curse me for my lack of involvement, commitment and progress," he says.

The wild spaces in Alberta are certainly richer because of the work Lorne has done, and continues to do on their behalf. He says: "I have had the rich opportunity to stand on the shoulders of giants," referring to his predecessors and co-workers such as Elmer Kure, Carl Hunt, Duane Radford and many more. And we, as future Wilderness Defenders and lovers of wild places, are truly blessed to be able to stand on the wide, sturdy shoulders of Lorne Fitch.

***"To leave your mark you need talent, a unique vision and stubbornness."* Terrance Trout D'Arcy** 🍓

A freelance writer and photographer, Lindsey loves tramping through Alberta's wild spaces, whether on foot, horseback or skis.

DIRECT ACTION: AWA's 2012 Bighorn Monitoring Report



BY SEAN NICHOLS, AWA Conservation Specialist

“Is that a solar panel on your pack?” asks the lady on horseback as we step aside to let her and her companion pass.

We are five kilometres up Canary Creek from the trailhead at the Bighorn's Hummingbird Forest Recreation Area: not the first place one expects to encounter solar panels, or two tablet computers, for that matter. However, on this day they suit AWA's purposes perfectly. They are ideal recording devices, allowing us to update our trail recreation monitoring observations for the 2012 season.

Originally, I was going to entitle this piece “Technology in the Wilderness,” and I had planned on spending some paragraphs discussing how the Bighorn Wildland Recreational Monitoring Project was turning to these tablet computers and other technology to aid us in our work. (I'm writing this article on the trail on one of the tablets. All the photos in this article are also taken with the integrated cameras.) That article, as it turns out, will have to wait for another day...

The two equestrian users are the only other human beings we have encountered on our three days on the trail. We have otherwise been left to a peace marked only by the sounds of the sparrows and babbling brooks.

This is a decidedly mixed blessing: the reason for the solitude is that almost the entire trail system included in AWA's trail monitoring program has been closed to all OHV traffic since July 3. While the signs posted at the trailhead hinted at the reason, we shortly encountered it for ourselves:

The upper reaches of the access trails have been so badly affected by erosion from this year's runoff that they have caved in, becoming impassable to all but the more determined foot users. In the worst stretches, OHV riders have attempted to bypass the damage by creating braids; only to have these erode away as well. This is in addition to the extra vegetative damage and rutting the braids cause to the terrain that they cross.

Is this an issue attributable solely to higher-than-normal runoff? I don't think so. The problem is that these trails should not be here in the first place. The terrain in many places (including where we are observing the worst of the erosion) is boggy, porous, and at the end of the day simply unable to support this type of development or use. The wet weather is not a problem itself, but rather exacerbates an existing problem. When high water flows cause impassable wash-outs, this is merely a highly-visible symptom of the damage that has already been occurring.

We saw this in 2006, when similar cave-ins occurred where the trail circuit reaches the Ram River valley. The problem was at that time “solved” by rerouting the trail to bypass the problem area altogether, creating an ad-hoc extension straight through old-growth forest.

We are now seeing the same thing again in 2012. This time the damage is so bad that, rather than closing a single stretch of trail, the entire trail network has been closed. What will be the “solution” this time? How many extra kilometres of vegetation will be replaced with newly-created trail as a band-aid patch over the glaring fact that these trails should simply not be here?

For over a decade, AWA has expressed this view. There are perhaps some areas where the soil and the ecosystem are able to handle trails of this type. The Onion Lake road is a hard-surfaced OHV road that suffered little erosion; it is the only trail in the circuit that remains open as I write this. However trails such as those that go up the Canary and Hummingbird creeks, as well as the pristine valleys behind them are not appropriate and need to be closed – permanently – to motorized traffic.

As recently as last August, AWA wrote a letter to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (now merged with the ministry of the Environment to become ESRD) and urged the government to close the trails, especially those in the Critical Wildlife Zones,

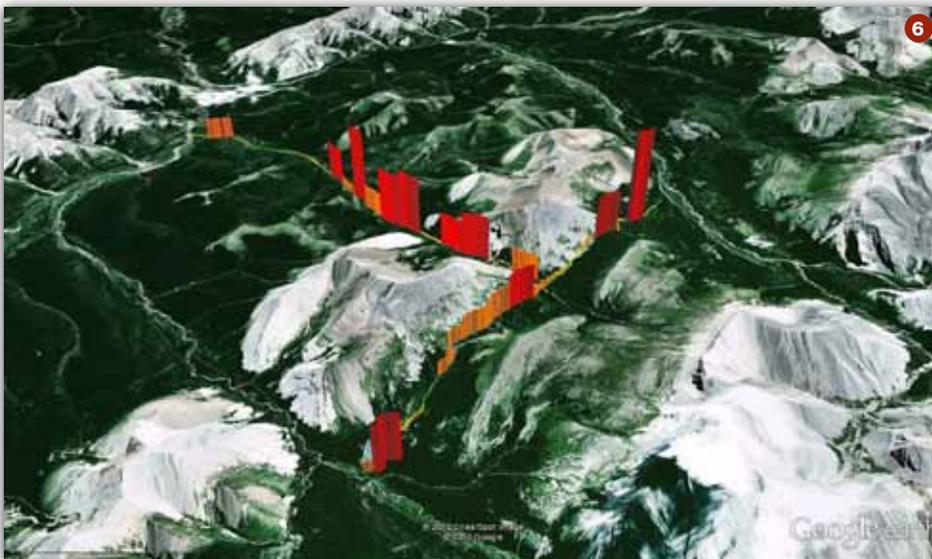
before the erosion – already visible then – became irreversible. Regrettably, this did not happen, and what we feared has come to pass. The erosion has become so extreme that Mother Nature has played her hand and forced the trail closures that AWA was unable to effect.

So for now, the trail circuit remains closed. I sit at our campsite at the top of Canary Creek, listening only to sounds of birds and water. A little while ago I watched a playful hoary marmot bouncing around on the rocks by the creek crossing, blissful in his reprieve from the roaring of engines straight through his playground.

How long will this reprieve last? We are hopeful – ever hopeful – that ESRD will use this opportunity to take stock of the natural treasures of these valleys, of how threatened they are, and will decide to close the trails for good. 🍀



Trail closure signs posted at the Hummingbird Creek trailhead.
PHOTO: © S. NICHOLS



- 1** Many of the damage sites that have not yet completely caved in are on the verge of doing so. In 2005-2006, 144 damage sites were originally recorded on the stretches of trail monitored on this trip. This year, an additional 146 damage sites were added to that tally, showing an increased rate of trail degradation over the last half-decade.
- 2** Large sections of the trail have become so eroded they are now impassable to all but foot traffic. Even the equestrian users we encountered were forced to turn back by these inhospitable sections.
- 3** Attempts at “stewardship” such as dropping this tree in a hole to warn future users do nothing to mitigate the damage caused.
- 4** The erosion at this damage site has created a trench up to 175cm deep.
- 5** Trail users often react to damaged sections of trail (such as that on the right) by creating braids and secondary trails to bypass the obstructions, causing further damage to the vegetation.
- 6** Erosion Event distribution on OHV trails. Height and colour of 500m trail sections indicates the total length of eroded trail within each section: no eroded trail = green, 1m-10m eroded = yellow, 11m-25m eroded = orange, 26m-100m eroded = dark orange, greater than 100m eroded = red. (Background map courtesy Google Earth)

Updates

New Study Calls for Reduction in Road Density in Grizzly Bear Range

It has been known for a long time that roads and motorized access have a strong negative effect on grizzly bears, and a newly-released report adds more fuel to the fire. The report, *Vehicle traffic shapes grizzly bear behaviour on a multiple-use landscape*, by Northrup et al was published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* in August 2012.

