

# A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE



THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

JUNE/JULY 2014

The Wonder of Willmore

Going Home

Voices of Experience

Floods...Not a Water  
Management Problem?



# C O N T E N T S

JUNE/JULY 2014 • VOL. 22, NO. 3

## Features

- 4 The Wonder of Willmore
- 6 Going Home
- 8 Get Out There: Voices of Experience
- 11 Floods Are Not a Water Management Problem
- 13 Conservation Corner: To Tell You The Truth
- 15 Focus: Alberta's Species-at-Risk

## Association News

- 17 Filming Wolves: Andrew Manske's Experiences
- 19 Government Relations: This is Now and That was Then
- 21 Climb and Run for Wilderness – Recap From Another Great Event

## Wilderness Watch

- 23 Updates

## Departments

- 26 Gear Ideas
- 27 Reader's Corner
- 30 In Memoriam

## Events

- 31 Summer Events

## Cover Photo

Let yourself be drawn into the Persimmon Range, Willmore Wilderness Park  
PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

## Featured Artist: Pamela Copeland

Getting away from everything, in the peace and quiet of the wilderness, is something Pamela has always enjoyed. "Wherever I lived in Alberta, I have always craved time in the natural world, to connect with the land, to ground myself and to feel a greater part of everything around me. Time in nature nourishes and soothes my soul and quenches a yearning in my heart. I cannot imagine life without it." She and her husband, Robert, share a love of the outdoors and wildlife and have made the Claresholm area their latest home in rural Alberta.

Pamela works mainly in the pastel and acrylic mediums. Her works feature forests, mountains, waterways and Alberta's iconic native grasslands. Pamela is currently working on pieces for a solo show planned for late September. The southern Alberta landscape, including the Porcupine Hills, will be the focus of her exhibit. Pamela may be reached at [pjcope@platinum.ca](mailto:pjcope@platinum.ca)

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

## Editor:

Ian Urquhart

## Graphic Design:

Doug Wournell B Des, ANSCAD

## Printing:

Colour printing and process is sponsored by Topline Printing



## Mixed Sources

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

[www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org) Cert no. SW-COC-001922  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council



## ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

*"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"*

Alberta Wilderness Association is a charitable non-government organization dedicated to the completion of a protected areas donation, call 403-283-2025 or contribute online at [AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://AlbertaWilderness.ca).

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

## Please direct questions and comments to:

403-283-2025 • [wla@abwild.ca](mailto:wla@abwild.ca)

Subscriptions to the WLA are \$30 per year. To subscribe, call 403-283-2025 or see [AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://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](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca)  
[awa@abwild.ca](mailto:awa@abwild.ca)

ISSN 1192-6287

# Solstice Reflections

Maybe it's just me but I think it's taken summer far too long to get here. Now that summer seems to have both feet firmly planted in Alberta we hope you're going to be able to find some time to get out there and explore Alberta's natural world. Several of the articles in this issue's Features section focus on areas and/or experiences that express or reflect in one way or another what the authors and interviewees find so remarkable about living and recreating in the outdoors.

If you've been paying close attention to the provincial government's response to the flood of 2013 you'll have noticed that considerable weight has been given to engineering approaches to mitigating future floods. Certainly some of this is necessary and welcome. But, as Dave Mayhood's article in the Features section and Carolyn Campbell's update in the Wilderness Watch section maintain,

there's a very real and largely unmet need for other types of responses. Municipal planners and developers need to recognize floodplains for what they are – parts of our rivers. Their actions and plans for development should be animated by this fundamental truth. Our political leaders could do far worse than act on their counsel as well as the types of headwaters protection initiatives that are being advocated in the Ghost River valley.

Niki Wilson and Nigel Douglas offer you their regular features on conservation science and Alberta's species-at-risk. As you'll see I asked Niki to jump through a particular hoop for this issue of the *Advocate*. Nigel focuses on bison in this issue. I'd never ask a bison to jump through a hoop.

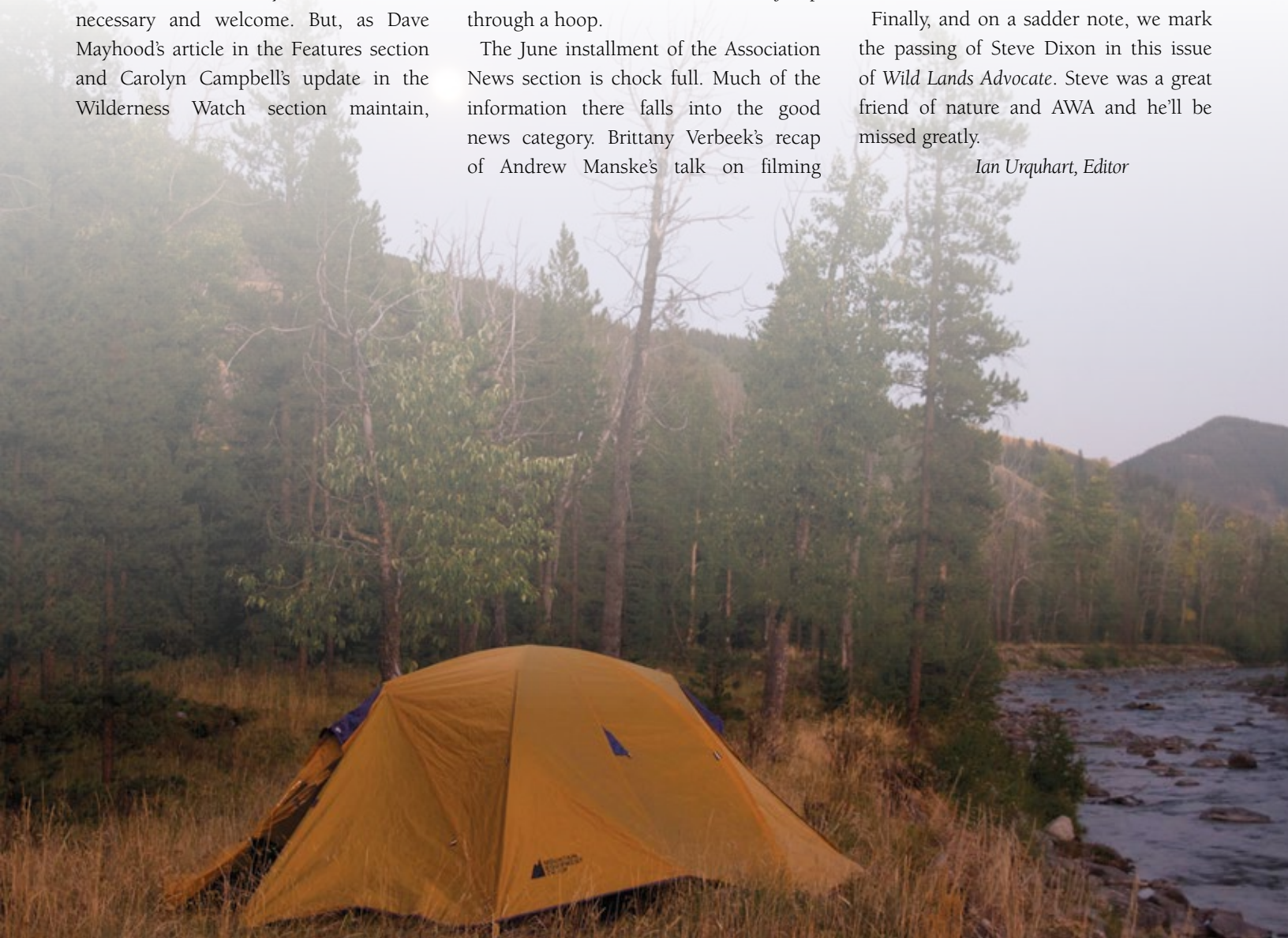
The June installment of the Association News section is chock full. Much of the information there falls into the good news category. Brittany Verbeek's recap of Andrew Manske's talk on filming

wolves, Christyann Olson's summary of the Climb and Run for Wilderness, and David Minkow's account of the workshops associated with Mountain Equipment Co-op's Freshwater campaign all should generate a positive aura for you. The account of AWA's long time in coming meeting with the new Minister of Environmental and Sustainable Resource Development might make you grumpy. Read it and I think you'll see why.

What else do we have on offer in the June issue? Wilderness watch updates – of course. If you're a runner (or know someone who is) you'll definitely appreciate Kristina Vyskocil's gear review. Like art and/or wolves? Check out our book reviews.

Finally, and on a sadder note, we mark the passing of Steve Dixon in this issue of *Wild Lands Advocate*. Steve was a great friend of nature and AWA and he'll be missed greatly.

*Ian Urquhart, Editor*





# The Wonder of Willmore



By Ian Urquhart

Over the course of the day changes in the light may affect dramatically our perspective on and responses to mountain landscapes. Life has had a similar impact on my appreciation of those landscapes. My earliest memories of mountains see them as a canvas for imagining larger than life tales. When, as a 10-year old, I looked at Old Glory outside of Rossland, B.C. I heard a story from my father's youth. He and his buddies decided to go on an early spring camping trip and took Gibbard's Trail to the top of this tallest of peaks in the Rossland ranges. A snowstorm hit them hard when they reached the old weather service

lookout on the mountain, stranding them there for several days with the weather crew. I wanted mountains to give me a taste of that kind of excitement. I wanted to be at the top of that mountain curled up in my dad's wool sleeping bag listening to wind and snow batter the cabin.

As a teenager I added another need to hiking in mountain landscapes. My hikes had to feed a need to conquer. They were tests. I needed to get up to Slocan Chief cabin in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park as fast as I could. That need meant I missed the doe and fawn off the trail that the rest of my family was treated to. Never mind...I was the first one to the cabin.

Now mountain landscapes nourish a spiritual side of life I used to ignore. They are sanctuaries. They offer refuge from busyness and are a source of inspiration. I need them as much as I need air to breathe and food to eat.

Last year I had the opportunity to take advantage of Ray Rasmussen's generosity and spend a week in the sanctuary of Willmore Wilderness Park. Willmore begins at the northern boundary of Jasper National Park and, at nearly 4,600 square kilometres, is nearly half the size of Jasper. Rocky Notnes introduced Ray to Willmore a long, long time ago. Ray fell in love with what he experienced and returning to this special place has been a regular event on his summer calendar ever since. Every year Ray takes it upon himself to organize hikes into the Willmore so others may be acquainted with the many basins and ridges he has come to know over the years.

Over the course of seven days I had the opportunity to explore Willmore with Ray, his partner Nancy, and the rest of the group from our base camp in the Eagle's Nest Pass region. It didn't take me long to enjoy the opportunity to day hike from base camp. Hikes to places like Manzer Lake (named for Dave Manzer, a long-time Willmore outfitter), the Big Bump, Wildhay Ridge, and "Two Bears" Lake (the label I'm giving to the lake close to where we saw two grizzly bears) impress in so many ways. Wildflowers, spectacular vistas, dramatic weather changes, and comradeship figure prominently in my mind.

