

A WILDLANDS ADVOCATE



THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

OCT/DEC 2016

Public Lands in Alberta

C O N T E N T S

OCT/DEC 2016 • VOL. 24, NO. 5 & 6

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Cover Photos

This issue's front and back covers are graced by Gordon Petersen's stunning photos of the last light on Barnaby Ridge in the West Castle Valley.
PHOTO: © G. PETERSEN



Featured Artist: Mike Judd

Mike Judd is a lifelong resident of southwest Alberta. The Eastern slopes with all their wonderful wildlife, weather, and landscapes are the essential ingredients of Mike's life.

The outfitting business led Mike to discover landscape painting as he arranged back country trips for different artist groups. Spiritual experiences – that's how Mike describes those horseback trips to high view points and days of gazing intently over some of the finest scenery in the world.

Through his paintings Mike tries to capture his sense of what the land feels like to him and how the land's moods vary with the seasons.

The continuous, unrelenting pressure on Alberta's wild lands lends a sense of urgency to his paintings. Too many natural landscapes have been compromised or sacrificed for urban and industrial wants.

Mike is a member of "The Outsiders," a group of nine visual artists who live and work in southwest Alberta. Their work, Mike's included, is being exhibited at the Lebel Mansion in Pincher Creek until January 12, 2017. See www.thelebel.ca for more information or contact the gallery at (403) 627-5272. The Mansion is open Tuesdays to Fridays, from noon to 5pm.

Editor:

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Graphic Design:

Keystroke Design & Production Inc.
Doug Wournell B Des, ANSCAD

Printing:

Colour printing and process by
Topline Printing



Printed on FSC
Certified Paper

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

*"Defending Wild Alberta through
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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.

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.

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



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ISSN 1192-6287

With the Aged Comes the Wisdom of the Ages

May God bless Mary. Mary is a 91-year old supporter of AWA. After she received the last issue of the *Advocate* she wrote what you see below to Alberta's Minister of Environment and Parks about the Castle. Mary's concern for what we should leave her two great granddaughters is inspirational. May the Christmas season deliver to all of us, not least the officials charged with protecting our natural heritage, some of that inspiration and the common sense Mary saw in Lorne Fitch's arguments against OHVs in the Castle.

-Ian Urquhart, Editor

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Shannon Phillips,

What will my great grandchildren inherit from me? Some material things, but most of all I want Alberta to have pride and protection for our natural heritage so they can enjoy the Castle and other parks without OHV degradation. Do not delay full protection as I am now 91 and I see efforts of the Alberta Wilderness Assoc heeded! Willing to speak up for our environment. Mary

(next side of card)

Enclosed article by Lorne Fitch, long time Lethbridge resident, who you probably know. I have known Lorne since 1980 and think he has a good dose of common sense. (Lorne Fitch 10 arguments.) — M.K.

Is There Enough “Public” in Alberta’s Public Lands?



By Andrea Johancsik, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

A hunter, a mushroom picker, and a rancher go to a bar. “All we have is Alberta beef tonight,” says the server.

“Well it’s no surprise,” the mushroom picker says. “Just yesterday I encountered a locked gate before my favourite mushroom field.”

The hunter chimes in, “I wanted venison and my buddy wanted to get a fresh fish down the road, but the gates were

locked too!”

“Hey, don’t be upset,” the rancher chimes in, “it’s the law. I have a grazing lease and I’m legally allowed to deny you access to that public land if your use involves bicycles, animals for transport or motor vehicles; if your use of that public land would take you through a fenced pasture where livestock are present or on cultivated land where a crop has not been fully harvested; if there is a fire ban; if you plan to hunt or

camp; or if your use is contrary to a recreation management plan. Thanks for the land and enjoy your Alberta beef!”

Think this is a joke? It isn’t – you might not have access to the public land that all of us own. You could be denied access to land to do these seemingly harmless activities. It’s all perfectly legal according to the Recreational Access Regulation and lease conditions. In order to enter one of the 5,899 grazing leases in Alberta, you need to

Public Lands Facts

According to the Government of Alberta, grazing leases are long-term authorizations to individuals, corporations, or associations. Allotments, on the other hand, are areas in the forested range of central and southern Rocky Mountains that use natural barriers like rivers and mountain ranges for cattle grazing. The type of disposition generally – but not always – corresponds to Alberta’s White and Green area system. Alberta created this distinction in 1948. Sixty-one percent of Alberta is found in the Green Area; 31 percent is in the White Area. (See Figure 1) Leases are found generally in the White Area and allotments in the Green Area.

The White Area is mostly settled. Three-quarters of the White Area is owned privately. White Area lands may be used for a range of commercial, recreation, and conservation purposes. Municipal governments have primary authority to make decisions regarding how private lands in the White Area are used. Primary authority rests with the provincial government for how public lands in this Area are used.

The Green Area is nearly all owned by the public. Two land uses not associated with lands in the White Area, timber production and watershed protection, are listed as main land uses in the Green Area. Primary authority rests with the provincial government for how Green Area lands are managed.

Public lands in Alberta make up about 60 percent of the total provincial land base. Of that, approximately eight million acres of public land are under agricultural disposition. Of that, 5,899 grazing leases cover over five million acres.

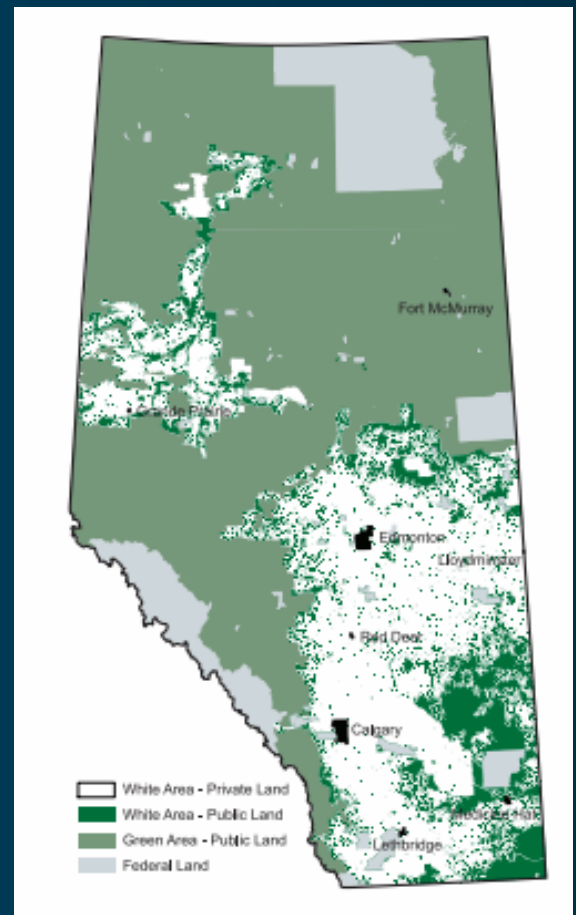


Figure 1: Alberta’s White and Green Areas SOURCE: GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA, LAND-USE FRAMEWORK

receive permission from the lessee and the lease may be subject to certain conditions like “No access if livestock in field” and “Contact 7 days before accessing lease.”

Meanwhile, in grazing allotments, activities pertaining to oil and gas, forestry, off-highway vehicle use, cattle grazing, and other recreation compete with one another for access to the land. This approximates a “free for all” and creates the opposite problem – too much access, too easily obtained. One would think that the safety risk to livestock is no different whether they are on grassland or in the foothills. One AWA member wrote, tongue in cheek, to say:

“Ironically, in the Green or forested zone of the province, cattle are also grazed on public land grass, but under permit. There, the public is not considered to be at risk from vicious cattle. There, the public is free to risk recreating amongst a mix of cows, calves and bulls. Apparently Green Zone cattle are a different, more benign breed, than White Zone cattle.”

Near Caroline, you might be barred entry onto a grazing lease with a condition of “No access while livestock are on field” because a few cows are licking a salt block coincidentally (or strategically?) placed near the locked gate. In West Bragg Creek, on the other hand, anyone who has mountain biked or hiked in the area has experienced a bounty of cows so proliferate that they risk slipping on a cow patty or colliding with Bessie at the next hairpin.

This type of difference is puzzling and illogical. It suggests there’s a serious need to pay more attention to public lands management issues. But understanding public lands access in Alberta is a complicated affair. Let’s break it down and discuss how we got here, what Albertans think about public access, and what should happen next.

Origins of the Recreational Access Regulation

Alberta’s grazing system is older than the province itself. It was established in 1881 to reduce conflict between ranchers and encourage economic growth from the grazing resource. Divvying up the land was a



The Government of Alberta’s “Use Respect/Ask First” campaign from the 1980s and AWA’s response

no-brainer; settlers altered the landscape dramatically and as their numbers increased so did conflict for resources. The grazing system was an organized method to reduce and manage resource conflict.

The access issue flared up significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. Gordon Stromberg’s private members bill in 1973, *The Private Land Protection Act*, sought to give persons holding grazing leases or permits the right to refuse access to the public. There wasn’t a single definitive legal statement on public lands access; a handful of laws including the *Public Lands Act*, the *Petty Trespass Act*, the *Wildlife Act*, and the *Criminal Code* offered inconsistent and sometimes contradictory positions.

In 1981, a two-day Trespass Seminar brought stakeholders together including AWA, Western Stockgrowers Association, Alberta Fish and Game Association, government agencies and other groups. The group couldn’t come to consensus on access but some needs were agreed on.

For instance, the group identified a need for a clear and simple method for identifying and locating land operators on both public and private land. A website was eventually created (<https://maps.srd.alberta.ca/RecAccess/Viewer/?Viewer=RecAccess>) where someone who wants access to leased land can view the location of the lease and the lessee’s contact information in order to



obtain permission. Although this aims to be simple, critics argue it restricts unreasonably those who go on spontaneous trips onto public land and that the internet is not the best way to connect rural residents.

The Government also aimed to address public awareness by their “Use Respect” program to encourage ranchers and hunters to get along. AWA adamantly opposed the project because it implied that permission was required to access public lands by foot and led an access campaign with Alberta Fish and Game Association in the mid-1980s.

Access rights to public lands were tested in the courts in the late 1980s. Treaty Indian George Alexson was charged with trespass for hunting without permission on grazing lease land west of Longview. The case of *R vs Alexson* was heard at three levels of the court system in Alberta. The provincial court ruled the general public has unrestricted access to Crown grazing leases. The Court of Queen’s Bench Justice ruled that land under Crown grazing lease is off-limits to anyone without permission. Finally, in October 1990 the case was heard in the Court of Appeal and was overturned again. The Court of Appeal ruled that “hunting on land which is subject to a grazing lease is not an offence under the *Wildlife Act* or the *Public Lands Act*, nor does it constitute trespass under the *Petty Trespass Act*.”

The precedent-setting case for access by the general public, however, came in 1995 after Calgary hunter Wade Patton attempted to hunt on the OH Ranch; the Ranch made an application in court to prohibit the hunter from accessing their leased lands. The application was denied initially but the Court of Queen's Bench overturned the decision. Patton couldn't enter the lease without permission. The justice ruled the OH Ranch had "exclusive right of occupation" which carried with it the right to prohibit entry onto the lands. The Court of Appeal affirmed this decision. Lawyer Mike Wenig wrote the following about this case in a 2005 essay: "the Court based its legal findings on vague references to common law property doctrines and on weak, negative inferences from the province's reservation of rights to continue granting access for resource development" and "the OH Ranch courts' unexplained legal and factual findings were an unsatisfactory resolution of the public access issue."

So how did these "vague" and "weak" elements that the courts upheld come to be included into an enforceable regulation?

In 1997 and 1998, MLA Tom Thurber chaired the Agricultural Lease Review Committee and released the "Thurber Report." It revealed that compensation payments from oil and gas were retained by the grazing lessees instead of the rightful owner, the Government of Alberta. Thurber



Lease conditions like these are a telling sign of the control lease holders have on choosing which recreational activities are allowed on the lease, if they choose to exercise it.

tabled Bill 31 in 1999, the *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act* to address this issue. The Bill was passed but never proclaimed, a rare event in which the bill becomes law but does not come into effect. The very last paragraph in Bill 31 contained a provision amending the *Public Lands Act* to require lessees to provide "reasonable access" for recreational users.

A few years later, the *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act* re-emerged as a government bill, Bill 16. Mike Cardinal, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development at the time, said the bill built "on extensive public consultation that occurred in 1997 and reflects recent discussions with the stakeholders." The new act led to the Recreational Access Regulation as we know it today, expanding that one paragraph of Bill 31 but including none of the provisions about lessee compensation which is the subject of Ian Urquhart's article in this issue. I'll give the Minister the benefit of the doubt that discussions around access hadn't changed from 1999 to 2003 – after all, AWA has been asking for public lands to be public for longer than I've been alive – but Bill 31 and Bill 16 looked about as similar to me as the Fire Code Regulation and the *Dangerous Dogs Act*.

The bill had its critics in the legislature. One predicted that issues like lack of spontaneity in recreational planning and "a cramping of style and access for [hikers]" would arise. Another accused the executive branch of the government for "[ruling] supreme in this province" and "selling out to special interests because they happen to be powerful." The ND opposition proposed an amendment to ensure hikers were allowed on agricultural dispositions, at their own risk and liability. The amendment would have taken foot access out of the regulations to allow freedom for walkers who didn't intend to hunt on the land. It was defeated and the very problems that were flagged by these critics in 2003 persist.

One aim of the Regulation was to set up a dispute resolution process in case of conflict between a user and lessee. In the last 16 years since the Recreational Access

Regulation came into force, there have only been 12 formal disputes filed. Four were resolved in favour of the lessee and seven in favour of the recreational user. One was withdrawn as resolved prior to a decision by the Land Stewardship Officer, (LSO), a position in Alberta Environment and Parks. We were told by government that many other informal LSO disputes are handled at the field level with no formal application being filed or entered into a database. Although there are no records AWA was told "these occur regularly in some regions." It appears the dispute process set up by the regulation hasn't been used consistently throughout the province and, in some cases, it hasn't resolved some contentious and ongoing disputes. In a 2003 response to the new regulation, the Environmental Law Centre predicted this problem. James Mallet wrote: "practically speaking, the burden of applying for review of any access dispute will also fall upon the visitor." Not surprisingly, in general lessees are happy with the regulation while recreational users find it onerous and unfair.

What do lessees think?

A quick search through the public website previously mentioned shows that conditions on leases vary widely. The burden is on the recreational user to find out when they have to call, what they're allowed or not allowed to do, and to know where they'll go ahead of time in case they encounter different conditions on an adjacent lease. "Reasonable access" is certainly not a concept that everyone agrees on. I might argue that it's reasonable for someone to walk onto public land regardless of what time of day or year, whereas a grazing lessee might believe it's reasonable to require two weeks-notice before entry.

I spoke to three people who hold grazing leases west of Rocky Mountain House, where hunting attracts a lot of users. All three lock access to the land they lease with gates. All have experience with oil and gas operations on their lease. All three support the regulation.