Roads are known to lead to higher grizzly mortality rates through a number of mechanisms. A 1998 study of grizzly mortality in the Alberta Central Rockies Ecosystem found that 89 percent of human-caused mortalities occurred within 500 metres of a road on provincial lands, and in National Parks 100 percent of human-caused mortalities were within 200 metres of a road or trail (Benn 1998). Animals may be killed directly on roads, but more importantly roads bring people into direct contact with bears, and bears die through hunting, poaching, mistaken identity or the creation of “problem” bears. Compounding the problem, roads may actually attract bears, by providing ample food opportunities and easier movement corridors, but those bears are more likely to die there. To put it simply, more roads mean more dead grizzlies.

The Northrup et al study area consisted of 3,000-km² of grizzly bear range from the U.S. border north to Highway 3, including Waterton Lakes National Park and the Castle. Traffic rates were measured using remote traffic counters and trail cameras, and the effect on bear behaviour was measured on 14 grizzlies fitted with global positioning system (GPS) radio collars. Within this study area 2,273 km of roads were measured, at a density of 0.73 km/km² (or 21 percent higher than the maximum 0.6 km/km² recommended for core grizzly range in the province’s 2008 grizzly recovery plan). Traffic volumes were classified as “low” (fewer than 20 vehicles per day), “medium” (20-100 vehicles per day), or “high” (more than 100 vehicles per day)

The effects of traffic volumes on grizzly bear behaviour were clear. “Roads cause functional habitat loss, alter movement patterns and can become ecological traps for wildlife.” Bear behaviour was affected in a number of

different ways, including:

- Avoidance of roads receiving moderate traffic and strong avoidance of high use roads at all times.
- Selection for areas near low traffic roads over higher-use roads.
- Increased night-time use of areas near roads and movement across roads during the night when traffic was low.
- Increased likelihood of bears crossing low traffic roads compared to higher-use roads.

An additional effect of high levels of motorized access in the forested public lands to the west of the study area is the possibility of bears being displaced onto private lands to the east, where mortality risks may be higher: “In addition, bears selected private agricultural land, which had lower traffic levels, but higher road density, over multi-use public land.” This would seem to corroborate the findings of groups such as the Drywood Yarrow Conservation Partnership, which have been recording increased numbers of grizzly sightings on private land (see earlier article on page 5 of this issue).

Scientific studies are, of course, only part of the picture. Where it all falls down is that science seems to play only a small part in land management decisions in Alberta. Studies take place and recommendations are made, but these rarely seem to result in any positive changes to management practices. The province’s 2008 grizzly recovery plan, for example, was clear that “human use of access... is one of the primary threats to grizzly bear persistence,” but in the intervening years, progress to reduce that access has been minimal.

The new Northrup et al report is also clear that changes are needed. “Future management plans should employ a multi-pronged approach aimed at limiting both road density and traffic in core habitats,” the authors emphasize. “Access management will be critical in such plans and is an important tool for conserving threatened wildlife populations.” Let’s hope that the provincial government is ready to start listening this time.

- Nigel Douglas

Endangered Greater Sage-grouse Hang On by a Thread in Alberta, Huge Declines in Saskatchewan

Every spring anxious eyes turn towards the greater sage-grouse mating grounds of southern Alberta (known as “leks”) to see whether or not Canada’s sage-grouse population made it through the winter. This year’s spring population counts observed only 13 males at Alberta leks, showing no improvement since last year. In Saskatchewan, the only other Canadian province in which sage-grouse persist, huge population declines were observed. Only 18 males were counted at Saskatchewan leks, a dramatic decrease from the 42 males recorded in 2010.

According to sage-grouse scientist Mark Boyce, 2012 lek counts (i.e.: 31 males observed in Canada) indicate that fewer than 100 birds in total now stand between sage-grouse being endangered and sage-grouse being extinct in Canada. The cause of this relentless decline is no mystery: sage-grouse are highly sensitive to habitat disturbance. Research has shown that when confronted with oil and gas development, sage-grouse actively abandon their leks and other habitats crucial to their survival.

Although it is disappointing to see no improvement in Alberta sage-grouse populations since last year, these numbers do not come as a surprise. What else can we expect given the lack of on-the-ground action from either the provincial or federal governments to protect sage-grouse habitat? However, as sage-grouse range continues to disappear in Canada, it is extremely troubling to see such significant declines in Saskatchewan.

Although the greater sage-grouse has been listed as *endangered* provincially since 2000 and federally since 1998, both levels of government have failed to take any effective action to halt this steep decline. In the last two years, the Alberta government has launched a translocation program using birds from Montana. But considering the main cause of species decline is habitat fragmentation and degradation through rampant oil and gas activity, population supplementation addresses only the symptoms, rather than the source of sage-grouse decline. At best the provincial government is prolonging the inevitable; at worst they

are delivering Montana birds to their death. Alberta's species at risk surely deserve more than simply spending every spring hoping for the best.

- Madeline Wilson

A Spill is Worth a Thousand Words

We all know the common mantra, repeated by school teachers of all grade levels in defense of the "boring" history lessons students must endure: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it" (George Santayana). So when we hear that, yet again, a pipeline spill has resulted in very serious damage to one of our most important provincial rivers, perhaps it is time to recall those words, cliché or not.

On June 8, 2012, north of Sunde, Alberta a pipeline operated by Plains Midstream Canada (a subsidiary of Plains All American Pipeline L.P.) spilled approximately 480,000 litres of light sour crude oil into the Red Deer River, a major source waterway for southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This news came only weeks after reports of another pipeline leak, this time in northern Alberta. On May 19, a pipeline operated by Pace Oil & Gas Ltd. spilled approximately 800,000 litres of oil into surrounding peat wetlands just south of Rainbow Lake.

In the case of the Red Deer River Spill, the pipeline operator did not detect the problem themselves but was alerted to the leak by the Sunde Petroleum Operators Group (SPOG). Similarly, in the Rainbow Lake pipeline failure, the operator was informed their pipeline was leaking when another company operating in the area happened to notice it during a routine fly-over.

The condition of Alberta's aging pipeline system, the sheer density of energy related pipelines crisscrossing the province, the rate at which this system is expanding, and perhaps most importantly, the overall weak regulatory oversight of the energy industry, are all disconcerting factors that undoubtedly contribute to the occurrence and severity of pipeline spills. In 2010 the Energy Resource Conservation Board, the entity responsible for provincial pipeline regulation, estimated that for every 1,000 km of pipeline, 1.7 failures occur per

year. As Alberta is currently crisscrossed by approximately 400,000 km of energy-related pipeline, this predicts 680 failures per year. As the regulators, government and industry representatives are quick to point out, some of these 680 failures result in small releases. Nonetheless, no matter the frequency or size of individual spills, the fact that a spill-free system is a lofty if not impossible goal, is indisputable.