But, what stands out most for me now



Ian Macdonald, on his way to start the climb to Wildhay Ridge. PHOTO: © I. URQUHART





Hikers in Willmore Wilderness Park, like this early morning mist, will find it hard to leave. PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

at this stage of my life is the timeless, everlasting quality I came to associate with Willmore. This timelessness is present in the ridges and valleys you have the opportunity to follow when you venture beyond

the old forest fire road that takes you into Willmore. At the headwall of the cirque above Manzer Lake, where water trickles out of the rocks, rests a moss-covered set of bighorn sheep horns. How many sea-

sons have those horns seen since the death of the monarch who wore them? Less than a stone's throw away from these horns sits the fossilized remains of the prehistoric sea life that once inhabited this alpine valley. Timeless and everlasting – those are the qualities of Willmore that will bring me back there again. I only wish I'd made the time to discover this special place decades ago. 🌲

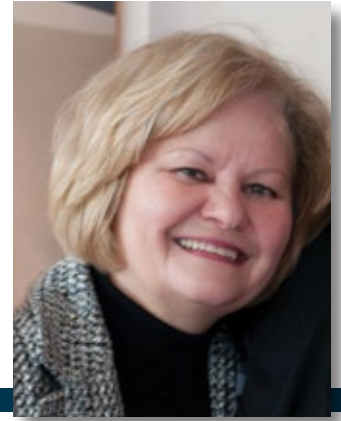


RoseMarie and Hilde, two compatriots on Ray's 2013 Eagle's Nest Pass trip, still smiling after a late July snow squall on "the Big Bump." PHOTO: © I. URQUHART



At the end of July ground squirrels already have been busy preparing for winter. "Haystacks" are being piled, if messily, outside a burrow. PHOTO: © I. URQUHART

# Going Home



By Christyann Olson, *AWA Executive Director*

As thoughts turn to summertime, Ian, our *Wild Lands Advocate* editor asked us to think about our favourite places and where we might go this summer. Many possibilities, many wants, ran through my head. One favourite trip is impossible to name. Thinking of the prairies, a day hike in Sage Creek will undoubtedly be on my itinerary. So too will be a picnic on Milk River Ridge. The majestic mountain landscapes of the Bighorn call me too; the green rolling hills of the parklands of Wain-

wright Dunes and Bodo Hills nudge forward too for a place on my itinerary this summer. I'd like to head north on the eve of fall and see the northern lights.

But I plan to start my summer adventures by going home, to Coleman, the town in the Pass where I grew up.

How fortunate I was to have the mountains, forests, and the Crowsnest River literally at my doorstep. As a child I wandered and came to know the hillsides and the streams. I loved “bugs” – my favourites were the stone-

flies the rainbows of the Crowsnest River love so well. I could tell you when and where you would find the most wonderful patch of lady slipper orchids and glacier lilies; I could tell you when the eagles were likely to perch on the tallest snags; I *might* tell you where my favourite swimming hole was or where to find tiny black diamonds encased in the rocks. I was a coal miner's daughter and coal was our daily bread. People laugh when I tell them it was only when my family moved to Calgary that I learned coal was



Early morning sun wakens Crowsnest Mountain. PHOTO: © D. OLSON



dirty. I remember early morning breakfast conversations with my parents wondering if Japan would buy the coal that year and what it would mean if they didn't.

Things have changed a great deal in Coleman. Signs of lost enterprise line the main street; the grocery store, the barbershop, the hotel, the Roxy theatre, the jewellery store, and the hardware store are all gone. Gone too is most of the old infrastructure of the mining operations. Green grass now grows on the piles of overburden from coal mining operations. The miner's path is still there and is a destination hike now as the history of the Crowsnest Pass comes to life through interpretive sign boards and tourism promotions. The Crowsnest River is a world-class destination for fly-fishers. As they step into the stream to cast they are one with the river. I hope they appreciate the strength and the peace of this mountain stream and all it means to our wellbeing. The pristine waters that are its headwaters are vital life-giving waters for fish, bugs, birds, ungulates and their four-legged predators, and plants. And, of course for us too.

I know I will be rejuvenated when I go to the pass to hike and enjoy the places of my



Stoneflies, Crowsnest River. PHOTO: © C. OLSON

childhood. The crisp clean air on my face will invigorate. I will be one with the water as I cast out my line and I will take this time to reflect on how fortunate we are to have wild Alberta. As I round the bend on Highway 3 and see my old friends again, the majestic Crowsnest Mountain and her Seven Sisters, I will turn the clock back to those days of my youth. I'll hope to see an elusive

sow grizzly and her cubs; I'll remember the day a bull moose came out of the bush and walked down the hill behind me as I made my way to school; I'll smell the magnificent wild roses that line the miners path; I'll wait for the call of a raven to renew my hopes that my children and grandchildren will come to know what I learned in the Pass. ▲

## Pamela Copeland - Featured Artist



Spring Green, Pastel: 11 by 22 inches PHOTO: © P. COPELAND

# Get Out There:

## Voices of Experience



By **Brittany Verbeek**, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

**I**n a recent *National Geographic* issue, journalist Paul Salopek writes about embarking on a journey around the world. He is traveling by foot, retracing the steps of early humans migrating out of Africa to the southern tip of South America. He said, “By walking, I am forced to slow down. The world blurs and flattens with speed. On foot there is clarity.”

This quote really moved me. So many of us compete in a daily race to get as much stuff done as possible; we drive faster, send more emails, accomplish more, and we fail to live even a few moments of our time here at a slower, arguably saner, pace. One way to walk in Salopek’s footsteps is to escape the buzz of technology in areas with few roads and no wifi. Find places where the only sounds heard are the rustling of leaves, the gurgling of creeks, and the hum of the wind. Find places where no schedule exists other than the rising and setting of the sun. In Alberta we are lucky because places like this still exist. It is important to celebrate the incredible true wilderness we have. People travel from all over the world to experience Alberta’s backcountry. They come to take in the breathtaking landscapes we are so fortunate to enjoy.

Growing up, I took camping, hiking, and exploring in the mountains for granted. It’s what our family did. As an adult I have become extremely aware of how privileged I was to have that lifestyle engrained in me at a young age. I understand and appreciate the power of nature to heal, to both stimulate and calm the mind, and to bring happiness.

But I am just beginning to explore Alberta’s wild spaces. So I thought it best to ask some

seasoned Albertans who have extensively explored parts of our wilderness to share their experiences. Their impressions and recollections of some of their urite places will hopefully inspire you to get out there!

### **Life on the Flanks of the Livingstone Range**

David McIntyre, a landowner and AWA member, describes his backyard as the Serengeti of southwestern Alberta. The Livingstone Range is a north-south mountain range that erupts out of the earth from the Highwood River to Crowsnest Pass, near the eastern boundary of the Rockies. “A serrated knife edge in the sky,” is how David describes this range named for the famous English African geographer and missionary. This natural wall combined with the Waldron Co-operative’s well-managed grazing leases, private lands, and conservation easements to the east has created a rare example of ecological integri-

ty in an area where there is too little formal provincial or national protection. One gap in the great rock exists - aptly named The Gap - carved out by the thundering Oldman River and buffered by a moist willow-rich valley.

It is a strikingly gorgeous landscape that is home to a wide spectrum of wildlife. David describes the area’s vegetation as a wonderful mosaic of rough fescue, aspen, and limber pine forests. Courtesy of the area’s strong westerly winds the limber pine grows horizontally like snakes across the ground. This rich habitat supports one of the largest bighorn sheep populations in the province and one of the largest aggregations of moose. Both white-tailed deer and mule deer can be spotted in droves. One day from an elevated vantage point, McIntyre counted 276 deer grazing below. The Livingstone’s cold mountain streams and rushing rivers boast native troubled trout – westslope cutthroat and bull – in addition to many other aquatic



*Moose and her calf in a foothills stream.* PHOTO: © D. MCINTYRE





Looking over Nancy Field's shoulder at the Livingstone Range. PHOTO: © D. MCINTYRE

organisms. The region has some of Alberta's few remaining viable spawning habitats for our disappearing native trout species. The area has a rich anthropological history as well. Historic native cairns, vision quest areas, medicine wheels, and other archeological remnants of past generations are scattered across the range.

David and his wife Nancy Field wander the eastern flanks of the range daily. They see the landscape as an extension of their own house. They have witnessed moose calves fighting against the river current battling to survive, bull elk crashing into each other competing for females, and classic predator/prey interactions. Using his botany skills, David marks the first signs of spring according to the blooming of buttercups and prairie crocuses. On any given morning in the fall, he can hear sounds of elk bugling, reverberating through the valley. Sightings of dusky grouse, golden eagles, wolves, and bears are a simple, welcome part of their daily life.

David's keen interest in wildlife has led him to set up trail cameras, collect fur for DNA analysis, and photograph the diversity of the

area's flora and fauna. He is a firm believer in a "catch and release" landscape ethic. He says there is no reason why everyone can't enjoy Alberta's wilderness to its full extent while maintaining its intactness for future generations. When I asked him if he or Nancy ever worried for their personal safety living in such a wild area, his reply left me pondering the disconnect between our modern urban society and the natural world. He said they felt safer amongst the wildlife than in the chaos of cities. His viewpoint makes a lot of sense when you compare the number of people in Alberta who are injured or killed in wildlife encounters to those injured or killed in automobile accidents.

Once a month on the eve of the full moon, David and Nancy set out at dusk to climb a smaller ridge east of the Livingstone Range. As they look west from the top, their eyes fill with the beautiful glow of the moon and they become intoxicated with the magical view surrounding them. They sit in the stillness, admiring the precious home they share with myriad other plants and animals.

## K-Country's Teacher and One of His Students

I would describe Ed Hergott, a long time supporter of AWA, as a walking, breathing guidebook to Kananaskis Country. If someone were to point at a random mountain peak anywhere in that area, chances are good that Ed would not only know the name and details of the mountain but he could tell you he climbed to the top of it at least once in his lifetime. He has hiked, backpacked, cross-country skied, paddled, climbed, and snow shoed all over the Rockies. But he knows Kananaskis and Banff best.

Ed has had the explorer's itch throughout most of his life. He began his backpacking and skiing career in the late 1960s, at that time mostly venturing out on his own. Ed is not one to linger in the forested areas. He usually aims to get above the tree line, scramble to a mountaintop, and soak up the far-reaching vistas. Before the explosion of trail guidebooks and ubiquitous trail descriptions on the internet, Ed and his friends used to drive west, point at a ridge or a mountain and say: "Hey that one looks good,



Ed Hergott on a small peak west of Eiffel Peak. PHOTO: © B. LEE

Let's climb it." With the help of a compass and some bushwhacking skills, they rarely let the mountain get the best of them.

His real vocation, or at least the one he got paid for, was teaching at a high school in Calgary. During his years as a teacher, he led the school's outdoor club. He took them on many climbing, hiking, and skiing adventures. He inspired students year after year and provided lifelong outdoor memories for them.

After retiring from his teaching career, Ed decided to start his own hiking group. He

began organizing day trips every Tuesday for a small group of friends and acquaintances. Eighteen years – 918 Tuesdays later, his group has left few mountains in Kananaskis Country unclimbed. Ed's natural leadership skills, combined with his passion for the outdoors, have created the perfect recipe for this group's safe and memorable adventures. They've explored Grotto Mountain, Sheep River, Mount Rundle, Red Ridge, Eiffel Peak, Blue Rock Mountain, just to name a few. Their group has evolved to also travel further distances together for multi-day journeys. Once a year they do a big trip such as hiking in Jasper National Park, biking across parts of Europe, or sea kayaking in the Broken Group Islands on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

You might think Ed's group, where the average age is seventy, is a fair-weather bunch. They're not. It astonished me to find out they go rain or shine (or snow) every Tuesday of the year, with the exception of Christmas. Minus thirty degree weather does not dissuade them – those are "gear testing days." Being out in the backcountry as often as Ed and his group have been, they've observed more than their fair share of wildlife: bears, mountain goats, lynx, cougars, and even a wolverine have blessed them with their pres-

ence. They've had the privilege of walking through alpine meadows teeming with wildflowers and sharing a lunch space with those few hardy trees exposed above the tree line, struggling to survive.

In the last few decades, Ed's teaching instincts have come to the fore. Rather than find new exploration destinations for him, he's more likely to offer his knowledge and experiences for others to enjoy. Not everyone has had Ed's lifelong love affair with Alberta's eastern slopes. A good friend of his and member of their hiking group had very little experience in the backcountry until she retired and joined the group. Bonnie Curran, who just celebrated her seventieth birthday, can now say she has climbed thirty-two mountain peaks that are visible from Highway 1 from Calgary to Lake Louise. She's also scrambled to the tops of many, many more hidden from the highway.

Bonnie told me before she retired she was not very active, especially when it came to the outdoors. She seemed to never have the spare time, as many city dwellers will empathize with. She had always wanted to discover Alberta's wilderness and once she retired it became a priority. Her husband wasn't as keen so Bonnie looked for a group to get involved with. When she joined Ed's group, she did not know how to ride a bike; she had very little experience on cross-country skis. She admitted to me that it was a great challenge and a steep learning curve when she started out, but with the encouragement of the rest of the group, her life was changed. Soon she was biking with the group in Germany, climbing to the top of Mt. Sparrowhawk and Mt. Kidd. She gained confidence, endurance, health and great friendships. Like Ed and his group, Bonnie's a living example of how wilderness activity not only rejuvenates individual spirits but also creates strong bonds between people.