One lessee complained about invasive

and noxious plants primarily spread by off-highway vehicle users. Though the oil and gas company on the lease does some weed control, this lessee takes the brunt of stewardship responsibility for spraying and pointed to a need for more provincial management of weeds. The oil and gas company on this lease closes the gates to the access road during hunting season at the lessee's request. When I asked what problems the company had that would require closure of the gates, I was told that it was a proactive decision because there had been problems of theft of solar panels and batteries in other dispositions. This may be true, but I would also guess there are benefits to maintaining a good relationship (either "financial" or personal) with the land's other occupants.

Another lessee holds land that is apparently popular with hunters. Badly behaved, disrespectful ones have cut fences to remove their kills, wrecking the fence

and letting the lessee's cattle roam outside the lease. According to the conditions on this lease (foot access only, no access when livestock in field), the hunters are probably breaking the law. This lessee was upset that the regulations weren't being enforced.

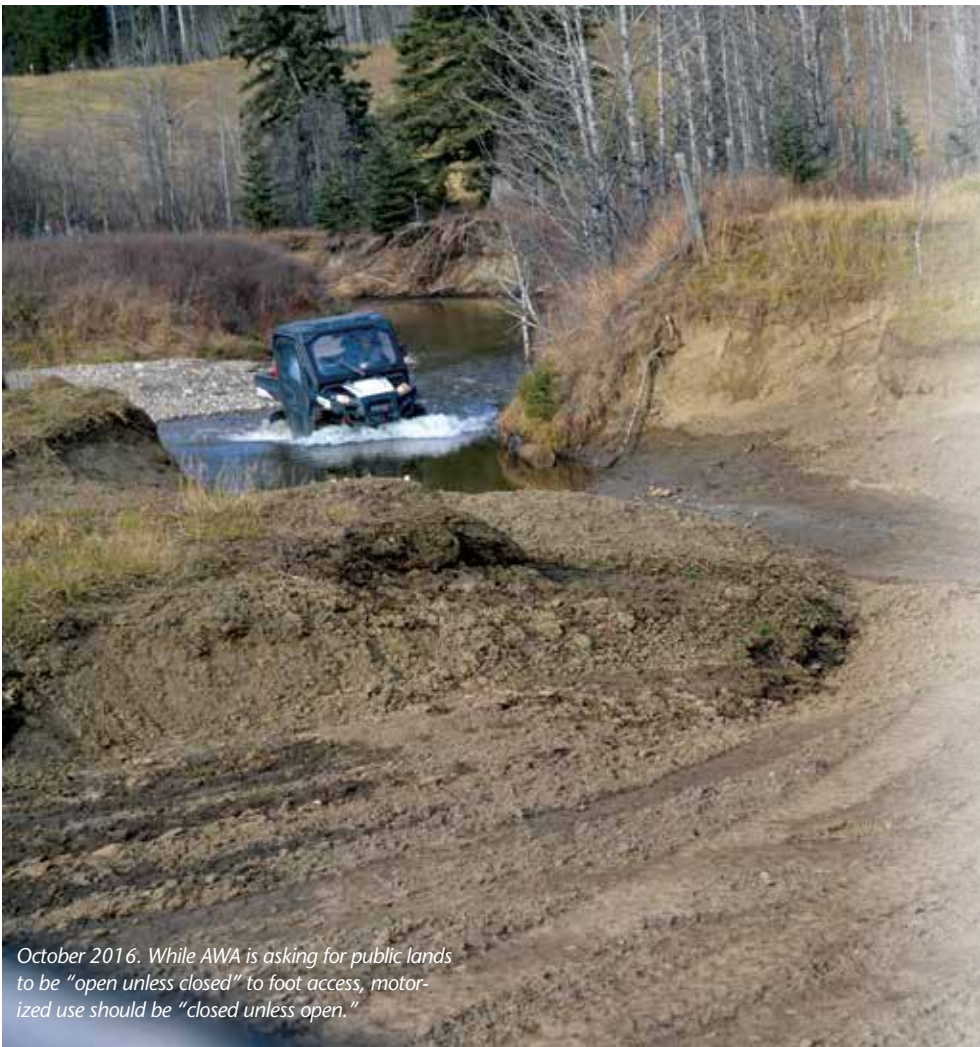
Liability is a major issue for grazing lessees. They wouldn't want to be at fault if anything happened to users by way of an accident or bear the cost for emergency response calls. The Recreational Access website says the lessee's liability is reduced if recreational users become injured, unless the courts find the lessee intentionally or negligently tried to injure them. Recreational users are responsible for their own personal safety. It would be smart for the recreational user to inform the lessee about their entry in order to be aware of and perhaps warned about hazards like aggressive bulls or other hunters on the lease. One lessee told me he likes to let

users know about their safety, and to be aware of how many people are on the lease at a given time. This communication is encouraged and most sensible people will try to do this. But the lessee shouldn't be liable for the risks I might expose myself to on leased lands. If they're not liable then AWA doesn't believe prior contact must be necessary for people to access leased land on foot.

Shawna Burton, owner and manager of Burton Cattle Co., holds both a grazing lease and allotment in the M.D. of Willow Creek near the Porcupine Hills. She maintains the most damage is caused by off-highway vehicle users in the forestry allotments. On the grazing lease, the biggest problem is garbage left during hunting season as OHVs aren't allowed. A video published on AWA's website in the spring shows this stark contrast between OHV-disturbed land and intact land (albertawilderness.ca/ohv-disturbance-porcupine-hills).

Burton appreciated the kind of courtesy that happened in the past when users would build face-to-face relationships with the lessee before accessing the land, but doesn't deny access to people on foot or horseback. "This country should be preserved," she says. "It's nice to be able to share it with people that appreciate it and respect it. We have people that have been coming for years to hunt – this is their trip to the motherland. It's solitude, it's cathartic for them. We have people [come] that have nothing to do with agriculture that love it as much as anyone else."

It's clear that being a grazing lessee carries with it a number of challenges, and that restoring damage to leased public lands usually is a burden the lessee bears primarily. It's understandable that with emotional, material, and financial connections to the land, you wouldn't want to deal with damaged land and broken fences. We would argue, however, that foot access (hunting, bird watching, hiking, and other low-impact recreation) isn't detrimental to the landscape and that individuals should be able to make their own



October 2016. While AWA is asking for public lands to be "open unless closed" to foot access, motorized use should be "closed unless open."

decisions about, and be responsible for, their personal safety. The current system, under a premise of protecting the public, unfairly advantages a minority of individuals who are granted the privilege to graze the land – without necessarily giving any consideration to low impact foot access. Alberta has gone too far in the direction of making this type of public land de facto private property. Leaseholders shouldn't have the same rights as they would if they owned the land.

What does the rest of the public think?

Dwight Rodtka, hunter and retired provincial wildlife official, submitted a formal dispute in the past year to resolve the issue of being denied hunting access to a long-used grazing lease. Rodtka asked for access to a high-grade road, but the lease's conditions state the lessee can deny access to anything other than foot access, Rodtka's request for access and his subsequent appeal were both denied. Rodtka particularly took issue to the fact that the lessee told him that OHV users were allowed (allegedly the lessee was advised by Sustainable Resource Development to allow OHVs) but trucks were not. Rodtka was told by the agrologist in charge that the lessee was legally allowed to ignore his own lease's conditions, which include in this case 'no motorized access'.

"Where I live a lessee has cattle on his lease during summer and then puts four horses on the lease in the fall leaving them there until hunting seasons are closed. This eliminates public hunting but the lessee and his friends enjoyed this private hunting reserve all season," says Rodtka. He adds: "How the government can defend this hideous abuse is beyond comprehension. Albertans have been robbed of their public land by grazing lessees' and their friends who now control access to it and we don't even realize it."

Vivian Pharis, long serving AWA board member, also uses the same lease for stewardship – checking on the health of the landscape and documenting off-highway

vehicle damage. She also crosses the lease to get access to vacant public land beyond the lease boundaries where there are no restrictions on public access. This year, correspondence with the government has informed Vivian a steward role falls under the Recreational Access Regulation. She is denied access as a steward, even though "steward" is not specifically defined in the Regulation.

Other stories include lessees strategically placing salt blocks near the road entry to activate the "No access if livestock present" condition in the foothills. In the southeast, recreational users were repeatedly denied access except to the hunters who paid the lessee for access. Profiting off the wildlife resource is illegal under Alberta's hunting regulations but selectively denying access is not.

What does it all mean for conservation?

One of the biggest issues with this situation is that there is inadequate protection for wildlife and habitat on grasslands, the landscape and ecosystem where most grazing leases are located. Kevin Van Tighem states that cattle grazing is the best economic use of our public rangelands. Maybe that's true in the bare dollar value, but what if we put a price on ecological goods and services like clean water and biodiversity? While it's certain that well-kept, long-held livestock operations contain some of the healthiest native ecosystems, we shouldn't be so quick to make such a definitive generalization.

Cattle have been around for 150 years but bison and indigenous peoples co-evolved with the grassland ecosystem for thousands. The recent work of the Innii (bison) Initiative by the Blackfoot people to reintroduce bison widely across the Eastern Slopes is a powerful example of the influence empowered peoples can have on public priorities. Grazing can contribute to a healthy ecosystem but valuing the land for other purposes like conservation and reintroducing extirpated species is also important. Access is also

important for stewards who have been voluntarily performing that vital role on the land for generations. Not every rancher stewards the land perfectly and other people can bring attention to range practices that affect parts of the land, such as riparian zones.

In deciding what the best use of public land is, Alberta needs an inclusive and comprehensive public debate that considers modern issues such as climate change and indigenous rights. We shouldn't assume that grandfathered uses are the "right" uses today.

The Future of Access?

In 2014, a stakeholder engagement session was hosted by the government to explore changes in the Recreational Access Regulation, as the regulation was set to expire. AWA was excluded. We were told that the government consulted two grazing associations, three beef producers, three off-highway vehicle organizations, and four non-motorized recreation groups. Notably missing from this list are environmental groups, First Nations, and industry, all of which were specifically pointed out in last year's Auditor General's Report as key stakeholders. The audit even specified that "current and future Albertans" were a stakeholder – that's YOU.

This Regulation is set to expire in March 2017, so there is still time to give the government your thoughts on the matter.

AWA believes that in order to achieve a vision of public lands in Alberta held in perpetuity for the public and in the public trust and interest and managed for conservation, broad and meaningful public consultation should inform public lands policy. Key elements to include in this policy are: allowing unconditional foot access, managing for wildlife, watersheds, and ecosystem goods and services, and only allowing designated motorized access if the decision is based on science and public input. ▲

Cowboy Welfare:

The few exploit the many

By Kevin Van Tighem

This article was published first in the October 2016 issue of *Alberta Views*. AWA is grateful to both Kevin and *Alberta Views* for their permission to reprint the article here.

Imagine that you and your extended family own a large tract of land full of native vegetation and wildlife. Some of your family fish there in summer or hunt there in the fall. Others simply enjoy the birds, flowers and fresh air. The native prairie on the land would benefit from some grazing, so your family offers a seasonal cattle-grazing lease to a local rancher.

Then one day, much to your surprise, you find some new roads and natural gas wells on the place. The rancher who leases your grass has granted an oil company access to your land in exchange for annual payments—to himself. Not only that, he's put up "No Trespassing" signs around the property and he stops you at the fenceline. "I lease this land," he says. "You can't go in there."

"But it's my land!" you exclaim.

The rancher grins slyly. "Hmmm..." he says. "How much you willing to pay?"

Impossible? Not in Alberta. Our public land is treated like private property when the government leases out the right to graze our grass. About 5,700 private individuals and groups lease more than 202,000 km² of Alberta Crown land for livestock pasture. They pay less than \$3 per animal unit month (or AUM; the equivalent of what a cow and calf eat each month). This is far below market rates for private grazing leases. For example, when my wife and I lease out our private land for grazing, we get about \$25 per AUM—eight times more than the government land just across the fence. Red Deer lawyer Bob Scammell, who has spent decades fighting for the public's right to enjoy its own land, calls the grazing lease issue "cowboy welfare."

Grazing leases are just that: leases for cows

to eat grass. The land still belongs to you and me. But previous Alberta governments allowed lessees to sell their public land leases rather than surrender them when they no longer needed the grass themselves. Buying a public grazing lease creates the illusion of land ownership, but that's all it is: an illusion. That land is owned, on our behalf, by our government.

Because of that illusion, grazing lessees have asserted rights not granted by the actual leases. The government even allows leaseholders to act as "gatekeepers" for public access. The presence of livestock is considered reason enough to deny access. Some unscrupulous operators exploit that angle to turn public land into private hunting reserves. After pulling their cattle out for the season, they turn a few horses loose and use the presence of those horses as a reason to deny public hunting access—while giving their friends and family exclusive hunting rights. Some have even been caught illegally charging access fees to guide companies, profiteering not only from our public land but our public wildlife too.

If there's oil and gas under the land, grazing leaseholders can pocket serious profits. Government looks the other way when energy companies pay leaseholders for permission to build roads, pipelines and well pads—even though that money should go to the owner, not the renter. Auditor General Merwan Saher's 2015 annual report estimated that Alberta forgoes more than \$25-million annually by way of this unearned subsidy to a wealthy few. Meanwhile the provincial treasury is bare.

It's not a pretty picture, but in fairness nei-

ther is it the whole picture. The exploiters are probably a minority. Many grazing-lease holders are good folks who protect the land from motorized abuse while still welcoming hikers, hunters and others who travel on foot. Their low grazing fees are more than offset by many volunteer hours of land stewardship. Those good lessees are as offended by the abuses of the few as the rest of us ought to be.

Previous attempts to reform cowboy welfare foundered, largely because Conservative governments depended on politically influential rural elites. Our new, less beholden government might do better. Their challenge will be to not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Cattle grazing is, after all, the best economic use of our public rangelands and can be important in sustaining native prairie.

There's no question that non-grazing revenues from public land should flow into government revenues rather than lessees' pockets. Public foot access should be allowed at all times. And grazing-lease fees should reflect private market rates to ensure the fairest return to us who own the resource.

Still—the best grazing lessees work to keep our native prairie in prime condition, protect endangered species, remove invasive weeds and sustain wetlands and water supplies. It's only fair that excellent stewardship should earn discounted grazing rates. Responsible reform should lead to the best lessees paying the same low rents as before—not as cowboy welfare but as fair compensation for careful stewardship of Alberta's family treasures. 🐾

Kevin Van Tighem spent three decades studying, interpreting and managing nature in Canada's western national parks.

The Prairie One Percent:

Time to Share, Time to Invest?

By Ian Urquhart



When I introduce students in my introductory politics class to power and inequality I ask them to read a short magazine piece by Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel prize-winning economist. “Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%” details growing inequality in the United States – a country where a few years ago one percent of the population claimed nearly 25 percent of U.S. income. Stiglitz suggests that American society suffers from the inequality obtained by the power of the wealthy. “One Percenters” are generally disinterested in seeing government look out for the vast majority of Americans and offer them good public education, good public health care, and stronger environmental protections.

The Stiglitz article offers a useful context for thinking about grazing leaseholder compensation – one aspect of the grazing lease system on public lands in Alberta. Who receives compensation, for example, for oil and gas exploration and development activities on public grazing lease lands? How should compensation be divided between leaseholders and government? If government receives a share, how should that share be invested?