AWA remains extremely concerned about the lack of rigorous, precautionary management and monitoring systems in place, and the cumulative impacts resulting from this weak regulation. Increasing national and international focus on major pipeline project proposals has fuelled mounting public concern regarding pipeline integrity. Large-scale disasters, such as the Red Deer River spill, indicate the province is not doing enough to ensure that the environmental and public health risks posed by energy development and the cumulative impacts of active and abandoned energy infrastructure across the province are being adequately managed. It is clear that current management and monitoring standards are able to safeguard neither the integrity of valuable ecosystems, nor the health and safety of Albertans.

- Madeline Wilson

Where is Alberta's Biodiversity Strategy?

Although the first round of regional land-use planning is virtually complete for northeastern Alberta and well underway in the South Saskatchewan region, Albertans are still waiting for an accompanying biodiversity strategy to manage wildlife and wilderness impacts from cumulative development effects. However, AWA has learned that the Alberta government is moving towards releasing a biodiversity strategy and accompanying management system for public review.

From what we have learned, Alberta's biodiversity strategy has been dubbed "Managing Alberta's Natural Advantage," or MANA for short. The strategy's vision is anticipated to state that biodiversity will be conserved, sustainably used, and valued – all of which sounds ambiguous. By contrast, the 1990 Wildlife Policy

for Canada adopted by the federal government, Alberta and other provinces, included goals such as "maintain and restore biodiversity," clear wording that fulfilled the criteria established by the United Nations Environment Program and the International Union for Conservation of Nature for conservation strategies. It would be more auspicious if Alberta's new policy re-affirmed the Alberta government's prior commitment to a clear, world-class, biodiversity goal.

The crucial policy piece for shifting on-the-ground practices is the management system; from what we have learned, the architecture being developed for Alberta's policy has great potential. Insights from Alberta's Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, from provincial land-use plan modeling and more recently, from advances in habitat "cause and effect" analyses will be integrated. Planning tools will allow decision-makers and, hopefully, the public to see how key outcomes for habitats and species may be expected to vary with policy decisions. For example, expected outcomes for forest bird populations for northeastern Alberta can be compared under various management scenarios such as "business as usual," best industrial operating practices, stronger motorized access management, and protected areas. Decision-makers could also look at how these policies would affect access to fossil fuel and forestry resources to identify tradeoff costs of limiting the industrial and recreational footprints. This would pave the way for much more transparent and deliberate decision-making around cumulative effects of development on wildlife.

The government apparently intends to consult with the public on the biodiversity strategy this autumn. Hopefully the "nuts and bolts," which is to say, the proposed management system, will also be presented for public review at that time since it is key to understanding the strategy's potential. AWA will continue to advocate for biodiversity goals and policies to be informed by conservation science and for upholding our longstanding international biodiversity commitments.

- Carolyn Campbell

Canadians Willing To Make Sacrifices to Recover Caribou in our National Parks

Canadians support renewed efforts to recover *threatened* caribou in our Mountain National Parks – and we are willing to make sacrifices to allow that recovery to take place. This is one of the significant findings from a newly released Parks Canada report, *Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou: What we Heard*.

In November 2011, a draft Conservation Strategy was released, and the Canadian public was invited to provide comments. Around 150 individuals and organizations obliged, and their responses are summarized in the new Parks Canada document. Notable findings include:

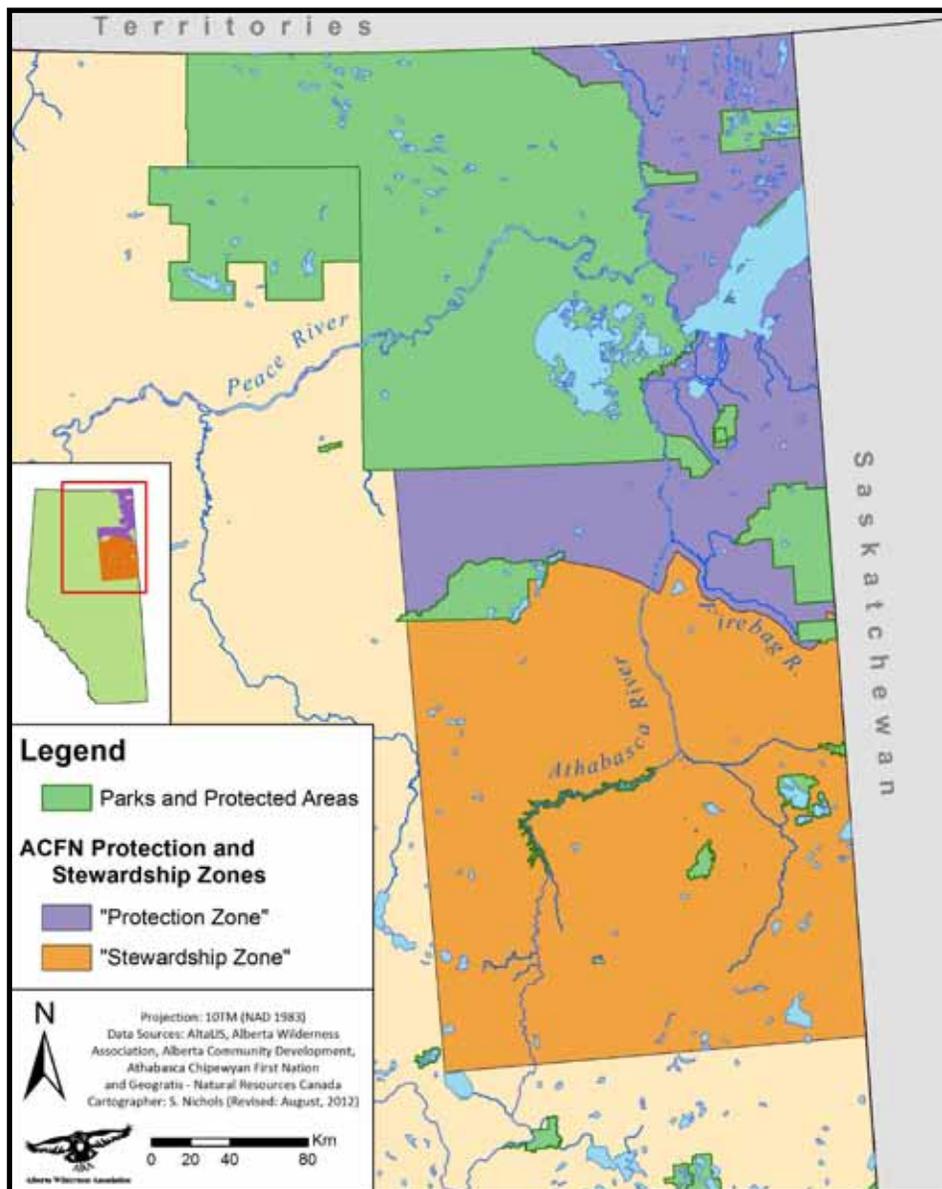
- 97 percent of respondents felt that caribou conservation was important.
- More than 90 percent of respondents supported seasonal trail closures and relocation of trails or campsites to limit recreational impacts in important caribou habitat.
- Nearly 85 percent of respondents support seasonal closure of secondary roads.