I hope this article will inspire others to follow David, Ed, and Bonnie and explore Alberta's great outdoors. After talking to them I'm inspired to take more notice of the earth's beauty, to always make time for nature, and to never think it's too late in life for outdoor adventures. Please, join us. 🐾



Bonnie Curran, at a spry 70 years old, on the summit of Grotto Mountain. PHOTO: © E. HERGOTT



# Floods Are Not a Water Management Problem



By Dave Mayhood

**F**loods are a fact of life for anyone living beside flowing water. I experienced my first — and almost last — flood shivering in a half-submerged frame tent, our boat floating in the doorway. Three of us spent an anxious night as trees slammed to the ground all around us, uprooted by the river. The site was remote and escape was impossible: with us navigating in the dark, logs choking the torrent would have swept us into debris jams and ground us up.

We survived that flood, but we shouldn't have. We were living on a floodplain, on the edge of an alluvial fan (the flood-deposited debris from a steep mountain tributary)

during an unrelenting 10-day rainstorm. It was a crazy place to be.

Rivers flood. The place they flood — the only place they flood — is the floodplain. Floodplains look like land, but they are not. Floodplains are part of the river. They are as much a part of the river as rapids and pools in the active channel. Building on the floodplain is building in the river. If you do it, expect, sometime, to get wet. Rivers cannot flood you if you are not in them. Prudent people build there cities elsewhere.

Like many other southern Alberta communities, central Calgary is built on a floodplain. So, inevitably, the Bow will flood — over and over again, forever. Few of us are

just visiting this planet; we're here to stay. Let's plan accordingly, and make our communities and countryside last forever. We, and all of our descendants, should be able to live here without having to fear flooding rivers. At the same time we should be able to enjoy the natural southern Alberta landscapes we all love so much, unmutated by flood-control structures.

My suggestion: stop all building on floodplains, immediately. Follow a long-term (say, 50-year) strategy of moving the flood-prone parts of communities off of floodplains, starting with the most vulnerable. Governments can purchase the properties and convert the land to public parkland, a suitable



Elbow River above Bragg Creek, June 2013 flood. PHOTO: © D. MAYHOOD





*Jumping Pound Creek, June 2013 flood. PHOTO: © D. MAYHOOD*

use for floodplains. Once completed, we can sit on the terraces and look down on floods, a great natural spectacle, in complete safety. Costly? Of course, but a one-time cost. Crazy? Read on.

Many people believe that engineering works can stop floods. They can't. Flood-control structures can at best postpone floods. Eventually they will experience floods they cannot handle, with potentially catastrophic results: massive property damage, many deaths. Only structures built to control the maximum possible flood might be exempt from this rule and they are insanely expensive in financial, ecological, esthetic, and social terms. All engineering works require frequent monitoring, regular maintenance, and eventual replacement. These are perpetual costs, which means that they are effectively infinite. Any other solution is cheaper.

Flood-control dams store water temporarily and then release it as the flood recedes. Rivers already have even greater temporary storage capacity naturally, and for free, in perpetuity. Floodplains are natural flood controls: during a flood, they store all of the excess water. They work perfectly, every time. And they maintain themselves forever. All that is needed is to stay off of them, and let them do their job. Best of all, during the times they are not storing floodwater (very nearly all of the time), we can use them safely as parks, nature reserves, picnic areas — all essential assets that make life worth living. All are relatively cheap to maintain and repair.

An estimated 100,000 southern Albertans were evacuated from floodplains in the 2013 flood: fewer than 2.5 percent of the province's population, fewer than 0.3 percent of the Canadian population. These are the peo-

ple who would be directly aided — temporarily — by flood control structures. All of us will pay forever for flood-control works to protect, temporarily, a relative handful of citizens. In the event of a catastrophic failure of any of these structures, the “protected” are at far greater risk; many others must place themselves at great risk to help them. Floodplain-dwellers are safer if they move off of the floodplain. All of us are richer by working with, not against, the river. 🌲

*Dave Mayhood is a consulting aquatic ecologist in Calgary (<http://fwresearch.ca>). His family has lived there for 125 years, missing the great 1879 flood by a decade, but still experiencing two more floods larger than the 2013 flood over that time.*



# Conservation Corner:

## To Tell You The Truth

By Niki Wilson



**A**dvocate editor Ian Urquhart asked me to write about why I am a science writer, and why I think it's important. Fasten your seatbelts for the roller coaster ride known as my tumultuous career path.

I wanted to be a writer since childhood. I wrote my first novel in grade five: a six-page murder mystery involving well-loved children's themes like divorce, sex, and betrayal. After reading it, my parents eyed each other nervously, while my teacher suggested I continue writing, and perhaps learn to stretch out the narrative.

I believed I would be a writer until high school. Then my enthusiastic and attractive teacher Mr. Kostiw got me hooked on biology. At the time I didn't realize that loving nature (and Mr. Kostiw) wasn't the same as being good at data analysis and off I went into the sciences.

In my first year ecology lab, we did an experiment to teach us how to develop models of wildlife populations and how to write a scientific paper. It involved carrying an egg with a fork, knife, and then spoon. We were to write which was most effective and why. I felt the guidelines for writing the scientific method were kind of boring, and decided to give the cutlery Latin names (*forkus foodus*, for example) and pretend they were alive. Surely this would award me extra points!

I failed that assignment. The professor's teaching assistant asked me a bunch of questions to see if I had any idea of what we were really doing. When it appeared that I did, she asked me why I animated the silverware. I didn't have an answer to that, at least not at the time. But I think I do now.

Even then, something in me wanted to make scientific information more digestible and readable for a broader audience. While it was not the point of that particular course, it

stands out to me as a place in my past where the light should have gone on, had I only been looking for it instead of doing Jell-O shots at parties.

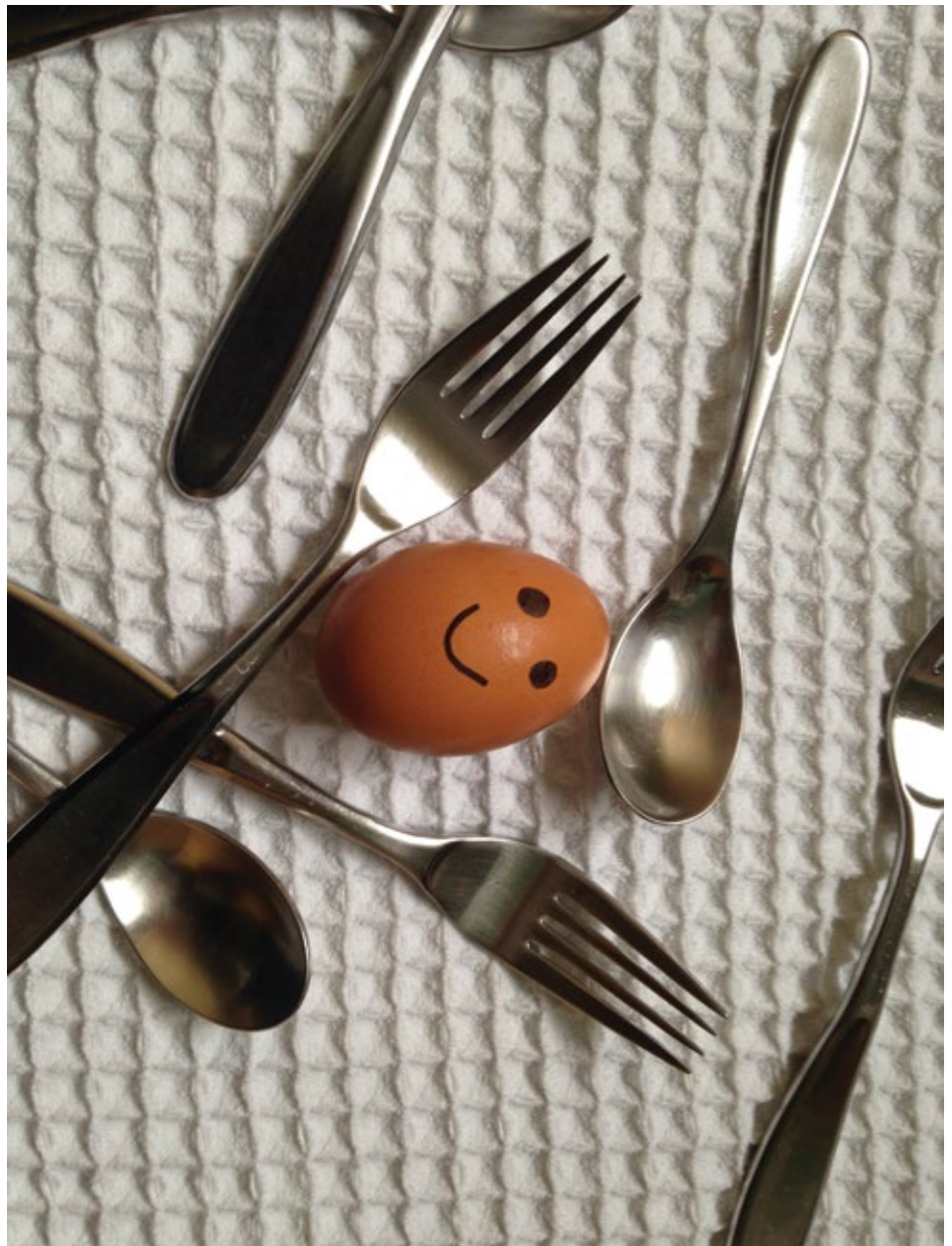


PHOTO: © N. WILSON

I figured it out eventually. Fast-forward 15 years to when I realized that while I loved talking and writing about science, I didn't like doing it nearly as much.

What I really love is sharing science with others. I want to use reporting and storytelling to make science more accessible. I want to start conversations that otherwise might not take place. My parents taught me that conversation and, more importantly, informed debate is one of the keys to a functioning democracy.

Debate is easy. The problem comes in the informed part. Many people in North America don't make decisions based on evidence – especially when those decisions clash with the way they want to live their lives.

For example, we all know that despite the resounding scientific evidence showing the human responsibility for climate change, some North Americans remain skeptical. Some flat out deny the change is happening and that we're largely responsible for it.

While it would be easier to think climate deniers are science illiterate simpletons, that's simply not the case. A recent study suggests that, as a group, climate deniers have as much scientific knowledge as anyone else. However, they use their knowledge selectively to affirm their customary behaviour, behaviour that contributes to climate change.

In reality, many people who deny climate science are just surviving day to day like the rest of us. There is laundry to do, kids to move around, bosses to answer to. My hope is that well-crafted stories that can connect people to science through other belief systems, other values that matter to them, are important.

For example, while a person may not want to part with her luxury Lexus LX 570, 5.7L SUV in favour of a smaller six or four cylinder hybrid, she will be concerned by the fact that smog is linked to the asthma her child suffers from. Establishing this connection may lead her to make healthier choices – for her children and the planet.

Having said that, good science writing doesn't overreach. It doesn't try to make connections where they don't exist. Science writing is about presenting today's state of knowledge and reporting accurately on sci-

entific discovery by examining the strength of the evidence in light of factors such as methods used, sources of funding, and contradictory information. As a science writer, my credibility depends on this. For example, while I would like there to be a clear link between Sasquatch sightings and gluten-free diets, I haven't been able to find one that is evidence-based. And that's just the way it is.

As a society we have to be able to talk about science even when it doesn't suit our belief system. My job is to make sure

knowledge sees the light of day and to make it interesting, sometimes even funny, and easier to understand.