In January the Alberta Land Institute (ALI) published “Alternative Models of Compensation on Alberta’s Crown Grazing Lease Lands,” a comparative study of compensation models for public grazing lease lands (the study is available online at <http://www.albertalandinstitute.ca/research/research-projects/project/grazing-leases>). O’Malley, Entern, Kaplinsky, and Adamowicz compared current public lands grazing lease policy in Alberta with several alternative systems. Two of those systems operate today, one province-wide in

Saskatchewan and the other in the Municipal District of Taber. A third system was proposed by Alberta’s Agricultural Lease Review Committee (Thurber Committee) in 1998. As Andrea Johancsik notes in our first feature article the Thurber Committee recommendations were passed by the legislature in 1999 but the law never came into force.

The Alberta Land Institute is an independent research institute that strives to take “an innovative and impartial investigative approach.” The authors of the alternative models study sought to offer “clear and independent information regarding the legislative and policy objectives around compensation.” Their goal was simple, and fundamentally important – to try to better inform compensation policy discussions.

Alberta’s Grazing Lease Rental and Compensation System

Today, grazing leaseholders pay the provincial government an annual rental fee. The rental fee is calculated according to the amount of forage required by an “animal unit” in one month (if you run into a 1,000-pound cow on the street you’ve run into the definition of one animal unit). Rental rates are highest in southern Alberta, lowest in the north, and in between in Red Deer/North Saskatchewan area. Alberta’s Auditor-General reported that, in 2013-2014, the provincial treasury received \$3.8 million from grazing leaseholders. It also noted that a Government of Alberta survey from 2012 recorded that privately owned land in Alberta was rented out for grazing at ten times the rate charged to graze cattle on public land.

“The province charges less rent for grazing leases than private landowners charge.”

– Alberta Auditor General, July 2015

Ranchers aren’t the only ones who look to public lands as a vehicle to help earn a living. Oil and gas companies want access to those lands as well. Their search for oil and natural gas may lead them to access and, as a side-effect, damage the very same lands where leaseholders graze their cattle. This is where the concept of compensation arises. In Alberta’s compensation system, the public – the owners of public lands – receive very minimal compensation for oil and gas operations on leased lands. The leaseholder receives the lion’s share of compensation. The amount of compensation leaseholders deposit into their bank accounts generally is determined through negotiations with the companies. These negotiations are private; there isn’t a public record of how compensation actually is paid.

Back to the One Percent

The secrecy surrounding compensation payments creates an obvious problem for serious research into Alberta’s compensation payment system. The authors of the ALI study seem to have been very careful in how they addressed this problem. They calculated an estimate, based on the decisions the Alberta’s Surface Rights Board has made in compensation disputes between leaseholders and petroleum companies, of what lease-

holders receive for each wellsite on leased lands. This estimate for 2013/14 is \$1,500 per wellsite annually.

Using the \$1,500 per wellsite estimate the ALI study suspects that grazing leaseholders receive \$50.13 million annually in petroleum industry compensation payments. Over the 30-year lifespan of a wellsite these compensation payments were estimated to amount to just under \$1 billion - \$901.5 million.

Do these estimates mean all grazing leaseholders receive compensation from the oil and gas industry? No. Of Alberta's 7,388 grazing leases on public lands 44.8 percent of them (3,312 leases) don't have any petroleum wellsites on the land.

Getting back to that idea of the one percent and fairness...of the 7,388 leaseholders in Alberta one percent of them (74) annually receive an estimated \$19.1 million. The one percent receives a staggering 38 percent of all the petroleum compensation cheques sent to leaseholders. The study believes that one leaseholder, who has 812 wells on leased land, receives \$1,218,000 every year in compensation payments. People who told the late Bob Scammell years ago that they knew of leaseholders who were receiving more than \$100,000 annually in petroleum compensation payments likely knew very well what they were talking about.

Is this overall level of compensation fair? Is it fair that none of the compensation goes to the real owners of public land – people like you and me? The millions of dollars collected by the Prairie One Percenters, if not the compensation regime itself, surely bears a critical look from the perspective of fairness.

“Certain leaseholders receive surface access compensation fees in excess of the actual rent they pay to the province for grazing livestock and the costs incurred

from allowing industrial access to their leased land.”

– Alberta Auditor General, July 2015

The ALI report uses the term “windfall” at one point. I can imagine how some grazing leaseholders may have cringed when they saw that word. Giving windfalls to grazing leaseholders wasn't the program's intent. As the ALI study describes it, that intent or purpose was to make grazing leaseholders “whole”, to put the grazing leaseholder affected by energy operations in a financial position as close as possible to the position they were in prior to entry by the operator.”

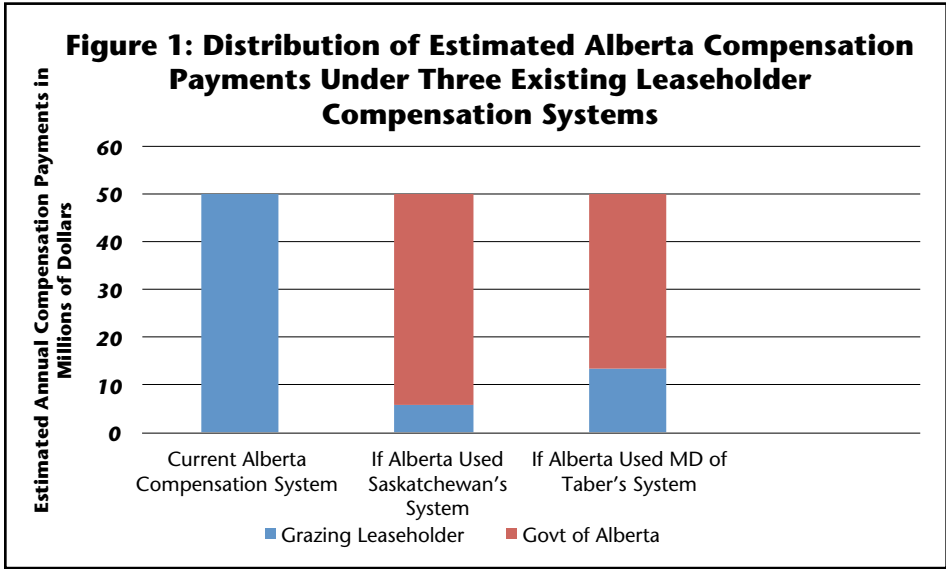
Are there any or many windfalls out there? Is the leaseholder who receives an estimated \$1.218 million “whole”? What about the other 73 who claim an estimated \$19.1 million every year? In July 2015 the Auditor-General reported that one of the province's grazing associations paid the government “\$68,875 in grazing fees and collected \$348,068 in industry payments for industrial activities on their leased lands. If individuals and associations are more than whole, the phrase

“cowboy welfare” would seem to be an appropriate label to use to describe what Alberta's current compensation model delivers to a fortunate few.

And then there's the windfalls that may arise when leases are sold. Leaseholders keep all of the money they receive when they sell or transfer a lease to graze cattle on public land. The Auditor-General noted that a pair of leases in southwest Alberta, amounting to 1,134 acres, were offered for sale. The asking price was \$265,000. The annual rental fee paid to taxpayers for those leases? \$486. Isn't this the type of situation that screams “windfall profit?”

The authors of the ALI study don't delve into questions of fairness. They don't recommend a policy change. What they do though is show that in Saskatchewan and the Municipal District of Taber the compensation issue is handled very differently. Those jurisdictions have developed compensation arrangements where payments are shared between the public and leaseholders. In both of those systems the lion's share of compensation payments goes to the public while the leaseholders receive considerably less. Figure 1 compares what the distribution of compensation

Alberta Land Institute Estimates of Compensation Paid to Grazing Leaseholders on Alberta's Public Lands	
Annual Compensation	Compensation Over Thirty Years
\$50,130,000 (± \$16,710,000)	\$901,524,000 (± \$300,508,000)
<i>Note: The Institute estimated leaseholder compensation over a range of \$1,000 to \$2,000 per wellsite. The \$50 million and \$901 million figures represent the sums of the \$1,500 per wellsite calculations.</i>	



payments between the Alberta government and leaseholders would look like if Alberta kept its current system or followed either of these two alternative compensation models.

Did Saskatchewan and the MD of Taber think about what a fair distribution of compensation payments should look like when they designed their models? If they did, they came to very different conclusions about what constitutes fairness than what is suggested by Alberta's system. If Alberta used the Saskatchewan system, a system employed by the centre-right Saskatchewan Party government, grazing leaseholders in Alberta would receive \$5.752 million rather than \$50.13 million. The government would receive \$44.378 million. If Alberta adopted the system used in the Municipal District of Taber then leaseholders would receive 26.7 percent of \$50.13 million; the

remaining \$36.762 million would go to the provincial government.

Fairness has another, even more important, dimension that I would like to raise when it comes to the compensation payment issue. This dimension is about the land, about the damage oil and gas inflicts on the land, and how compensation payments are and could be used. How much of the compensation the Prairie One Percent receives is devoted to restoring and improving the public's land? In 1999 the Thurber Committee recommended that Alberta create a "Conservation Resource Management Fund" with some of the funds that flowed then and now to leaseholders. This Fund could, in part, invest in enhancements to Alberta's grasslands. If government has an obligation to make leaseholders "whole" I think it has at least as equally strong an obligation to make

the land whole as well. If petroleum activities compromise the landscape then some of their compensation should be plowed back into the land itself.

While important in all landscapes this principle is especially important in Alberta's grasslands. One of the reasons so many of Alberta's endangered species are found in the province's grasslands may be traced to the detrimental impact that our thirst for oil and gas has on native habitats. If Alberta's politicians can summon the political will needed to think about redistributing some percentage of petroleum compensation to the public treasury I would hope those funds would be dedicated to restoring Alberta's grasslands. This is an issue and an obligation I suspect is better entrusted to government than it is to our Prairie One Percent. ▲

Featured Artist Mike Judd



*Cameron Lake,
Oils on Canvas,
60" by 72"*

Not in my Backyard ("NIMBY")

By Joanna Skrajny, AWA Conservation Specialist



Picture your daily morning routine: you wake up, grab your morning cuppa Joe, and open the blinds to let the morning sun wash across the kitchen table. But your window lets in a more disturbing image. Overnight someone had dumped a pile of garbage on your lawn and then chopped down and set fire to your favourite tree. Freshly ripped tire tracks over your beloved begonias and perfectly manicured lawn are the scars of a midnight joyride.

I imagine you would be furious. You would want to go to the police and demand that they serve justice. You would call your insurance company and want compensation for thousands of dollars of damage to your property. After that is all done, you'd need another cup of coffee – maybe something stronger. You might take a selfie with the damage and post it to social media (#mondays am I right?) so you can vent your anger and

publicly shame whoever did this to you.

After your anger subsided, you would be filled with a sense of loss. Much of the work you've done to take care of your home, gone after a few thought-

less moments. The tree where your children spent endless hours climbing and swinging on that old tire, burned down.

The following three photos show that this happens every day on land that



Garbage left in piles will be foraged by hungry bears, acquiring a taste that may get them killed one day.
PHOTO: © W. HOWSE



Stay off the lawn: Too lazy to take your chairs home after a weekend of camping? Why not burn and leave them? PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY



My begonias! Nothing left to grow on this mud bogging patch adjacent to the North Saskatchewan River. PHOTO: © W. HOWSE



An example of a created and abandoned campsite. All the trees have been cut down to make room for trailers. Garbage, including empty shells, litter this camp – with the next camp only metres away. PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY

belongs to you and me, the wonderful backyard that Alberta's public lands provide us with:

These photographs are just a small sample of what Corporal Wayne Howse of the RCMP has seen during his time enforcing public lands legislation in the Bighorn. On a recent tour that I took with him around this area I saw just a small piece of the extent of damage and neglect on our public lands.

Case Study: Abraham Lake Mouth (KiskaWilson PLUZ)

The Kiska-Wilson Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) is an incredibly popular area for random camping on weekends, as it backs onto Abraham Lake. Corporal Howse showed me the proliferation of trails everywhere in this area. They are especially common around the lake

and river. Keep in mind that in a PLUZ it is illegal to operate an off-highway vehicle anywhere that isn't a designated trail. Most of what Corporal Howse showed me was evidence of illegal use. A large portion of the forest around the roads has been cut down in order to make room for trailers, for firewood, and for campers. Trails have even been graveled over by motorized users to make them "legitimate" for the 5th wheelers to come in.

I learned that, on a summer weekend, upwards of 400 trailer units camp in this area. Multiply that by a few times and you have an estimate of the sheer number of people and OHVs that are in the Kiska Wilson Public Land Use Zone. As you can imagine, environmental damage is only a small portion of the work that officers have to do every day. With so many people out in such a small area,

public safety very quickly becomes the primary concern.

Perhaps the most egregious damage results from the cumulative impacts of so many people with motorized vehicles on a landscape. There is evidence everywhere of people joyriding in the lake and on the river beds. All of the surrounding hills have tracks running up and down them and the hills are visibly slumping. The garbage is left for the wildlife to feed on. Often, this damage goes un-noticed and unenforced, because there is literally only a handful of officers responsible for watching over thousands of kilometres of public land.

I used to think that this disturbance, however intense, only would be found in isolated pockets. The reality is that the disturbance is everywhere. There were many locations on our full day tour, covering a few hundred kilome-



An aerial photograph of a popular random camping spot in the Kiska-Wilson PLUZ. This is just one of 3 or 4 similarly sized sites – it's not uncommon for these fields to be completely packed wall-to-wall with trailers during weekends. PHOTO: © W. HOWSE

tres, where you would see trailer units camped on oil and gas well pads, surrounded by clearcuts, with trails cutting into the remaining forest. It's important to keep in mind that is this only a snapshot of one of the hundreds of areas that enforcement officers have to patrol. And then there's the ongoing proliferation of logging and industrial roads that encourage even more motorized access onto the landscape. In a word, it's overwhelming.

We are used to hearing these things, but it's very different when you actually see it on the land. By the end of the day, I felt an incredible sense of loss. This is land that belongs to the public, and must not only serve human wants and economic development, but must sustain our wildlife as well. It's clear that the current model of managing public lands is simply not manageable.

So what can we do?

Here are some suggestions on how we can avoid NIMBY on our public lands:

1. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use needs to be considered a privilege, not a right. In the absence of a designated trail network, public lands should default to being off limits to OHVs. We need to recognize that off-highway vehicle use can have significant impacts to our lands and wildlife if it is not properly regulated. Trails need to be planned in areas where watershed, wildlife, and ecosystem integrity is not compromised by OHV use.
2. Give out expensive tickets... often – constant enforcement educates those who listen and penalizes those who don't. Enforcement officers also need to be able to give on-the-spot fines to offenders.

3. There needs to be areas where motorized recreation is not permitted under any circumstances, such as in our provincial parks. Currently, over 90 percent of provincial public lands are open to OHVs, yet recent surveys have estimated that only about six percent of Albertans participate in motorized recreation. OHVs are known to displace other users such as hikers, as well as wildlife. Simply put, this use is permitted on a disproportionately large amount of land. ▲

Thanks to Corporal Wayne Howse for the photographs, the tour, and the endless hours of helping to protect our public lands.