Canadians clearly feel that it is important to maintain endangered species in our National Parks, but what is particularly significant is that we understand this means we may need to make compromises that affect our own activities. And we are fine with that.

Woodland caribou of the Southern Mountain population are found in Banff, Jasper, Glacier and Mount Revelstoke National Parks, as well as in adjacent provincial lands. They are listed as *threatened* under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. But the fact that they live in National Parks does not necessarily mean they are safe or sufficiently protected. Banff National Park's caribou herd finally died off in 2009, the first extirpation of a large mammal in a Canadian National Park in more than a century. Two of Jasper's three caribou herds have experienced significant declines in recent years.

AWA hopes that Parks Canada will remember these findings when it decides whether or not to allow future developments, such as Jasper's planned expansion of the Marmot Basin ski hill into caribou range. Ecological integrity remains the priority of Canadians, even if that means restricting development.

- Nigel Douglas



Parks, Protected Areas and ACFN's Proposed Protection and Stewardship Zones.

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Presents Innovative Caribou Co-management Plan

In the absence of any provincial government leadership in caribou recovery in Alberta, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) has showed its willingness to step up to the plate. In an innovative new report, ACFN lay out a "stewardship strategy" for the management of caribou and wood bison in a huge area of northeastern Alberta. The report - *Nih boghodi: We are the stewards of our land. An ACFN stewardship strategy for thunzea, et'hen and dechen yághe ejere (woodland caribou, barren-ground caribou and wood bison)* – was released in April 2012.

The primary goal of the newly proposed strategy is to "provide a concrete vision and tool for sustaining the way of life of our Nation, particularly in relation to ACFN Homelands, and in the face of anticipated or proposed development." This includes proactive protection and restoration of habitat for all local populations of caribou and bison within their historical range in ACFN Homelands.

The strategy proposes two distinct zones (see map):

Protection zone

The Protection zone would extend from the Firebag River corridor north to the Alberta/ Northwest Territories border, including the Birch Mountains and Lake



Athabasca. The strategy makes it clear that “current levels of habitat destruction have exceeded a level sustainable for the protection of caribou and for the protection of ACFN rights and interests.” It calls for mandatory objectives in this zone including:

- No new industrial developments.
- No licenses, leases, authorizations or permits on the land without ACFN’s written consent.
- Provincial and federal governments should fund and work with ACFN to implement a program of habitat reclamation where habitat has already been degraded.

Stewardship zone

The Stewardship zone would extend from the Firebag River corridor south to Calling Lake. In this zone, the strategy stresses that “(m)aintaining a close and respectful relationship of interdependence between humans and both caribou and bison throughout their historical range, including sustainable harvesting, is integral to our way of life and culture.” The Stewardship zone is intended to “ensure that this relationship of interdependence can continue into the future.” Objectives in this zone would include:

- Total disturbance area within

stewardship zone not to exceed 20 percent.

- No industrial footprints to exceed one hectare per square kilometre in any given square kilometre.
- No industrial water withdrawals from lakes, streams, wetlands, or muskeg.
- A maximum linear disturbance (e.g., roads, pipelines, transmission lines, seismic lines) threshold of 1.5 km/km² in any given square kilometre depending on the ecological context.
- A maximum linear disturbance threshold of 0.4 km/km² within the stewardship zone as a whole.

In both the Protection and Stewardship zones, the strategy calls for “a program to establish trails and access corridors to reduce impacts from ATVs and quads, and minimize linear disturbance in the backcountry.”

The AFCN intends to introduce its strategy for “comments, refinement, and support by other First Nations, researchers, government agencies, industry, and NGOs.” AWA will be lending its support to these proposals, which could go a long way towards addressing the caribou habitat protection that the Alberta government has avoided for so long.

- Nigel Douglas

North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

On some days wading into the tangled web of environmental politics in Alberta can be less than uplifting. We can all too easily overlook the good news stories and forget to celebrate the people working tirelessly on the ground day after day. Within the North Saskatchewan River (NSR) watershed, a group composed of municipalities, organizations, and individuals has been tasked with promoting an understanding of watershed issues in this region of Alberta, a large watershed with a diversity of stakeholders and unique challenges. The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is a non-profit society, formed with the purpose of protecting and improving water quality and ecosystem functioning in the NSR watershed in Alberta.

As set out in the 2003 provincial *Water for Life* (WFL) strategy (renewed in 2008) the NSWA is the

designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for the North Saskatchewan River watershed, a regional level partnership created to facilitate action and stakeholder engagement in watershed issues at the regional level. Throughout the province there are eleven designated WPACs, each charged with the following three major responsibilities: preparing a “state of the watershed” report; preparing an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP); and undertaking ongoing information, education and consultation activities on watershed issues and management.

Since 2005, the NSWA has been working to complete an IWMP for the NSR watershed, a significant accomplishment and huge undertaking, which was completed in June 2012. Throughout this time the NSWA has also spearheaded and participated in a variety of other studies and reports, some of which include the following:

- In 2009, the NSWA initiated the first sub-watershed planning project for the NSR basin in collaboration with local municipalities for the Vermilion River sub-watershed.
- The NSWA has participated in the development of the Water Management Framework for the Industrial Heartland and Capital Region.
- Along with local groups, the NSWA assisted with the completion of the Mayatan Lake State of the Watershed Report, which serves as a localized example of water management within the NSR.

The completion of the IWMP signals a point of transition for this group. In order to achieve the goals outlined in the IWMP, the NSWA ideally will act as a bridging organization, bringing people together to develop various implementation initiatives, while expert working groups will be established to address priority tasks. As per the WFL strategy, completed IWMPs are submitted to the director appointed under the *Water Act* and final approval of a water management plan rests with the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD).

On paper, the IWMP is a comprehensive document, and encompasses over a decade of scientific research, community collaboration and

engagement, and public and stakeholder input. However, there is currently no statutory framework to ensure the recommended water management strategies are applied through legislation. As stated in the IWMP, “implementation of certain recommendations will be achieved through the voluntary choices and actions of individual decision makers in government, industry, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. The value of the plan will only be realized to the extent that stakeholders, individually and in collaboration, act on the recommendations as there is no specific statutory framework yet in place to require adoption and implementation of IWMPs.”

It remains to be seen how the Minister of ESRD treats this valuable document and whether or not these recommendations will be incorporated in provincial land use plans. If the provincial government fails to heed these recommendations, it will be our loss indeed. Both the board of directors and the staff of the NSWA are made up of highly educated and experienced individuals coming from a wide variety of backgrounds. The expertise, tenacity, and commitment this group has devoted to completing the IWMP is commendable and worth both recognizing and celebrating.

- Madeline Wilson

Howse Pass Highway: The Ridiculous National Park Highway Proposal that Refuses to Die

One would assume that a proposal to blast a major new highway through the heart of wilderness lands in Banff National Park would be laughed off as a fantasy from a past era in which civilization was measured in numbers of asphalt superhighways. But plans to build a highway from Saskatchewan River Crossing across Howse Pass and into B.C. – plans which have been around since the 1940s – simply refuse to die. And with a current federal government that has already demonstrated its willingness to put economic considerations far above ecological integrity in national parks (see the approval of Brewster’s notorious “Discovery Walk” in Jasper National Park), who is to say that these proposals

will not be received more positively this time around?