I think I've come a long way from those Jell-O shots at first-year university parties. But when you cover environmental science, a girl still needs a beer once in a while. ♣

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



PHOTO: © D. VONESCH

## With Friends Like These...

A Calgary billboard paid for by the "Friends of Science" (FOS) highlights just how important it is to have access to solid, accurate science writing. The FOS – yes, that acronym is disturbingly close to the one for the Flat Earth Society – believes Calgarians should blame the sun for climate change. That's right. This group contends that record carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere aren't responsible for climate change. Today's carbon dioxide level, having exceeded 400 parts per million for the first time in recorded history, is "the primary driver of recent climate change." Who identifies carbon dioxide as behind the wheel of the climate change bus? No less reputable a group of scientists than those from NASA – the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Groups like the Friends of Science prey on our values and comforts. They tell our luxury Lexus LX 570, 5.7L SUV owner, as she speeds by the billboard driving the kids to school, that all is well. To follow this group's message will deliver this and future generations a fate no better than that of the children who followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

*- Ian Urquhart*



# Focus:

## Alberta's Species-at-Risk

By Nigel Douglas



### Bison

Few wild species in Alberta, or indeed North America, have had a history quite as desperate and complex as the bison. Their story is interwoven inextricably with the settlement of the west, with the worst excesses of the settlers, and the annihilation of vast numbers of wildlife – from bears to beavers and prairie chickens to passenger pigeons. The sheer logistics of exterminating 30 to 50 million bison from the plains landscape in around 80 years is in itself quite staggering. But yet the bison endured – just – and today there is some hope there may be a potential for recovery, if not to the unimaginably vast numbers of the past, then at least to something considerably more impressive than what we are left with today.

Bison were wiped out, in part to allow for the settlement of domesticated cattle and in part to remove the food supply on which First Nations people were so dependent. The new railways advertised hunting opportunities where keen hunters could shoot as many bison as they liked from passing trains, leaving the carcasses to rot where they fell. By 1889, the population of plains bison had been so devastated that only an estimated 1,200 animals remained; wood bison were reduced to a remnant herd of 250 near Great Slave Lake.

So what exactly are these animals that have a history so closely linked to our own in North America? Bison are the largest land mammals in North America, members of the cattle family which also includes cows, buffalo and yaks (the word “buffalo” is often used, incorrectly, to refer to bison). There are only two bison species in the world: our

North American bison (*Bison bison*) and the European bison (*Bison bonasus*). American bison are usually divided into two subspecies: plains bison and wood bison. Wood bison are generally taller and less stocky than plains bison.

### Plains bison

Historically, plains bison roamed across a huge area from the Rockies to the Atlantic and from central Alberta and Saskatchewan to northern Mexico. Exactly how many bison there were is not known definitively. On its species-at-risk website, the federal government estimates that “(p)rior to the arrival of European settlers, there were likely some thirty million bison across the continent.” By

1888, it is estimated that only eight bison remained in Canada and 85 in North America.

Today, in Canada, there are 670 to 740 adult animals left, in three free-ranging herds in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, with semi-wild or captive herds in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. In addition there is a semi-wild herd of around 500 individuals in Alberta's Elk Island National Park.

More than any animal (with the possible exception of the beaver) bison had an enormous impact on their own ecosystem. Huge herds would have passed through areas on their long-term migration, grazing and trampling the landscape to devastating effect. Then they would have moved on, maybe not to return for several years. Scrub and tree



Bison in the Badlands PHOTO: © C. OLSON



cover would have been periodically knocked back and open grassland habitat would have been maintained. The absence of such large herds of ecosystem-modifying animals is still felt to this day.

The federal government describes current bison habitat as “extremely fragmented and there are no corridors between herds.” and points to the lack of habitat as the “greatest impediment to the conservation of the plains bison.” In recent decades, two major disturbance regimes – fire and flooding – have been removed or severely suppressed in the traditional range of bison. This is especially so in northern Alberta. Historically, fires were intentionally set by First Nations people to move herds, to clear forests, and to renew grazing areas. The modern history of fire suppression has enabled forests to encroach on to meadowed areas. Flooding was an equally important disturbance along major waterways, such as the Peace River. It pushed back forests and renewed the wet meadow sedge and grass vegetation upon which bison depend. But flooding too has been reduced with damming of rivers and river channeling.

Other threats to bison include disease and cross-breeding with domestic cattle. Diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and anthrax are passed freely between bison and domestic cattle. The advent of game-farmed bison also complicates the picture considerably. Such bison are often cross-bred with domestic cattle (to make them more placid and manageable), and so they are entirely distinct from genetically pure wild bison. AWA has long opposed the use of publicly-owned land to graze domestic bison.

## Wood bison

The wood bison is *endemic* to Canada, i.e. it occurs in Canada and nowhere else. The range of the wood bison was always much more limited than that of the plains bison. In the past, they were found in northeastern British Columbia, northern Alberta, northwestern Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and southwestern Northwest Territories. The federal government estimates that there once were over 168,000 wood bison in Canada.

Today, nearly 3,000 free-roaming wood bison are estimated to exist in six wild populations in Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Yukon, and Northwest Territories. Alberta has one large disease-free herd in Hay Zama, as well as six herds in Wood Buffalo National Park which are known to carry disease.

The federal government lists the main threats faced by wood bison as “(d)isease (anthrax, brucellosis, and tuberculosis), cross-breeding with plains bison, and habitat loss through human development, agriculture, and forestry and petroleum resource development.” In Alberta, despite their designation as an *endangered* species, management of wood bison is focused on minimizing the spread of tuberculosis and brucellosis from wild bison to domestic cattle and to other disease-free bison herds. The long term plan is apparently, to eliminate the disease risk which would “allow the restoration of wild populations of wood bison across northern Canada.” In effect, the disease-free Hay Zama herd is managed to prevent its spread eastwards into habitat that might bring it into contact with diseased herds; between 2009 and 2013, 521 bison were killed for roaming too far from their designated Hay Zama stronghold. All of them were subsequently found to be free of tuberculosis and brucellosis. We should find a better management approach to protect these endangered animals.

In April 2012, AWA lent its support to the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation’s (ACFN) impressive “stewardship strategy” for managing caribou and wood bison in a huge area of northeastern Alberta. The report called for “proactive protection and restoration of habitat for all local populations of caribou and bison within their historical range in ACFN Homelands.”

## Bison today

Even today, bison recovery, more than for any other species, is less about science and more about economics and politics. In June 2004, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recommended that the plains bison should be added to the list of species protected under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. Marco Fes-

ta-Bianchet, then-chair of COSEWIC, commented that it was important to “redouble our efforts to protect species at risk and their habitats.” But in August 2005, the scientifically-inexplicable decision was made by the federal Environment Minister to refuse his committee’s recommendation. AWA argued at the time that economic interests were given undue weight in the decision not to list plains bison; effectively the interests of a handful of bison farmers who were opposed to wild, free-roaming herds were put ahead of the interests of an endangered native species.

Provincially, plains bison in Alberta are listed as “extirpated” (or locally extinct), with no plans to reintroduce free-ranging herds (legally, recovery plans are required for all *endangered* species but there is no such requirement for extirpated species). AWA, of course, does not suffer from such a lack of vision, and continues to advocate for the protection of wild areas that will enable bison (both plains and wood bison) to persist in self-reproducing populations in Alberta, with the freedom to move throughout their historic ranges. The ecological restoration of bison as a keystone species in a wild landscape would also allow traditional First Nations cultural practices to resume. It is a huge vision and maybe it will be some time before society has the ambition to put it into practice, but AWA has never been afraid to dream big! 🐾

### Quick Facts:

- *Bison bison bison* (plains bison)
- *Bison bison athabascae* (wood bison)
- Federal status: Endangered (both species)
- Provincial status: Endangered (*wood bison*); Extirpated (*plains bison*)
- Height: up to 2.8 metres.
- Length: 3.0 to 3.8 metres.
- Weight:
  - Plains bison: 600 to 860 kilograms (average 700 kg).
  - Wood bison: 350 to 1,000 kg.
- Interesting fact: A bison’s coat contains ten times more hair per square centimetre than that of cattle. This makes them uniquely adapted to surviving cold winters.



# Filming Wolves:

## Andrew Manske's Experiences



By **Brittany Verbeek**, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

**T**here was a full house at the AWA Hillhurst Cottage School on the evening of Tuesday, May 2, 2014. The star of the night was Andrew Manske, a renowned Canadian and Emmy Award Winning natural history filmmaker, who travelled from Grande Prairie to speak about his experiences filming wolves all across Canada. Beer in one hand, snack in the other – the audience sat back for an evening of entertainment and learning about this iconic carnivore.

Manske has been chasing wolves for over 20 years. Growing up in southern Ontario Andrew never really experienced true wilderness so he began honing his skills as a wildlife cinematographer once he moved to Alberta and got a job at Chateau Lake Louise. He spent his days off in the backcountry viewing a wide cast of wildlife through the lens of his small video camera. Andrew's first large mammals experiences hooked him – he's lived in Alberta ever since. After graduating from film school he met Albert Karvonen, a naturalist and award-winning filmmaker from Edmonton who has been making natural history films since 1975. Eighty-four years young Albert currently is making a film about grouse. Karvonen quickly became Manske's mentor, friend, and professional collaborator. He worked with Karvonen until 2008 and a year later Andrew established his own production company, Compass Media Inc.

Most of us thoroughly enjoy the final products of videographers like Manske and Karvonen. Seldom though do we get the chance to hear the story behind the camera. Andrew recalled the first time he filmed a wolf in

1995. The wolf's mystique and intense golden-eyed stare caused a huge adrenaline rush in Manske that resulted in two dramatic consequences: shaky, unusable footage and an experience that changed his life. He had found his calling.

Through the amazing wolf footage he has collected over the years, Manske took us on a virtual trip across Canada from the estuaries of the west coast to the mountains of Labrador. One of his earlier films was shot in Northwest Territories' Mackenzie Bison Sanctuary. He wanted to capture the intricate and fascinating relationship between the

largest wolves in the world and the largest land mammal found in North America – the wood bison. He showed us clips from two documentaries, Discovery Channel's *Wolves and Bison* and National Geographic's *Killer Quest Wolf Hunt*. The evolution of filming technology as well as documentary style was very evident from comparing these two films. Building tower structures and shooting from a distance on the ground, which was once what videographers relied on, is no longer the industry-standard. Now, using Cinalflex camera systems Manske can get clear, stable, and close up video of the animals from he-



PHOTO: © C. OLSON

icopters or drones as they move across the landscape. The style was very different as well. Many of the big producers have moved towards more dramatic wildlife documentaries with adrenaline-pumping music and narration using phrases like “it’s show time” and “get ready for the take down.” The goal is to target younger audiences with shorter attention spans and a thirst for action.

The glamour of natural history films begins at the television screen. Everything before that consists of extremely hard work and countless time in the field where you can look forward to being a feast for bugs and to staying perfectly still for hours to get that one perfect shot. Wolves are no different from us in that excitement happens seldom during long bouts of routine and sleep. Good cinematographers must walk a fine line between their relentless drive to get the best shot and painstaking patience. Manske told us about a time he stepped over that line. Before leaving Manske alone on an island to film west coast wolves, his Heiltsuk guide made him promise not to howl at the wolves because it messes with them. But as the days progressed time was running out, and he still didn’t have the shot he wanted. Knowing the wolves were nearby in the forest he disobeyed the guide’s warning. He imitated a pup. Immediately an entire pack came out into the clearing and straight over to his blind – growling and trying to get in. The pack harassed him for two days. They ate his microphone and chewed up his water bottles. Some even took joy rides in his zodiac as other wolves pulled it across the beach. I believe he learnt his lesson.

Andrew has spent ten years going back to the same estuary on that island filming west coast wolves. Manske told us the island wolves are almost a sub-species because of the differences in appearance and behaviour. They are smaller, have shorter hair, and possess more genetic diversity than the average grey wolf which is contrary to what scientists originally hypothesized. They are also less afraid of people and more aggressive than their mainland counterparts. The clip he showed us from CBC’s *Wild Canada*

series showed wolves catching 15-pound salmon, biting their heads off, and leaving the rest of the bodies out on the open beach for the scavengers. A seemingly altruistic act had an underlying purpose for the wolves. The salmon’s body flesh contains parasites that the wolves cannot digest so they let the ravens and eagles eat out the insides of the fish and then the wolves ate the remaining highly nutritious skins.