My First Year in the Bighorn



By Joanna Skrajny, *AWA Conservation Specialist*

We finished our first day of backpacking through the mountains and arrived at our camping spot after a long day of meticulously measuring the length of every damaged trail. As the three of us set up camp, I had taken off my shoes to rest my red and swollen feet, and the contents of my pack lay strewn around camp. The others had done the same, three trails of cooking ware and sleeping materials leading to tents.

After dinner, and just as drowsiness began to set in, we started a particularly important daily ritual – hanging our food in a bag on a tree away from camp in order to avoid any midnight visits from a bear. One of AWA's most dedicated volunteers, Paul, took it upon himself to complete the task. He meticulously wound a length of rope around a rock, and the three of us walked to scout a suitable tree candidate. We found one a few hundred feet away, and Paul aimed his rope bound rock at a reasonably tall branch. He threw the rock, only to have it catch the branch below. In a particularly impressive

display the rock shot right back – narrowly missing us three monkeys in the path of the rock. I silently thanked myself for packing a good first aid kit.

Once our food was safely aloft, the three of us hobbled off to bed at the ripe hour of 8pm.

Although I have been out a few times before to the area, this was my first time out on the trail systems leading into the heart of the backcountry. What is wonderful about the Bighorn is that it is full of flat valley bottoms covered in a network of nameless creeks and streams. You are immediately greeted with wonderful views – open landscapes, twisted trees, interesting rocks and open skies. An easy 10km hike takes you to a gorgeous back mountain pass filled with alpine meadows. With many creeks crisscrossing the valley bottoms the hike entailed a fair number of water crossings – but my feet weren't complaining about the cool water on a nice summer day!

One of the things that anyone who has spent time in the wild can attest to is the

volume of silence you experience – until you realize it's not silent. It might be subtler but it's just as dynamic as the city din we are accustomed to. As the cold alpine air settled down on our camp, we fell asleep to creeks chattering away into the night. We experienced a thunderstorm one night, every single bolt of light flashing brilliantly and the rain droplets tapping on the canopies of our tents. As the storm finished I stepped outside. The storm had passed through quickly, not even leaving a cloud behind. Water dripped from the trees that wetly glistened in the night from the stars above, stars so very, very bright. Slowly, as dawn drew closer, the forest began to move and rustle again with life.

With the morning came bird song and chilly frost. During the daytime, pikas called to us out from the scabble and marmots poked out their rotund bodies. One very special morning, we saw grizzly bears digging in the meadows for *hedysarum*, also known as “bear root,” among a splash of wildflowers.

Why were we in the Bighorn?

In the late 1970s, Bighorn Wildland was managed primarily under the Alberta Eastern Slopes Policy as prime protection zone, which prohibited motorized recreation. In 2002, the Alberta Government formalized an access management plan that legalized motorized recreation in the Wildland on designated trails. AWA had the foresight to see that trail monitoring was essential to determine the effects of

motorized use and, in 2003, AWA initiated a project called the Bighorn Recreation and Impact Monitoring Project.

2016 marks 13 years of AWA monitoring these trails. Although it was my first trip a few volunteers like Paul Sutherland and Heinz Unger have participated in these monitoring exercises many times. They were an invaluable pool of knowledge for me to draw from. This year, we took two separate 3-day trips, which is the time needed in order to cover the trail sys-

tem. Over the years, the trails we walk and what we use to monitor them has changed drastically. From pen and paper we have transitioned to tablets on which a questionnaire-style form is completed in order to ensure consistency in the answers.

This work has been an integral piece of AWA's work on the Bighorn and we couldn't have done it without the dedication of volunteers like Paul and Heinz. Many thanks to you both!



Room with a view! PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY

The Bighorn is big country, with some impressive wild spaces. Its stretches of uncompromising wilderness – sometimes silent, sometimes not – are so humbling to me. It's country I cherish and seek out. It offers what I need to “reset” my addled urban mind.

As we were out hiking the trails, it was clear we were out during an unusual time. Many of the trails had been closed due to the fact they were unstable and highly eroded. Consequently, the amount of motorized activity was minimal. For once we could actually *hear* the wilderness, which is too often ruined by off-highway vehicle racket. In August, following a month of consistent rain, the remaining open trails were filled with water. We slipped and slid our way down the middle of the tracks where possible, bushwhacking where it wasn't.

All of this August rain, although not uncommon in the Bighorn, provided us with a unique vantage point. It helped us appreciate just how much erosion this landscape has experienced in just over 10 years. Sticking our tape measures into the puddles consistently revealed that even trail

portions which are considered “undamaged” have eroded around 20cm since they were opened.

The amount of water that this landscape is capable of holding is reflected in the trails. Many *Wild Lands Advocate* readers may remember last year's findings of what happens when a new trail is built on such a sensitive landscape. The Canary Creek trail had been relocated away from a valley bottom, a section with multiple creek crossings, up to a wooded hill in order to avoid washouts from future floods. Good in theory, but the exceptionally wet landscape played havoc with this relocation effort. Cut into a 33-degree slope made of soft soil, the trail was already slumping and collapsing not ten months after it was built.

My visit one year later to the rerouted trail gave me two definite conclusions – neither of them positive ones. The first was that the whole 800m of the rerouted trail looked – bad. There's just no other word for what we witnessed. The slumping had moved up the slope by another metre in some portions. Where the trail wasn't cut into



Mmmm... breakfast for mama bear!
PHOTO: © P. SUTHERLAND



On the August trip - Left to right: myself (Joanna), and volunteers Heinz and Joel on the August trip.
PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY

the slope, we still noted huge piles of earth churned to reveal exposed and torn roots. And yet this wasn't the only spot. Almost the entire network of the trails, especially those contained in the mountain valleys, where both water and OHVs funnel, were in a similar – if not worse – state of disrepair. The second conclusion was that there is simply no better place to put this trail, much like many others in the Bighorn. This was the shallowest slope away from the creek valley. If any trail were to be here, this would be the place to locate it.

This year in the *Wild Lands Advocate* we have extensively covered the various impacts that OHVs have on the landscape and

wildlife. Some of the “hits” include:

- increasing runoff and sediment,
- increasing habitat fragmentation,
- displacement of wildlife such as elk and grizzly bears,
- increased motorized access contributing to poaching and stress on wildlife
- displacement of other users such as hikers

From a conservation perspective it's clear that OHV use has impacts on any landscape. These environmental impacts are exacerbated in areas as sensitive as the Bighorn. Any trail damage is long-lived, magnified by the short growing season. But even from a perspective of simply *looking* at the trails it's clear they are doomed to fail. Nature simply didn't mean for them to be on this landscape.

Water + soft soil + over powered machines is simply not a sustainable combination. When every step of our feet squishes into the trails, how are machines weighing anywhere from hundreds of pounds to over half-a-ton with huge tire treads supposed to ride on these trails without having an impact? In recent memory trails have now been closed in 2012, 2013, and 2016 for some portion of the summer. Even from the perspective of the public purse it is obvious that these trails will have to be rebuilt again and again. Why should we spend money endlessly repairing the damage done? And that's assuming that all users are respectful

and will keep their machines on designated trails – which we know is not always the case.

Another important piece to this puzzle to me is that the Bighorn is special and it is heartbreaking to see piece by piece whittled away. Last year was a particularly dry spring, and for most Albertans, the rain this summer was welcome. This landscape is highly valued for providing drinking water to many Canadians. The Bighorn is called the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River for a reason – it's wet! The rivers and streams flowing out of the Bighorn provide up to 90 percent of the water supply to Edmonton. This landscape is clearly crucial for water security and wildlife habitat. It is also one of the only remaining footholds in Alberta's Eastern Slopes free from heavy industrial use and logging.

As we hiked in the rain, listened to it pelt our tents, saw the stars, and lost ourselves in such a vast landscape, I kept having the overwhelming sense of experiencing something so much greater than myself. Too many members of our species believes we can build it better, we can conquer and tame the landscape. But at what point do we accept, respect, and humbly bow to the uncompromising wilderness, instead of picking up another shovel? At what point does wilderness, landscapes not or very lightly touched by our hands and boots, have its own worth?



Who's laughing now? Volunteer Joel happily knee deep in waders on a trail filled with water. This is a designated trail and was deemed stable enough to be open. PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY

My first year in the Bighorn affirmed why I work as a conservation specialist and what AWA is working towards. It's clear the Bighorn should be protected as a Wildland Provincial Park, just like the government promised in 1986. Our monitoring is used to inform decision-makers about the importance of smart planning and protecting wilderness and headwaters landscapes. But it's also important to physically walk the land and appreciate it for yourself. I hope this will encourage you to do the same. 🌲



In 2015 volunteer Ken Lee measures collapsed sections of trail along Canary Creek, less than 10 months after the trail was constructed by the Government of Alberta. PHOTO: © S. NICHOLS

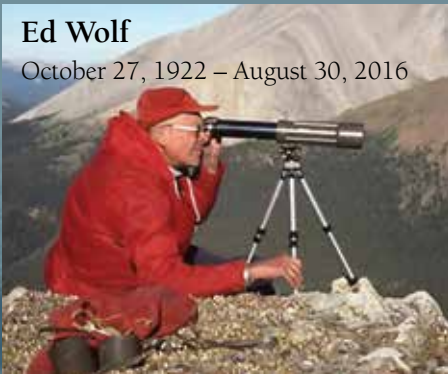


In 2016 a portion of the rerouted trail in the forest. Even where the trail wasn't cut into a 33 degree slope, there was extensive root and vegetation damage. PHOTO: © J. SKRAJNY

In Memoriam

Ed Wolf

October 27, 1922 – August 30, 2016



Ed Wolf, an AWA founding member, former board member, and an anonymous supporter of AWA passed away at the end of August at the age of 93. Ed anonymously provided monthly rent money when AWA first sublet Hillhurst Cottage School in the 1970s from the Hostel shop. Many long-time AWA members have tales about Ed. He loved hunting, especially with Tom Beck and Dick/Vivian Pharis, and hiking,

Christyann remembers Ed for the enormous campfires he would make that evaporated the rain and helped everyone get dry again! Every time she builds a campfire she thinks of him and always will. In the last few years, he was extremely concerned with unreported bird deaths from wind turbine development and the rampant explosion of wind farms throughout Alberta.



Bob Scammell

November 29, 1937 –
November 24, 2016

Late this fall Alberta lost a proud son, its most passionate outdoors advocate and, without doubt, its greatest defender of public lands, when Bob Scammell passed along.

Bob was taken by a muscle atrophying disease that, even when I spent a day interviewing him in 2011, already had him in its grip. It robbed him of his greatest pleasure – to be able to walk out in nature. In 2011 he could

no longer hunt or fly fish or even visit his favourite pools along the North Raven River or Prairie Creek. Over the next 5 years the disease would rob him even of his ability to write.

Bob had always lived life to the fullest with a long, distinguished career in law, another long, even more distinguished career as a writer and a third remarkable career in volunteerism, particularly as an outdoors advocate.

In 2011 Bob could still write, and his pen was loaded with rich description and sharp analysis. In recognition of his keen legal mind Bob received a Queen's Counsel designation in 1980. But Bob's greatest fame, including international fame, came from his writing. For 50 years, Alberta newspapers, most consistently the *Red Deer Advocate*, carried Bob's weekly outdoors columns. He wrote for a range of Alberta's sports journals and for sporting magazines across North America. Bob won many awards, including three national writing awards in 2011 alone, the year I interviewed him. His books were often Canadian bestsellers.

AWA will long be beholden to Bob, for

his cooperative work in the 1970s Eastern Slopes hearings and the fight to save Willmore Wilderness Park from development, when he was Alberta Fish and Game Association president. The two associations, with Bob always pushing us, worked cooperatively and effectively together through the 1980s on Integrated Resource Planning, on exposing the hazards of game farming, and on defeating the province's plan to sell grazing lease public lands.

Bob's passing is a call to action. AWA must redouble its efforts to pursue the goals he cherished: regaining free access to grazing lease lands and ending "Cowboy Welfare" (Bob's term) that denies the public millions of dollars a year in surface rights fees. When we are successful on these intractable issues – and we will be successful – our victories will be dedicated in Bob's memory. Delivering justice on these two issues meant more to him than anything else.

To read a fuller account of Bob's remarkable life, please see *Wild Lands Advocate* Vol. 19, no. 4 (August 2011).

– By Vivian Pharis

Ribbon of Brown

By Eric Gormley,
Kristine Kowalchuk,
and Raquel Feroe



Wildlands Advocate has published excellent articles on diverse wild backcountry places. This discussion is about a wild urban place, the North Saskatchewan river valley through Edmonton. Wandering home after a night downtown you might step off the hard surfaces to the top bank of the river valley, and see darkness below. Urbanites could see a void—vast lands undeveloped—but conservationists know what can't be easily seen is often where the good stuff happens. Edmonton's river valley represents the largest expanse of urban parkland in all of North America, and until now it has remained, on the whole, natural. Human beings gain mental and physical benefit from spending time in the valley, away from noise, away from artificial lights, with a nighttime view of the stars. It calms

us. Just as important, it provides habitat for dozens of species of plants and animals and is the only corridor for wildlife movement across the city—most commonly coyotes and deer, but also moose, and the odd black bear. It is the “emptiness” that makes it so valuable. As local biologist Ross Wein says, “the river valley is our eco-corridor, it's all we have in the Edmonton area.”

And yet, rather than rejoicing in this green gift that makes us the envy of cities everywhere and doing our best to protect it, Edmonton has recently begun to actively promote the river valley as a backdrop for human recreational activities and, increasingly, to destroy it by turning it into the equivalent of an outdoor mall, replete with escalators, amusement activities and commercial centres. Balancing humans' place in our city's river valley has never been easy, but in the past few years there has been a sudden change in direction in river valley management. Unless there is greater awareness of the river valley's ecological, historical, and cultural value, we are poised to lose the most important natural area of our entire city.

Edmonton's river valley park today is no accident. It has benefitted from thousands of years of wise stewardship of indigenous peoples who used the area as a source of fish, game, saskatoons, chokecherries, cranberries, and materials for making tools and fire—as well as a source of spiritual connection with the land. The valley's long history of human occupation reminds us of how important nature is to our well-being.

Over a century of protection has respected this heritage. In 1907 Montreal land-

scape architect Frederick Todd offered the emerging city of Edmonton a unique vision, something eastern cities had long forfeited—a “necklace of parks” running through the river valley. Assembling this park has been a constant thread in Edmonton's DNA ever since.

Many people over the decades endorsed Todd's remarkable vision. The last century focused on acquiring valley lands for parks, including from reclaimed dumps and industrial sites. Parkland grew from 294 acres in 1906 to 2,000 acres in 1947 and nearly 5,000 acres in 1965. Fifty years after Todd had imagined it, Edmonton director of parks J.R. Wright surmised, “continuity and unity are probably the strongest intangible elements contributing to the uniqueness of the River Valley.” The vision for this park was to make it feel like the countryside. When the City acquired 1,300 acres of Whitemud Ravine from 20 different owners in 1960, Wright wanted housing setbacks at the top of the ravine so people below in Whitemud Creek would look up and see only nature. Putting people in touch with nature—especially those lacking means to travel to the mountains or other rural areas—was the aim.

