

VOLUME 40 | NUMBER 3 | FALL 2010

SUGGESTED RETAIL: \$7.50 CDN

Nature Alberta

C E L E B R A T I N G O U R N A T U R A L H E R I T A G E



HIKING CASTLE'S TABLE MOUNTAIN. SUE GUERRA

feature article

The Castle –
Crown of the Continent!



AT WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK. RICK PRICE

Want *Nature Alberta* in...

FULL COLOUR!

Switch your subscription from hard copy to the full colour e-version and get even GREATER enjoyment of *Nature Alberta* while REDUCING paper use.

This offer is available to both new and old subscribers. At this time, subscription rates remain the same. If you are not satisfied with the e-version, you can simply switch back to hard copy. If you wish, you can get both hard copy and the full colour e-version for an extra \$15 per year.

Say **YES** I want the e-version!

and within four weeks of receiving this issue, we will send you a complimentary full colour *Nature Alberta* e-version of it. Say "Yes" – satisfaction guaranteed!

Phone today: (780) 427-8124; or
Email us: na@naturealberta.ca or wildhavn@memlane.com

Contents

NATURE ALBERTA VOLUME 40, NUMBER 3, FALL 2010

Editor's Page BY DENNIS BARESCO	2
Letters to the Editor	3
Alberta Issues in Brief.....	5
First Hand: Thrilling Sightings! BY DENNIS BARESCO	8
Nature Alberta News	9
Book Review: This High, Wild Country: A Celebration of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.....	11
Up Close Naturally: Leaves BY MARGOT HERVIEUX	12
Close to Home: Nature Photography in Alberta BY JOHN WARDEN	14
My Experience with the Little Brown Bat (<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>) 2007 - 2009 BY ROBERT DANNER	16
The Castle - Crown of the Continent! BY CAROLYN ASPESLET	20
Nature Diary: Black Bear Guests! BY DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN.....	26
Eyes on IBAs BY CHUCK PRIESTLEY	27
New Parks Legislation & the Recent Stewards Conference	30
The Future of Alberta's Protected Areas? BY LINDA KERSHAW.....	32
May 2010 Bird Species Count BY JUDY BOYD	33
Nature Alberta Conservation Strategy for Large Carnivores in Alberta..	35
In Memoriam: Barb Kuz.....	37
Celestial Happenings BY JOHN MCFAUL	38
Nature Alberta Club Page.....	39
Birds of Western Canada: A Funny Field Guide	40

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY NATURE ALBERTA,
11759 GROAT ROAD, EDMONTON, AB T5M 3K6
PHONE. 780.427.8124 **FAX.** 780.422.2663
EMAIL. NA@NATUREALBERTA.CA
SUBSCRIPTION \$30.00 PER YEAR; \$55 FOR TWO YEARS

EDITOR. DENNIS BARESCO
EMAIL. NA@NATUREALBERTA.CA
CIRCULATION. TED HINDMARCH
LAYOUT. BROKEN ARROW SOLUTIONS INC.
PRINTING. PERCY PAGE CENTRE. ISSN 0318-5440

THANKS TO THE PROOFREADERS WHO ASSISTED IN PRODUCING THIS ISSUE:
ELAINE CATHCART, SANDRA FOSS, MARILYN ROSS, VAL SCHOLEFIELD,
JUNE VERMEULEN.

MANY THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

**WANT TO SUBMIT ARTICLES
OR PHOTOS?**

GUIDELINES ARE AVAILABLE ON
THE NATURE ALBERTA WEBSITE:
WWW.NATUREALBERTA.CA

NATURE ALBERTA DEADLINES ARE:

SPRING ISSUE. FEBRUARY 14
SUMMER ISSUE. MAY 15
FALL ISSUE. AUGUST 15
WINTER ISSUE. NOVEMBER 15

FALL 2010

1

Nature Alberta is composed of natural history clubs from across the province. The aims of the Federation are:

- (a) To encourage among all Albertans, by all means possible, an increase in their knowledge of natural history and understanding of ecological processes;
- (b) To promote an increase in the exchange of information and views among natural history clubs and societies in Alberta;
- (c) To foster and assist in the formation of additional natural history clubs and societies in Alberta;
- (d) To promote the establishment of natural areas and nature reserves, to conserve and protect species, communities or other features of interest;
- (e) To organize, or coordinate symposia, conferences, field meetings, nature camps, research and other activities whether of a similar or dissimilar nature;
- (f) To provide the naturalists of Alberta with a forum in which questions relating to the conservation of the natural environment may be discussed, so that united positions can be developed on them, and to provide the means of translating these positions into appropriate actions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: Chuck Priestley

VICE PRESIDENT: Ted Hindmarch

SECRETARY: Vacant

TREASURER: Peichen Gu

PAST PRESIDENT: Sandra Foss

APPOINTED DIRECTORS: Dennis Baresco, Dawn Dickinson, Jim Gendron, Peichen Gu, Ted Hindmarch, Chuck Priestley, Don Stiles

ELECTED DIRECTORS: Chrissie Smith (ANPC); Claudia Cameron, (BLN); Scott Jubinville (CFNS); Lu Carbyn, (ENC); Grant Henry (FMNS); Marty Drut, (GN); Ted Johnson (LLBBS); Lloyd Bennett (LNS); Margot Hervieux (PPN); Tony Blake (RDRN); Iris Davies (VRNS);

STAFF: Philip Penner (Exec. Dir.); Christine Brown; Vid Bijelic

CORPORATE MEMBER CLUBS

Alberta Native Plant Council, Box 52099, Garneau P.O. Edmonton, AB T6G 2T5

Buffalo Lake Naturalists, Box 1802, Stettler, AB T0C 2L0

Nature Calgary (CFNS), Box 981, Calgary, AB T2P 2K4

Edmonton Nature Club, Box 1111, Edmonton, AB T5J 2M1

Fort McMurray Field Naturalists Society, 152 Cote Bay, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 4R9

Grasslands Naturalists, Box 2491, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8G8

Lac La Biche Birding Society, Box 1270, Lac La Biche, AB T0A 2C0

Lethbridge Naturalists Society, Box 1691, Lethbridge, AB T1J 4K4

Peace Parkland Naturalists, Box 1451, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4Z2

Red Deer River Naturalists, Box 785, Red Deer, AB T4N 5H2

Vermilion River Naturalists, 5707 - 47 Avenue, Vermilion, AB T9X 1K5

AFFILIATES:

Alberta Lake Management Society

Friends of Jasper National Park

Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild

Grant MacEwan Mountain Club

Alberta Mycological Society

Heritage Tree Foundation of Canada

Alberta Stewardship Network

J.J. Collett Natural Area Foundation

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Lee Nature Sanctuary Society

Beaver River Naturalist Club

Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

Big Lake Environmental Support Society

Purple Martin Conservancy

BowKan Birders

Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society

Calgary Bird Banding Society

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas

Cochrane Environmental Action

Association

Committee

The Wagner Natural Area Society

Crooked Creek Conservancy Society

Weaselhead/Glenmore Park

Crowsnest Conservation Society

Preservation Society

Edmonton Naturalization Group

Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake

Ellis Bird Farm

Stewardship Assoc.

Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society

Wood Buffalo Bird Club

Friends of Blackfoot Society

CELEBRATE NATURE ALBERTA

IT'S OUR 40TH BIRTHDAY IN 2010!!!



EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed by the authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the editor and the Federation of Alberta Naturalists. The editor reserves the right to edit, reject or withdraw articles submitted. While due care will be taken of all manuscripts, photos or artwork submitted, FAN cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage to such articles.

Editor's Page

BY DENNIS BARESCO

NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE!

Some things you just can't let pass without comment. That's the way I felt after reading Margaret Wente's column, "Can environmentalism be saved from itself?" (*Globe & Mail*, Nov 27, 2010). In it – and referring to the "environmental movement" – she states, in her typical self-assured way: "For years, its activists neglected almost everything but climate change." Her message was that we have been doing practically nothing useful – that before they were sucked into the giant vortex of global warming, environmentalists did useful things." Things like working to protect nature from direct threats. Back then, we "believed in conservation – conserving this beautiful planet of ours from the worst of human despoliation." Her final advice: "Please grow up, people. You have important work to do."

Well, sorry Margaret, but you really must get out more. Naturalists and environmentalists across Canada have increased their focused efforts

for the conservation of habitat and species, not slowed, stopped or ignored them as claimed in her column. She apparently hasn't noticed our continuous accomplishments, probably because, compared to the climate change issue, we are grossly underfunded, have a very difficult time getting the media's attention and have a volunteer base that is stretched to the limit. Yes, we "have important work to do" – and we're doing it! She should probably go ask Nature Canada, Bird Studies Canada, or any of the provincial umbrella groups like Ontario Nature or Nature Alberta, what we're up to – and then start paying attention to us and the work we're doing!

That's the message I sent to her and the Letters section of the *Globe & Mail*. It wasn't published, but I know Margaret reads her e-mails, so perhaps next time she may think a little bit before making sweeping pronouncements about the environmental movement.

She listed some of the important things environmentalists did, as if we no longer did them, such as: "protested against massive Third World dams that would ruin both natural and human habitats . . . warned about invasive species and diseases that could tear through our forests and wreck our water systems...fought for national

parks and greenbelts and protected areas." However, on a local, regional, provincial and national level, all those things, and a great many more, are steadfastly being addressed by environmental groups.

Many letters to the Editor pointed out that if we do not do something about climate change, all the other "important work" will eventually become irrelevant. Very true, but that doesn't address Margaret's point, and I wish the *Globe & Mail* had included some comments that did.

Also true is her statement: "The delusional dream of global [political] action to combat climate change is dead. . . . Public interest in climate change has plunged, and the media have radically reduced their climate coverage." Because of this, she said, "The biggest loser is the environmental movement." Well no, Margaret. The generation or two following ours and a healthy natural world helping provide quality of life to its inhabitants (human and wild) are the biggest losers. The death of global action, plunging of public interest and minimal attention span of the media does not change reality, regardless of how much politicians, the public and the media attempt to delude themselves.

Meanwhile, my final advice to Margaret, politicians, the media and all who behave like spoilt brats is: "Please grow up, people. You have important work to do."



THERE ARE MANY EXCELLENT REASONS WHY NATURALISTS WORK SO HARD TO PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT; IN THE PHOTO ARE TWO OF THEM. IAN FOSS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Coyotes, Foxes and Long-tailed Weasels

While the Long-tailed Weasel was placed on the list of endangered species in Alberta, there has never been a lack of Coyotes. In fact, they are everywhere. Are the two connected? In the Spring 2010 issue [*Nature Alberta*, Vol 40, # 1; pg 4], Dawn Dickinson expresses a doubt [in response to Dr Dekker's Letter to the Editor, "Coyote Density"], although she does not appear to have any first-hand knowledge on the subject of canid predation on mustelids.

Who has ever seen a pair of Coyotes teaming up to catch a weasel in open country? Well, I have. I also know first-hand that our (supposedly rare) weasels now climb trees and bushes at the least sign of danger. I consider this an anti-predator response, to get away from their canid enemies. There indeed is good scientific evidence that Coyotes (and foxes) are deadly on weasels, not just here but in the USA and Europe.

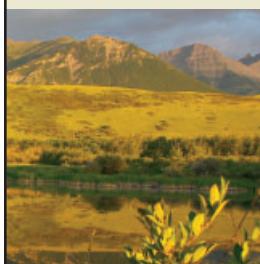
For instance, I have closely followed the invasion of Red Foxes in Holland. In a very large coastal national park, where there were no foxes at all before and plenty of Weasels, Stoats, and Polecats, all of these mustelids became very rare soon after foxes arrived and became common. The Stoat (the equivalent of our Long-tailed Weasel) went locally extinct. Researchers were puzzled. They too had seen the last of the weasels climb trees. This pointed to a shortage of rodents, the biologists thought. And by way of explanation, they wrote in their papers that the weasels apparently were starving and now forced to hunt for birds and bird nests in the bushes. In correspondence

On the Covers:



FRONT COVER

The Castle-Crown is one of the most naturally amazing regions in Alberta. As the Feature Story illustrates (pg 20), there seems to be no end to the ecological splendour. Opportunities which respect nature abound for people to enjoy the Castle-Crown, including hiking the high country. Perhaps even more amazing is that the Castle-Crown, as a site of international significance, has so very little permanent protection.