A great challenge for cinematographers is to be as discreet as possible to ensure the camera is capturing natural behaviour of animals. Another is to also find spots in clearings to film where there are good lines of sight. Filming wolves in the Rockies presents these challenges because the wolves are hard to find and to keep in sight. They are usually well hidden in the dense forests. Man-



PHOTO: A. MANSKE, COMPASS MEDIA INC.

skes most successful effort to film wolves in the Rockies was from a recent trip into Willmore Wilderness Park, north of Jasper National Park. He has also had great success filming wolves in the highest mountains east of the Rockies, the Torngat Mountains of Labrador. Andrew first went there with Albert Karvonen and has subsequently spent a lot of time there. Its remoteness makes access and filming very difficult but Manske has embraced and risen to the challenge. He found a prime spot to film at Fraser Canyon, a narrow canyon along the migration route of what used to be the largest caribou herd in the world – the George River caribou herd

at 750,000 strong in the mid-1990s. Unfortunately, not unlike the dramatic decline of Alberta’s caribou herds, the most recent survey puts the herd size at fewer than 28,000. A variety of reasons are proposed to explain why the herd’s size has plummeted in the last 10 to 15 years. Manske invited us to stay tuned for a future documentary on the rise and fall of the greatest herd on earth.

At Fraser Canyon, the caribou are funneled into a narrow space creating a first class hunting spot for their main predators – wolves and black bears. Spots like this can even the odds for predators because out in the open tundra caribou can reach speeds of 80km/h whereas wolves can do no better than 65km/h for short periods of time. A more appropriate name for the canyon would be graveyard canyon – Andrew told us that caribou skeletal remains are scattered everywhere. The film clip he showed reminded me of the stampede scenes from the Disney classic “The Lion King”. The clip was of a wolf perched on a ledge surveying a stampede of ungulates down below, just waiting for the perfect opportunity to pounce. Unfortunately for the wolf in the clip, it waited too long and its prey passed by safely.

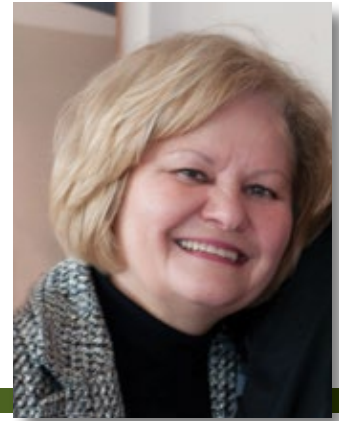
Andrew’s images transfixed the audience all evening: wolves chased bison only to have the bison herd retaliate; a pack of wolves and a grizzly bear with two cubs fought over a bull caribou carcass; wolf pups howled as they emerged from their den for the first time; a wolf pack chased a caribou at full speed. At one point Andrew hesitated to play another film clip because he was concerned about time – the audience cried out in protest. Clearly, no one wanted the night to be over.

Andrew even gave us a sneak preview of his newest project – filming the elusive wolverine. Manske is definitely someone worth keeping in mind if you’re looking for terrific wildlife documentaries. Check out his two websites at [www.andrewmanske.com](http://www.andrewmanske.com) and [www.compassmedia.ca](http://www.compassmedia.ca) to find his most recent productions. 🍀



# Government Relations:

## This is Now and That was Then



By Christyann Olson, *AWA Executive Director*

### Now...

On May 1, 2014 we were pleased to finally meet Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) Minister Robin Campbell on the matter of Hidden Creek. We formally requested this meeting when we welcomed the newly appointed minister in a letter of December 2013. We hoped the Minister would find time when he was in Calgary but, that turned out to not be possible for the Minister. We accepted the first offer his office made for a meeting and travelled to Edmonton. In between there were a number of reminders that we were waiting for an appointment to meet and finally there was time in the minister's schedule for AWA.

We went to discuss Spray Lake Sawmills' (SLS) logging in Hidden Creek, *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act* materials AWA obtained about logging there, and AWA's 30 years of concerns about logging this area. We also spoke generally about the risks of logging in the southern Eastern Slopes with Minister Campbell and his Deputy Minister, Bill Werry.

If ever there was a slam-dunk case against clearcut logging an area, it would be around Hidden Creek, located in the headwaters of the Oldman River. Hidden Creek had a magnificent legacy; it provided outstanding spawning beds and critical habitat for our endangered westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout. Many times throughout the past 30 years, logging in this area was stopped on the advice of the department's Fish and Wildlife Division. But all stops were pulled in late 2012. All protective measures were minimized, trees

8-inches in diameter were stripped for garden mulch, and the hillsides slumped – perhaps in sadness. Soil ran into the stream and transformed Hidden Creek. Crystal clear above the logging the creek became a silted, muddy brown below the clear cuts. Vital spawning beds were muddied and our already endangered fish species likely have lost another of their dwindling, unprotected spawning beds to industrialized forestry.

Deputy Minister Werry spoke about the monitoring his department had put into place and about the need for providing greater transparency without resorting to FOIP. We hope that, in that positive spirit, the monitoring results for Hidden Creek pre- and post-logging will be made available to AWA as soon as possible. We've asked for that data but we're still waiting for a reply to this request. During the

meeting we also requested a written response to our letter written last December; nearly two months later we're still waiting for that response.

The deputy minister outlined plans to continue moving reorganization forward under Integrated Resource Management (IRM) – an approach towards resource management that has been talked about much for more than a generation now. AWA hopes the forest service will interpret integration to mean that ecological and wildlife values should be given much more consideration. We want to see more than timber beasts wandering the Eastern Slopes. The deputy minister assured us that collaboration among the department staff is very important to him.

We've heard government and industry talk for decades now about how forests are more than fibre factories. But we fear they



will remain just that – fibre factories – unless the conservation community plays a meaningful role when it comes to land-use planning, when it comes to logging plans. It's high time the consultation that grazing leaseholders are offered is extended to conservationists. We are the only reliable voices to speak out on behalf of the voiceless – wildlife and landscapes. It's equally frustrating that, while conservation is on hold during Land-use Framework planning, it's business as usual for industry.

We left the meeting with the assurance that we could meet again, perhaps in Calgary next time. We've since written to set up such a meeting. Like English and Spanish football fans we wait to hear some good news. All we've received so far is silence. Today the news is about the raging, flooding waters of the Oldman River drainage. Pouring rain, without a healthy forest to absorb water and reduce runoff, will lead to damaging, deadly consequences. Logging in our headwaters must respect this reality. Conservation must be given equal weighting at the decision-making table set by ESRD.

### Then...

Christyann's report exemplifies the sort of detached, disinterested treatment public interest groups too often now receive, federally and provincially. Phone calls, emails, and letters are most often ignored. Replies are often so late in coming that they are ineffectual. Advice is rarely sought or given credence if allowed. Meetings take months to arrange and are then often perfunctory and inconsequential.

It wasn't always so. In the 1980s when I was AWA president, the minister in charge of forests, lands, and wildlife was the affable businessman, Don Sparrow, who, along with his no-nonsense, highly capable deputy, Fred McDougall, considered AWA as one of their business constituents. AWA was then able to regularly reach these decision-makers by phone and to meet with them.

In fact, when there was a "hot issue" on the table – and the logging of Hidden Creek in the Upper Oldman watershed was frequently that issue, Fred McDougall gave me, as AWA president, his personal phone number. I was to call him first if an issue became in-

tractable. I used his number when proposals to cut roads and build a resort in Willmore Wilderness Park came suddenly, and alarming to the fore. After we spoke, the only disturbances in the forests of Willmore Wilderness Park came from hikers, horses, and the four seasons.

Minister Sparrow asked AWA for our top three wishes and began work to see them realized. He started with his personal choice – the Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area (a name he or his staff actually applied to the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan). Before being assigned to a new ministry and before his untimely death on an Alberta highway, Don Sparrow brought the Bighorn to the cusp of designation. Unfortunately his successor, LeRoy Fjordbotten, didn't share Sparrow's and the Bighorn was never legislated into being. Fjordbotten's tenure in Forestry, Lands, and Wildlife began the trend of distancing that ministry from the conservation portion of its constituency. It continues today. 🌲

- Vivian Pharis, AWA Board of Directors



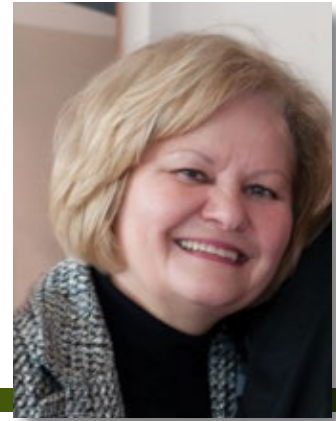
This majestic tree was cut during the first pass through Hidden Creek in the mid-1980s. We keep this slice of the tree at our offices as a stark reminder of how long it takes to grow a tree like this in Alberta. More than 430 years old, this tree was sacrificed and the small trees that grew after this logging have largely been reduced to garden mulch. Standing forests are worth so much more.



# Climb and Run for Wilderness

## Recap From Another Great Event!

By Christyann Olson, *AWA Executive Director*



As I sit down to write this summary of Climb and Run for Wilderness 2014, Earth Day is a speck in my rear view mirror and World Environment Day is just behind us. Telling the story of the Best Earth Day Event in the West is complicated – our Climb and Run for Wilderness is an event like no other. It truly has something for everyone. The event had a simple beginning – one hand-written tri-fold display on the sidewalk outside what was then the Husky Tower with our World Wildlife Fund partners from Toronto. Our focus was on Alberta's Special Places 2000 initiative and in drawing attention to it we were fulfilling our mandate to create awareness and defend natural landscapes throughout Alberta. Twenty-three years later our event consumes literally a year's worth of planning and organizing. But, just as was the case twenty-three years ago, our goal is the same. We advocate tenaciously on behalf of healthy ecosystems and wild spaces for Alberta's wildlife. A rich and healthy biodiversity depends crucially on the choices we make and the care we show for the land.

That is the general perspective that guides our planning for this annual event. Drawing on more than 130 volunteers, the event successfully offers a number of components addressing healthy bodies, active minds, participation no matter the age (from babes in backpacks to people 97 years young!), volunteerism, and a strong spirit of community and giving.

Our Wild Alberta Expo boasts a range of displays – from the simple to the sophisticated; this year we were pleased to have 30 displays, all attended by volunteers ready

to help those who passed by to learn more about Alberta and the value of a healthy and naturally biodiverse environment.

I know I speak for the staff and the Board when I say how touched and inspired we are by the gifts and support AWA receives during events like the Climb and Run for Wilderness. No matter how small the contributions may appear to some professional fundraisers (yes... we receive pennies in baggies and are very glad for them!) they make a tremendous difference to AWA. These gifts help AWA be strong throughout the year.

The fundraisers themselves are amazing forces to contend with. Here are just a few examples from this year. There's four year old Abigail Hadden who saves bottles and cans for the bears and the wolves. With tremendous support from her family Abigail raised \$2,200. The Overends were this year's Top Family Fundraiser. Patti, Bill, Sam, and Alex have been climbing for years and every year they tap on the shoulders of their friends, colleagues, and family to raise an amazing number of sponsorships. This year their efforts topped \$8,000! Then there's Richard Guy. While climbing the tower twice and being 97 years old is fame enough, Richard also tops the marks by being the outstanding individual fundraiser. He raised more than \$4,000. Of the 27 teams competing this year, Cenovus A team raised \$2,180 to be the Top Fundraising Team of the 23rd annual Climb and Run for Wilderness. Together we raised \$110,000. Many, many thanks to all who helped get us to this plateau.

Outstanding athletes are aplenty during

the event. They lead the way as they race and climb, set and meet amazing endurance goals. Jonathan Heinz climbed the stairs 29 times in five hours – remarkable. Ammon Piepgrass was right behind Jonathan and also completed 29 climbs, taking only a handful of minutes longer.

The Calgary Tower, our host for the event, sponsored a new component this year. The Calgary Tower Elite Endurance Climb was limited to 15 athletes and offered a top prize of return airfare to Vienna, Austria, for the winner to compete in the final race of the World Federation of Great Towers Tower-running Challenge, up the 776 steps of the Danube Tower. This is the first time AWA has been part of the WFGT Tower-running Challenge circuit and it is an exciting new dimension to our event.