Along the way, park builders from Wright to city councillors, bureaucrats and business people cautioned against short-sighted policies that would erode the great civic plan. Edmonton's citizens acted to save Mill Creek and MacKinnon ravines from traffic engineers in the 60s and 70s, the latter after shovels were already in the ground. In response to these threats, in 1975 the Province and City together bought land and built



Blue clematis, south bank of the North Saskatchewan River, east of Dawson Bridge
PHOTO: © E. GORMLEY



Trail through poplar and carragana in Dawson Park PHOTO: © E. GORMLEY

a continuous trail system on both sides of the river from Edmonton's east end to the High Level Bridge, creating a 13 kilometre riparian zone in the process. The Province further protected lands along the river from Fort Saskatchewan to Devon from commercial and industrial use by designating them a "restricted development area." In 1976, the John Janzen Nature Centre was opened to provide public awareness and education of nature. This was followed in 1985 by the River Valley Bylaw, which extended the river park to the western limits of the city and noted the need to protect against the intrusion of roads and utilities. In the early 90s the City's Ribbon of Green document confirmed, "the public now recognizes the valley can be easily damaged as well as conserved." It resolved, "the major portion of the river valley will remain in a natural state," and in support of this vision, education "programs will increase awareness of natural and human history."

This theme of a continuous greenway was reinforced in the City's Biodiversity Report (2008), declaring the North Saskatchewan

River to be a "major ecological corridor across Alberta." The report observed the valley and ravines are still "well-connected, and maintaining and improving this connectivity will be critical to protecting biodiversity over the long term." In 2011, the City published "The Way We Green," its environment master plan. It lamented the loss of natural areas and pledged to protect "ecological connectivity in the North Saskatchewan River Valley — one of the region's key biological corridors." A Natural Areas Advisory Committee and the City's Master Naturalist Program that trained citizens in stewardship practices grew out of these initiatives. In the past few years both have been suspended...and this seems to have portended the shift to come.

One would expect current concerns over climate change and species loss would heighten appreciation for nature's work in helping to control pollution, manage floods, and add to the physical and mental health of people—but the pendulum has swung towards development of the river valley. In 2013, the Province dropped the

last of its valley restricted development caveats, the section from Edmonton to Devon. That same year, the city approved the Valley Line LRT, even though its route passes straight through landscape that connects Mill Creek Ravine—"a biodiversity core area"—to the river valley regional wildlife corridor. According to the environmental impact assessment, the LRT track and long retaining walls beside the existing three lane roadway are "expected to impede local wildlife movement," and have a "major impact" on the local ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the 1975 Capital City Recreation Park agreement the Province signed with the City, requiring the City to consult with the Province over development in the eastern half of the river valley, has slipped into a coma, and now is in danger of being buried. The City and the Province are also both providing infrastructure funding to River Valley Alliance, a quasi-official body whose motto "preserve, protect, and enhance" has been recently updated to "promote, protect, and enhance."

City administration still is careful to ac-

knowledge ecology, but rarely makes it a priority. In rapid succession the central river valley is seeing a host of infrastructure projects, including the Valley Line LRT and, just 450 metres away, a \$24 million funicular—an outdoor elevator—under the iconic, hundred-year-old Hotel Macdonald. Even though the same contractor performed the EIAs for both projects, there is no mention in the EIAs of cumulative effects. Both projects encroach upon shrubby areas in the north bank of the valley, the only sub-areas in both surveys in which biologists discovered the presence of the grey catbird. These two shrubby areas scored highest in avian diversity and abundance, partly because they were removed from roads and traffic. Both shrub areas will undergo major disturbance and house new mechanical workings. Some vegetation will grow back, but one must assume the two projects, together, will impact bird activity in this part of the river valley.

This fall the City also approved a 15-metre “climbing gym” in Whitemud Nature Preserve, and eight days later, it approved seven new docks and boat launches, each requiring tree cutting, construction of trails, and consequent loss of habitat. City Council deemed every one of these projects “essential.” Expected soon is the announcement of a paved promenade in Rosedale with “plazas, walkways, and docks.” The idea of a concrete seawall west from there

along River Valley Road is being floated.

There has always been room for some appropriately placed, low-cost infrastructure to accommodate river valley users, like picnic shelters or a building in Hawrelak Park where people can put on their skates and access washrooms. But now the City wants to place infrastructure in the valley as a way of attracting and capitalizing on new user groups. Tourists, for instance, drawn by water taxis, and paying customers for upscale patio restaurants who may never have come to the valley otherwise, and who, after their meal, return to the city rather than venturing into the woods. The rationale given is if the public wants urban amenities in the valley, we need to provide them. Contrast this with River Valley Bylaw, which informs us, “[since 1910] municipal, regional and provincial authorities have sought to protect the North Saskatchewan River Valley’s natural open spaces from urban development....”

This begs the question: Is the City forgetting its history? This rush to construct in and commercialize the river valley seems to discount all of the City’s accumulated wisdom over the past century of the value of nature in the city. The river valley is more than abundantly wonderful already. Yet now one hears less about sightings of a pair of pelicans, or a grove of sweet cice-ly than one does about boat launches and flashy promenades linking riverside cafes.

What people come to expect from nature in the city can’t help but translate into a conservation ethic that will guide stewardship practices of Alberta’s remote lands, as well.

As an antidote to the development trend, we would like to see the conversation deepened about Edmonton’s greatest asset. The river valley cannot be all things to all people and remain important as a conservation corridor. The voices to weigh the most heavily are the voices of those who know the valley’s worth as a natural landscape, and they need to be amplified. Clearly, many citizens value the river valley as more than just a backdrop for urban pursuits. Strengthening governance of the valley, abiding by indigenous respect for the earth, and staying true to the vision of men and women who assembled and bequeathed these parks is vital. We must rekindle the forums and collaborations that led to the 2006 *Coyotes Still Sing in My Valley* and 2005 *North Saskatchewan River Heritage Study*. And do more to alert people to the valley’s superb flora and fauna. Frederick Todd’s words are truer today than when he spoke them a century ago — “a crowded population, if they are to live in health and happiness, must have space for the enjoyment of that peaceful beauty of nature, which is the opposite of all that is sordid and artificial in our city lives.”

We would like to hear from those with expertise and passion—the readers of *Wildlands Advocate*. To receive notice for forums being planned or to share your ideas, please contact Eric Gormley at erigormley@gmail.com 🐾



Retaining walls and LRT track will block the wildlife corridor from Mill Creek ravine to the river valley
PHOTO: © E. GORMLEY

Eric Gormley is a retired educator and a beginner naturalist. Raquel Feroe is a physician who promotes awareness of known links between human and environmental health. Kristine Kowalchuk is a food and environment writer who teaches English at NAIT in Edmonton. Her book, *Preserving on Paper*, will be out in May 2017 from University of Toronto Press. All call Edmonton home.

A positive approach to trail advocacy

By Glen Mumey



Our family travels trails by foot, ski, and snowshoe – we are foot-propelled (FP) trail users. Naturally, we view with interest the extensive policy discussions in Alberta – especially regarding the southwest corner where we live. The general policy approach from organizations that represent FP users is a negative one – exclude off-road vehicles from our pathways. As things stand, though, there are many gasoline-propelled (GP) users, and we live in a democracy, so these recommendations often do not succeed. Either by permission, or by default through lack of rule enforcement, the quads and snowmobiles remain a substantial presence.

Our provincial government is elected to look after matters that the citizens cannot look after individually. Trails located on public land owned collectively by all of us are one of those matters. To make decisions on trails, we would expect government to weigh the number and commitment of different sets of trail users who are expressing preferences, the money that must be taxed away from others to provide benefits to these users, and any effects of the trail use, positive or negative, on those who do not use the trails.

The GP users are a pretty committed group. Most of them have spent 5-figure money for an off-road vehicle and its accoutrements. What they want from government is permission to ride on public lands. Their vehicles can quickly move them to their favourite areas, so pre-existing primitive logging roads or less are good enough for their needs. Where modest trail

improvements are desired, the GP users often provide them through volunteer work. Their case with government rests not only on the pleasure they provide their users but on the assurance that their use does little or no harm. To this end they may promise to protect streams with bridge crossings, to encourage GP users to avoid environmental damage, and to endorse some government control of their activities (though they normally do not lobby for tough law enforcement of trail rules). Their focus on permitted passage on public land is self-reinforcing – the more access available, the more GP users.

FP users are many but disparate. They are not sifted for commitment with a 5-figure ticket. Some may spend much of their free time on trails; others may just take an infrequent break from car sight-seeing with an easy hike on a national park nature path. Their advocacy is likely to take their own permitted passage for granted, perhaps by ancient usage, and to strongly demand exclusion of the GP group from public lands. They do this by stressing the harm done by that group, through damage to the land, air, water, and wildlife. Few would dispute that GP travel is more environmentally disruptive than FP, but policy makers must think about quantity of harm.

There are several weaknesses in this negative advocacy by FP groups. Systematic proof of major harm is difficult and complex to establish. Additionally, positive public benefits from FP passage may be neglected. Moreover, any success from the advocacy does not have a simple nexus of self-reinforcement.

A positive position for the FPs could take two parts – stressing public benefit from their activity, and encouraging improvements to the trail system that would recruit more FP users. One benefit beyond the pleasure of the users relates to health. With the public paying the medical bills, getting people engaged in outdoor exercise has a policy-making appeal. Extensive scientific research supports the benefit of exercise, and thereby, could develop into a quantitative case for the positive contribution of FP activity to medicare savings.

If FP activity can be demonstrated to save public money, there is a case for using some public money to promote this. Anyone who has used trails in the U.S national forests or the Canadian national parks will have observed attributes that draw people to FP trail use. They are good access roads to trailheads, well-marked trailhead areas with developed parking space, well maintained trails, and easy-to-understand route information. When any one of these conditions is deficient, FP use is discouraged.

Well-marked trailheads with good parking are practically non-existent in the extensive Alberta public lands not in parks. Signage is not expensive, and can both invite people to try trails and allay concern of getting lost. Some attractive outdoor destinations are too remote for someone who has only a half-day or a day for hiking – they might require several hours travel on an old logging road to reach a feasible starting point. FP use could be encouraged with selective access road development.

If a good FP infrastructure is in place, marketing of healthful outdoor activity

with public funds also makes policy sense. Better infrastructure would also reinforce school outdoor programs. Without the infrastructure, promotional programs can be promising an experience that turns out to be unappealing to many.

FP users could also learn from their GP counterparts on one important item, trail maintenance. Their organizations could commit that if the government does its share through infrastructure development, they would raise funds and labour for keeping trails in good condition.

Positive advocacy could also include recommending better enforcement of back country trail rules. This is an endeavor that might be joined by at least some GP users, who want trails used responsibly. Back country policing is not easy, but its cost can be kept down by recognition of a simple equation: deterrent effect = X (probability of getting caught) x Y (consequence of getting caught). X requires costly surveillance, but addressing Y with meaningful fines and vehicle seizures can both reduce the need for surveillance and

pay for some of it.

A positive approach in FP advocacy has an obvious self-reinforcing aspect. Recruiting FP users by encouraging their activity increases the future clout of the FP group. The more of us there are, and the more committed we are to trail use, the more we may be listened to by policymakers. 🌲

Glen Mumez, a retired professor of finance from the University of Alberta, lives in southwest Alberta

Featured Artist Mike Judd



Castle Mountain, Oils on Canvas, 20" by 24"



Pincher Creek, Oils on Canvas, 14" by 18"



Leaning Fir, Oils on Canvas, 20" by 24"



Screwdriver Creek, Oils on Canvas, 16" by 20"

First Nations' Health and Wilderness

By Andrew Waddington



The link between personal health and the ability to access, engage in, and spend time in wilderness has been well documented and studied. What is less discussed is the link between wilderness and population health, which is of particular interest when discussing the First Nations communities of this country.

Within Canada, First Nations people are considered a “disadvantaged” population.” Health Canada defines a disadvantaged population as one that is “vulnerable to environmental risks as a result of physical differences, behaviours, location and/or control over their environment.” The disadvantage of First Nations communities is evident. On average First Nations people make \$10,000 less than people from the non-First Nations population; they have suicide rates that are 800 times greater than other populations in Canada; they have an incidence of tuberculosis that is 26.4 times greater than the general population; the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health found that aboriginals have a disproportionately high rate of HIV infection and contribute a significant number of the new HIV cases that are diagnosed. Further to this, diseases of lifestyle such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (such as emphysema) and diseases related to obesity are disproportionately high in First Nations communities.

While these statistics are shocking they shouldn't stop us from focusing on the assets and strengths of First Nations communities that could improve population health. A key theme that has been shown to enhance the health status of First Nations communities is facilitating First Nations participation

in what are labeled “traditional activities.” This includes activities such as hunting, fishing, berry/plant gathering as well as protecting animals that are considered “totem,” that have a special spiritual meaning, such as bison.

For a community health initiative to be successful it is essential that the target population wants to participate and will be treated as an equal partner. These conditions create a process academics refer to as “doing with” versus “doing to.” While many top down approaches to health interventions may be well intended they tend to be viewed as paternalistic. Therefore, they are not well received and do not work. As supporting traditional aboriginal activities necessitates the conservation of species and habitats the two interests – wilderness preservation and promoting activities that promote healthy First Nations populations – complement each other well. They can encourage relationships that are more akin to real partnerships – focusing on the “doing with.”

When discussing population health it is also worth noting what are referred to as the social determinants of health. These are factors that have been shown to have a positive influence on health but are not direct health measures per se. Fourteen social determinants of health have been identified and include things like: income, early childhood development, food insecurity, employment, working conditions, and housing among others. To demonstrate the link between conservation and the social determinants of health the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota provides a powerful example. Members of this community launched a product

called Tanka Bar, a bison based jerky bar. This is inspired by traditional native recipes and necessitates bison conservation. The success of this bar has provided a guaranteed income for many on the reserve, thus allowing these individuals to secure housing, food, and other economic benefits. Other offshoots of the Tanka Bar's success include the funding of a social housing project on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Closer to home, here in Alberta, members of the Blackfoot Nation are leading a project called the linnii (pronounced “E-Knee,” the Blackfoot word for bison) initiative which focuses on the return of bison to the traditional Blackfoot lands in Alberta and Montana. Early observations on this effort are inspiring from both conservation and health perspectives. They suggest an important link between conservation and enhancing the social determinants of health to the benefit of the health of First Nations communities.

While many of the conservation efforts afoot in Alberta may not directly focus on enhancing population health they have the potential to do so. While First Nations communities may at first be the obvious benefactors of these conservation movements (from a health perspective) I believe a focus on conservation and spending time in nature will extend well beyond the First Nations of this country. It may have a positive health impact for all. 🐾

Andrew is father, husband, hunter, and nurse. In January 2016 he moved to Fort McMurray to work full time as a nurse educator. He's also working on a Nurse Practitioner Master Degree.

Conservation Corner:

A Star By Many Other Names

By Niki Wilson



My Dad loves the stars. As a child I remember him showing me the easy-to-find constellations like Orion the Hunter and the Summer Triangle. He showed me how to navigate using Polaris, the North Star, located just up from the upper right tip of the ladle or “dipper” from the Big Dipper. Since then, I’ve looked up and found the familiar comfort of the Big Dipper many times. However, now I know it by another name – Mista Muskwa – the Cree name for The Big Bear.