INSIDE FRONT COVER

Like the Castle-Crown, Waterton Lakes National Park, its neighbour, is a godsend for photographers. Rick Price has spent much time there with his cameras and, as the photo shows, has been well rewarded!



INSIDE BACK COVER

And a great time was had by all! Nature Alberta's September Board meeting at Deer Valley Meadows took Directors and guests where naturalists are supposed to be: in nature! See the story on pg 9.

Important Bird Areas, like Eagle Lake, are precisely that: areas of great importance for birds. Such areas exist across Alberta. If you would like to be involved in stewardship of IBAs, let Nature Alberta know! See the story, pg 27.

When you are as tiny as a hummingbird and fly all the way to Mexico for the winter, you need all the nectar you can get. However, a "hummer" also eats smaller insects and spiders, many of which it finds on the nectar flowers: hors d'oeuvres, perhaps?



BACK COVER

Black Bears, like Grizzlies, are omnivores, eating virtually anything that could be classed as food. Perhaps somewhat surprising is that about 80% of their diet is vegetarian. In autumn, ripe berries are favoured, along with insects and nuts – or whatever happens to wander by their claws!

with them I pointed out -- based on my Alberta observations -- that tree-climbing by weasels is an anti-predator strategy to escape from the fox. This view is now well accepted in Holland and elsewhere. Today the stoat is still practically extinct in coastal Holland where the fox is king.

As to Red Foxes and Coyotes in Alberta, I have written widely about their running battle, observed at first hand over many years. In British Columbia, I interviewed several naturalists and government zoologists. Those with long-term field experience confirmed that the Red Fox, once locally common, disappeared after the relatively recent arrival of its bigger and aggressive cousin.

DICK DEKKER, PH.D.

National Parks Priorities?

I have just received my copy of the Summer issue. You've done a great job as usual. I loved the article about the Woodland Caribou in Jasper.

Are you familiar with some of the changes proposed for the area around Cameron Falls in Waterton? Parks Canada wants to enlarge the parking lot in order to accommodate "large buses and horse trailers"!!!! Many trees have already been cut down. A petition was circulated this past summer and many people have already voiced their discontent with the project. I have attached a photo of a plaque that is located along

WHAT ARE NATIONAL PARKS ?

NATIONAL PARKS ARE LIVING MUSEUMS OF NATURE PRESERVED FOR THE BENEFIT, EDUCATION AND ENJOYMENT OF THIS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

HELP US MAINTAIN THEM UNIMPAIRED FOR THOSE YET TO COME.

CE QU'EST UN PARC NATIONAL

UN PARC NATIONAL, C'EST UN MUSÉE VIVANT DE LA NATURE, CONSERVÉ POUR LE BIEN, L'INSTRUCTION ET L'AGRÉMENT DES GÉNÉRATIONS ACTUELLES ET FUTURES.

AIDEZ-NOUS À GARDER CES LIEUX INTACTS, À L'INTENTION DES GÉNÉRATIONS FUTURES.

the highway down to Belly River. You can see how enlarging paved parking lots at the expense of green space fits right in with the park's mandate!!!!

Let me know if there is anything I can do for the cause.

SANDRA HAWKINS

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dr Dekker and Dawn Dickinson (a Nature Alberta Director) have started an interesting discussion. I invite readers of Nature Alberta to join in the dialogue with your thoughts, whether from a professional aspect or through personal experience. In particular, we would be interested in the Alberta situation; for example, are there substantial differences in different parts of Alberta from what Dr Dekker has observed? Please email your thoughts to wildhavn@membrane.com.

Advertising in *Nature Alberta*

Nature Alberta is now accepting a limited number of advertisements for future issues. Ad rates vary from \$35 (business card size) to \$249 (full page), X2 for colour.

Full details, including rates and sizes, are available at:
online: www.naturealberta.ca
email: na@naturealberta.ca
phone: (780) 427 – 8124

ALBERTA ISSUES IN BRIEF

Withdrawn...temporarily!

In late November, the Alberta Government withdrew Bill 29, the updated Alberta Parks Act, following province-wide anger. The new Act would have essentially left ecological protection of our parks up to the whims of the Parks Minister (which means the whims of Cabinet elites, in essence). It would have given the government legal authority to pretty well do whatever it wants, behind closed doors, with only a requirement for public ‘notice’ rather than public consultation and hearings.

Tourism, Parks and Recreation Minister Cindy Ady said the province would talk with

stakeholder groups over the next while and then reintroduce the bill, with some amendments, in the spring. However, she insisted that she will not scrap the bill altogether: “I’m not starting at square one,” said Minister Ady.

The Minister’s statements ignore the fact that many different groups have spent the past few years talking and providing detailed input to Parks about parks and protected areas – and an overwhelming majority of Albertans in general have been very clear in expressing their desire for more protection and more parks. More talk seems to be just a desperate attempt to placate

and patronize Albertans. As *Red Deer Advocate* columnist Bob Scammell said, Bill 29 “continues the trend of this government to weaken the few environmental protections that are in place and ignore the wishes of the people in favour of corporations and development.”

A coalition of groups is fighting the proposed bill, including Nature Alberta, the Alberta Wilderness Association, Stewards of Alberta Protected Areas Association [see article pg 39], Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club. It is not an exaggeration to say that at stake is the natural and ecological integrity of Alberta’s entire parks and protected areas system.

Perfect Storm for Alberta Caribou

A new Alberta Caribou ‘policy’, which does nothing to protect severely-threatened woodland caribou, is one more nail in the coffin for this beleaguered species. An open-door policy on tar sands development, and proposed changes to protected areas legislation in Bill 29 guarantee doom for woodland caribou in north-eastern Alberta.

“The draft policy guarantees that caribou are doomed, and caribou protection will never prevail in land-use decisions,” says Cliff Wallis, AWA President. “Despite knowledge of critical caribou habitat, everything government has said or done shows they have no intention of protecting that habitat.”

“New development is allowed, new cutting is allowed, new roads are allowed,” says Wallis. “Nothing is getting turned down except new protected areas for caribou and stronger legislation for protected areas. It’s full speed on development and go slow on protection.”

For more information, contact Nigel Douglas, AWA’s conservation specialist, at (403) 283-2025.

—From AWA News Release (Nov 24, 2010): “Perfect Storm for Alberta’s Caribou: Bill 29, Tar Sands, and Another Worthless Caribou Policy”



SLS LOGGING ROAD CUTBLOCK ON THE WAY TO COMMONWEALTH CREEK. JOHN MCFAUL

Spray Lake Sawmills Goes for Certification

Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) has decided to work towards Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. The work necessary is similar to the work done voluntarily by SLS in the McLean Creek area a few years ago.

SLS is a private, family-owned company that has been logging in what is now known as Kananaskis Country for more than sixty-seven years. Many of the recreational trails in Kananaskis Country were created when the areas were logged. Some log haul roads in the bush are “put back” to re-grow, but many are now used as part of the hiking, cycling, cross-country

skiing, equestrian and off-highway vehicle trails system there.

SLS has indicated that they are always willing to discuss concerns that are brought to them. They have been certified for many years under the industry-initiated program, ForestCare, where they have achieved high scores for their sustainable forest practices. Check out: www.spraylakesawmills.com/.

FSC is a voluntary international certification and labeling system indicating that the forest products you purchase come from responsibly managed forests and verified recycled sources. Under



FSC certification, forests are certified against a set of strict environmental and social standards, and fibre from certified forests is tracked all the way to the consumer through the chain of custody certification system. The end result is products in the marketplace carrying the FSC ‘check-tree’ logo. Consumer demand for FSC-certified products encourages forest managers and owners to become FSC-certified. Independent third-party auditors conduct all FSC certification audits. For details on FSC, go to: www.fsccanada.org/.

Mackenzie Gas Project

In November, the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories released their final response to the environmental assessment of the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project.

Despite claiming they have accepted most of the recommendations, the Governments have actually accepted only 11 of the 115 recommendations from the

Joint Review Panel that studied the environmental impacts of the proposed Project.

The governments' response plainly dismisses the principles of sustainable development by rejecting recommendations on the grounds that they would constrain development. The governments' refusal to commit to implementing all of the Panel's recommendations creates the unsustainable conditions that the Panel warned about in October.

Nature Canada is deeply concerned about the devastation that could be unleashed on important wildlife areas across the Northwest Territories as a result of the Government's aggressive stance against the Panel recommendations. Nevertheless, the National Energy Board approved the project in December.

From Nature Canada, Thursday Nov 18, 2010



Potatogate!

The Alberta Government's proposed sale of 25 sections (16,000 acres) of public land in southeastern Alberta to SLM Spud Farms for growing potatoes created a unified outcry seldom seen before. Almost everyone was appalled by this unsavory deal.

There were so many reasons why so many objected that it was hard to keep count, among the reasons: the massive loss of native prairie and associated wildlife; loss of fine grazing land; loss of hunting and other recreation opportunities; already a glut of potatoes; huge



HABITAT FOR????? WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

amount of water required; the lack of openness, transparency or opportunity for public input; it was bad for Alberta; it flew in the face of the Land Use Framework process; and the government didn't even follow their own standard procedures for sale of public land. The media reported the issue fully, with many commentators expressing sincere anger.

The government's response to the outcry was somewhat bizarre. They misrepresented the role of conservation land trusts. The premier maintained there is no



"WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE ONCE PLAYED"? RICK PRICE

Running over Nature

Every so often, an ad appears on TV or in magazines showing a roaring vehicle of some kind excitedly challenging that formidable foe, Mother Nature – oft times, in the process, damaging Mother Nature. In many cases, it appears that the activity could be illegal and contrary to a wide variety of legislative protections.

Most recently, ads for Jeep showed a vehicle driving in a creek (or river). Nature Alberta (NA) sent a letter to Jeep Canada expressing our concern about an ad which appeared to promote blatant disregard for the environment. As an organization, Nature Alberta advocates responsible use of off-highway machines, whether they

are quads, trucks, 4 x 4's, SUV's, snowmobiles or any other type of vehicle. Ads like these send the wrong message entirely, especially to younger drivers. NA stated in the letter that we "would hope Jeep Canada would be more responsible in the future in its advertising of products, in not promoting practices that create ecological damage."

It should be noted that such ads may have been produced on authorized or established watercourse fords and trails, or on a manufacturer's test field. Still, the message being delivered is one of conquering nature wherever we wish to go – authorized or not.

A JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE IN ACTION (NOT FROM THE AD). WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

law requiring public input or even the informing of Albertans of public land for sale before it's gone. The Minister suggested that the province has been selling land like this for 100 years, so what's the problem? The government was either clutching at straws – or truly convinced that Albertans have no right to question or even know what the government is doing with land we own.

In early November, SLM Spud Farms withdrew the application, allegedly at the urging of the government. This freed the government from admitting anything and freed them from setting a precedent by turning the proposal down; it allows them to continue whatever land policies and methods they wish. Nature Alberta volunteers and staff worked very hard on this issue; we will continue to stay on top of it because it is likely that the issue is only delayed, not over. Vigilance is the byword.

Naturalists can make a difference when they see such ads simply by writing the manufacturer and/or the media outlet. Equally important is to contact Advertising Standards Canada and lodge a complaint; that can be done electronically at www.adstandards.com. You could also tell your nearest dealer of the vehicles involved. A copy of Nature Alberta's letter can be found on our website (www.naturealberta.ca).



If you have a first-hand experience with nature, send it in and share it with other naturalists. After all – there are 8 million stories in the Nature City. Yours...could be one of them.

First Hand: Thrilling Sightings!

BY DENNIS BARESCO

Naturalists are famous for coming up with thrilling sightings of wildlife as they hike through woods and prairie, canoe waterways – or simply watch the goings-on in their backyard.

Since birding is the most heavily practiced of the wildlife-watching “arts” many of the sightings are of the avian kind.

Not all sightings are birds though, as Holle Hahn’s backyard Western Toad proved; her sighting was written up in the Summer 2010 edition of *Nature Alberta* (Vol 40, # 2).

Imagine Don and Sean Gordon’s surprise of seeing two moose in an arid badland along the South Saskatchewan River (Fig 1)! Sometimes, as Rick Price’s Waterton Black Bear photo shows, it’s hard to tell who’s watching whom and which one finds the sighting most thrilling! (Fig 2).