Those competing instead to make the most climbs in four hours matched the Herculean efforts of our 15 elite competitors. Our website lists all of the results and the winners of all the events including the Louise Guy Poetry Prize taken by Betty Millham this year. The murals gracing the walls of the tower stairwells were painted a month earlier. From youthful whimsy to artistic precision, the murals have added more than 150 thoughtful pieces of public art to the Tower over the last 23 years. Together they exemplify again the caring concern many people have for our wild spaces.

The 2014 event also featured the participation of a new climb partner, The Carbon Farmer, Inc. of CBC Television's Dragons Den fame (Brad Rabe is also famous for surviving several political science courses with the *Advocate's* editor). Brad and Re-

becca, partners in life and business, will be planting one tree in honour of every person who reached the top of the tower on their family farm near Manning Alberta. This will add to the more than 317,000 trees they have already planted to establish carbon offsets and contribute to the health of Alberta's boreal forest. Other generous supporters provided everything from bananas to water bottles to amazing prizes and we are grateful for their untiring support.

Taking on a Zero Waste initiative was a big challenge for this event and we almost did it! A single bag of refuse was the extent of our garbage; all other waste was composted or recycled. This meant that our diversion rate was 89 percent, nearly there; our challenge for 2015 is to make it the rest of the way there, to 100 percent. Congratulations everyone and thanks to Green Calgary for auditing the waste and helping us meet the challenge.

From the youngest to the oldest this event and the day at the Calgary Tower is inspirational and engaging. The community support and the spirit of camaraderie, enduring friendships, and volunteerism make this event a success and helps AWA continue our work day in and day out.

Thank you everyone for making this event so successful! 🌱

*Christyann Olson  
Executive Director*





# Updates

## Confirming the Neonicotinoid Threat, Business Takes an Important Small Step

There have been several important developments further to Brittany Verbeek's warning in the April *Advocate* about the harm neonicotinoids do to pollinators. The seriousness of Brittany's warning was just underlined by a peer-reviewed analysis conducted by the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides. This task force, created by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, analyzed 800 peer-reviewed studies and concluded "that there is clear evidence of harm sufficient to trigger regulatory action."

Dr. Jean-Marc Bonmatin, one of the lead authors of the Task Force's *Worldwide Integrated Assessment*, said there is no doubt about the harm caused by the use of neonicotinoids and other systemic pesticides. "We are witnessing a threat," in his words, "to the productivity of our natural and farmed environment equivalent to that posed by organophosphates or DDT." The alarm raised by Rachel Carson more than fifty years ago against chemical "elixirs of death" led to the ban of DDT in Canada and the United States in 1972, ten years after the publication of *Silent Spring*.

Terrestrial invertebrates such as earthworms are the most affected groups of species. Bees, butterflies, and other insect pollinators are the next most affected group. Aquatic invertebrates, while the least affected, are nonetheless vulnerable. Vertebrate animals are less susceptible but seed-eating birds face risks from eating crop seeds treated with these systemic pesticides.

On a more positive note, Home Depot announced that its home and garden suppliers must label any plants treated with neonicotinoid pesticides by this fall. It is the largest retailer to announce plans to address the neonicotinoid threat. Unfortunately,

this important piece of information is only likely to be used by those consumers already aware of the threats neonicotinoids pose. Other small retailers and nurseries in the United States have pledged more ambitious bans against the use of neonicotinoids in their operations (<http://www.foe.org/beeaction/retailers>).

Friends of the Earth Canada is petitioning Canadian retailers to stop selling plants pre-treated with these pesticides, to ban the use of neonic pesticides in their operations, and to educate consumers about the threats these pesticides present to pollinators. The petition may be found at <http://foecanada.org/en/takeaction/home-garden-petition/>.

- Ian Urquhart

## Parks are for...?

People. I suspect that's the answer most Albertans would offer to that question. The City of Red Deer is unique in Alberta in offering a different answer...pollinators. As this winter drew to its official end, Red Deer City Council unanimously passed a motion calling on the City's parks department to explore dedicating space and habitat in existing and future parks for pollinators. This initiative promises to create habitat for native pollinators and honeybees; it will provide the native plants pollinators need to survive and thrive such as lupins, fireweed, goldenrod, and blanket flower. Council also asked the parks department to help raise community awareness about how much our livelihoods depend on pollinators (Councillors Harris and Mulder, who drafted the motion, claimed that two-thirds of the world's food crops depend on pollinators and that the annual economic value of the services native pollinators provide in North America is more than \$3 billion). It also called on the City of Red Deer to explore instituting a permanent ban on neonicotinoids.

- Ian Urquhart

## For Sale (again): Petroleum Leases to Endangered Caribou Habitat

Since May the evidence has been steadily mounting that Alberta's decisions regarding caribou habitat ignore science, Alberta's own stated caribou policy, and public opinion. In early May, Alberta's 'mountain' caribou were assessed as *Endangered* – in immediate danger of extinction – by Canada's *Species at Risk Act* scientist advisors (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada – COSEWIC). Yet Alberta barged ahead and auctioned 1,500 hectares of new oil and gas leases in mountain caribou ranges from May to early June. More sales are on the horizon. From late June to early August, the government plans to auction 1,000 more hectares of land in endangered mountain caribou habitat; it plans to auction another 1,400 hectares in threatened boreal caribou ranges further north.

Alberta's project-level 'guidelines' enable an expanding surface disturbance on leases. They are far too weak for caribou survival as shown by widespread declines in caribou populations. The news of these lease sales sparked a strong negative reaction across a broad spectrum of Alberta opinion. Alberta's two major daily newspapers, wilderness and fish and game groups, and all three opposition parties called for a halt to lease auctions in these ranges until responsible rules are in place to ensure caribou survival.

Alberta's mountain caribou populations live in west central Alberta and migrate between mountain summer habitat, some of which is protected, and unprotected foothills habitat that is under intensive industrial pressure. Habitat disturbance by forestry cutblocks and energy seismic lines, roads, and pipelines is a boon for deer and moose and the predators that follow. This dynamic robs the caribou of their ability to

minimize overlap with predators. Caribou and wolves have co-existed over thousands of years but industrial disturbance boosts predation beyond what the caribou can endure. Mountain caribou populations have decreased by more than 60 percent since 2002, just 12 years.

The federal government released its final recovery strategy for southern mountain caribou (which includes all Alberta mountain caribou) in early June. This strategy requires developing plans to manage ranges to achieve at least 65 percent undisturbed foothills winter habitat. In the Narraway and Redrock-Prairie Creek herd ranges, where oil and gas leasing continues, habitat disturbance as of 2010 was estimated at over 80 percent and at roughly 50 percent respectively.

Extensive new disturbance from forestry and energy development marches on within the ranges and important buffer zone areas of Alberta's boreal woodland caribou herds to the north. In 2012 the federal boreal caribou strategy required provinces to make progress towards at least 65 percent undisturbed habitat within these ranges as well. Scientists assessing northeast Alberta populations warned in 2009 that these boreal caribou populations will not survive for more than a few decades unless the current decision-making course is reversed.

Scientists have stated that recovery of these caribou is technically and biologically possible. AWA has noted that solutions are within reach if energy operators are required to use directional drilling technology and pooled leases to reduce the existing footprint and to comprehensively reclaim the historic footprint. The missing ingredients remain corporate and political will.

- Carolyn Campbell

## Reaching Out in the Ghost – It's What Good Neighbours Do

Anyone familiar with last year's floods will remember how neighbours helped one another deal with the devastation visited on peoples' lives in southern Alberta. One year later, residents in the Ghost River valley are

reaching out to their Calgary neighbours – not to cope with a flood but to try to reduce the odds of 2013's event repeating itself.

Ghost Valley residents met throughout the spring to share their concerns about land uses in the valley. The meetings were framed as "neighbours coming together to support one another." Through community meetings, Ghost Valley residents were able to identify areas of shared concern and some possibilities for action.

In early June, one hundred and thirty-nine people with roots in the Ghost River valley delivered a letter to Calgary's Mayor Naheed Nenshi, highlighting the importance of the Ghost River watershed to Calgarians' lives. In the winter, the Ghost River may supply as much as 20 percent of the Bow River's flow to Calgary. In the 2013 flood, nearly one-third of the water flowing into the Bow came from the Ghost River.

Their message to the mayor was clear: "The Ghost River plays a vital role in the wellbeing of Calgarians, so please collaborate with us to protect the health of our shared watershed. Join us in exploring ways to preserve and strengthen the important ecological functions of the Ghost River watershed."

The letter highlights two threats to the Ghost River watershed's ecological capacity:

1. inadequate management of OHVs and random camping;
2. clear-cut logging in close proximity to the Ghost River and its tributaries.

And these two threats are interrelated: road-building required to harvest timber from the valley further reduces the water-absorbing capacity of the region while increasing OHV access.

Reading the group's letter, it's clear they've seized on a win-win proposal. Protecting the Ghost watershed will help preserve the landscape Ghost Valley residents love while offering Calgarians the secure and safe supply of water they've enjoyed historically. And being neighbours, why not work together to achieve these mutual goals?

AWA hopes Calgary's mayor accepts their invitation and joins the residents of the Ghost Valley for collaborative actions pro-

tecting this beautiful and life-sustaining watershed.

- Ian Urquhart

## Funding for Flood Mitigation Turns a Blind Eye to River Ecology

The southern Alberta floods of June 2013 were devastating. Over the past year AWA has engaged with various government and watershed stakeholders, particularly in the hard-hit Bow watershed, about ways to manage land to increase flood and drought resiliency. So far our message is falling on too many deaf ears. Most resources for longer term 'flood preparedness' are being devoted to engineering approaches to divert rivers that are naturally highly mobile into channels or reservoirs and hope they don't breach in the next large flood event.

On April 29, 2014 the Alberta government announced it would spend \$625 million over the next three years on flood protection work. Only a meagre three percent of that money will go to strengthening the flood and drought-buffering potential of wetlands, forests, and river corridors. All the rest of the cash is assigned to projects to further harden riverbanks, or to build or expand weirs, dams, and reservoirs.

Mountain-fed rivers need room to flex, to stretch their shoulders, when their waters are high. Across their flood plains, our western rivers dissipate the force of flood waters, carve new channels, and renew river corridor vegetation. Across their flood plains, shallow groundwater reserves connected to these rivers are replenished, filtered, and slowly released as base flow in drier seasons. While it is more understandable why we've hardened the Bow river channel in the highest density parts of downtown Calgary, AWA isn't convinced that other measures taken in the past year make as much sense. This applies particularly to narrowing and hardening many kilometres of river channels in low-density areas along the Bow and Elbow watershed with concrete and boulders. And... much more of this approach is in store: of the announced provincial flood mitigation



funding in the next three years, 56 percent (\$350 million) will be directed to community projects that appear to favour narrowing and hardening of river channels within a small portion of the flood plain.

Apart from very negative effects on fish and wildlife, this armouring of riverbanks accelerates downstream flows in low to medium flood periods and cannot withstand higher flows. New provincial regulations against building in a “flood way”, but permitting building in a “flood fringe”, fundamentally misunderstand our rivers’ behavior. Allowing more construction in flood plains is doubly dangerous. It increases the risk to families and infrastructure from groundwater or overland flooding in future big flood events. It also degrades our river corridors and the groundwater reserves needed to withstand dry seasons.

Forty-one percent (\$254 million) of the announced flood mitigation funding is for new or enlarged artificial water diversion or impoundment structures. Diversion channels are proposed for High River and a tunnel is being considered within the City of Calgary. The Alberta government’s Flood Recovery Task Force report of early June 2014, on flood mitigation measures for the Bow, Oldman, and Elbow watersheds, recommended further studies into building one or two water holding structures for the Elbow River. The first would be an earthen dam across the mainstem of the upper Elbow near McLean Creek in Kananaskis Country. The second would be an off-stream diversion channel below Bragg Creek that would run into an offstream reservoir on ranch lands west of Calgary.