In the Cree legend, Mista Muskwa was a massive bear that roamed the land doing

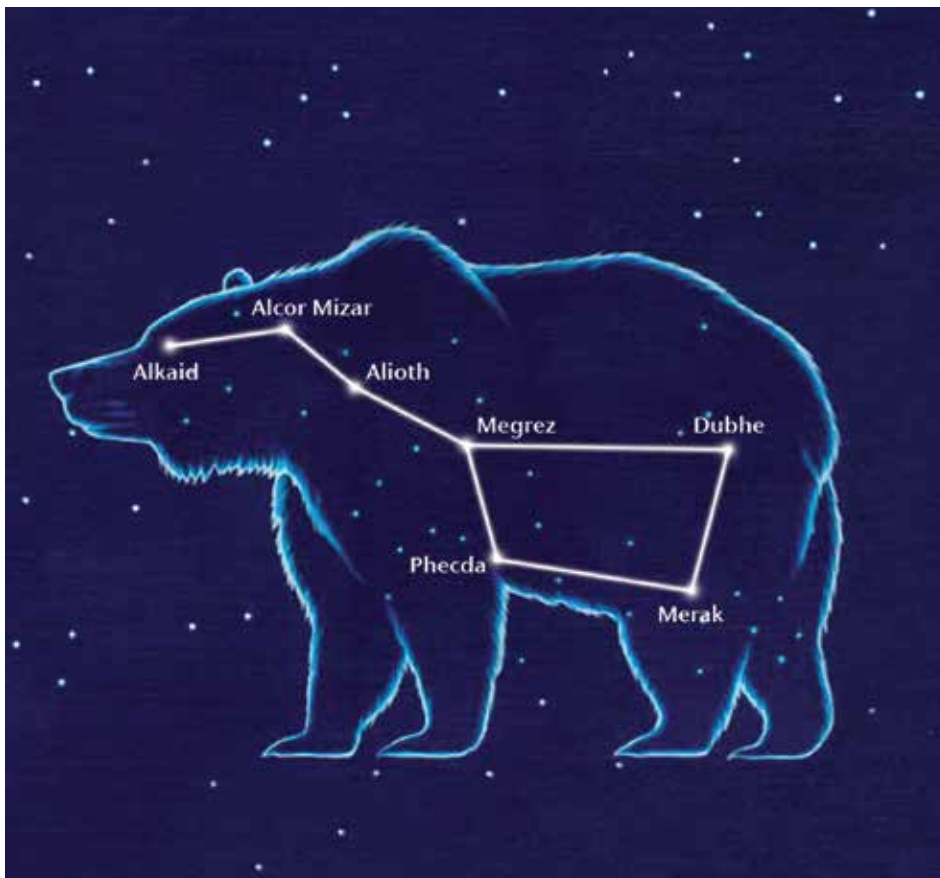
whatever he wanted. He wrecked homes, pillaged food caches, scared away game, ripped up edible plants and killed all who got in his way. He got away with this bad behaviour for many years, until the rest of the animals decided it was time for the bully Mista Muskwa to leave traditional lands. The animal group sent the best hunters and trackers – the birds – to run Mista Muskwa off the land.

Wilfred Buck, Science Specialist at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, finishes this story in his paper *Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars*:

It is said that Mista Muskwa and his pursuers were so fast that they flew into the northern night sky. Just as this happened, the bear was mortally wounded and he turned and faced his attackers. Mista Muskwa was bleeding badly and he shook, as a wet dog would shake, and as he did, blood from his wound fell to the earth and landed and stayed on all the broad-leafed plants. That is why the leaves of all broad-leafed plants change color in the fall. As Mista Muskwa, shook he also splattered a drop of blood on the bird that mortally wounded him. To this day, pipichew – the robin – has a red chest. To remind all of the rewards of bullies, Mista Muskwa was placed in the sky along with the seven birds (Corona Borealis). Pipichew (the brightest of the 7 birds) was given a further honour by being granted a special egg. It was the color of the sky and had speckles that represented the stars.

“The story of Mista Muskwa is always a favourite of children,” says Buck, “because the constellation is easy to pick out, and it is in the northern sky all year.” Buck hails from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation of Northern Manitoba. I met him during the Jasper Dark Sky Festival a few years ago, where he captivated festival-goers of all ages and backgrounds with his stories told both in a planetarium and around the fire at the Lake Annette Star Party.

While Buck enjoys sharing stories, he also teaches others about the academic traditions of his people. “First Nations people were theorists, adventurers, philosophers and astronomers,” says Buck. “It’s import-



Mista Muskwa (The Big Bear) by artist Edwin Bighetty PHOTO: © E. BIGHETTY



Tehpakooop Pinesisuk (The Seven Birds) by artist Edwin Bighetty
PHOTO: © E. BIGHETTY



Atima Atchakosuk (The Dog Stars), popularly known as Ursa Minor, reminds us how the domestic dog came into being by artist Edwin Bighetty
PHOTO: © E. BIGHETTY

ant our children grow up with an awareness of that.”

Buck was 16 before he heard a Cree star story. Though he'd been in school, until then he'd only been exposed to the Greek and Roman names for the stars. An elder named Murdo Scribe told him another Big Dipper Story, that of the Fisher Stars. It tells the tale of how Fisher brought summer to the people. “It got me thinking, and got me asking questions,” says Buck.

First Nation astronomy is more than stories and legends. The stars and planets assisted Cree and Anishinabe people in telling time, direction, and weather, and was vital to survival. Buck says that in only teaching Canadian children the Greek and Roman version of this information, they miss out on a valuable and relevant source of knowledge about the Northern Sky. He writes:

I hope to see a day where Anishinabe, Dene, Oji-Cree, Inuit, Lakota, Ininewuk and all other marginalized peoples hold their stories and relationships to the stars in plain view for their children and all the world to see...We arrive at knowledge from many different paths and the more aware we are of other possibilities, the more sensitive we will be to understanding and difference.

This sentiment couldn't be more relevant than it is in the world we live in today. This holiday, surrounded by the Christmas sto-

ry of another family that followed a star, I'll also think of Mista Muskwa, and the gift of appreciating that there are many ways to know the world. ▲

Niki Wilson is a multi-media science communicator and biologist living in Jasper. Visit her at www.nikiwilson.com.


Coming in 2017...Poems Commemorating Canada's Wildlife

What do you do when you're concerned about protecting wildlife and their habitat? Rosemary Gell's answer was “write poetry.” Rosemary did this as part of her effort, along with Mark Campbell, to keep

a parcel of land in Calgary between Silver Springs and Varsity (199R Silverview Way) in Bowmont Park. That series of poetry, “Wildlife of Bowmont Park – Who Am I?,” was well-received in the communities around Bowmont Park. With the land staying in Bowmont Park Rosemary and Mark now have turned their attention to publishing a series of poems about Canada's wildlife to commemorate Canada's 150th birthday. We look forward to bringing you some of those poems in the New Year. Here's a taste of what you can expect. The poem below was part of the Bowmont Park series.

Friends of the Bowmont Natural Environment Park Area

Wildlife of Bowmont Park




Blue Jay

Who Am I?


When icy winds are cold and mean
I huddle in an evergreen;
Feathers fluffed to keep me warm
In the swirling winter storm.

Plumes of blue and black and white
Fan behind me like a kite;
I often give my name away
By squawking loudly, “jay” “jay”!

Turn Page Upside-down for Answer
I'm a Blue Jay!

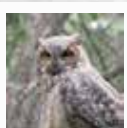


Bohemian Waxwing



Robin

Great Horned Owl



© Rosemary Gell, 2016

AWA Member Kirsten Pugh on the Climb and Run for Wilderness:

Why? Why? And Why?

By Kirsten Pugh

Why I Climb

When I first started participating in this event, I was motivated not only by the desire to fundraise for AWA, but also to challenge myself physically. One memorable year I climbed the tower five times – but typically I go up two or three times. I love the atmosphere, the camaraderie, and the sense of community that comes with being part of something greater than yourself.

What I will miss about being in the Calgary Tower is the art, the “Tallest Gallery in the West.” I loved seeing the new art added every year and – of course – being told what step I was on so I knew how many more were to go (Good news... there are factoids to read on each floor while climbing the Bow, and you’ll know what floor you’re on too!).

I love watching faces of people as they climb. Some are racing, seriously or for fun; some are chatting comfortably with friends old or new; but all have that light in their eyes telling you they are enjoying themselves. Seeing Richard Guy climbing at the age of 99 in the 2016 Climb was so inspiring, and the fact he carries a photo of Louise, his late wife, gives me a lump in my throat every year.

I will continue to climb for the next quarter century of this event. I will continue to stay active, to get out and enjoy the wilderness whenever possible, and to fundraise for AWA so that the wilderness will be there when I need to escape to it.

Why My Kids Climb

Let’s be honest – my kids didn’t have a lot of choice when they started “climbing” for wil-

derness, since my husband David or I would carry them in a backpack. Now, however, at six and nine they delight in going up more times than me, and take even more delight in not letting me forget that they have gone up more times than I have! They fundraise, in lieu of birthday gifts, and I hope will grow up to love and appreciate the wilderness as much as David and I do.

They both attended the Wilderness Defenders Camp this past summer and absolutely loved it. The presentations they did at the end of the week about westslope cutthroat trout and owls were both adorable and heart-warming.

Why My Company Climbs

I have been organizing the Cenovus Teams

for the Climb and Run for Wilderness for years now. I love getting people together to support fundraising for a very important cause or organization like AWA. It’s a great opportunity to meet colleagues you might not otherwise get to know and we always have a great time both on the Climb and in our training sessions. Last year we won the Team Spirit award! Working for Cenovus and having the company support employee fundraising with matching donations, support the team with T-shirts, and support AWA by sponsoring the 2017 Climb and Run for Wilderness makes me very proud.

I hope to see you inside the stairs of the beautiful Bow building on Earth Day 2017 challenging yourself and raising funds for AWA. ▲



The Pugh family at the 2016 Climb and Run for Wilderness

How Many Bucks Does it Take?



By Christyann Olson, AWA Executive Director

At the end of each year, we take time to reflect on the past year and offer you a snapshot of how we are managing. I am pleased to say it's been another full and challenging year for AWA. Our story is one of hard work and determination by a dedicated and passionate group of staff and volunteers that I am proud to be the Executive Director for.

We all know AWA cannot further its goals or succeed without the support of people who are passionate about nature and wilderness. We're weathering some tough economic and are doing quite well. Our frugal and careful planning has helped during the economic downturn and our reserve funds are helping to carry us through these hard times.

But we still need you. We hope members and donors like you will continue your faithful support as we move into 2017. You've justified that hope and optimism in past years and, knowing you as I do, I'm

confident I'll be adding 2017 to that list.

I am thrilled to have three dynamic conservation specialists – Andrea Johancsik, Nick Pink, and Joanna Skrajny – join Carolyn Campbell and me this year. They have helped us move forward on a number of difficult issues. Our faithful and untiring accountant Anne Fabris retired this year as did Sean Nichols and we offer them our sincere thanks for their many years of dedicated service.

Overall, we have had more letters, notes, and cards thanking us for all we do. Many supporters have written on issues that concern them and we believe that together we are making progress on our vision of a network of protected representative wild spaces throughout Alberta. Our detailed Annual Report is now posted to our website with our Financial Statements and I hope reading through the report will add to the sense you have of where we have come from and where we still have to go.

Please know we are inspired by your support as volunteers and as donors. Almost 90 percent of our revenue comes from the donations and fundraising you do for your AWA. We simply would not be able to pursue our vision without you and the untiring support of so many!

If you are able, please consider making a gift to help us continue being the strong and independent voice for conservation we are. The insert in this Wild Lands Advocate can be mailed in or you may use our secure online service by going to our website www.AlbertaWilderness.ca. All donations received or post marked before midnight on the 31st of December qualify for a 2016 charitable tax receipt.

With sincere thanks and best wishes for the warmth and happiness of this holiday season for you and yours. 🌲

Christyann

Below you will find the names of those who friends and family have honoured over the past year. Some are honoured for the joy they bring today; others are honoured in memory of the important lives they led.

Gifts in Memoriam 2015 - 2016

P.K. Anderson 1927-2014
Joseph Biegun 1924-2015
Gerald Brewin 1929-2016
Roger Creasey
Brent Dahl 1961-2016
Ken Dalman 1939-2015
Richard Dean
Joyce Docken 1923 - 2016
Larry Frith 1943-2016
Bruce Greenwood 1931-2016
Vic Grossi 1957-2015

Lorna Gunn 1947-2016
Chris Havard 1944-2015
Kuma 2001-2016
David Manzer
Weslyn Mather 1945-2015
Ruth McPhee 1920-2016
Brian McWilliam 1957 - 2016
Adelle Peterson 1926-2015
Martha Reisenhofer 1932-2016
Gail Sygutek 1942-2015
Knut Vik 1933 - 2016
Hugh Wallace 1941-2016

Celebration Donations

Philip and Tristann Stopford
Raymond Hadden's Birthday
Abigail Hadden's Birthday
Gus Yaki's Botany Outings
Richard Secord
Karina Lynn Eustace-Wallis
Val Scholefield
Laura Sharpe
Gerry Annand
Benjamin Vonesch
Alex & Lindsay
Joel Lipkind

At the Summit:

The Families that Make the Tower Climb for Wilderness a Success

By Nick Pink, *AWA Conservation Specialist*, and Polly Knowlton Cockett

On a typical day the Calgary Tower, a behemoth of concrete and steel, likely isn't the first place you think of when you imagine the wilderness, wildlife, and water of Alberta. But something special happened on Earth Day (April 22) every year from 1992 until 2016; the wilderness came to the tower. This last year more than 1,000 participants and 150 volunteers migrated to the Calgary Tower to make their annual trek up the 802 steps to the top while learning, sharing, and promoting awareness of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA). While all donors and supporters are greatly appreciated as the driving force of AWA's activities, some go far above and beyond the call of duty. In recognition of these exceptional supporters, AWA bestows an annual Margaret and Jerry Hall Award for the Most Outstanding Family.

The Award is about more than fundraising. "It's about the participation and when you are doing it with a family it's a notion that it's an activity or an engagement that the entire family can be involved in some way," says Polly Knowlton Cockett, whose family received the award in 2009. Recipients share a year-after-year commitment to

the event and a passion for wild spaces and wildlife.

To date nine families have claimed the Margaret and Jerry Hall Award for the Most Outstanding Family. They are:

Year	Family
2016	Darcy Pearson and Family
2015	Heather, Robb, Abigail, and Raymond Hadden Kirsten, David, Michael, and Annika Pugh
2014	Tony and Liz Fricke and family
2013	Patti Dibski, Bill, Sam, and Alex Overend
2012	Erin Grier, Joe, Willa and Sadie Vipond
2011	Patti Dibski, Bill, Sam, and Alex Overend
2010	Cathy Scott, Gord, Ailsa and Gareth Hobbins
2009	Robin, Rowan, Grayson, Audrey Lane Cockett and Polly Knowlton Cockett
2008	Ed Hergott and Family - 18 family members climbed and volunteered at this year's climb!

Why do they do it?