The Howse Pass highway – described by the *Red Deer Advocate* as “a bad idea that won’t go away” – made the news once again in July 2012 when Rick Strankman, Wildrose MLA for Stettler-Drumheller, announced that the highway “could be a tremendous benefit” to the economy of his riding (*Red Deer Advocate* July 12, 2012). Incredibly, he made the extravagant, if not outrageous, claim that such a development could be blasted through a national park “with minimal impact on the environment.” Conservative MPs Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin) and Blake Richards (Wild Rose) quickly added their support to the proposals.

In an April 2004 *Wild Lands Advocate* article (Howse Pass Highway Dream Lives On), Herb Kariel described a previous proposal to build the deeply unpopular highway. The cost in 1984 dollars was estimated at \$200 million, a cost that in today’s dollars would be more than doubled. That proposal came to nought, and hopefully the current proposal will go the same way.

Renewed calls to build the “Highway that Refuses to Die” point to a 2005 pre-feasibility study commissioned for the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce, Clearwater County, Lacombe County and Alberta Economic Development, which concluded that there would be a generous economic benefit that would significantly outweigh the costs of construction. The highway would slice through the ecologically-sensitive Banff National Park for “a mere 34 kilometers,” apparently. In a peculiar twist of logic, the report found that the highway would be beneficial in part because “In the short term, some traffic would be diverted away from current routes through the National Parks.” Of course the study did not take into account the environmental and social costs of building a highway across one of Canada’s premier national parks. I would think those costs would be very significant, perhaps astronomical.

Fortunately, construction of the highway is in no way imminent. Legislative obstacles include an Act of Parliament passed by a previous Liberal government, which made it illegal to put a road through the pass. Although the federal government was happy to dismiss opposition to the Brewster Discovery

Walk (including a 180,000-signature petition against the development), it would be hard to ignore the immense opposition that such an ill-considered highway would arouse.

Let's hope that common sense will prevail, but for the time being, the proposed Howse Pass highway is what the *Red Deer Advocate* likens to "an annoying mosquito in the bedroom that just won't go away."

- Nigel Douglas

State of Canada's Declining Bird Populations Warrants Urgent Conservation Action

Conservation Action

Although Canada is currently home to 451 species of birds, conservation action is required to ensure that the most vulnerable of these birds persist in the future. According to a report released in June 2012, almost half (44 percent) of all bird species found in Canada have experienced population declines since 1970 and Canada's total breeding bird population has decreased by 12 percent. Published by Environment Canada on behalf of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, *The State of Canada's Birds 2012* compiles population data gathered by professionals and citizens over the last 40 years. These findings serve to reinforce the fact that, like so much of Canada's wildlife populations, human activity has heavily influenced the current health of Canada's bird species.

Overall, it was found that grasslands birds, migratory shorebirds and aerial insectivores (birds that eat flying insects) have experienced the most severe population declines. The cause of these declines was mainly attributed to habitat loss and degradation due to oil and gas development, forestry, intensive agriculture, wetland drainage, urban expansion and

climate change. It was also found that populations of waterfowl, raptors and colonial seabirds are increasing due in large part to successful conservation initiatives, careful management, habitat protection and reductions in environmental contaminants.

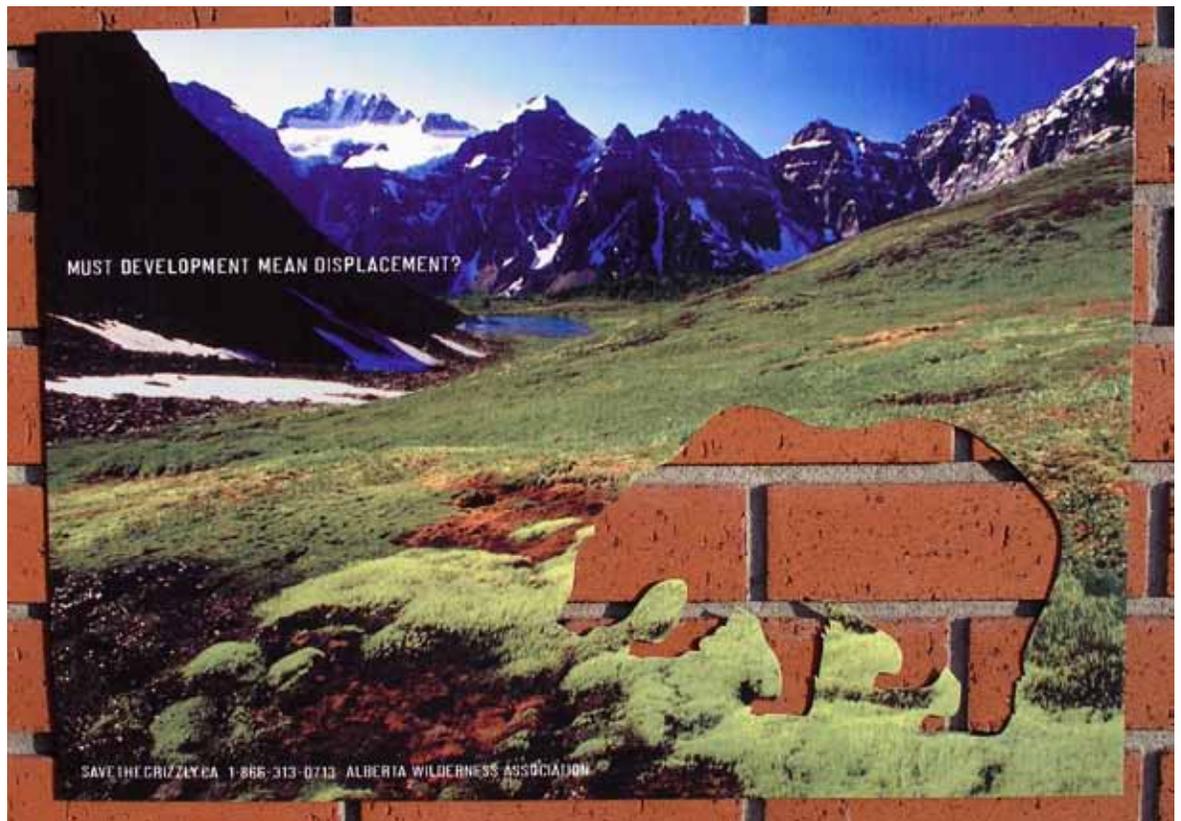
Of particular concern, populations of grasslands birds have declined by an average of 45 percent since 1970. In Alberta, less than one percent of the Grasslands Natural Region is formally protected in any way, despite the fact that 75 percent of species at risk in the province rely upon grasslands habitat. The prairies are some of the most intensively altered landscapes in Canada; due to intensive land use and conversion, more than 70 percent of native prairies and wetlands have been destroyed. Endangered grassland species such as the greater sage-grouse require immediate habitat protection and restoration to prevent their imminent extirpation.