AWA is concerned about the false sense of security these dams and diversions will convey to communities downstream. This risk factor is embedded in the Bow/Oldman Flood Mitigation report, prepared by an engineering firm. It advises that “(flood mitigation measures cannot guarantee that flooding will never occur in the protected area. In fact, the introduction of some structural mitigation measures merely changes the pathway to flooding or nature of the risk.”

For example, the report’s recommendations aimed to cope with a 1:100 year flood, also called a 1 percent annual exceedance flood. Such a flood would have a peak flow of 930 m<sup>3</sup>/s and a seven day volume of 130,00 dam<sup>3</sup> into Glenmore Reservoir at the western edge of Calgary (a dam<sup>3</sup> is a cubic decameter, which equals 1 million liters). The June 2013 flood was significantly higher than this: it saw a peak flow of 1,260 m<sup>3</sup>/s and a seven-day volume of 154,000 dam<sup>3</sup>. The Kananaskis Country Elbow proposal includes building an auxiliary earth cut channel spillway to protect the dam from blowing out during extreme floods up to the probable maximum flood (PMF) event of three times the 2013 flood levels. Use of the earth cut channel spillway during high flows in this headwaters location would create enormous erosive force. It would also send high waters on to downstream communities. The report recommends “that the GoA communicate to the public that flood risk can only be reduced, not eliminated.”

Containing even a 1 percent annual exceedance flood is expensive. The report gives a preliminary estimate of \$200 million for the Springbank diversion and \$300 million for the McLean Creek area dam. These costs are likely to escalate dramatically during construction; this money would be better spent reducing infrastructure in strategic areas along the Elbow to give the river more room to move and to dissipate flood waters. The proposed Kananaskis Country Elbow dam is of particular concern since it is designed to be easily used as a permanent reservoir; it will further degrade an ecologically sensitive headwaters area that is important to absorb, purify, and slowly release surface water and groundwater.

Does the Alberta government attach anything more than symbolic value to watershed ecology? It’s hard to answer “yes” when it relies almost entirely on activities that reduce natural flood and drought resiliency and watershed health and facilitate ongoing construction in floodplains. Alberta Wilderness Association has asked the Alberta government to implement ecologi-

cally-sound watershed management principles to better protect Albertans from future floods and droughts.

- Carolyn Campbell

## Two Whoops for Whoopers?

In early May Canada’s Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) reminded us there’s much to be concerned about when it comes to the future of wildlife in Canada. Twenty-seven wildlife species were added to the “at risk” list pushing the total number of species in COSEWIC’s four risk categories to 693: 306 Endangered, 165 Threatened, 200 Special Concern, and 22 Extirpated.

The whooping crane, one of Canada’s Endangered species, graced the front cover of the April issue of the *Advocate*. Inside that issue Nigel Douglas told the story of this imposing bird’s recovery from the brink of extinction. From a global estimate of 21 birds in 1941 the wild population today numbers nearly 400.

The *Northern Journal* reported in early June that a record number of whooping crane nests have been counted in the annual nest survey conducted in Wood Buffalo National Park and the surrounding area. Eighty-two nests were spotted this year, eight more than were identified in 2013.

This is encouraging news for several reasons. Obviously, more breeding pairs of whooping cranes promises to boost the population. This good news also underlines the importance of protected areas to species recovery programs. Would we even be talking about record nest numbers if Wood Buffalo National Park didn’t exist?

Finally, this year’s news confirms that whooping cranes are expanding their range. This expansion is taking whoopers outside of Wood Buffalo’s boundaries. Seven nests were identified outside the park, five to the north of its boundaries in the Northwest Territories and two on First Nations’ reserve lands.

No nests seem to have been identified south of the park’s boundaries.

- Ian Urquhart

# Gear Ideas

## Run Free - Casio Mobile Link Runner (Unisex)



### By Kristina Vyskocil

May's Victoria Day weekend traditionally celebrates the beginning of Canada's summer camping season. Camping enthusiasts who are also runners also may have considered the long weekend to be an invitation to log some miles on the trails. The May long weekend also marks the beginning of long and grueling training plans to prepare for all those races happening later in the summer. Whether you're a trail runner out for a leisurely sprint in the woods or a racing athlete doing hill repeats, the Casio Mobile Link Runner can help you with either or both. This watch synchronizes with your iPhone via Bluetooth to display GPS-related fitness metrics and switch up your workout playlists (\$89; battery included).

### What is the Casio Mobile Link Runner?

The Casio Mobile Link Runner is an athletic watch that will connect to your heart rate strap, speed and cadence sensor, and iPhone via Bluetooth.

### What does the Casio Mobile Link Runner do well?

This watch has all your standard features: date display, world time for 100 cities in 35 time zones, coordinated universal time, a 12- or 24-hour hour format, hourly time signal, as well as the option to set up to five daily alarms. It also comes with a snooze button.

When it comes to training, it functions as a stopwatch, countdown timer, lap timer,

and interval timer for up to 120 records. For runners who are also swimmers or triathletes, this watch has an IPX 8 rating and is water-resistant up to 100 metres. Night runners will appreciate the watch's adjustable LED backlight with Super Illuminator and afterglow features to provide just the right amount of light for the right amount of time. Also the watch face is made of polycarbonate – meaning it's highly durable and impact resistant. The strap, on the other hand, is made of resin so it's less durable but entirely replaceable. All these features and functions run on a single lithium CR2032 replaceable battery which should last you approximately two years (based on 12-hour daily activity). But don't worry about keeping track of when you'll need to replace it: the watch will warn you when the battery is getting low. To save power, the watch turns itself off automatically after a fixed amount of inactivity. And, no need to fret if you've misplaced your phone: you can use the Casio Mobile Link Runner to trigger an alert to help you find your iPhone so you can spend more time running and less time digging between the sofa cushions.

### What are some drawbacks of the Casio Mobile Link Runner?

Sorry, Android and BlackBerry users: the Casio Mobile Link Runner is only compatible with the iPhone 5c, iPhone 5 and iPhone 4s (iOS7) running Bluetooth 4.0. To make full use of all the watch's features, you also need to install the complementary Runmeter GPS, Walkmeter GPS, Cyclemeter GPS or Wahoo Fitness (for use with the Wahoo Fitness Blue HR Heart Rate Strap and Wahoo Fitness Blue SC Speed/Cadence Sensor) on your iPhone to monitor your progress. Casio Watch+ will be soon available for

synchronized use. You can find all of these applications at the Apple App Store. The watch does not include any logging function or a button lock. The watch also isn't friendly for early morning trainers since it doesn't have a sunrise set time, and you'll still need to check the weather reports since it doesn't come with a temperature reader.

### What's the bottom line?

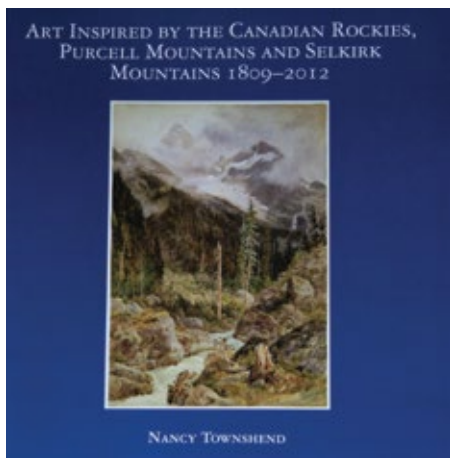
The Casio Mobile Link Runner is a watch with features other training watches don't have, but only goes so far as to display GPS-related fitness material and is tailored exclusively for iPhone users. With this in mind, it's ideal for runners or triathletes who are starting to use electronics to enhance their workouts and race performance.

*Kristina currently works at Mountain Equipment Co-op and in the fall will be entering the final year of her English B.A. at Grant MacEwan University.*





# Reader's Corner



**Nancy Townshend, *Art Inspired by the Canadian Rockies, Purcell Mountains and Selkirk Mountains 1809-2012*, (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 2012).**

## **By Krystyna Fedosejevs**

Nancy Townshend's book is unique, worthy of being placed at the pinnacle of art history literature. To date it is the first Canadian art history book focusing on one Canadian geographical area over a span of over two hundred years.

Its outward appearance is attractive. The glossy tile-blue paperback cover features Lucius O'Brien's *Mount Sir Donald*, watercolour with gouache highlights over granite, on the front. *Borderline Case: Five-The Great Divide*, a silkscreen on paper with postcard applique, decorates the back.

The book is appropriately organized under three chronological eras: Traditional (1809-1899), Modern (1900-1971), and Contemporary (1972-2012). Introductory chapters herald the eras and within each era selected artists, all Canadian except for one, are highlighted. Nancy Townshend presents each artist per chapter, detailing biographical background relevant to his or her mountain-inspired art. "Endnotes" following each chapter provide further information to references made in the text. Artwork pertinent

to the theme is beautifully reproduced, often full-page coverage per item. An index is available at the back of the book. It includes the remarkable images appearing in the book and references to the text.

Whether it be traditional watercolours showcasing David Thompson's schematic code, vibrant oil paintings exemplified by modern artists such as Catherine Robb and Peter Whyte, or thought-provoking contemporary art forms by the likes of Kent Monkman and Jin-me Yoon, the author expertly takes us through a fascinating journey. Her passion and knowledge of visual arts in this geographical context is inspiring. An astute researcher, having visited libraries and art collections in the United Kingdom as well as Canada, the author offers the reader a notable keepsake.

I am fascinated with the subject as well as the organization of the book. Having studied art through high school and geography at university, I understand the correlation between artistic interpretation of subject matter and the expertise of the artist to produce meaningful results with appropriate mediums.

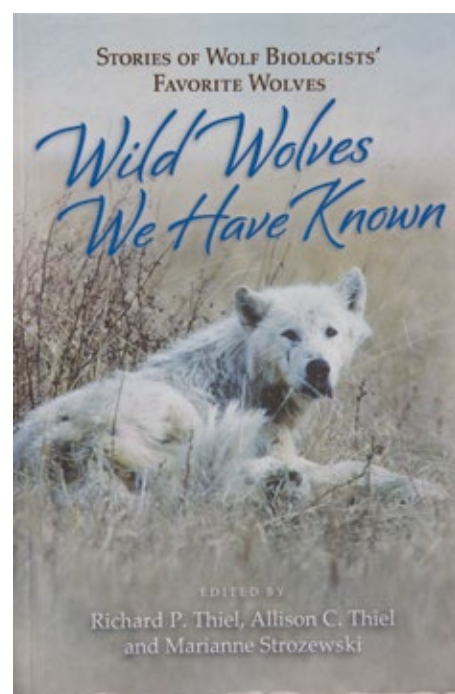
Regardless of academic background, I believe anyone having an interest and admiration for art and the mountains would enjoy this book. Especially poignant are the views of contemporary artists in addressing the present and future states of our planet due to climate change. Will the magnificent glaciers captured in paintings and photography be recognizable when viewed in person in the future? How will our global environment survive the ongoing changes? As Jan Kabatoff says referring to glaciers, "Once they disappear, the Earth will be irrevocably altered". A new sensibility has entered artwork with the overshadowing fear of losing what we cherish, our beautiful natural environment. That what means so much to the artistic soul.

This beautiful book gripped me so pas-

sionately that I traded a borrowed library copy for one purchased at a local bookstore.

I encourage you to take a look yourself.

*Krystyna Fedosejevs is a writer, primarily of poetry and fiction, based in Edmonton. She is the winner of the Alberta Wilderness Association's inaugural Louise Guy Poetry Contest, 2011.*



**Richard P. Thiel, Allison C. Thiel, and Marianne Strozewski, *Wild Wolves We Have Known: Stories of Wolf Biologists' Favorite Wolves*, (Minneapolis: International Wolf Center, 2013).**

## **By Ian Urquhart**

You expect great things when you ask more than thirty internationally respected wolf biologists to collaborate on a book project. *Wild Wolves We Have Known*, one such collaborative project, doesn't disap-

The expectations of the contributors to this collection were very different from those associated with thriving in their home range – academia. Here the writers offer “up close and personal” accounts of their work with wolves; they offer intimate portraits of individual wolves who impressed them over years of study. After John Vucetich’s thought-provoking introduction the writers’ portraits are presented in three sections: experiences of the biologist, stories of conflict, and chronicles of resilience.