FIG 1. SEAN GORDON

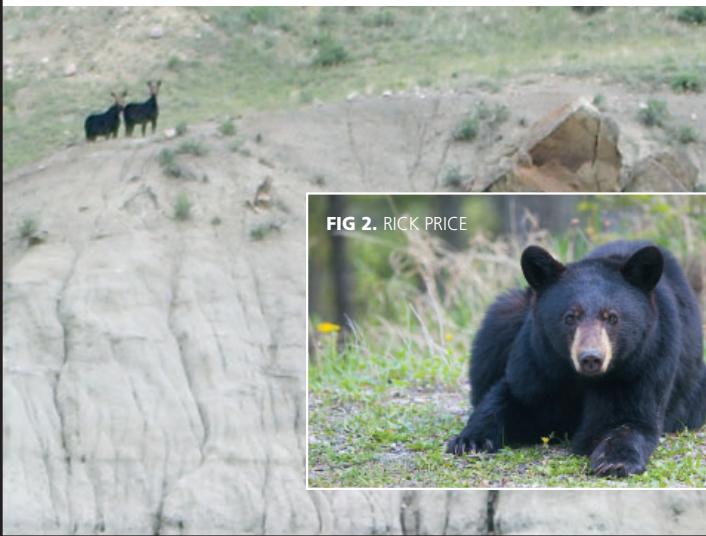


FIG 2. RICK PRICE



Holle and Hans Hahn spotted some Evening Grosbeaks (Fig 3) at their feeder and “had to shoot through 2 panes of glass to get this close,” said Holle. “We always had the odd one, but never this many...pretty shy birds compared to Blue Jays.”



FIG 3. HOLLY HAHN

Seeing a species that is a record is always very exciting. The accidental reverse migration of the Green-tailed Towhee, a southern U.S. species, was a first Canadian Winter record and only the second documented occurrence in the province. It showed up in Jasper townsite in early Dec 2009 and remained through March 10, 2010. The photo (Fig 4) was taken on Feb. 15, 2010 by Richard Klauke of Vilna AB.

FIG 4. RICHARD KLAUKE



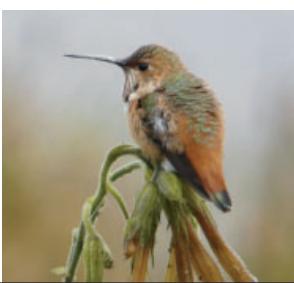
A sub-adult male Anna’s Hummingbird (Fig 5) at Casa Vista Estates southeast of Gibbons was present from late September until Oct 31, 2009; it was one of two Anna’s reported in the province that fall. There were also several records indicating a reverse fall migration event in BC. The photo was taken by John Farquhar of Gibbons.

A late migrant sub-adult male Rufous Hummingbird (Fig 6) was photographed on a frosty Oct 6th in a Fort McMurray suburb, seeking nectar from an end-of-season Hollyhock. This sighting was both very late and outside of normal range limits for Rufous Hummingbirds. Cathy Mountain of Fort McMurray took the photo.



FIG 5. JOHN FARQUHAR

FIG 6. CATHY MOUNTAIN



Nature Alberta NEWS



NEW CLUB

The Alberta Mycological Society (AMS) is the latest group to join Nature Alberta as an Associate Club. The Society's Mission Statement is: *"To provide educational, recreational, scientific and culinary opportunities for Albertans who are interested in the fascinating world of mushrooms and fungi."*

Formed in 1987, AMS has approximately 165 members. Most are amateurs with a variety of interests in nature, including ecological roles of fungi in the environment, medicinal uses of mushrooms, edibility of mushrooms and the recreational and cultural aspects of mushroom picking. As AMS stated in its application:

"Fungi are typically the ignored Kingdom but are ecologically and intricately involved with all other forms of life. Without fungi, nature in Alberta would not be as it is."

Nature Alberta warmly welcomes AMS to our family of member clubs.

NEW VENUE FOR MEETING

The location for Nature Alberta's last Board of Directors meeting on Sept 25-26 was considerably different from where meetings are normally held. Instead of the city, we moved to a location along the Red Deer River near Alix AB, the Deer Valley Meadows Resort.

An excellent facility in lovely surroundings made this meeting much more fun and relaxing than usual as attendees hiked, canoed, strolled the woods and indulged in enjoyable conversation. Wayne Houcher and Charley Bird set up and interpreted their displays of, respectively, birds' eggs and insects.

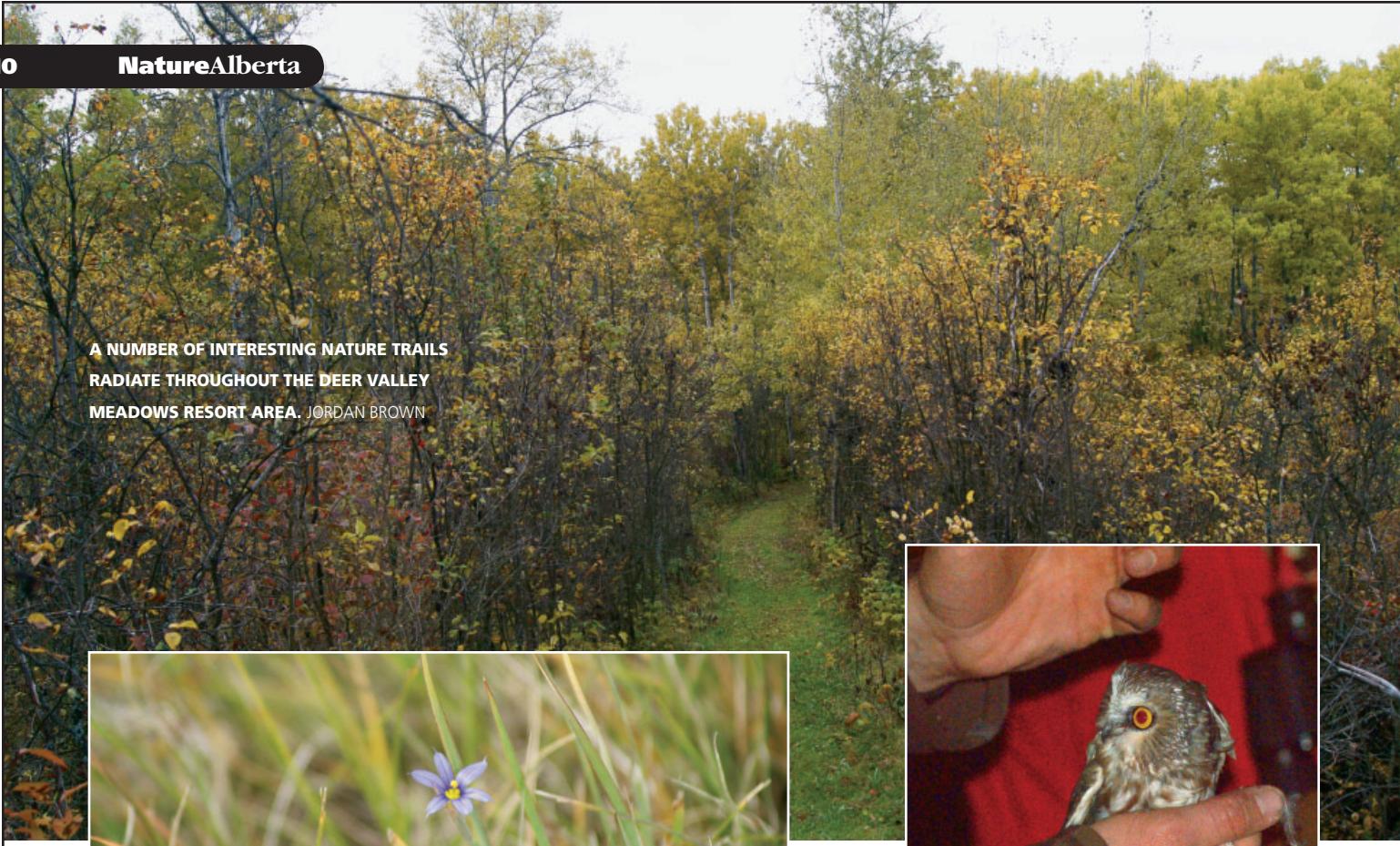
After dinner on Saturday evening, Judy Boyd (former Nature Alberta Director and Executive member) gave a fascinating presentation on her work with the Medicine River Wildlife Centre; she even brought a Great Horned Owl along! Later, President Chuck Priestley took folks into the dark of the night to give a demonstration on banding Saw-whet Owls.

On top of all that, the Directors accomplished a lot of business. Perhaps it was the surroundings, but discussions of finances and administration seemed much more interesting under the giant A-frame of the Deer Valley Meadows lodge!



**NATURE ALBERTA DIRECTOR
MARTY DRUT SHARES STORIES
WITH JUDY BOYD AND OTIS.**

JORDAN BROWN



A NUMBER OF INTERESTING NATURE TRAILS

RADIATE THROUGHOUT THE DEER VALLEY

MEADOWS RESORT AREA. JORDAN BROWN



FALL COLOURS – AND EVEN THE OCCASIONAL FLOWER – GREETED THE DIRECTORS.

JORDAN BROWN



CHUCK PREPARES TO BAND ONE OF THE
SAW-WHET OWLS CAPTURED IN A MIST NET.

JORDAN BROWN

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS. LEFT TO RIGHT: PHILIP PENNER, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR; TED HINDMARCH, VICE-PRESIDENT AND *NATURE ALBERTA*
CIRCULATION MANAGER; CHUCK PRIESTLEY, PRESIDENT. JORDAN BROWN



A GROUP OF
NATURALISTS HIKE
DOWN THE HILL
AND THEN CANOED
FOR SEVERAL
HOURS ALONG THE
BEAUTIFUL RED DEER
RIVER. JORDAN BROWN



WHILE WAITING FOR THE LUNCH CROWD TO ARRIVE, OFFICE
ADMINISTRATOR CHRISTINE BROWN CHECKS THE DISPLAYS SET UP
BY WAYNE HOUCHER AND CHARLEY BIRD. JORDAN BROWN



This High, Wild Country: A Celebration of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park

REVIEW BY: SANDRA C. HAWKINS

Although I have had the good fortune to visit many of the world's most beautiful natural places, my heart always returns to Waterton. It shall always remain my favourite place, and I was honoured when asked to review *This High, Wild Country: A Celebration of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park*.

For those individuals who possess a visceral love for mountains, this first person account will have strong appeal. Writing with a passion, joy and respect for nature, the author takes us on a sentimental journey into the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Beautiful watercolour paintings and pen and ink drawings help bring this journey to life. Both the author and illustrator are former "parkies," and their experiences while employees with the US National Parks Service add a refreshing, personalized dimension to the account.

After presenting a brief history on the founding of the two parks and their subsequent joint designation as an International Peace Park and World Heritage Site, in 1932 and 1995 respectively, the book focuses on macro topics such as the area's shared geology and its alteration by forces of glaciation, avalanches, climate, weather and time.

In order to experience the living treasures of the mountains, the author describes the joys of "Zone Walking". Starting from just above tree line with its patches of "inorganic landscape" and then moving ever downward through increasingly lush vegetation, he

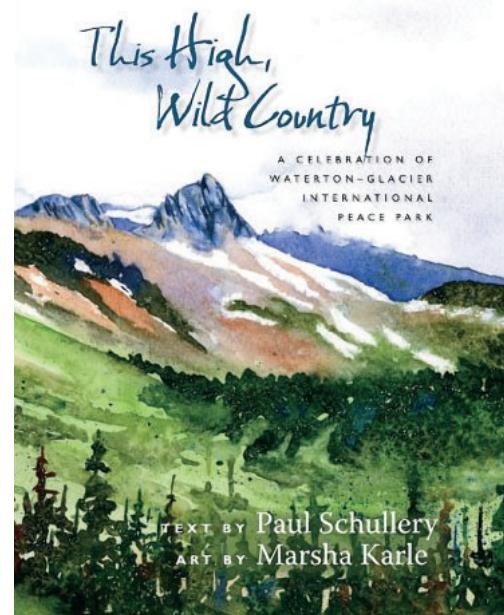
revels in a discussion of the ever-changing spectrum of trees, shrubs, flowers, mosses, and lichens along with their resident complement of avian and terrestrial fauna.