The Tower Climb is a unique event. "It's different" Liz Fricke recalled. "So many outfits have a run or a walk...and people regard it as a challenge, it's actually fun to see how many times you can do it. Liz, husband Tony, and their family received the 2014 Award.

For some supporters, involvement with the climb came directly from their work with AWA. Ed Hergott, patriarch of the 2008 award recipients, has volunteered with AWA since he retired from teaching in 1996. The Association quickly discovered the talent they had on their hands and asked Ed to help coordinate the Tower Climb in 1997. They've never looked back; Ed has been successfully coordinating the Climb for almost 20 years. Ed told Polly: "I gather a group of about 25 of us. And we're the guys that are in the tower, as you come up the various levels, and we direct traffic at the base, and we run the elevators. Plus, I'm Christyann's (Executive Director of AWA) eyes on the scene."

For others, the challenge of getting up those 802 stairs got them started. "I wanted to see if I could make it to the top" says



Margaret and Jerry Hall
PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON



Ed Hergott
PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ



The Hadden Family (with Nana Olson)
PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ



Liz (right) and Tony (left) Fricke and Family (centre)



Gareth, Ailsa, and Gord Hobbins

Kalen Pearson whose family won the award in 2016. She adds “now it’s to support a good cause”.

Heather, of the 2015 Award co-recipient Hadden family, has participated for so long that it has become part of her family’s yearly traditions. “I don’t know when we started. It’s just something that we’ve always done. It’s just part of what we do.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, for many of these outstanding families, the activity is about family and friends. Kirsten Pugh’s family shared the award with the Haddens in 2015. Kirsten, a past AWA Board Member, recalls: “We had participated – I worked for Cenovus-Encana – there was a fellow who organized the teams, and we just participated through that. [Once Encana and Cenovus split in 2010], I took it upon myself to organize the Cenovus teams. I’ve been doing that since 2010. And the kids have always done it.”

Gord Hobbins, father of the family that received the 2010 Award, checks off all the boxes: “[My son] Gareth would like it because he’s of an age where he likes to show people what he’s capable of from a physical perspective. Our daughter, it’s a win-win situation, she’s been always the one to... if it has an environmental or positive spin on it, she’s the one who puts the flag up and says wait a minute, ok I think we can walk to this place, we don’t have to take the car.”

But why support AWA?

Ed Hergott, Tower Aid & Base Crew Coordinator and all-around MVP, originally took notice of AWA through his interest in outdoor activities along the eastern slopes. “The eastern slopes were a big issue and the AWA

bit hard on it for the protection of those areas and the watershed and the animals and the wilderness. Then Lougheed came in and set aside Kananaskis Country [Provincial Park] and all kinds of protections that had never been there. And so that was just an enormous step forward. And the issues continue, logging and gas and oil and all that.”

Erin Grier explains her support this way: “I think what’s been a key to our support of the AWA is our connection to nature and to wild places that my family spends a lot of time, in the mountains, helping our kids understand the importance of being connected to those places.” Erin received the 2012 Award, along with her partner Joe Vipond (now an AWA board member) and their children Sadie and Willa. “And,” Erin adds, “it’s better than an amusement park! You can see so many amazing and cool things.”

Liz Fricke cites and appreciates AWA’s education mandate: “What they do is they keep you informed in what’s actually happening, which is not easy to do, and their research seems pretty good. Because there’s been lots of areas that people haven’t known what’s going on.”

The Climb sounds like a great time!

As with any annual event, each year provides a lesson for what was done well and what could use improvement. What keeps people coming back?

“[We] like everything about the climb, especially doing it as a family,” says Darcy Pearson. Kirsten Pugh echoes this sentiment: “The kids love it, so it just becomes one of those traditions. And now for them, it’s this thing we always do.”

“It’s so much nicer since they put all those murals in there,” says Polly Knowlton Cockett, “When we were first doing [the Climb], it was drab. They’ve really upped the atmosphere so that it’s fun, and it’s fun at the top.”

Twenty-five years of success and improvement have polished the event into what it is today. But there are always a few wrinkles to iron out. When asked what they didn’t like about the climb, Sam and Alex Overend, whose family has won the award twice (2011 and 2013), had a few thoughts to share. “The lines to get into the elevator [can be too long],” offered Bill Overend’s eldest son, Sam. “When people come down the stairs when you are coming up. Or the really, really competitive people that push people.”

“Getting up early,” adds Alex, Bill’s youngest.

It seems only fitting that individual families have played such an impressive role in the strengthening of the AWA family over the years. Families such as those recognized with the Margaret and Jerry Hall Award have been and remain a tremendous source of support for AWA.

The plans for the 2017 Climb for Wilderness mean that we’re moving to the Bow Building after 25 years at the Calgary Tower. Our new venue has even more stairs and an even greater view from the top. What we hope never changes is the warmth and excitement that AWA’s families bring to our celebration of Earth Day. 🌱

A special thanks to Polly Knowlton Cockett for taking the time to interview all of the recipient families.



Patti Dibski, Bill, Sam, and Alex Overend PHOTO: © J. QUIROZ



Erin Grier, Joe, Willa, and Sadie Vipond



Audrey Lane, Rowan, Robin, and Grayson Cockett PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON



The Pearson family PHOTO: © K. MIHALCHEON

AUTUMN

On October 22nd AWA hosted Autumn Splendour, AWA's largest event of the year in Edmonton. Over 100 AWA members and supporters gathered once again at Edmonton's Snow Valley Ski Club to re-connect with each other and learn more about AWA's activities over the past year. Guests

had the opportunity to mix with and ask questions of eight of AWA's eleven-member board – led by our President Owen McGoldrick. We were very pleased that Edmonton Strathcona MP Linda Duncan was once again able to join us. The same should be said of Laura Jackson, of Jackson Power, and Steve and Kay Kulak of Edmonton's Wildbird General Store. They generously

sponsor Edmonton's speaker series.

The highlight of the evening came courtesy of Vivian Pharis, Alberta's archangel of wilderness. Vivian took her audience on a tour of Willmore Wilderness Park – what she labelled “a million acres of wildest wonder.” She described the Park's importance to Alberta's First Nations – archaeological evidence points to aboriginal occupation and use in the Willmore as long as 10,000 years ago. By the time of World

Sam Gunsch, Peter Lee, and Glen Semenchuk in conversation with MP Linda Duncan.



Some of the many treasures donated for the evening's silent auction.



Owen McGoldrick and Christyann Olson with a Sunflower Platter, generously donated by Wildbird General Store.

SPLENDOR

War II the Willmore had gained a considerable international reputation for its wildlife riches – many outfitters took their clients out on hunting expeditions through the Willmore's valleys, many trappers harvested the area's bounty of furbearing animals.

The human ambitions Vivian outlined in her remarks bear a striking resemblance to those that have sacrificed too much of Alberta's wilderness. Those ambitions want to tame the Willmore or enslave it through

development and industrialization. What's different about the Willmore is that those ambitions largely have been held at bay. The work of Vivian's generation of AWA membership played a vital role in frustrating those ambitions. AWA looks forward to working with groups today such as the Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society to ensure that the Willmore continues to enjoy

the protection it now receives through its own act, the *Willmore Wilderness Park Act*. I hope that, at next year's event, Vivian will be able to confirm that the Alberta government remains committed to preserving Willmore's "million acres of wildest wonder" for future generations. 🍷

- Ian Urquhart

MP Linda Duncan and AWA Board Emeritus Vivian Pharis, two tenacious defenders of wilderness.



A glimpse at some of the evening's many conversations.



Although Elvis had left the building he left this collection of memorabilia or the raffle.



Vivian Pharis delivered a wonderful talk about the Willmore.

Updates

Carnivores and Communities in the Waterton Biosphere Reserve

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve Carnivore Working Group (CWG) hosted a Carnivores and Community Program Tour September 22, in Twin Butte (south of Pincher Creek). Despite it being the rainiest day of the month, a large group showed up to tour the area and learn about how local livestock producers deal with “problem” carnivores – mostly bears and wolves that interfere with their daily production and livelihood.

Due to the weather we didn't see much of the stunning and rich landscapes of the southwestern corner of Alberta. But the enthusiasm and knowledge of group attendees made up for the deluge of rain. Grizzly bear researcher Andrea Morehouse and black bear researcher Annie Loosen presented an update on their recent studies in the Waterton-Parkland area, and Provincial Carnivore Specialist Paul Frame updated the group on Alberta's draft Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan.

Two buses took the tour to visit ranches

that have installed deterrent and protection projects like electric fencing (to keep out both carnivores and ungulates like elk), electric chicken coops, and repurposed Sea-Cans. Throughout the day we heard stories from landowners who face the greatest threats and inconveniences from sharing the landscape with carnivores. Some expressed fear as they reported walking their children or grandchildren along driveways with fresh grizzly scat or at having unexpected staring contests with bears through the living room window. One rancher has had 10 confirmed livestock killed by grizzly bears and 3 livestock killed by wolves this year. Those totals don't include other livestock that have gone missing on his property. He spoke of his frustration at never having seen a bear at work. I learned that grizzlies often bury the remains after they have a meal, making it difficult for people to prove that it was a grizzly kill! Yet others shared hope by recalling the success they've seen since installation of the projects.

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve representative emphasized that there is no one solu-

tion to these problems. Every ranch is different, every parcel of land is different, and each person has their own financial and logistical needs to address. These problems are also best addressed on a community scale. If one producer sets up projects to deter carnivores a neighbour may now be more at-risk of having problems. Like any Biosphere Reserve, the collaboration is grassroots and aims for good outcomes for both the people and the ecosystem they live in. I was impressed with the dedication of local producers to continue living with grizzly bears in the region. AWA has consistently advocated for the protection of Alberta's grizzly bear populations and recognizes the hard realities and dilemmas of living in areas of high human-bear conflict. The Carnivore and Communities Working Group deserves much recognition and thanks: whether people are motivated to participate at first by frustration, tolerance, or love for the animals, the efforts of this community is making a difference for the wildlife.

- Andrea Johancsik

Featured Artist Mike Judd



*Pincher Creek2,
Oils on Canvas,
14" by 18"*

Pembina Climate Summit Draws Hundreds

I bet some of you would be skeptical a year or two ago if I told you the 2016 Alberta Climate Summit would be oversold. After all this is Alberta, home to oil sands, low taxes, and climate change deniers. But, what a difference a year can make. Add new provincial and federal governments, an agreement in Paris, and a sense of urgency due to widespread job loss in the oil and gas industry, and all of a sudden climate change is a hot button topic. On September 20 at 8:30am, organizers of the Summit were greeted by a standing-room only crowd, swelled by over 100 unexpected attendees. The Summit made the news and #ABClimate was trending on Twitter, second only to #Brangelina (nothing can top a celebrity divorce!).

Presenters in the morning included Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips, Eriel Deranger of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change author John Stone, Mark Brownstein from the Environmental Defense Fund, to name a few. Two “fireside” panel discussions focused on first, how firms are responding to carbon constraints and second, on the role of fossil fuels in 2050. Participants attended one of four breakout sessions in the afternoon: international trends for coal; energy efficiency; utility scale renewables; and community-owned renewables. Here are some highlights from Twitter:

Let's not forget though, it still is Calgary: one panel discussion was sponsored by Suncor and Shell, and expensive tickets meant that the business world still dominated the audience. Entrepreneurialism was a major theme. In the Utility-Scale Renewables breakout session I attended, the technical jargon around markets, investment, and electricity was enough to make my head swim. This is not to say those are bad conversations, but only that the mindset is one primarily of profit, capitalism, and resource exploitation.

This mindset is seldom questioned, despite its contribution to numerous global problems such as inequality, marginalization of poor communities, land use challenges, and biodiversity loss. I had the opportunity to raise this perspective with David Hone, Climate Change Advisor for Shell, at a breakfast presentation the day prior, by asking, “your scenarios are based on an assumption that our economic paradigm – global economic growth – will remain into the future, but do you believe there needs to be fundamental, significant changes in our economy to achieve ambitious targets like the Paris Agreement?” I think his response suggested that past assumptions about what economic paradigm should guide our actions on this planet are not changing in the business world.

Some conservation interests were represented in the audience, such as Alberta Ecotrust and the Miistakis Institute. Coffee-break discussions centred on oppor-

tunities to use existing disturbances to the land for renewable energy development (such as the SunMine solar farm in Kimberley B.C. that is located on a former mining site), formulate an energy efficiency policy, and use small-scale, community owned renewable in our cities where the load is highest. These ongoing questions should be an immediate focus in planning for a zero net-carbon future. It's all of our work, alongside government, industry, and landowners, to find out how to enable a renewable energy sector in the abundant opportunity we have in southern Alberta without compromising wildlife and the last remaining native grassland and parkland habitats.

Two high-school students spoke the closing words. One told the audience that her grandfather recently died in Africa not from old age, but from a snake bite. Due to warmer temperatures, African snakes are moving into homes to stay cool. She emphasized – “African snakes are too hot.” Climate change is not a problem that can be put off until next decade. The same student urged the conference to do something positive for their communities, and this will create a ripple effect of resiliency across the province, the country, and ultimately the world. Starting the conversations at the Pembina Climate Summit was a first step in achieving this.

- Andrea Johancsik

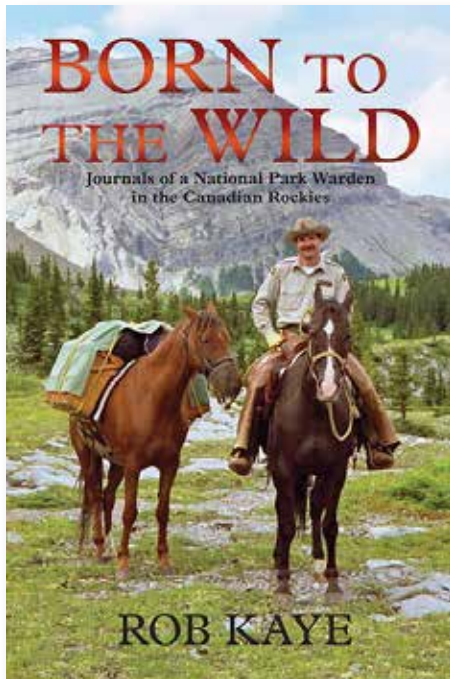


Reader's Corner

Rob Kaye, *Born to the Wild: Journals of a National Park Warden in the Canadian Rockies*,

(Grey Wolf Books, 2015)

Reviewed by Andrea Johancsik



Former Park Warden Rob Kaye relives his extensive commitment to and knowledge of Jasper National Park in his autobiography *Born to the Wild – Journals of a National Park Warden in the Canadian Rockies*. Read it, and you'll be exposed to wildlife encounters and challenging backcountry travel in the comfort of your home, but the frank realizations of future threats to Canada's parks remain real.

The 340-page book is full to the brim with lively stories about Kaye's experiences in the backcountry working as a park warden. Complementing his stories are numerous recollections of Rob's peers and mentors. Encountering wildlife is a theme that glues the book together, both the miraculous and the deadly – although fatalities and injuries from bears are rare, the tales that come out of them are gripping. Kaye describes many incidents in Jasper of encounters between people and black/grizzly bears as well as human encoun-

ters with wolves, cougars, and moose.