Vucetich’s essay stimulates in several ways. He describes life as a hierarchy made up of genes, organisms, populations, and ecosystems. Pick a point on the continuum of human history. Compare it with another and you may find very different conclusions about what the proper relationship should be between the hierarchy’s myriad elements. He’s concerned that our new-found moral consideration for other species and ecosystems, a step forward, comes at the expense of individuals. Individual cowbirds, barred owls, or wolves are killed in order to protect other species.

Vucetich and the other contributors to *Wild Wolves We Have Known* want readers to appreciate the lives of wolves from the canid’s perspective. They hope their stories will generate empathy for wolves and from empathy we will develop an ethic of care for this fellow member of life’s hierarchy. Telling the stories of others, wolves in this case, will help us live more sustainably, meet our needs without sacrificing those of others. This book isn’t for you if you don’t agree with or won’t consider these premises.

This short review cannot do justice to the many insights you’ll find in this book. The first section introduces the reader to one of the collection’s themes – the value of studying individual wolves over time. Studying individual wolves was critically important to restoring northern Rocky Mountain wolves in Yellowstone National Park. In the Yukon, the Blow River Female 3410 offered researchers key information on the tundra wolf/caribou relationship. The Porcupine Caribou Management Board used that knowledge wisely in 2009 to save the

lives of hundreds of tundra wolves, wolves that otherwise would have been shot in a misinformed effort to rebuild that nomadic caribou herd’s size. Stories of wolves from Alaska, the Northwest Territories, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and New Mexico underline how much studying individual wolves may tell us about aspects of wolf ecology such as territoriality, reproduction, and longevity.

The first section also introduces a second theme of the collection – the dedication of these biologists and the risks they take to study wolves. Lu Carbyn spent more than a decade studying wolves in Wood Buffalo National Park – as a private citizen – after the federal government pulled the plug on the wolf/bison project he was part of. The reader’s reward for his dedication is a gripping, heart-wrenching account of a wolf/bison encounter. Diane Boyd’s efforts to rescue Sage, a massive gray wolf with a home range stretching from northern Montana to south-eastern B.C. and southwestern Alberta, emphatically punctuate this dedication. What term other than dedicated better describes a biologist who would spend a cold winter’s night in the bush (New Year’s Eve at that) frantically searching for Sage and then, once he was found, trying to extricate the wolf from the illegal trap set to kill him.

Conflict is the theme of the collection’s second section. Ellen Heidecker’s story about the disappearance of the Durango pack, Mexican wolves reintroduced into southwestern New Mexico, is a classic tale of the legitimate problems wolf reintroduction may pose to established ranching communities. It’s also a classic tale of prejudice and misconception, attitudes that exaggerate threats from wolves and cripple efforts to try to carve out a space for wolves on the landscape.

Conflicts between wolves and hunting also figure here. This has been an especially contentious issue in prime elk hunting locations bordering Yellowstone National Park. The Yellowstone Wolf Project reported in 2010 that, since wolves were reintroduced into the national park, the northern range elk population plummeted by roughly 50 percent. Wolves are one factor responsible for

the decline. Two chapters focus on wolves in Yellowstone National Park and raise important questions about how to manage the healthy wolf population that now roams inside and outside the park.

Scandinavian wolf researchers, in their chronicle of Ulrik’s life in Sweden, suggest that Scandinavians are no more rational than their North American cousins when it comes to their views of wolves. When they started their wolf research project in 1998 these researchers believed good data and solid information would resolve most wolf-human conflicts in the countryside. It hasn’t. Poaching looms as a constant threat to Ulrik, his mates, and the health of wolf packs in Sweden and Norway.

If conflicts with our species’ interests weren’t a serious enough problem for wolves to contend with their species faces another, subtler, threat – hybridization. Two chapters focus on wolves in and around Ontario’s Algonquin Provincial Park. As in many aspects of wolf ecology human intervention looms large when it comes to understanding the threat hybridization poses. Our changes to the landscape there allowed coyotes to move into areas previously the preserve of wolves. The stories of the Axe Lake Female 49-09, the eastern wolf/coyote hybrid that so captivated John Benson, and the Vireo wolf that John and Mary Theberge followed in and around Algonquin open a window onto this dimension of canid evolution. If humans have facilitated hybridization what, if anything, should wildlife and public lands managers do about it?

Resilience sometimes will be what we discover on the other side of the conflict coin. The book’s concluding section takes the reader from Romania to the high Arctic, from the steppes of Spain to the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina, and places in between. In these stories, particularly the accounts of Spain’s Ernesto and Romania’s Timish, we see how wolves have adapted and survived in decidedly unfriendly agricultural and urban settings.

The story of Big Al in northern Wisconsin draws our attention to the fact that wolves must develop resilience to more subtle



threats – diseases courtesy of domestic dogs. Dave Mech's chapter about Brutus, the bold Arctic wolf, introduces the reader to another dimension of resilience. For Brutus, resilience to human intervention isn't necessary – the Arctic wolves of Ellesmere Island so rarely see humans that they are essentially unafraid of their research guardians. But the harsh climate of the high Arctic is just as challenging to survival and demands a different kind of resilience. Rolf Peterson's story about the Old Gray Guy of Isle Royale points out how important happenstance may be to the health and resiliency of wolf populations. Had M93 not made a fifteen-mile trip across the ice of Lake Superior from Canada to Isle Royale National Park in Michigan the

Isle Royale wolf population would not have received a vital injection of genetic diversity.

Mike Phillips' story about 344F in North Carolina is a portal into the world of wolf recovery. What is so heartening about this young red wolf's story is the hope it offers to programs attempting to take species that only have existed in captivity and restoring them in the wild. Seventeen years after the restoration program began the wild population of red wolves in northeastern North Carolina now is estimated to be between 90 and 110 individuals.

If you're still reading this review I'm betting you accept or at least are willing to consider John Vucetich's premises about the ethic of care we owe our fellow travelers on our

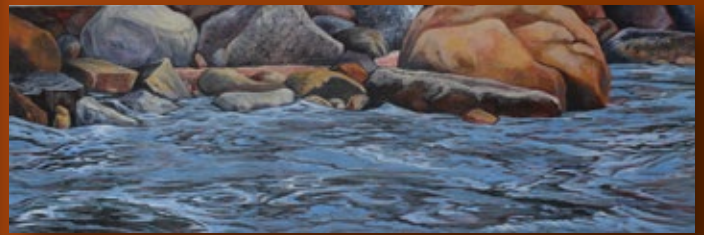
Earth. The essays in *Wild Wolves We Have Known* offer an important contribution to developing that ethic and I hope it will find a place on your bookshelf – not least because the proceeds from the book's sales will support the educational activities of the International Wolf Center ([www.wolf.org](http://www.wolf.org)).

I'll leave the last words or thought to consider to a quote Diane Boyd, the writer of Sage's story, takes from the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould: "We cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well – for we will not fight to save what we do not love."



*Whaleback in Spring, Pastel: 11 by 22 inches*  
PHOTO: © P. COPELAND

## Pamela Copeland - Featured Artist



*River's Edge, Acrylic: 12 by 26 inches*  
PHOTO: © P. COPELAND

*Storm Drama, Pastel: 12 by 16 inches*  
PHOTO: © P. COPELAND



*Quiet Reflections, Pastel: 14 by 19 inches*  
PHOTO: © P. COPELAND





# In Memoriam

## Steve Dixon – October 25, 1917 – May 21, 2014

Story teller, loving husband and father, conservationist and outdoorsman, hard-working farmer, skilled pilot and so much more describes the friend we lost in May. Steve Dixon was forward thinking. He had a vision of a society that cared about the land, about wildlife and water and about all who depend on a healthy environment. Few of us realize that Steve, a founding member of AWA, was vital to the work and success of AWA in its early years. Few have heard the stories of Steve leaving early in the morning to fly to Edmonton to meet with government ministers and fly back to his farm near Brant to take care of his day job by the afternoon. He gave generously of himself and we, and the lands we care about, are better for it.

When Steve was 85 Shirley Bray and I were privileged to go on a aerial tour with him. Steve flew us west towards Peter Lougheed Provincial Park and then south over the foothills to the Castle. He showed us how much things had changed and the new scars our appetite for timber and petroleum had left on the land. He delighted in seeing rich, healthy landscapes from the air and wished there were more of them to see.

Steve and Helen, his soulmate and amazing wife of 74 years were always activists and engaged in saving and restoring what was precious. They led by example and if that meant flying somewhere to deliver the message they didn't hesitate for a moment. As a couple they enjoyed many sunrises and sunsets together and their love for each other always shone on their faces.

I know Helen will miss Steve dearly and we wish she will find comfort in her warm memories of their lives together, knowing that Alberta is a better place from their time together. Active until his last year, Steve enjoyed a visit and a chance to talk and tell his stories. Story telling is a lost art for many but Steve could capture the moment and inspire you as he told of his adventures. He was a man who lived his life to the full – a role model and a key founder of the Association we all feel such pride in today. We will greatly miss him and can only hope we can do justice to his vision as we work on behalf of the wild Alberta Steve cherished.

*Christyann Olson  
Executive Director*



*One of Steve's favourite photos – not only because of where he was and the time it offered him to reflect and renew, but because of who he had along with him. As I remember the story Mike Dougherty was someone Steve introduced to the wilds and the spiritual and physical renewal that comes from climbing a slope and sustaining yourself in Alberta's wild spaces. PHOTO: © M. DOUGHERTY*



# Summer Events

## **AWA Kids Day Camp – NEW THIS SUMMER!!!**

**Week 1: Monday, August 11 – Friday, August 15**  
**Week 2: Monday, August 18 – Friday, August 22**  
**9:00am – 5:00pm**

If you are between the ages of 6 and 11, become a little wilderness defender at AWA's Kids Day Camp! Action packed days will include fun activities, games, crafts, special guests, field trips and more.

Get outdoors. Get in nature. Have fun. Make friends. Learn naturally.

**Stay tuned for more information on our website coming soon.**

## Summer Hikes Program

### **Ya-Ha-Tinda**

**Saturday, July 12, 2014**

Join leader William Davies to explore an inspiring region of prairie and parkland surrounded by mountain peaks.

### **Dry Island**

**Wednesday, July 16, 2014**

Explore the wonders of Alberta's Red Deer River valley with leaders Rob and Tjarda Barrett. Climb to the top of the "dry island", an untouched remnant of natural fescue grasslands.

### **Great Divide Trail in the Beehive**

**Tuesday, July 22, 2014**

Come along with leader Brad Vaillancourt to explore subalpine and alpine wilderness beauty, the world of bighorns, pikas, marmots, and golden eagles.

### **Medicine Wheel Bus Tour**

**Tuesday, August 5, 2014**

Hop on our bus with leader Jay Bartsch for a day of touring around the northern grasslands where natural and human history abounds.

### **Sage Creek**

**Saturday, August 9, 2014**

Enjoy the big sky landscape and discover the many hidden wonders of Alberta's grasslands with leader Lorne Fitch.

### **Castle Backpack Trip**

**August 24 – August 26, 2014**

Join leader Reg Ernst and spend two days and nights exploring southern Alberta's Castle River region. You must supply your own camping gear and food.

### **Fall in the Whaleback**

**Saturday, September 27, 2014**

Softened by fall colours, both the montane environment and Bob Blaxley will impress you with their one-of-a-kind attributes.

### **Rumsey Natural Area**

**Saturday, October 4, 2014**

Hike with leader Paul Sutherland along this beautiful rolling knob and kettle terrain, rough fescue and other grasses.

For more information and registration: [www.albertawilderness.ca/events](http://www.albertawilderness.ca/events) or 1-866-313-0713

**Pre-registration is required  
for all hikes and tours.**



# The 26th Annual Wild West Gala

September 19th, 2014 at 6:00 pm  
Red and White Club, Calgary

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:



Alberta Wilderness Association  
Box 6398, Station D  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1  
[awa@abwild.ca](mailto:awa@abwild.ca)



Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40065626 ISSN 485535