The book is in no way a scientific treatise, although the author presents a wealth of information in a most palatable package. For those who wish to learn more, an appendix filled with a wide variety of additional reference material is included.

Multiple cautionary tales about the negative implications arising from human interference with natural ecosystems compose my favourite part of the book. For example, White Pine Blister Rust (a non-native disease found on seedlings imported from Europe) is responsible for altering both the ecosystems and the photogeneity of both parks. Massive changes also ensued when park lakes were stocked with non-native fish for the purpose of sports fishing. Although this practice has since ceased, the parks' aquatic ecosystems and native fish species such as the Bull Trout are still suffering the consequences.

The author sums up his feelings and wears his heart on his sleeve when he writes about the "pricelessness of authenticity" and "...the humility of accepting nature on the terms it offers rather than succumbing to the arrogance of thinking we can always fix things even if they show no evidence of being broken" (p. 63).

All news is not grim. The author takes hope for the future of the Gray



Text by Paul Schullery/Art by Marsha Karle, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque NM, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4602-5 (paper), \$34.95

Wolf and the Grizzly Bear populations in both parks. The designation of the 7.8 million acre Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) and a variety of other lands that border the parks was instigated by the need for additional habitat. He hopes this is only a beginning, and that the future will witness an animal corridor that stretches from Yellowstone to the Yukon (Y2Y).

Favourite hiking trails and back country camping sites, historic Glacier lodges, red "jammer" buses, boat rides on the M.V. International, the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton, Chief Mountain, Going-to-the-Sun Road and the reaction of his trekking llama upon encountering the famous Gunsight Pass goats all constitute some of the author's favourite memories of the parks, and those memories are well worth the read.

With a Canadian bias, however, I had hoped for more detail specifically about Waterton National Park. Although the flora, fauna, geology, and climate are similar for both parks, historical, political, and literary references do not always overlap. Regrettably, Kootenai Brown, for one, garners no mention in the text!

Up Close Naturally: Leaves

BY MARGOT HERVIEUX

WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

Do you always feel overwhelmed by all those leaves in your yard? Well, save yourself some work and benefit a multitude of creatures by leaving them where they lie.

Fallen leaves provide important food and habitat for a surprising number of plants and animals. Poke around in the leaf litter and you will find beetles, ants and spiders hunting insects, and daddy-long-legs and centipedes scavenging for bits.

Not only are the insects and spiders helping to control unwanted pests but they are also food for ground feeding birds. During the fall, watch for arctic-nesting sparrows like White-crowned and Tree Sparrows shuffling through the leaves when they stop for fuel on their long migration.

The leaves themselves are food for an amazing number of soil organisms.

Everything from earthworms and slugs to bacteria and fungi help to break down the leaves,

getting energy for themselves and returning nutrients to the soil.

Plants also benefit from a mulch of leaves. The leaves hold moisture and insulate the soil, protecting tender roots and seeds. Nutrients released by decomposers feed the plants, and tunnels created by leaf-hunting earthworms increase air flow and allow water to penetrate further into the soil.

Leaves also provide shelter for animals looking for a safe place to over-winter. Wood Frogs, Mourning Cloak Butterflies and queen bumble bees spend the cold months in the leaf litter. There they freeze solid but remain unharmed because increased sugars in their blood prevent tissue damage.

When the soil is insulated by leaves, frost doesn't penetrate as deeply and that improves the survival chances for animals wintering underground.

Chipmunks have been asleep since early September, curled up in a network of seed and sleeping storage chambers as much as a metre below the surface.

For those of us willing to leave our leaves, we can help speed

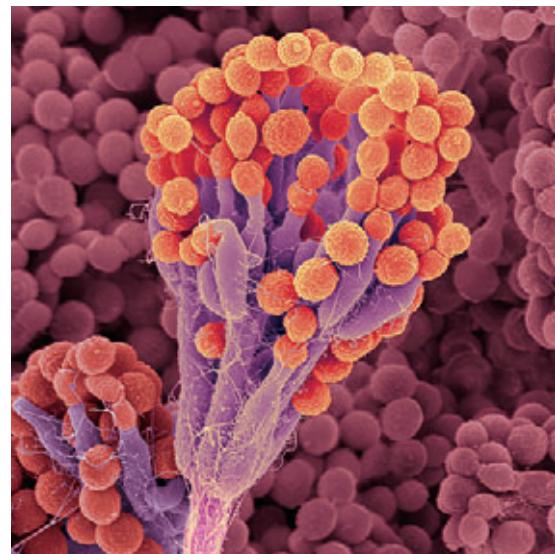
decomposition by breaking the leaves into smaller pieces. Simply run over the leaves with a lawnmower before raking them among your shrubs or onto your garden and flower beds.

Nature has been recycling fallen leaves for millions of years. So why strain ourselves by trying to tidy up the process?! The forest floor is just one more place where the diversity of life abounds.

WHAT NATURE DOES WITH THEM

It takes a lot of energy for plants to grow leaves, yet every fall those leaves are discarded in an effort to conserve water. Fallen leaves aren't wasted, however. They become part of an

SOIL BACTERIA: ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DECOMPOSERS. DENNIS KUNKEL/FORCES.SI.EDU



Margot also writes a column for the Peace Country Sun, archived copies of which are available at www.peacecountrysun.com.



impressive natural recycling system that helps fuel our entire planet.

Leaves actually start to break down before they even drop from the trees. As the days shorten and the nights cool, plants remove the valuable chlorophyll from the leaves for future use. With the green gone, the reds, oranges and yellows are revealed before the leaves are sealed off from the rest of the plant and they drop to the ground.

Once leaves reach the ground, the process of decay begins in earnest. The first step is breaking the leaves into smaller pieces. This job falls primarily to the many invertebrates that feed on fallen leaves – including millipedes, slugs, beetles and different sorts of worms.

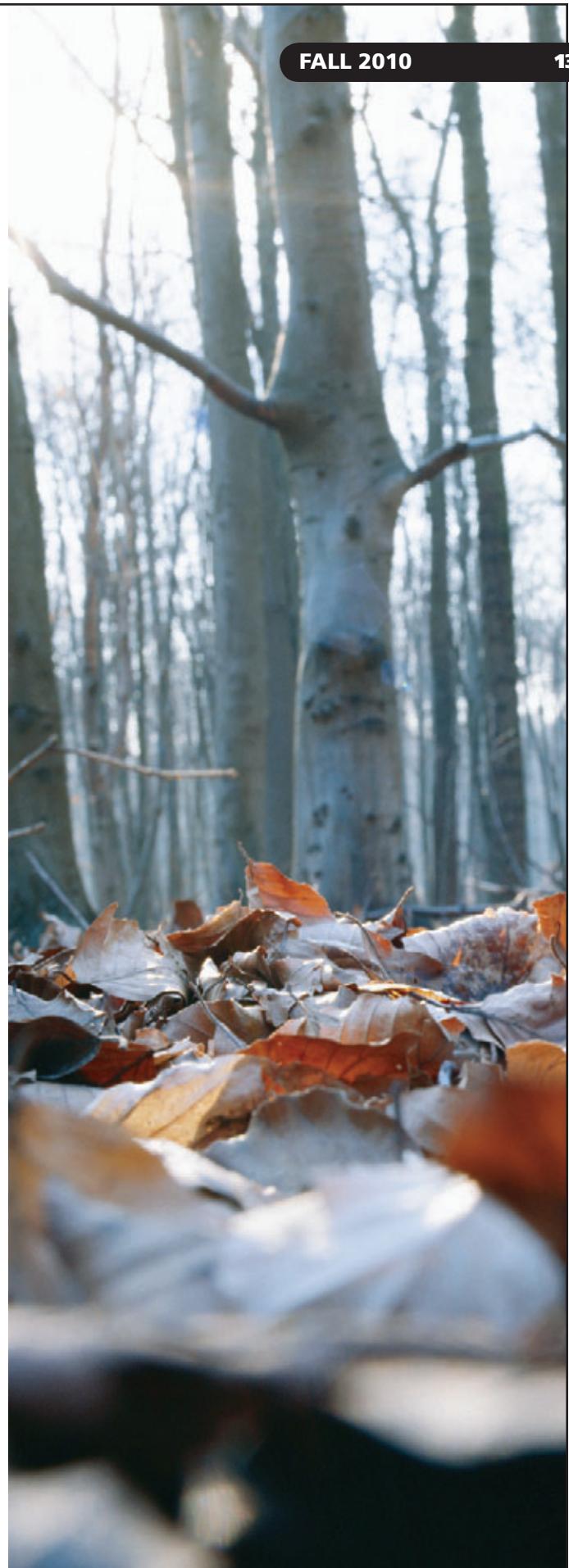
Birds and mammals also help break up dead leaves. Grouse and other ground nesting birds will use dead leaves in their nests while mice, voles and chipmunks use bits of leaves to line their winter shelters. Weather and the activities of large mammals like Moose also speed the crumbling process.

One of the best known leaf decomposers is the earthworm. Earthworms pull leaves into their tunnels where they slowly shred and eat them. This activity not only breaks down the dead plant material and releases nutrients, but worm tunnels also aerate the soil and increase water percolation.

Small leaf pieces become food for the leaders in the decomposition business: the fungi. If you dig around in the leaf litter you will likely find white threads on some of the leaves. These are mycelia – masses of fine fungal fibres. The mycelia absorb some nutrients to feed the fungus and release others into the soil. Other types of fungi, including some molds, coat the surface of dead material in either a dry or slimy crust.

Once the leaves have been broken into small enough pieces, bacteria can go to work. Millions of these microscopic, single-celled organisms further change the leaves, releasing nutrients and creating organic particles that become an integral part of the soil.

This natural recycling process not only cleans up huge amounts of dead material but is also responsible for the creation and maintenance of the soils which support both natural and agricultural systems. Without the waste management, fertilization and soil building services provided by decomposers, our world would be a very different place.



Close to Home: Nature Photography in Alberta



JOHN WARDEN

A couple of more f-stops and of course a tripod – once again, I had left my tripod at home. I resolved to go back out to Elk Island National Park and take the photo again, but this time, properly.

A week later I was back out at the park. It was the same day of the week and the same time of day and I knew exactly where the trees I wanted to photograph were located. But when I got there, it was all different. The light was different and the trees were different. It wasn't the same. It wasn't anything special at all. The moment was gone. It was like I was in a different time and place. I was standing at the same point in the river but the water had moved on.

"Ichi go – ichi e": One moment, one opportunity.

I studied Japanese martial arts for nearly twenty years and I learned

the Japanese phrase "ichi go – ichi e" from my Sensei, my teacher. He used it in the context of our training in the 'dojo' or training hall. As the senior student, I had the opportunity of training with the Sensei and he would tell me to 'focus, train harder', we only have this one moment, this one opportunity to train together.

Most resources attribute the phrase "ichi go – ichi e" to the Zen esthetics of the Japanese tea ceremony. The tea master has one moment, one opportunity to create the perfect setting and the perfect bowl of tea. While the phrase may have originated in the tea ceremony, its concept, its philosophy has been absorbed into all of the Japanese arts, from flower arranging, to painting and brushwork and into the combat arts. In feudal Japan, sword training was literally a matter of life and death. In actual sword combat, there would only be one moment and one opportunity.

My karate Sensei and I had the good fortune of being able to train together for many years, but then one day, he was gone. He moved away, and we no longer had those moments. We no longer had those opportunities to train together. But I have carried his teachings and the Zen practices of the martial arts into my photography. For me, nature photography is about becoming completely absorbed in the energy of that exquisite natural moment. It's about being part of something so much bigger than yourself, but being in harmony with it. It's an opportunity to be part of a perfect moment in time. And then that moment is gone and there's no going back.

But another moment and another opportunity are right there, right now.

I was a police officer for thirty five years, and I can tell you that my career was full of moments



JOHN WARDEN

and opportunities. Most people don't really associate policing with the word Zen, but one person who did was Janwillem van de Wettering.

Van de Wettering was a Dutch author who wrote a series of police procedural novels set in Japan. I've read nearly all of Van de Wettering's fiction, but one of his titles has always stayed with me – *Inspector Saito's Small Satori*. Satori is a Japanese word for sudden enlightenment or sudden understanding.

I like the idea of small enlightenments, small understandings. Perhaps that's what life is all about, a series of moments and opportunities that

yield small understandings. Pile them up, one on top of the other and you have a journey, a journey going forward, based on the small understandings of each moment and each opportunity.