In central and northern Alberta, the Western Boreal region provides important wetland habitat for migratory shorebirds, songbirds, and water fowl. Wetlands face many threats throughout Alberta and the rest of Canada. The rate of wetland loss is alarming. It is estimated that 80 acres (about 45 soccer fields) of wetlands are

lost every day due to wetland drainage for agriculture and development, pollution, invasive non-native species, and drought.

Bird population health is a gauge of ecosystem health. Therefore, it's important to pay attention to and react to such trends. The earlier we identify population declines and implement recovery plans for species at risk, the more effective and beneficial our actions will be in conserving entire ecosystems. At the highest level, the provincial government needs to do more, to take immediate action, to protect these landscapes. Past conservation initiatives have proven successful in improving bird populations, but further bird conservation projects that incorporate national and international cooperation are required to conserve habitat and address threats. By setting aside land to protect endangered species such as the sage-grouse in southern Alberta, myriad species-at-risk will benefit. This report is a call to action for all Canadians across all sectors to protect our wildlife and their habitat now. Let's hope this important report, like so many others, will not be left to gather dust on the shelf.

- Madeline Wilson



Reader's Corner

Peter Dettling, *The Will of the Land*, (Canmore: Rocky Mountain Books, 2010)

Reviewed by Sean Nichols

Swiss-born author and photographer Peter Dettling moved to Canada in 2002, captured by the beauty and majesty of Alberta's Rocky Mountain National Parks. In *The Will of the Land*, he persuades us to take a long, honest look at how we manage the wilderness treasures found within the park boundaries, by providing the kind of mirror that only an outsider can. Switzerland, as he points out, comprises similar alpine landscapes to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, and is only a little over one and a half times the area yet is crammed with eight million people. It is "too late" for the wilderness in his native country; this book presents a desperate attempt to head off a similar fate here.

The Will of the Land may strike you initially as a photography book but it is much more than a collection of spectacular photographs. To be sure, Dettling is an exceptional photographer (Farley Mowat has lauded him for taking "the best damn pics of the other creatures of anyone I know on our planet"), and many of the photographs on display are breathtaking. From the cover photo of a wolf and grizzly squaring off over a piece of elk hide to the pair of frolicking grizzlies captured in *Bears in Love – Part II*, the reader is left to marvel at how Dettling captured these intimate images.

Have no fear: the full story is contained in the pages within. However the prose does more than describe how and where and when the photos were taken. Instead, after being attracted by the visuals, the reader is soon drawn into the real meat of the book: the stories of Banff National Park, specifically the Bow Valley and its mammalian inhabitants, that the author weaves together into his narrative.

If the theme of the book could be summed up in a single statement, it would undoubtedly be the one made on page 131 where Dettling asserts that "the Banff Bow Valley – the heart and soul of Canada's premier national park, part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a place ostensibly set aside to form a stronghold for wildlife – ... is one of the most dangerous places for a wolf to live."

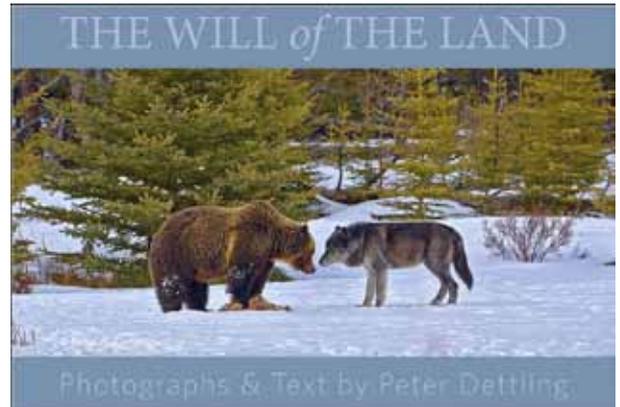
Over nearly 200 pages, Dettling takes on the mission of truly speaking for those unable to speak for themselves: the grizzlies, wolves, elk and other beasts of the Bow Valley. As he does so, he excoriates the Parks system for failing to provide these and other species the basic level of protection (in a national park!) needed to ensure their survival. It is an engaging read, but not a light one: Dettling provides plenty of history, charts, and statistics to back up his words. He has done his homework.

Threaded throughout are the aforementioned stories. The three-parter *Bears in Love* tells the photograph-laden story of grizzlies on which Dettling has bestowed evocative monikers such as "Casanova," "Arnie" and "The Brave One." We get to follow Dettling's encounters with these bears over the seven years that he travels the Bow Valley in search of his spectacular photographs.

Yet the narrative centrepiece of the book must be the tale of the Bows, a wolf family that Dettling first encounters in 2005, and goes on to follow for four more years. With the help of other researchers, he traces their lineage back to their 1993 arrival in the park and is able to befriend (as much as one can, or should, befriend a pack of wild wolves) many of the family's members. Their endlessly engrossing story takes up six of the book's 15 chapters, and several dozen photographs, including many of the most enrapturing. I will leave it for Dettling to relate what becomes of the family, although it does not have the happiest of endings.

Other species encountered and photographed by Dettling for the book include elk, coyotes, and rocky mountain bighorn sheep. Yet the previous refrain remains a common one: populations are dwindling, too little is being done, and Dettling is left to implore why in the one slice of Canada supposedly set aside for the protection of wilderness we cannot seem to be able even to accomplish that.

This brings Dettling, and us, back to the examination of the history of the national park system and specifically Banff National Park. Some pages



contrast Banff with Yellowstone and other national parks around the world, looking at how their divergent histories lead to divergent management practices today. We look at what does or does not work elsewhere, and at how comparable practices are being followed and implemented in Banff.

The book navigates a sometimes threatening but ultimately hopeful path. The book is divided into three broad sections: in *Garden of Eden* Dettling focuses on the honeymoon period when he first came to the Bow Valley. This is followed by the substantial *Paradise Lost* where we follow Dettling as he witnesses a darkening reality for his zoological friends. Finally, in *Regaining Paradise*, Dettling synthesizes his research into a set of optimistic proposals for how to turn around everything that has gone wrong.

I do not use the word "optimistic" lightly. Were I to have one criticism of *The Will of the Land*, it would be that it becomes hard to imagine after accompanying Dettling along his path that the proposals at its end are particularly realistic. At the risk of being overly cynical, the few chapters of proposals feel like a case of spitting in the wind. His call-to-action is well-taken, however: Dettling persuasively and clearly argues that the park is broken and follows this up by enlisting the reader in a call to arms to help bring about change. The exact form of that change may be subject to debate, but after reading the book, there can be no argument that it is needed.

Above all, I insist that my previous paragraph of criticism should not be taken to imply that the book is anything but completely worthwhile. Again, it is not light reading, but it is engaging, engrossing and even inspiring. Complemented by Dettling's stunning photographs, I recommend it highly. 🍓

Letters

July 12, 2012
Premier Alison Redford
Office of the Premier
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B7
Email: premier@gov.ab.ca
Fax: (780) 427-1349

Dear Premier Redford,

The recent series of major pipeline spills in the province has raised serious concerns for all Albertans about the integrity and oversight of the more than 300,000 kilometres of oil and gas pipelines that crisscross the province. These spills have brought attention to an issue that affects the entire province. Albertans deserve assurances that our pipeline infrastructure is safe, and that appropriate regulations and oversight are in place.