Kaye's early recollections from the 1950s paint a picture of the early days in the town of Jasper. Interactions with bears were an everyday occurrence as the town's open-pit dumpsite encouraged the bears to develop an appetite for human food. Kaye and his childhood friends snuck into the rodeo and attempted to jump on and off trains. In later years, their activities turned more sophisticated as they went fishing and backpacking on their own. These misadventures helped Kaye develop wilderness survival skills essential for his later career as a park warden.

Early on, the book also describes Jasper's indigenous and settler human history, and the brief window of time in which they coexisted. Setting this historical context against the sudden change in patterns of human occupation is an effective tool to help the reader make sense of Kaye's experiences and also to appreciate the significant ecological and management changes have occurred recently.

Kaye's career stretched from the 1970s to the early 2010s. The variety of duties he was responsible for over this lengthy career is remarkable. Kaye developed skills in avalanche safety and ski hill rescue and mountaineering; he was a first responder for highway accidents; he wrote reports and management plans and helped develop strategies; he repaired trails and telephone lines; he enforced the law against poachers; and he did all of these jobs while taking care of himself and a team of horses alone in the backcountry.

When it came to playing these many roles, it is clear from Kaye's recollections that he favoured the solitude and raw beauty of the backcountry to working at the townsite. He does a good job of describing the tranquility and satisfaction that nature provides, but words can only do so much. While Kaye yearns to relive his youthful summers in the backcountry, the reader can't help but also long to experience the same excitement in

the wilderness.

Wilderness – what does it mean, anyway? This question animates much of Kaye's writing. Misguided management practices like fire suppression and ungulate and predator culls, reinforced by global climate change and increased visitation, have reduced species diversity far from what it had been for thousands of years.

“Our parks have not been spared the spoils of human use: loss of habitat, serious declines in both number and diversity of flora and fauna species, the introduction of invasive non-native species, commercial exploitation, and overuse (loving our parks to death).”

- Rob Kaye

Because the changes happen incrementally, it took Rob his whole career to realize the extent to which humans have altered the once 'pristine' environments in Jasper National Park. Rob's retirement coincided with the severe budget cuts made to Parks Canada in 2012, cuts that gutted “thousands of years of corporate knowledge and experience.” It's clear from the book that Rob's strong generalized knowledge and on-the-ground expertise brought strength to the park's management that could be passed to future wardens – even the value of his mishaps shouldn't be discounted. Cutting funds and splitting roles aren't new phenomena in the National Parks, but the lasting impact of a widespread cut is likely impossible to quantify.

Kaye's career may be over but the themes and experiences he writes about will continue to be written through the many people he has influenced in his years with Parks Canada. His autobiography serves as a valuable memory. You might read an excerpt of the book at your next family campfire and through it gain a deeper appreciation of the magnificence of nature.

**Alberta, BEARSMART:
Colouring and Activity
Book,**

(Government of Alberta, 2012),

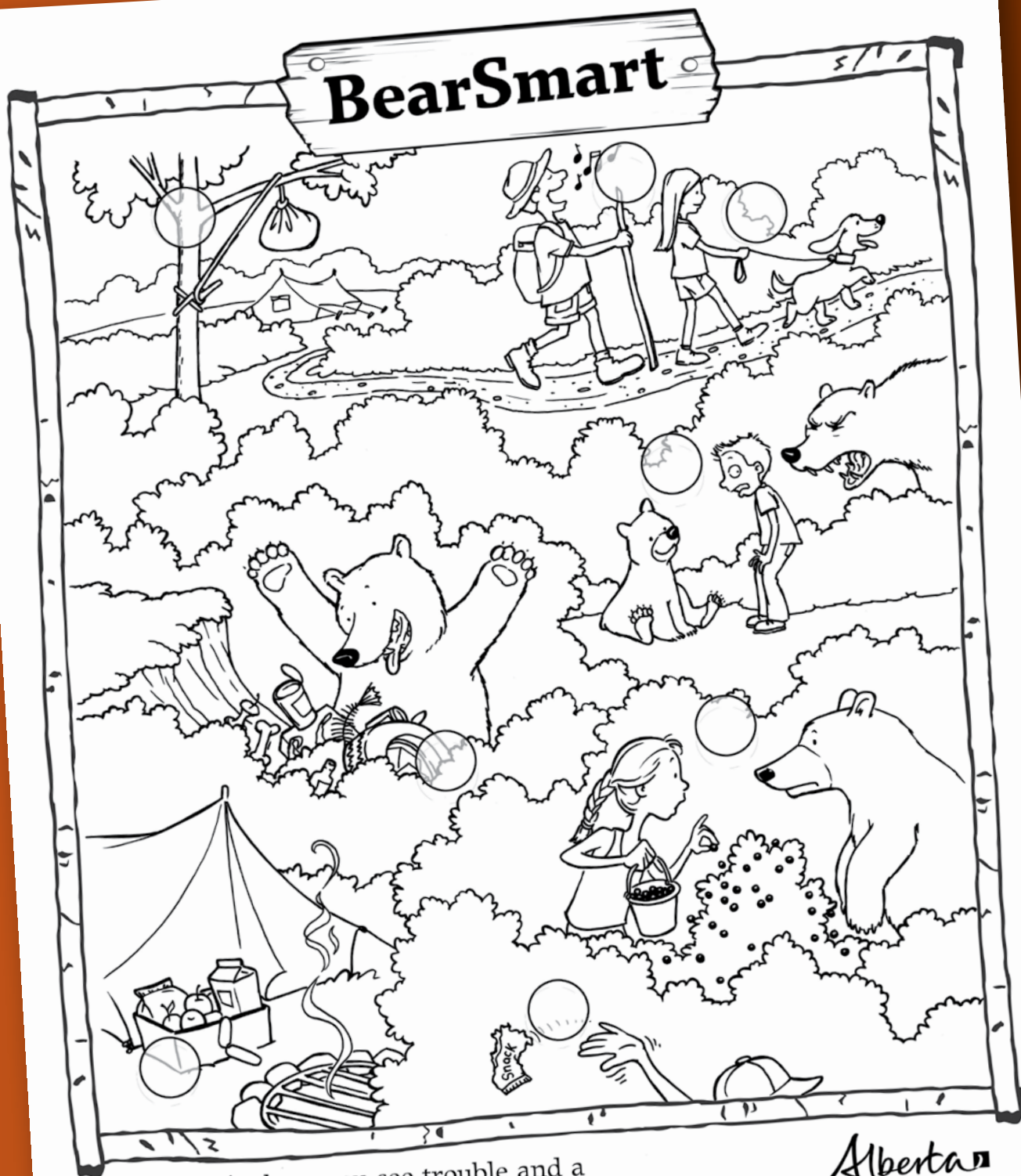
Illustrations by Lorna Bennett.

Reviewed by Joanna Skrajny

Do your part to save the bears by being BearSmart.

Where do bears like to live? What do people and bears have in common? What should you do to keep yourself and bears safe?

You'll learn all these things and more as you colour in this book. We have a page for you to enjoy. Want to see the rest? It's available for teachers, moms and dads, and kids to print for free at: www.bearsmart.alberta.ca.



Put an X where you see trouble and a
✓ a where you see something BearSmart.

Alberta
Government

Image provided courtesy of the
Government of Alberta

Gillean Daffern and Derek Ryder, *The Great Kananaskis Flood,*

(Victoria: Rocky Mountain Books, 2016)

Reviewed by Andrea Johancsik

In a new take on a coffee-table book renowned guidebook author Gillean Daffern and Derek Ryder, the chair of Friends of Kananaskis, offer readers a 190-page spread of photographs and stories from the 2013 Flood. Everyone who was in southern Alberta during the 2013 Flood may have a story but *The Great Kananaskis Flood* focuses on the stories in the headwaters of southern Alberta. Kananaskis Country was the hardest hit landscape in Alberta during this significant event. The book appeals to our very human connection to stories and visuals and is a must-have for every Kananaskis-lover and those who want to nurture long-lasting memories of the Flood.

The book's short introduction tells the story of the people most directly affected by the flood in the backcountry. Derek Ryder told me the idea for the book came from the realization that collectively the soon-to-be contributors were sitting on a treasure trove of photographic records of the flood. Because the Alberta government declared Kananaskis an emergency zone, there were few photographs taken during the flood. Parks staff, recreationists, and local area residents had to make fast decisions in the emergency, seek shelter or evacuate, and in some cases camp out until helicopter rescuers could arrive. These stories bring attention to the first responders and heroes of the day and highlight the efforts of everyone

who worked so hard in the aftermath to restore Albertans' favourite trails and campgrounds.

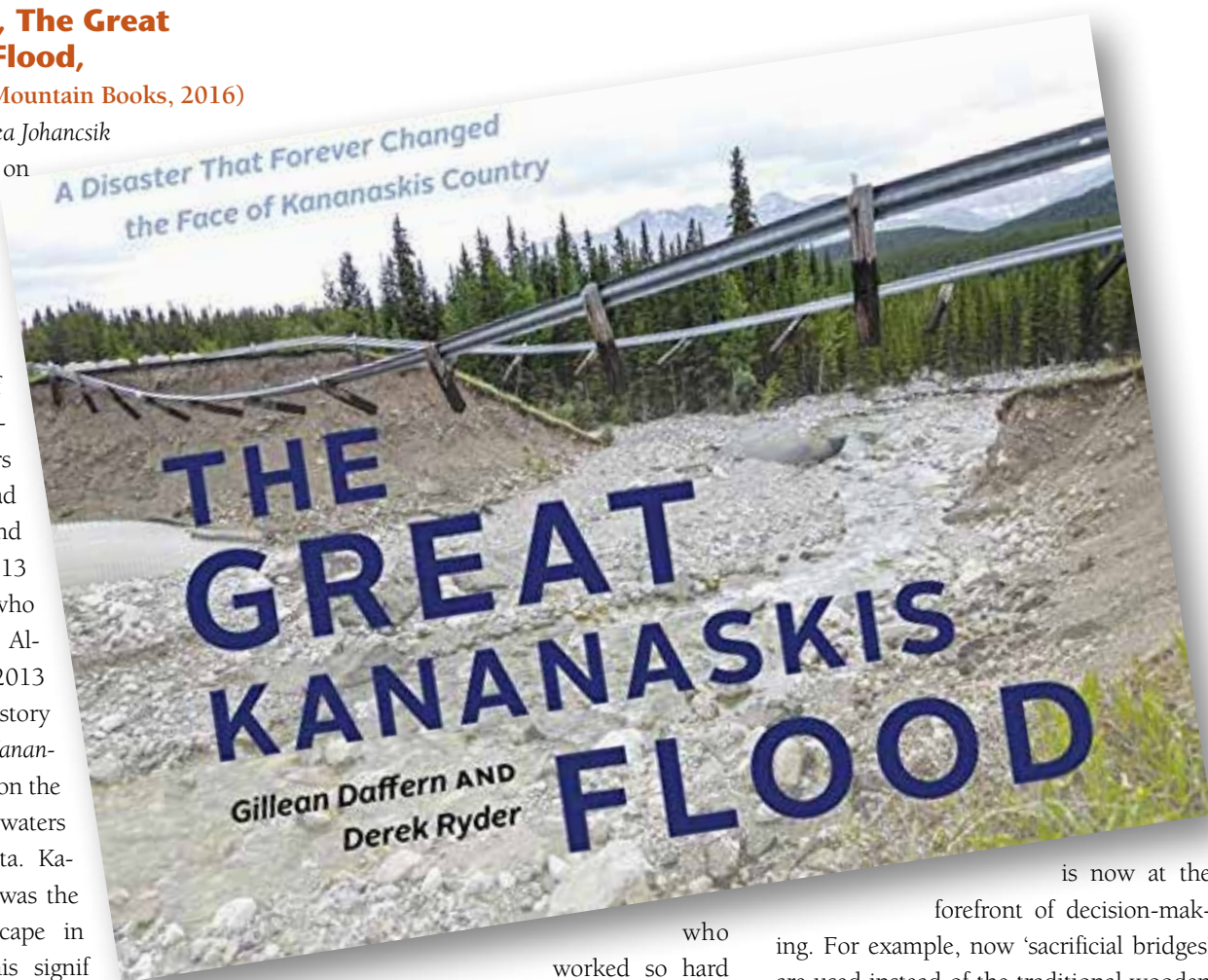
Discussion is light on some of the larger land-use problems that arguably exacerbated the intensity of the flood and the resulting destruction. The book mentions that inexpensive backcountry bridges became washed out and created logjams, worsening clogging and damage, but doesn't discuss whether bridges and developments should be rebuilt in the floodplain. However, the book intends not to comment on political matters, but will instead spark the reader to ask the essential questions that volunteers and staff had to consider in the aftermath: Where is it appropriate to rebuild? Did our human footprint make the flood worse? Will this happen again, and what will happen when it does?

Ryder assured me those crucial questions were being answered by land managers and volunteer organizations during rebuilding, which is still ongoing. Sustainability

is now at the forefront of decision-making. For example, now 'sacrificial bridges' are used instead of the traditional wooden bridges and they are designed to break up and break down so logjams aren't a risk. Friends of Kananaskis are also putting up interpretive signs to highlight flood impacts on popular trails.

A map showing the location of trails, roads, and bridges displayed in the photographs would have given the book an ounce more impact. But the readers who are most likely to enjoy this book are probably buying it because they know and love the trails already.

A typical coffee table book may be placed strategically in the front living room to show off pristine local landscapes to out-of-province visitors. This is not your typical coffee table book, but the photos and stories here of this natural disaster are no less awe-inspiring. Plus, it's a great excuse to share your favourite flood story when your in-laws walk in!



Upcoming Events

EVENTS

To receive regular updates on upcoming events such as hikes, talks, and music throughout the year, we would like to encourage you to sign up to receive AWA's electronic newsletter at <https://albertawilderness.ca/newsletter-signup/>

Information and tickets about events is available online at: www.albertawilderness.ca/events/

MUSIC FOR THE WILD

February 11 - Horizon Ridge and Will Lynch



March 11 - Barry Luft and the Hot TimAlis

Come join us at the AWA Cottage School (455 12 Street NW) for a great evening of music!

Doors open at 7:00 PM, show at 7:30PM.

For more information and to purchase tickets, go to www.albertawilderness.ca/events/



CLIMB AND RUN FOR WILDERNESS 2017

We are pleased to announce that the 26th Climb for Wilderness will be held on April 22, 2017 at Calgary's Bow Building! More stairs, even more magnificent vistas, and the excitement of a new venue await climbers. For the past 25 years, the Climb for Wilderness has challenged participants as athletes and fundraisers, supporting the wilderness we have in Alberta. The tradition continues, supporting education and awareness about wilderness and wildlife in Alberta and raising vital funds which ensure AWA can continue with its independent and non-partisan pursuit of wilderness conservation.

The Bow Building will challenge climbers and families of all ages to 1,188 stairs and 54 floors. It's time to start practicing! We can't wait to see you on the stairs.

Registration opens soon at: www.climbforwilderness.ca

Make sure to follow our Facebook page (Climb and Run for Wilderness) and Twitter (@Climb4Wild)

For a complete list of AWA hikes and tours go to: Albertawilderness.ca/events



PHOTO: © G. PETERSEN

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