I don't expect to find that exact same image of aspen trees at Elk Island National Park again, but maybe what I learned from the opportunity of looking for them is my own small satori, my own understanding that we only have the moment, so ... I better bring my tripod!

"Ichi go – Ichi-e" ...
One moment, one
opportunity.
Time stops,
In my camera lens –
One moment

- HAIKU BY JOHN WARDEN

My Experience with the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) 2007 – 2009

BY ROBERT DANNER

*Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) are the most frequently encountered and most common bat in Alberta. Average measurements: 89 mm long (3.5 inches); weight 7.5 g (0.25 oz); wingspan 22.8 cm (9 inches).*

Colour: olive brown to dark brown or nearly black on back; underside conspicuously lighter in colour. Range: over a large part of North America, south into central Mexico. See map, Fig. 1.



FIG. 1 Distribution of Little Brown Bat

In spring, after hibernation, nursery (maternity) colonies begin to form. They are characterized by hot dark conditions, often poorly ventilated, and located in a wide variety of places: man-made structures, rock crevices, tree hollows, and under bark. The

females exhibit high site fidelity, often returning to the same site. These nursery colonies are made up of adult females, their young, and perhaps a few immature males.

2007

During the early spring, three bat houses were built and later (May 10 and 11) placed at different locations southeast of Two Hills, Alberta. One was located on a Black Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) (Fig. 2), the second on an abandoned log barn at the entrance to the hay

loft which has the door nailed back (Fig. 3), the third on an abandoned cabin (Fig. 4). All three are within a span of 1.8 kilometres.

All bat houses are single celled, with a cell size of: width - 40.64 cm (16.0 inches); height - 60.97 cm (24 inches); back 81.28 cm (32.0 inches), with the back inside surface covered with plastic mesh, depth 38 mm (1.5 inches). Houses were painted dark brown to enhance solar heating, and oriented southeast, south, and east respectively. House entrances are 2.29 metres (7.5 feet) above ground.

FIG. 2 Black Poplar House



FIG. 3 Log Barn House



FIG. 4 Cabin House

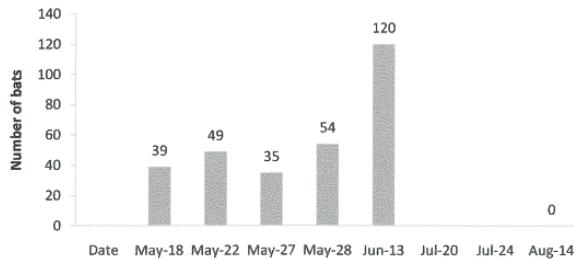


The houses were monitored in June and again in July. On July 11 while at the log barn house, a scratching sound was heard; on closer inspection, movement was seen behind the loft door. On the ground below, a large amount of mice-like droppings was observed. These droppings were observed in previous years but were thought to be rodents. Having to leave that day, no observations were possible that evening. Returning July 26, observation began that evening at 21:30; at 22:10 the first of ten bats emerged, the following night seven bats, and the next night none. During September, the house on the log barn was moved a short distance east to the west-facing wall of the old log home (Fig. 5).

2008

In early spring, another bat house was built and on May 18 placed on the east-facing wall of the old log home (Fig. 6); thus, four bat houses were in play, plus the log barn loft door. The five locations were monitored for guano (bat feces); also, a bat detector was used in the evening as an aid to ascertain if bats were present. There was no indication of use of the Black Poplar or cabin bat houses. Graph 1 shows usage of log barn loft door.

Emerging bats log barn loft door



GRAPH 1 Note: On July 20-24 videos taken, no counts made.



FIG. 5 Old Log Home West-facing Wall House

On May 24 and June 16, counts were made at the house on the west facing wall of the log home; respectively, fourteen and ten bats were counted. No counts were made on the house of the east-facing wall of the log home, but the quantity of bat guano that collected below each house was very similar.

2009

This year a different tactic was employed; not only would visual counts be made, but a site would be acoustically monitored all night from sunset to sunrise. A frequency division bat detector connected to a digital voice recorder would accomplish this task. The log barn loft door was selected because of the high count in 2008. The bat detector and recorder were set in a wood box having both ends open and secured to a tree with two bungee cords, set at a height above which cattle could reach, opposite the loft door. Monitoring commenced on May 23 at 22:00, but

by 22:35 no bat had emerged; therefore, the detector and recorder were turned off and removed. The decision was made to monitor the east-facing house on the log home (Fig 6) because of the location of a favorable tree to secure the equipment.

Monitoring commenced on the evening of May 24 and ended on June 11, for a total of six nights. When listening to the recordings, it is not possible to discern if you are hearing one bat or more than one or the same bat again. Therefore an occupied minute was employed – meaning that if a bat pass was heard in that minute or even if the minute was completely full of passes, it was counted as one occupied minute. Table 1 shows the results of those nights, and Graph 2 is a compilation of nights expressed in percentage of occupied minutes. Both table and chart are a measure of relative bat activity in relation to time, and not a measure of abundance.



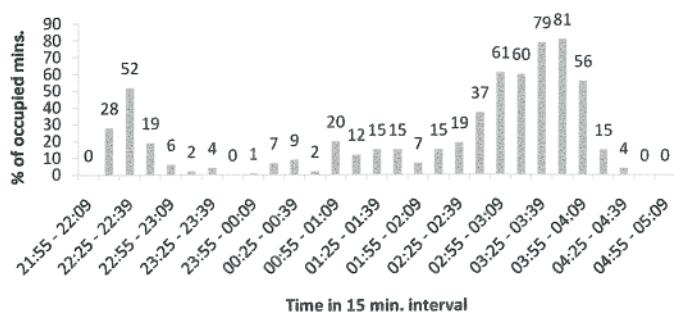
FIG. 6 Old Log Home East-facing Wall House

Time 15 min. interval	May-24	May-25	May-28	May-29	May-30	Jun-11	Total mins.	Total occupied mins.	% of occupied mins.
21:55 - 22:09	0	0	0	0	0	90	90	0	0
22:10 - 22:24	11	7	0	2	0	5	90	25	28
22:25 - 22:39	4	3	14	8	12	6	90	47	52
22:40 - 22:54	1	1	4	2	5	4	90	17	19
22:55 - 23:09	1	1	0	3	0	0	90	5	6
23:10 - 23:24	1	0	0	0	1	0	90	2	2
23:25 - 23:39	0	0	0	0	3	x	75	3	4
23:40 - 23:54	0	0	0	0	0	x	75	0	0
23:55 - 00:09	0	0	0	0	1	x	75	1	1
00:10 - 00:24	2	0	2	0	1	x	75	5	7
00:25 - 00:39	1	2	0	0	4	x	75	7	9
00:40 - 00:54	x	0	0	0	1	x	60	1	2
00:55 - 01:09	x	5	6	0	1	x	60	12	20
01:10 - 01:24	x	4	3	0	0	x	60	7	12
01:25 - 01:39	x	5	4	0	0	x	60	9	15
01:40 - 01:54	x	5	0	3	1	x	60	9	15
01:55 - 02:09	x	1	1	0	2	1	75	5	7
02:10 - 02:24	x	0	4	0	7	0	75	11	15
02:25 - 02:39	x	1	7	0	4	2	75	14	19
02:40 - 02:54	x	2	11	0	12	3	75	28	37
02:55 - 03:09	x	0	12	9	15	10	75	46	61
03:10 - 03:24	x	0	14	5	15	11	75	45	60
03:25 - 03:39	x	3	14	14	15	13	75	59	79
03:40 - 03:54	x	10	14	15	15	7	75	61	81
03:55 - 04:09	x	14	13	5	6	4	75	42	56
04:10 - 04:24	x	11	0	0	0	0	75	11	15
04:25 - 04:39	x	3	0	0	0	0	75	3	4
04:40 - 04:54	x	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	0
04:55 - 05:09	x	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	0
Total occupied mins.	21	78	123	66	121	66		475	
Total mins.	165	435	435	435	435	285	2190		

x - denotes bat detector or recorder not working correctly.

TABLE 1 Summary of Six Nights

% of occupied mins.

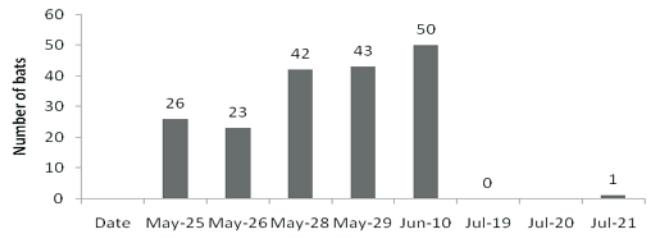


GRAPH 2 Compilation of Six Nights

During the summer, checks were made at log barn loft door; only a few bats were observed with no new bat guano detectable on the ground below. The Black Poplar and old cabin houses remained unused. Visual counts were made at old log home on both east- and west-wall houses. At the west-wall house: June 11 – forty-three bats; July 20 – forty-two bats. See Graph 3 for east-wall house.

Note: July 20, bats in house, no count; count made at west-wall house. Even though only one bat was counted on July 21 at 22:08, there was much bat activity around old log home; therefore, moving to the west side, a spectacular show was witnessed of swooping and diving bats until well after 22:30.

Emerging bats old log home east wall (house)



GRAPH 3

DISCUSSION

Examining Graph 2, bats started exiting the bat house (nursery colony) at 22:10 with peak emergence occurring from 22:25 to 22:39; by 22:54 all or most bats had exited. From 22:55 to 00:54 (2 hours), there was low bat activity in the area. Activity begins to increase at 00:55 but stays relatively flat to 02:39 (1.75

hours), thereafter rapidly increases and peaks at 03:25 to 03:54, then rapidly decreases with no activity by 04:40.

The number of bats at log barn loft door dropped from 120 in 2008 to only a few in 2009, while an increase occurred in both west- and east-facing bat houses on old log home; from fourteen in each house in 2008, to forty-three and fifty respectively in 2009. Why the apparent move to the west- and east-facing houses of the old log home? The following may be a few reasons why this occurred.

(1) Even though log barn loft door being south facing is better oriented to achieve maximum solar heating, it is open along all outside edges (perimeter), therefore allowing for ample air circulation, thus not allowing the space to achieve optimal temperature. The east and west bat houses mounted on old log home, even though lacking optimal orientation for solar heating, are open only at the bottom (entrance), with little air circulation – thus are better able to approach optimal temperature.

(2) The upper part of the log barn is constructed of boards allowing for more rapid cooling; it lacks thermal stability. In contrast, the bat houses on old log home are mounted on walls constructed of logs, giving greater thermal stability.

(3) The two bat houses on old log home will have darker interiors than log barn loft door. In the future, it will be interesting to see if and when the two bat houses on old log home reach maximum carrying capacity. Will they again use the log barn loft door as a nursery colony?

The availability of suitable maternity sites may be a limiting factor to the distribution and abundance of the species (van Zyll de Jong 1985).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Nick and Pearl Ewashko for allowing access to their land.

GLOSSARY

Bat Detector: Any device used to render the ultrasonic calls of a bat audible to the unaided human ear.

Frequency Division Detector: An ultrasonic detector that divides the frequency of an incoming ultrasonic signal by a defined factor, thus bringing the signal into the human range of hearing.

Bat-Pass: A sequence of two or more echolocation calls registered as a bat flies within range of a ultrasonic detector.

Ultrasonic: Any sound above 20 kHz, which is generally inaudible to human hearing.

References

- Pattie & Fisher 1999. Mammals of Alberta Pp. 220-221. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton AB.
- A.W.F. Banfield 1974. The Mammals of Canada Pp. 40-45. University of Toronto Press, Toronto ON.
- C.G. van Zyll de Jong 1985. Handbook of Canadian Mammals #2, Bats Pp. 68-77. National Museums of Canada, Ottawa ON.
- Maarten Vonhof 2006. Handbook of Inventory Methods and Standard Protocols for Surveying Bats in Alberta. Glossary Pp. 43-44. Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, Edmonton AB.

Ponderables

“The promotion of growth is simply a sophisticated way to steal from our children.”

DAVID BROWER

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Castle – Crown of the Continent!