For this reason, we are calling on you to initiate an immediate independent province-wide review of pipeline safety in Alberta, similar to the one which was recently conducted for the Auditor General of Saskatchewan's 2012 report.

We are encouraged that you have indicated you are "not opposed" to such a review, but we believe that such a critical issue simply cannot wait, as you have indicated, for the conclusion of the ERCB investigation into the recent spills. The average ERCB investigation takes nine months to complete, with some investigations taking years, and broader concerns related to regulation and enforcement are unlikely to be addressed by these investigations. An independent review of regulations and enforcement can and must be conducted in a parallel time frame to any ERCB investigation into individual spills.

Albertans need to know that their families, communities and drinking water are safe from pipeline spills. The time for leadership on pipeline safety is now, and the first step must be an independent pipeline safety review.

Signed,

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Alberta Landowners Council | 19. Council of Canadians | 39. Powers Group |
| 2. Alberta Surface Rights Group | 20. Davey Lake Group | 40. Public Interest Alberta |
| 3. Alberta Union of Provincial Employees | 21. Dene Nation | 41. Regional Environmental Action Committee |
| 4. Alberta Wilderness Association | 22. Earth Alternatives | 42. Seniors' Action and Liaison Team |
| 5. Alberta Workers' Health Centre | 23. Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society | 43. Sierra Club Prairie Chapter |
| 6. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation | 24. Environmental Defence | 44. South Porcupine Stewardship Association |
| 7. Big Valley Surface Rights | 25. Friends of Lily Lake | 45. Springvale Surface Rights Association |
| 8. Border Surface Rights | 26. Glasswaters Foundation | 46. Strawberry Landowners Group |
| 9. Butte Action Committee | 27. Greenpeace Canada | 47. Three Creeks Resident's group |
| 10. Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment | 28. Indigenous Environmental Network | 48. United Landowners of Alberta |
| 11. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Northern Alberta Chapter | 29. International Institute of Concern for Public Health | 49. United Nurses of Alberta |
| 12. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter | 30. Keepers of the Athabasca | 50. Uptag Society |
| 13. Central Athabasca Stewardship Society | 31. Lac Ste Anne Community Group | 51. Warburg Pembina Surface Rights Group |
| 14. ChangeAlberta | 32. Lochend Under Siege Group | 52. Water Matters |
| 15. Citizens for Responsible Development | 33. National Farmers Union | 53. West Athabasca Watershed Bio Regional Society |
| 16. Citizens for Responsible Power | 34. Nature Alberta | 54. World Wildlife Fund |
| 17. Cleanwater Foundation | 35. North Saskatchewan Riverkeepers | |
| 18. Confederacy of Treaty 6 | 36. Onoway River Valley Conservation Association | |
| | 37. Peace River Environmental Society | cc: Danielle Smith, Wildrose |
| | 38. Pembina Institute | Raj Sherman, Alberta Liberals |
| | | Brian Mason, Alberta NDP |

In Memoriam

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants - A Tribute for Elmer Kure (1921–2012)

By Lorne Fitch, P. Biol.

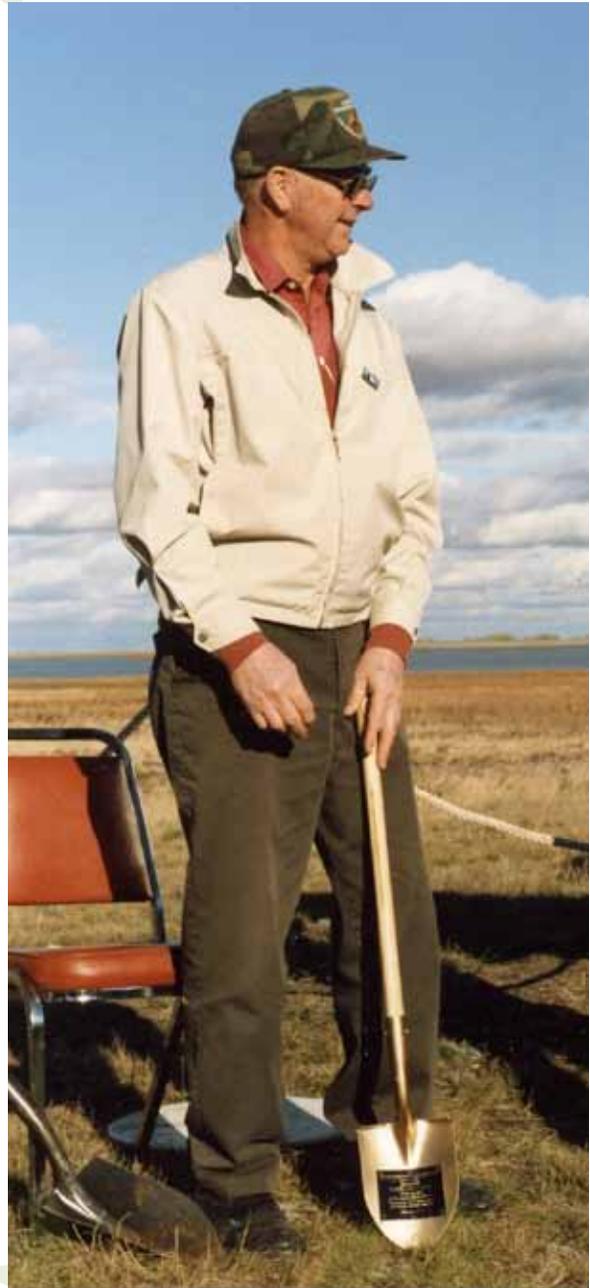
In the business of conservation we are often so intent on staring into the fog called tomorrow, we rarely turn around and look back at the pathway called yesterday stretching behind us. How we got on that pathway, how we gained confidence, momentum and critical mass is mostly based on those who came before us. All of us stand on the shoulders of some giants – Elmer Kure was one of those giants.

Elmer passed away this May at 90. When we look at the dash that represents his life, from 1921 to 2012 it doesn't provide a sense of his vast contribution to conservation. It's not so much the long list of initiatives he worked on but how he managed to accomplish so much for conservation.

