

Adventures for Wilderness



Discovering Wild Alberta

The sun dipped behind the rim of the river valley and set fire to the clouds with hues of vibrant oranges and reds. Nighthawks swooped and boomed overhead on their evening hunt for insects. The air was heavy with the scent of sage as coyotes yipped and yowled in the distance. We were camped on a wide meander of the Milk River under a grandmother tree. This old cottonwood was gnarled and surely had many stories to tell of fierce prairie winds, baking hot sun, and the wildlife that took shelter under her canopy or raised a family in her wide boughs. It felt as though things were much the same here as they had been for generations.

AWA's Adventures for Wilderness program offers ways for people of every age and place to be inspired and to learn more about Alberta's wild places. The program helps people who care about wilderness and wildlife meet others and find safe ways to be active outdoors and enjoy our natural areas. AWA's Adventure



Kyle Eustace scans the banks of the Milk River for wildlife on the eight-day Milk River Canoe Adventure, which raised almost \$7,000 for the Alberta Wilderness Association. Photo © L. Wallis

Program also raises money. All funds raised through this program are used to support the conservation work of the AWA staff so in years to come places like the Milk River Natural Area will remain the same. Our adventure took us – myself, my partner Kyle, our six-year old daughter Karina and two other close friends – 100 kilometres down the Milk River by canoe. I am so grateful that I am able to share adventures like these with the people that I care about, and that I am able to contribute to supporting the conservation work done by AWA.

So far this year the Adventures have raised \$40,000!

Our Milk River canoe adventure was a trip focussed on experiencing the joy of sharing love for the natural world with others, and we were able to raise almost \$6500 for AWA with the help of family and friends. Throughout the summer, volunteer coordinators have introduced folks to seven of their favourite spots in the province, including the Whaleback, Wainwright Dunes, Milk River Ridge and places in Banff, Kananaskis and the Ghost Wilderness. Participants have been fortunate to hear stories and learn about the areas' history, botany, biology, and ecology from experts in their fields, including Kevin Van Tighem, Cliff Wallis, Cheryl Bradley, and Heinz Unger. We are so grateful to have many volunteers who are so generous with their time and knowledge! Barb Amos added another dimension to the appreciation of Wild Alberta as she led a group in a day of sketching and other artistic exercises. Keep checking our website for another offering this fall.

Tako Koning revealed the natural history in our own backyards when he collaborated with the folks at Bighill Creek Preservation Society (BCPS) for a driving tour of the area near Bighill Springs, currently under threat by the proposed development of a gravel pit. Participants

learned about the geological history of the area as well as what BCPS is doing to protect this special area from industrial development.

In Calgary, there were several adventures. For those who missed the Climb for Wilderness at the Calgary Tower and then the Bow Tower, Chris Saunders led an outdoor reboot of the Climb for Wilderness up and down the many staircases in Sunnyside. Tako Koning took folks on a fossil hunting expedition on the facades of limestone-clad buildings downtown. This spring Christyann Olson and friends went on their annual foray to Nose Hill in search of the first spring crocus in memory of long-time friend and dedicated volunteer Margaret Main.

This year we also had more kids' adventures than ever before! Every month a dozen kids got the chance to learn about a special inhabitant of wild Alberta – from native bees and orchids, to bison and grizzly bears. Each month they met over Zoom to learn and do a craft related to that month's theme. I also led a few lovely families on a day of learning outdoor skills such as shelter-building, fire-making, and map reading. Stay tuned, this one will also be offered again this fall!

We hope you will join us in making the Adventures for Wilderness program vibrant! Visit our website at adventuresforwilderness.ca to find an adventure that suits you. Or donate to an adventure in a place that matters to you. Or... create YOUR adventure! If you have an idea for an adventure (either a fundraising solo adventure or an educational group one) please contact us at the office

(403-283-2025 or a4w@abwild.ca).

We would love to hear from you.

Happy adventuring!

- By Lindsey Wallis