BY CAROLYN ASPESLET (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CCWC)

I am sitting in my office overlooking Pincher Creek, contemplating how best to tell the story of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. How does one tell the story of over twenty years of hard work, research and stewardship that the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition has accomplished in its quest to have the Castle Wilderness designated as a Wildland Park?

It would be easy to get lost in the beauty of the mountain ranges that make up the Castle in the distance and be beguiled into believing that our Vision should not be so hard to achieve:

"A world in which wilderness survives so that wild lands and wildlife may thrive, and future generations can know their natural beauty and diversity."

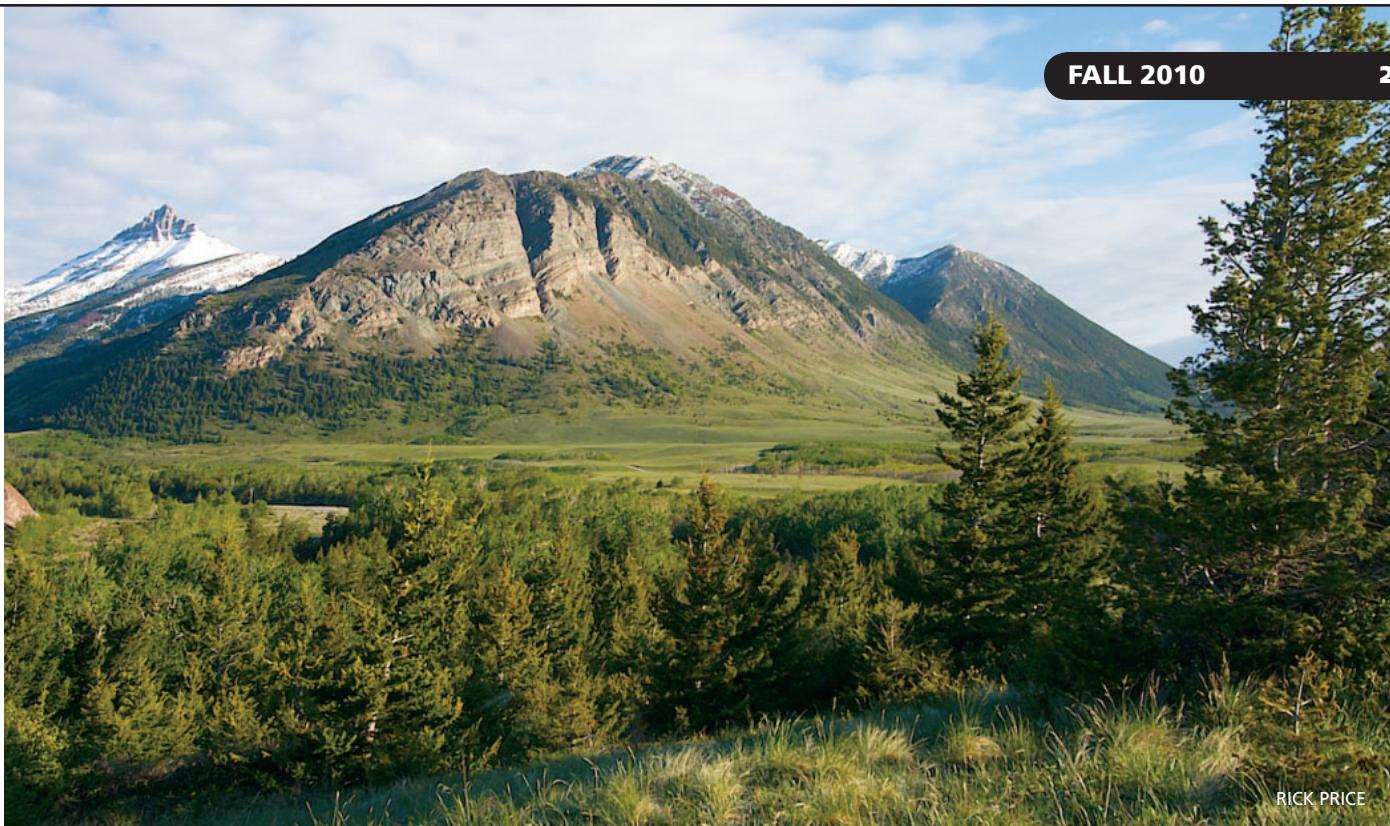
If you are not familiar with southern Alberta, the Castle Wilderness now goes by the unwieldy and unappealing handle of the "Castle Special Place/Management Area (Forest Land-Use Zone)". That aside, it remains the narrow band of the foothills and Front Ranges of the Rockies bordering the north side of Waterton Lakes National Park and running to the Crowsnest Pass. In total, it comprises 1000 sq kms. The Castle is vital to the long-term health and integrity of the tiny gem that is Waterton Park. As a significant part of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem that includes Glacier Park in Montana,

the Castle needs to be recognized in that context: hence the "crown" in our name.

Why is this area so important? Simply put, in the dry language of science, it is unique in packaging five distinct natural eco-regions into such a narrow belt of land between the man-dominated prairies and the Great Divide: alpine, sub-alpine, montane, foothills fescue grasslands and foothills parkland are all represented here, even though the montane, foothills fescue grassland and the foothills parkland are underrepresented in the protected areas of Alberta. It is also, latitudinally, a botanical transition zone, where some southern cordilleran species are at the northernmost limits of their ranges, while other northern communities find their southern limits. What this means on the land, in terms of the richness of species biodiversity, is that the Castle-Waterton area is home to over half of Alberta's 1600 plant species and includes 160

that are rare provincially and 38 that are considered rare nationally: more species of rare plants than any other unprotected place in Alberta. With this botanical richness comes – amongst other things – rare bryophyte communities, the additional treat of butterflies, many species of which are found nowhere else in Canada, and...should I mention the rare spiders, the list of which is still growing?

As the nexus of both north-south and east-west movement corridors that are currently still viable, the Castle is seen as critical to the long-term survival of Grizzly Bear, Wolverine and Canada Lynx south of the 49th parallel; these species depend on genetic connectivity with the rest of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem. Apart from the loss of bison, the Castle still provides home ranges for the full complement of the animals that were here 150 years ago, including such icons as the River Otter and Bull Trout, which (just barely) can still survive in the Castle's twenty-three headwater streams. The watershed as a whole contributes almost one-third of the water flowing to Southern Alberta communities from the Oldman River Basin. None of these great



RICK PRICE

natural assets can be taken for granted, given the multiple-use and multi-jurisdictional approach that the Alberta government has accorded the area for the past half-century.

The area known as the Castle has been many things to many people over the last century. But for the most part it has survived as an area of recreation and discovery for those who love the wild spaces. Both historically and today, it is an area of practical and spiritual importance to the local First Nations communities, but recent decades of overuse and multiple abuse have left the Castle a scarred wilderness.

The litany of attempts to get some meaningful protection for the area today has to seem discouraging. Pincher Creek area rancher, Fredrick W. Godsall, first appealed to the Dominion of Canada for the protection of the Castle in 1883, in the interests of maintaining the foothills forests, preventing the

fires that could be so disastrous to the early settlement communities and to provide a reliable buffer against floods. It was not a hard sell, back then, especially following the devastating floods that affected the Waterton, Castle and Oldman basins in 1897. Those principles were subsequently endorsed for the entire southern Eastern Slopes through the Dominion Forest Reserves Act of 1906 and, following yet another 1-in-1000 year flood event in the spring of 1908, with the creation of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve in 1910.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the land-use conflicts we feel today were well-articulated back then. In a letter to the Secretary of the Interior in 1905, advocating for the expansion of the Waterton (or Kootenay Lakes) Forest Park Reserve, in the face of John Lineham's fledgling Western Oil and Coal Company, Godsall wrote:

"The beauty and grandeur of the scenery there is unsurpassed and

I do not think equalled by anything at Banff... If parties are allowed to bore for oil there, which personally I regret, (but perhaps scenery must give way to money-making), very careful restrictions should be insisted on so that no unnecessary damage or ugliness be done, as is insisted on, I believe, at Banff".

In 1914 the borders of Waterton Lakes National Park were expanded to include the Front Range Canyons and much of the Castle up to the Carbondale drainage, but with Federal and Provincial relations shifting, as Alberta sought to establish its new identity, the distinction of purposes between "Forest Reserves" and "Forest Parks" saw the Castle area reverting back to being part of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve system in 1921. The administration of this Forest Reserve system remained a joint Federal-Provincial responsibility throughout the first half of the century, and was formally recognized through the formation of the Eastern Rocky Mountain Forest Conservation Act and the Eastern Rockies Forest

Conservation Board in 1947/48 for a further 25 year period.

In 1968, the Pincher Creek Fish and Game Association and the Alberta Wilderness Association advocated for protection of the Castle as a recreational wilderness. The public hearings that led up to the development of Alberta's Eastern Slopes Policy in the 1970s attest to the wide support for that outcome. With the release of the Policy in 1977, significant areas of the Castle were designated as Prime Protection or Critical Wildlife Zones, with seriously-protective conditions attached, and the South and West Castle watersheds were identified as a potential candidate area for a future Alberta Park. It was not long before commercial and industrial pressures challenged these conditions, and the Policy was revised through internal administrative changes to allow the free-for-all approach to decision-making that has been the hall-mark of the Policy since the 1980's, and was epitomized by the government's decision to allow oil and gas development in the Prime Protection Zone of Prairie Bluff (Corner Mountain) in 1987.

In 1993, Alberta's Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), in one of its first Decisions, on a proposal to develop a Four Season

resort in the Westcastle Valley, recommended the creation of the Waterton-Castle Wildland Recreation Area as the necessary condition to offset the effects of any development in the Westcastle River Valley. While the original proposal never materialized, after the Government rescinded the NRCB's decision under pressure from local commercial and industrial lobby groups, the incremental development carried on by Castle Mountain Resort Inc. has now created a year-round town site at the same location, without the environmental offsets of the Wildland Recreation Area envisioned by the NRCB.

In 1998 the Castle was designated a *Special Place*, under the Government's Special Places 2000 initiative to create a meaningful representative network of protected areas for Alberta. To date the Castle is the only area of the eighty designated that has not seen the legislated changes needed to secure the more protective status that was envisioned.

After another decade of neglect, a new opportunity for meaningful protection has emerged with the announcement in 2007 by the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation that the government would consider new proposals for parks and recreation areas created by local citizen initiatives. Castle Special Place working group was formed to flesh out such a proposal. The Working Group is a broad-based citizens group with thirty-four members and includes landholders, business owners, conservationists, outfitters, disposition holders,

environmentalists, First Nations, Municipalities, and recreational users.

This group was tasked with writing a proposal that would secure the intention of the Castle Special Place designation, by transferring the management of the area from Alberta Sustainable Resources Development (ASRD) to the Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation Ministry, where the opportunity for appropriate recreation, tourism and conservation management can be pursued, possibly as a Wildland Park. In 2009 the Working Group submitted its proposal to the Minister and has received supportive and positive responses, particularly noting the "good fit" with the current overall Land-Use Planning Advisory Committee for the South Saskatchewan Basin. For information on the Conceptual Proposal please visit www.castlespecialplace.ca.

In 2010, Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition along with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Sierra Club Canada, with funding granted by Yellowstone to Yukon, was able to produce a brochure and poster for greater awareness of the Castle Special Place and what protection as a park will mean to users.

In the meantime the natural assets of the Castle continue to be threatened by "business as usual" with the latest of these coming from Spray Lakes Sawmills (SLS). Despite strong public protests since consultation on the C5 Forest Management Plan began in 2003, SLS have scheduled clear-cut logging in a prime recreation area of the Castle, in the vicinity of the Castle Falls and the Beaver Mines Lake Recreation Areas, with an estimated 3,750 truckloads to be cut in winter 2011-12 and with more logging to take place over the next 10 years. This decision was made prior to the government's approval of the C5 Forestry Management Plan and



A BULL ELK STANDS IN MAJESTIC SILHOUETTE! DAVE MACINTYRE

with no regard to the Land Use Framework Planning for the South Saskatchewan Regional Basin that is still in process. Even the public advisory committee (CROW-PAC) selected by ASRD to assist in drafting the C5 plan had serious outstanding concerns, such that they were unable to support the Plan as it was finally submitted to the Minister.*

Notably, ASRD's own Fish and Wildlife Division was highly critical of the final outcome for its failure to maintain future old-growth forest stands that would support their biodiversity targets for the Castle and for its failure to address the requirements of Alberta's Grizzly Bear Recovery Strategy. Since that time, the Grizzly has been designated as a "Threatened" species in Alberta; Fish and Wildlife's concern is even more acute today.