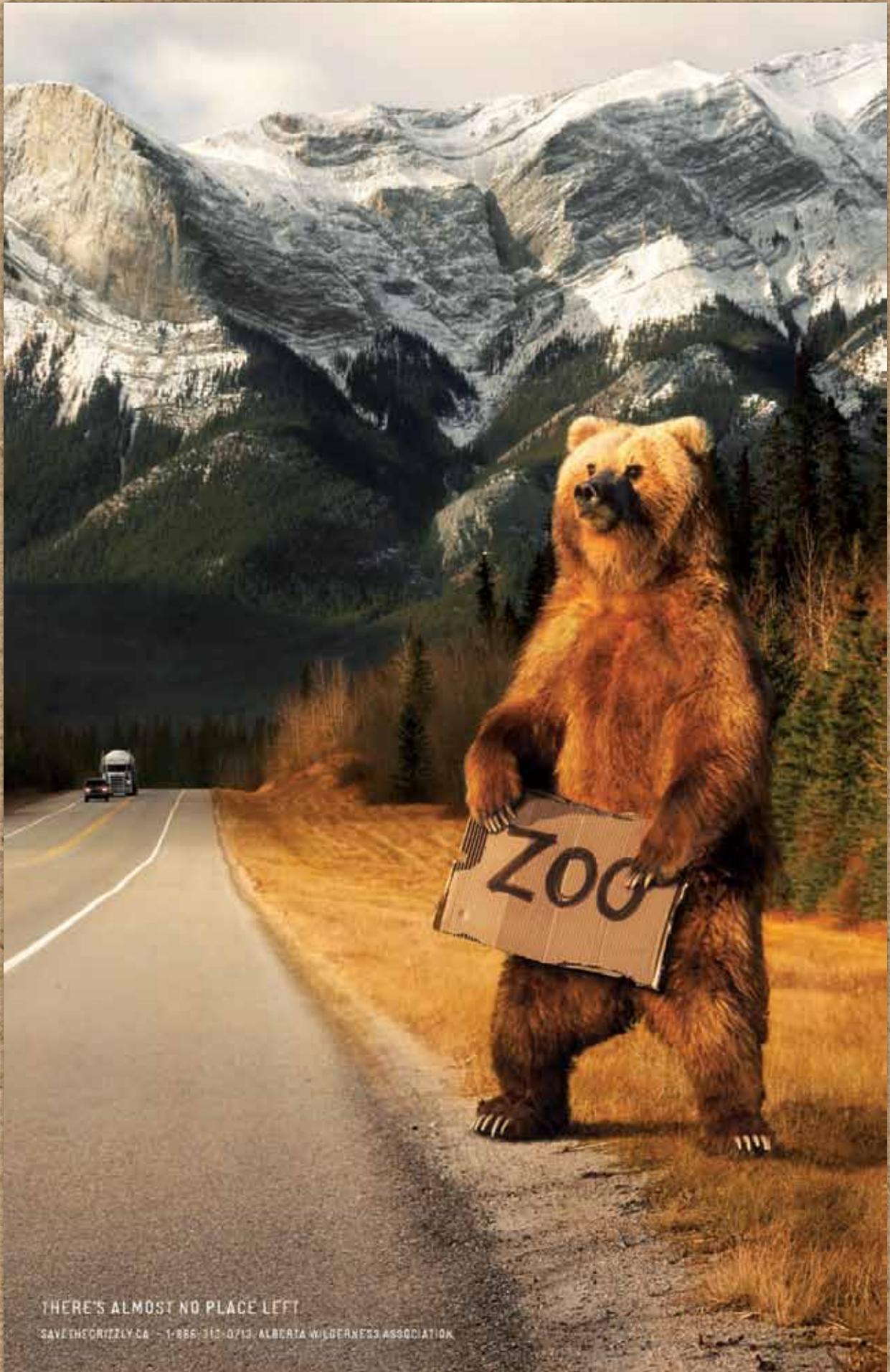
In Elmer's long life he was witness to many changes on the landscape. As a farmer he accepted he was part of some of those changes but he was always aware of the balance between benefits and costs. I think that put Elmer in a rare position to see both sides of the equation, of land uses and land use issues. And, his extensive reading made him an informed individual giving him a sense of perspective, of balance and of alternatives. He used those skills extensively to inform, negotiate and when no balance could be found, to draw lines in the sand.

The best of conservation successes are the ones hardly noticed; a clear stream with a rising trout, a woodlot harboring a grouse, a white-tailed deer and a patch of lady slippers, an intact piece of prairie grassland. Elmer was part of making so many of those things happen. He was also part of something larger. Healthy landscapes, fish and wildlife only persist when people appreciate and take responsibility for them. That is Elmer's legacy, one of stewardship, and the torch is now passed to us.

His contributions to conservation were many and are an enduring legacy to his work, integrity and commitment. Alberta is, no doubt, a better place because of Elmer's efforts.



Elmer Kure at Antelope Creek Ranch official designation in 1986.



THERE'S ALMOST NO PLACE LEFT

SAVE THE CRIZZLY CA - 1-888-313-0713 ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Events

24th Annual Wild West Gala

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 2012

The 24th annual Wild West Gala is a celebration of Alberta's Wild spaces and Wildlife. It is a tradition of friends, colleagues, members and supporters enjoying a great meal and an evening filled with entertainment, conversation, auctions and plain good fun. Tickets are \$110.00 for members and \$125.00 for non-members. This event is a fundraiser for the Alberta Wilderness Association and is totally dependent on volunteers and sponsors from the Calgary area to present an evening to remember.

- **Location:** Red and White Club (north end of McMahon Stadium), Calgary
- **Time:** 6:00 p.m.
- **Tickets:** \$110.00 for members, \$125.00 for non-members
- **Pre-registration is required:** 1-866-313-0713
- **Online:** www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

TALK:

Frogs and Oilsands with Brian Eaton

TUESDAY OCTOBER 2, 2012

In the US, 50 to 60 percent of frogs are malformed probably because of chemical contamination. How can we avoid the same fate in Alberta? Brian Eaton is a herpetologist working with Alberta Innovates. In this talk, he discusses the benefits of his work as to industrial development, forestry regulations, wetland assessments and tar sands development.

- **Location:** 455 – 12 Street NW, Calgary
- Doors open at 7:00 p.m.
- **Tickets:** \$5.00
- **Registration:** 1-403-283-2025
- **Online:** www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

Music For the Wild

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2012

Magnolia Buckskin

When four singer/songwriters join forces, the outcome is Magnolia Buckskin - an acoustic quartet of sublime vocals and refreshing original songs that will elevate your soul! The four are Kathy Cook, Natasha Platt, Emily Triggs and Corry Ulan; bringing you a blend of grassroots, folk and pop music.

- **Opening Act:** Horizon Ridge
- Doors open at 7:00 p.m.
- Music starts at 7:30 p.m.
- **Tickets:** \$15.00
- **Pre-registration is required:** 1-403-283-2025
- **Online:** www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

TALK:

The Great Divide Trail with Dan Wallace and Wayne Marshall

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 6, 2012

Dan Wallace and Wayne Marshall talk about history, personal experiences and hard work on Canada's Great Divide Trail. Their talk three years ago was a fascinating glimpse into the experiences these folk have – be sure you don't miss this evening where they talk about what they've been up to since then!

- **Location:** 455 – 12 Street NW, Calgary
- Doors open at 7:00 p.m.
- **Tickets:** \$5.00
- **Registration:** 1-403-283-2025
- **Online:** www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/events

Martha Kostuch Annual Wilderness and Wildlife Lecture and the

Annual Wilderness Defenders Awards

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2012

Guest Lecturer – **Lorne Fitch**

Two Alberta Wilderness Defenders Awards and one Great Gray Owl Award will be presented at this evening of celebration.

- **Location:** 455 – 12 Street NW, Calgary
- **Reception:** 6:00 p.m.
- **Wilderness Defenders Awards:** 7:00 p.m.
- **Lecture:** 7:30 p.m.
- **Cost:** \$30.00
- **Registration:** 1-866-313-0713 or 1-403-283-2025
- **Online:** www.AlbertaWilderness.ca/lecture

Alberta Wilderness Association Annual General Meeting

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2012

- Time 11:00 a.m.
- Location: 455 – 12 Street NW, Calgary
- Registration: 1-866-313-0713 or 1-403-283-2025





Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:



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



Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40065626 ISSN 485535