The reason for this logging is simple: to maintain capacity/efficiency at Spray Lakes Sawmill in Cochrane. The plan is sold by Spray Lakes and the Government as a necessary forestry activity to address the potential future cataclysmic threats of pine bark beetle infestation and forest fires. These are empty arguments. As the Fish and Wildlife folks put it:

"Using Mountain Pine Beetle [MPB] as a justification for a surge cut is not acceptable. A surge cut is compromising our ability to meet



reasonable seral stage targets (an AAC [annual allowable cut] of no more than 95% of the current level allows us to reach some reasonable targets). The decision to proceed with an agenda of surge cutting had insufficient input from Fish and Wildlife, despite our presence on the technical team...Implementing a surge cut justified by MPB is nothing more than a cover for increasing harvest levels in the short term."

The government's own forestry maps that track pine beetle infestations barely reference the Castle, and since 1936 all the major fires in the Castle have occurred in the most logged-over areas – most recently, since 2000, in Gorge Creek, Lost Creek and the Carbondale drainages. The Integrated Resources Management Plan set watershed protection, recreation and tourism as the priorities for this area, but it is clear that so long as ASRD maintains its control as Land Manager of

the Castle, industrial and commercial development will continue to preempt these priorities that could ensure a sustainable healthy environment.

THE ROLE OF CCWC

Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition is a charitable environmental non-profit society dedicated to ensuring the preservation, restoration and protection of the Castle Wilderness. Since 1989 CCWC has worked to restore and protect the area through advocacy based on a strong tradition of solid research and restoration work.

From its start in 1989, the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition has implemented a Stewardship Program to monitor, document and report on the natural health of the Castle. While this remains "citizen science" and necessarily anecdotal in its outcomes, it is an important part of our campaign for public support and gives our stewards, who love the wilderness, an opportunity to contribute positively to its future. Becoming a Steward does

*EDITOR'S NOTE:

While Spray Lakes Sawmills has been heavily criticized for its logging plans, it should be noted that it is the Alberta government which issues all permits and contracts, writes and approves all forestry plans, determines all uses of the land, including what – or what not – to protect, and is fully responsible for what happens during the carrying out of those plans. It is very possible that if Spray Lakes were to make major changes to their plans, the government would simply give the permits/contract to another company.

not require any special skills or knowledge. The knowledge comes with getting to know the place. Stewards pick a favourite site such as a lake, stream, trail or picnic site and make at least one visit a year to monitor any changes, observe plants and animals in the area and report on them, especially when rare or endangered species are encountered.

Stewardship can include such mundane tasks as the collection of litter or the pulling of weeds, but taken together, the many reports of individual observations of such things as erosion events, invasive plant infestations, recreational activities, grazing and industrial activities can add significantly to our overall on-the-ground knowledge of the region. It is from these reports that the CCWC has been able to maintain a basic database on the Castle, and has occasionally generated a "State of the Castle" Report that is shared with government agencies and can contribute to improved management of the area. Being a steward of a particular place lets you contribute to reversing the loss of species

and their habitats that are declining not only in the Castle, but also worldwide. If you are interested in becoming a steward, Castle-Crown will be offering seminars in the spring of 2011.



A PILEATED WOODPECKER FEEDS ONE OF ITS YOUNG. MCDougall

Our stewardship does not stop there. Taking the role of stewardship beyond the personal on-the-ground contributions that members can make, the CCWC has acted as "watchdog" for issues and concerns that continue to threaten the wilderness values, biodiversity values and overall ecological integrity of these important public recreational lands.

In 2003 the CCWC initiated a Judicial Review of Alberta Environment's failure to require an Environmental Assessment for the expansion of the former Westcastle Ski Hill (now Castle Mountain Resort Inc). In tandem with that Judicial Review, the CCWC also challenged Alberta Environment's approvals for a Sewage Lagoon and Irrigation Plan that was partly located in the Westcastle River Wetlands Ecological Reserve, directly adjacent to Castle Mountain Resort. Also in the "watchdog" role, the CCWC obtained full disclosure of the C5 Forest Management Planning consultation process (2003-2006) and the Joint Federal-Provincial Community Funding Grant of \$800,000 for Trail Improvements in the Castle (2008/09) through Freedom of Information Requests.

Following a number of interventions with respect to Shell Canada's natural gas activities, the CCWC took a lead role in presenting arguments to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board in the 2007 Shell Waterton 68 Public Hearing on behalf of CCWC members who were locally affected residents in the Beaver Mines community. This past October, the CCWC had to repeat that performance at another two-

week long Public Hearing in Pincher Creek before the Energy Resources Conservation Board, dealing with the same applications as were presented in 2007, namely to drill new sour gas wells in the Screwdriver Creek/Mount Backus area of the Castle.

We also host information presentations and attend or host outreach events to contribute to the overall health of the area. Castle-Crown is the official Steward of the West Castle Wetlands Ecological Reserve. Established in 2001, the West Castle Wetlands Ecological Reserve is approximately 160 acres and is home to rare plants such as the Bog Orchid and willow shrub communities, which are not found anywhere else in southern Alberta. The reserve is also home to many breeding or migrating birds, mammals of all sizes, as well as fish, reptiles and rare amphibians. This rich biologically diverse ecosystem is also a critical part of everyone's water source. Thirty percent of all the flowing water in the Oldman watershed (some 28,000 square km) comes from just four percent of the land base of which the West Castle Wetlands is a small but very important part. All communities downstream, from Beaver Mines all the way to Medicine Hat, benefit from a healthy ecological system, if only to ensure a safe and healthy water supply for the future.

Castle-Crown hosted the 3rd Annual West Castle Wetlands Ecological Reserve Weed Pull this year with 38 volunteers coming out to share in the day's event. Hand pulling and bagging weeds is very labour intensive; coming out to work towards our common goal for a healthy ecosystem were volunteers from the Castle Community Association, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Alberta Parks, Parks Canada, the Municipal District of Pincher

Write the Premier and/or your local Minister and let them know that the Castle is a Special Place and should be protected under the mandate of Alberta Parks as a Wildland Park to ensure its long-term sustainability for future generations to know the beauty of a recovered wilderness.

FALL 2010

25

Creek, youth from the Katimavik program and community volunteers. Everyone worked together to reduce Oxeye Daisy, Toadflax, Blueweed, Mullein, Orange Hawkweed and Canada Thistle. All are seriously invasive plants that threaten the integrity of the fragile and unique plant communities in the ecological reserve. Hand picking and bagging invasive species that are about to go to seed or dead-heading those that are not yet in flower are effective ways of preventing infestations from spreading in sensitive landscapes.

This year's weed pull was a great success; for the first time, all areas scheduled to be pulled were completed, with the majority of the pulling along the river. Events such as this help the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition to engage new volunteers and possible new stewards to the importance of protection and health of our ecosystems. It also gives us a chance to get to know other agencies and people who share in our work to eradicate invasive species. We also organize other volunteer days tackling shoreline clean-ups, garbage removal, trail restoration (or closures) and join with other groups with their weed pulls, seed gathering, and stewardship events. In 2010 we

engaged over 100 volunteers in restoration activities in many areas in the Castle.

May to October, weather permitting, Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition hosts a full summer hiking program. All our hikes are lead by volunteers who not only lead the hikes but also act as stewards and complete stewardship reports on the areas in which they are hiking. These reports then help us to identify areas that are in need of restoration work, trail repair or clean up. Hikes are open and free to all; membership in the CCWC is not required. For people looking to get an introduction to the area's special beauties, this is a great way to start, whether you just want to rejoice in the flowers of an alpine meadow, or hear and possibly watch a Varied Thrush in a subalpine forest, or climb the ridges to overlook the stunning panoramas of the Crown of the Continent. Come join us!

The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition is able to continue its work through the generous donations from people like you, grants from our funders and through memberships. If you would like information on becoming a member, a steward, to make a donation, or to check out coming events and hikes, please visit our web site at www.ccwc.ab.ca, or by mail to Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition, PO Box 2621, Pincher Creek AB, T0K 1W0. For all donations, we issue a charitable tax receipt. To all those who so generously have made donations to CCWC – thank you; your continued support is very important to our work in the Castle.

Over the years there have been many who have helped to support Castle-Crown, our projects and the work we do. Thank you to Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Stewardship Network, Alberta Ecotrust, Yellowstone to Yukon, Wilburforce Foundation, Fanwood Foundation, Mountain Equipment Coop and Alberta Culture and Community Spirit for their support of Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition and the work that we do.

For over 100 years, southern Albertans have been seeking protection for this area. Industrial-scale logging and more exploratory drilling of sour gas wells, with all the associated infrastructure of roads, pipelines and power lines, will negatively impact the future sustainability of this area. At the recent International Conservation Biology Conference held in Edmonton, Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach said, "*The Government of Alberta is committed to balancing energy and resources development with rigorous environmental stewardship and sustainability*". So with a new decade of logging scheduled, and more sour gas wells being applied for, when does the "*rigorous environmental stewardship*" begin?

It is time to see the Castle given its recognition in the network of Alberta's Protected Areas. For that to happen we need the public's support to see the area removed from the jurisdiction of Alberta Sustainable Resources Development and transferred to its rightful place with the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.



PYGMY BITTERROOT IS ONE OF THE MANY RARE PLANTS.

Like many naturalists, Debbie and Alan Godkin, from Westlock AB, have numerous stories of their experiences with nature – stories they love to share with other naturalists in this “NATURE DIARY” series!

Nature Diary: Black Bear Guests!

BY DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

Over the years of living in a small remote farming community in northern Alberta, we often saw Black Bears grazing on grass or clover along the highway between Keg River and Manning. But seldom were we able to get a good look at one, as they usually ran into the bush before we came to a full stop. The Black Bear in the photo (below) was the exception. I rolled down the window, manually focused the lens, and took two frames before the bear wheeled around and disappeared into the bush. It was the largest black bear I had ever seen!



DEBBIE GODKIN

One spring we spotted a Black Bear (photo at right) along the highway. It must have just recently awoken from a long winter's sleep, as it appeared to be somewhat dazed and was totally unconcerned with our presence as it continued to eat fresh blades of grass and twigs. We watched it for about five minutes before resuming our trip to town.

Bears are known to be freeloaders and willing to get a free meal wherever they can. Whether it is digging through compost at the garbage site, or stealing grain from a farmer's bin, or on the rare occasion breaking into a house, the bear's constant appetite, and curiosity, inevitably gets it into trouble.

When we moved up north, we were told that since we had a dog we wouldn't have any trouble with bears coming into our yard. That seemed to hold true, because over the years we saw lots of bears on the perimeter of our property but never had one come into our yard. It was only after we put our old dog to sleep that we got



DEBBIE GODKIN

up close and personal with a two year old bear that tried to come in through the open bedroom window while I was still in bed!

I yelled and tapped the glass. The bear released its grip on the ledge and ran off, only to return a few minutes later. I got dressed and into my wheelchair in half the time it would normally have taken me. I was at the kitchen table when it returned and climbed up to the half open porch window, then ripped the screen off. Again we made lots of noise and tapped the glass, causing the bear to slide down to the ground. But instead of running off, it loafed about on the lawn close to the house. I poked my head out the porch door and took two pictures just as Al fired one shot into the air. That young bear sped off in a flash. It's amazing how fast these usually slow-moving animals can move when the need arises.

We had another young bear in the yard not long after, and so we decided to get another dog!



DEBBIE GODKIN



Eyes on IBAs

BY CHUCK PRIESTLEY

Located approximately 45km east of Calgary, Eagle, Namaka and Stobart Lakes Important Bird Area (IBA) is a great place to go birding.

Collectively, the lakes are considered an IBA of international significance because large numbers of waterfowl congregate there during spring, fall and winter periods. More than 1,500 Western Grebe were counted there during spring migration and 50,000 waterfowl were counted during fall migration in the mid 1990s (Poston et al. 1990). During the 1970s, more than 300,000 Mallard were counted during the winter (Sadler and Myers 1976).

When large numbers of waterfowl are present at these lakes, it is also quite common to observe raptors

such as Bald Eagle. In fact, the Blackfoot name for Eagle Lake is "Pataomoxecing" which means "many eagles". Clearly, the importance of this place for birds has been recognized by local people for thousands of years.

As the name suggests, the IBA includes Eagle, Namaka and Stobart Lakes. Ballina Lake, a small lake between Eagle and Stobart, is also part of the IBA. The site is in the Mixedgrass Natural Subregion. Agricultural



UP TO 40 BALD EAGLES HAVE BEEN OBSERVED DURING THE WINTER

AT THIS IBA. CHUCK PRIESTLEY

lands surround most of the lakes in the IBA. Irrigation farming and grazing are the major land uses in the area. Because much of the land is privately owned, access to the lakes can be difficult. However, it is possible to access the northeastern shore of Eagle Lake. To do so from Calgary: travel east along Highway #1; go 3.3 km beyond the western



STOBART LAKE. CHUCK PRIESTLEY



edge of Strathmore; turn south on Range Road 245 and drive for 3.2 km. Access to the western shore is also possible. To do so: travel 8km east beyond Strathmore along Highway #1; travel south for 6km along Range Road 243 until you reach a campground. The campground has 80 sites, tap water, a beach and boat launch.

As is the case with Eagle, Namaka and Stobart Lakes, many of Alberta's IBAs are places where waterfowl congregate in large numbers during spring and fall migration. However, the unique feature of this IBA is that it is also often used by waterfowl during winter. As long as the lakes do not freeze up, waterfowl can be observed. Because of its larger depth (up to 5m), Eagle Lake remains ice-free for longer periods than other lakes in the IBA. Large numbers of waterfowl have been observed there in some years until early January. Once the lakes become ice-covered though, waterfowl move south to search for open water.

Even though the site was given IBA designation with global significance due to large congregations of waterfowl, it is frequented by other species of note. Black Tern, California Gull, Eared Grebe, Franklin's Gull, Piping Plover (rarely), Ring-billed Gull, Sprague's Pipit and Western Grebe have nested at the IBA. Red-necked Phalarope, Wilson's Phalarope, Dowitcher and other shorebirds have been observed regularly during migration.

Eagle, Namaka and Stobart Lakes IBA is truly an interesting place



DOWITCHERS AT EAGLE LAKE. CHUCK PRIESTLEY

to visit. I really enjoyed the time I spent there one warm day last fall. If you have the opportunity it would be worth your time to experience the place for yourself.

Delivery of the IBA program is about collaboration and partnership. The program is a coming together of people who feel that birds and the habitats which support their populations are critical. The goal of these combined efforts is to ensure that people will recognize the world's most important places for birds and support efforts to monitor and conserve these sites. Nature Alberta is continuing its role of coordinating IBA program efforts here in Alberta. If you would like to get involved or become an IBA caretaker please contact us. To do so, please call the Nature Alberta office at 780-427-8124 or send an email to Chuck at chuck@STRIXecological.ca. Also, if you have a chance to visit this IBA or others across the province, we would be interested to hear from you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alberta's Important Bird Areas project would not be possible without generous support from our partners. We really appreciate the growing number of people that have signed up to be caretakers at IBAs. We thank Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Bird Studies Canada, Nature Canada and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for their contributions to this program (listed alphabetically). The Important Bird Areas Program is a program of BirdLife International and is co-managed in Canada by Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada.

Literature Cited

- Poston, B., D.M. Ealey, P.S. Taylor and G.B. McKeating. 1990. Priority migratory bird habitats of Canada's prairie provinces. Environment Canada, Edmonton, AB.
- Sadler, T.S. and M.T. Myers. 1976. Alberta Birds 1961-1970. Occasional Paper #1, Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

DID YOU KNOW?

The IBA program is a partnership-based initiative.

Almost 600 IBAs have been designated across Canada.

Visit www.ibacanada.ca

Up to 40 Bald Eagles have been observed during the winter at this IBA.

Eagle Lake is the largest lake in the IBA and is 11.8km²

Northern Pike, Yellow Perch, White Sucker, Longnose Sucker, Brook Stickleback and Fathead Minnow are all native to Eagle Lake. Walleye were introduced and now reproduce in the lake.

New Parks Legislation & the Recent Stewards Conference

NEW LEGISLATION BACKGROUND

Most of you have heard about the proposed changes in Parks' legislation. We were informed about some of the details in a questionnaire earlier this year. This follows Alberta's Plan for Parks, which caused consternation last year because it didn't mention conservation as a goal for parks, only recreation and tourism. After considerable public outcry, a nod was given to the principle of conservation by including the word "protect" in the vision statement. This now reads "*Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy the natural world and the benefits it provides for current and future generations.*"

BEAUTIFUL LAKES & GREAT BIRD WATCHING AT SWITZER PROVINCIAL PARK.



The new legislation basically combines the two existing Parks Acts, the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangeland Act* (the act controlling Alberta's Protected Areas) and the Provincial Parks Act into one Parks Act. Heritage Rangelands will be moved to a separate Act and Willmore Wilderness will keep its own Act. The remaining 3 types of parks (Wildland Parks, Provincial Parks, Provincial Recreation Areas) and 3 types of protected areas (Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas) will all be lumped into "Provincial Parks." The alleged reason for this is to simplify the parks system so that the public knows what to expect. Parks will be zoned as 1 or more of 3 Zones: Zone A (Recreation), Zone C (Conservation) and Zone B (Mixed Use, everything in between). Note that Recreation comes first. Unfortunately, nobody seems to know how this system will work in practice, so how it will clarify things is currently as clear as mud! People have been given limited information

and asked to fill in questionnaires, so statistics from public consultation may be of dubious value.



ANCIENT ICE-WEDGE POLYGONS IN PLATEAU MOUNTAIN ECOLOGICAL RESERVE.

PARKS ACT UPDATE AT THE CONFERENCE

When we asked for more details of the legislation at the recent Stewards Conference in Sherwood Park (12 Sept 2010), Parks staff admitted they knew no more than we did. The lack of public discussion and staff input doesn't inspire confidence that the new legislation will provide the necessary protection for our parks. Protected Areas are no longer recognized as a distinct and important group; they are just one of many Provincial Parks, mostly classed as Mixed Use or Zone B. This could permit any or all of the following activities: hiking only, horse riding, hunting, off-highway vehicle access, biking, etc. With luck,

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article, from the Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA) September newsletter, was written before the proposed new Alberta Parks Act was withdrawn by Minister Ady. However, all the questions in the article are as relevant today as they were before. See "Alberta Issues in Brief" pg 5.

the few Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves could be Zone C (Conservation). We are told there will be no downgrading of protection, but the name changes convey very different expectations, and the Zones can be changed at any time by Ministerial order.

SAPAA reps Pete Kershaw and Alison Dinwoodie spoke briefly to Deputy Minister Bill Werry after the banquet on Saturday evening. He said it is important to get the Parks Act through this fall, because the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation (TPR) has to be able to coordinate it with regional Land Use Framework (LUF) plans. Asked if the law would define the intent of parks, he said conservation will be a primary objective. We can only hope!

NEGOTIATIONS AND REGULATIONS

Detailed regulations are not part of this new legislation, but will be debated sometime during the next year. A Memorandum of Understanding must be negotiated first, between TPR and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) to determine who has jurisdiction over which lands. Once jurisdiction has been finalized, TPR will have more authority to enforce regulations on the land it controls. As Stewards at the conference pointed out, there is no point having regulations if you



WRITING-ON-STONE PROVINCIAL PARK, ONE OF MANY SENSITIVE ALBERTA GEMS.

can't enforce them, and a lot more funding will be required to do this.

OTHER COMMENTS

At the Stewards Chat session on Sunday, Stewards expressed concern about the lack of information on and participation in parks and protected areas plans. This is not entirely the fault of parks staff, as communication within and between departments appears to be limited. Dr. Guy Swinnerton also had some interesting comments. Swinnerton is an international expert on parks, and has been a respected member of various national and international committees dealing with biodiversity and conservation. He said that the proposed Plan for Parks is a major regression, setting Alberta back over 60 years in terms of conservation progress. The Plan does not conform to any of the international standards for maintaining world inventories or protecting biodiversity, and it confirms Alberta's lack of commitment to meaningful conservation initiatives.

LAND USE FRAMEWORK (LUF) SESSION

Rebecca Reeves, a LUF planner for TPR, started



QUAD-INITIATED FIRE IN BEAVERHILL NATURAL AREA.

with the 3 objectives: 1) healthy ecosystems and environment, 2) people-friendly communities with recreational and cultural opportunities and 3) a healthy economy supported by our people and natural resources. Although "healthy environment" is now shown first in fact sheets, she mentioned that they all have equal importance, so there will probably be the usual trade-offs. Will environment be shifted to the bottom of the list? Rebecca also mentioned that the new Alberta Land Stewardship Act has the potential to over-rule municipal plans, if they are not in the best overall (provincial) interests.

One encouraging aspect is that as the new Parks Plan is being aligned with the LUF, TPR is expected to take a much greater lead in the LUF deliberations. Gaps in the Parks system will be addressed, more cumulative effects will be taken into account, and more information on recreation features and Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be made available. An attempt is also being made to put a value on scenic and conservation lands. Management of recreation on public lands also has to be implemented. A survey was recently distributed by SRD on proposed Regulations under the Public Lands Act.

CAPTIVATED AUDIENCE AT STRATHCONA WILDERNESS CENTRE



The Future of Alberta's Protected Areas?

BY LINDA KERSHAW

At this point, no one can say what the future holds for many of our current protected areas under the new Parks Act.

Who decides how each Natural Area, Wilderness Area, Ecological Reserve, etc. fits into the new Parks system? Although the reorganization is supposed to simplify land classification, there are many worrying, unanswered questions, and a lot of land is at stake. The classification and control of over 300,000 ha of land, designated under the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act, has yet to be determined. Decisions will define who controls these areas, and how each site will be classified and managed in the future.

What criteria will be used to define and delineate the new Park Zones? If an area was originally designated as a Conservation Subtype, will it automatically be zoned for Conservation? Will all Recreation Subtypes now be zoned for Recreation? What about Education sites or sites that haven't been given a Subtype designation? Once Zones have been assigned, which lands will be controlled by the Tourism, Parks and Recreation Department



PELICANS FEEDING IN THE BAY AT HASTINGS LAKE NATURAL AREA (PNT)

(TPR) and which by Sustainable Resource Development (SRD)?

Of special concern for many Stewards is the future of our unprotected Natural Areas. Five Natural Areas (total 2,310 ha) have Consultative Notation* (CNT) and 104 sites (total 41,976 ha) have Protective Notation** (PNT). This

means that 109 sites still are not protected by Order-In-Council. What will become of them? Few are publicized and most lack Stewards, so they are easily overlooked in the greater scheme of things. Stewards of PNTs might want to inquire into the proposed reclassification of their sites.

*Consultative Notation (CNT) is an Alberta government designation used to "flag" an interest in the land by a particular agency. CNTs don't place restrictions on land use, but alert potential applicants to the agency's concern.

** Protective Notation (PNT) is an Alberta government reservation placed on a piece of land that allows the province to restrict certain land uses and to identify management guidelines in order to achieve conservation objectives. Restrictions on land use are based on the characteristics of the land itself.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article, from SAPAA's September newsletter, was written before the proposed new Alberta Parks Act was withdrawn by Minister Ady. However, all the questions in the article are as relevant today as they were before. See "Alberta Issues in Brief" pg 5.

May 2010 Bird Species Count

BY JUDY BOYD

The general consensus for the 2010 May Bird Species Count was that the weather was lousy! There were a number of Counts that didn't happen this year.

The number of species was down in 2010: from 280 in '09 to 269 this year. Number of individual birds also went down: from 269,851 to 217,140. In 2009, the most numerous species was Franklin's



NORTHERN FLICKERS WERE SEEN IN ALL AREAS THAT REPORTED. RICK PRICE

Gull (37,211), second was Canada Goose (13,347) and third was Red-winged Blackbird (13,266). This year, the top three didn't change, but the numbers dropped: Franklin's Gull (17,360), Canada Goose (12,748) and Red-winged Blackbird (10,878).

Last year, 27 species were seen in only one location and 12 species in only two locations around the province. This year, it was 33 species in only one location and 16 species in only two locations. Of the single sightings: Spruce Grouse (with a count week bird (CW) seen at Cold Lake), Northern Shrike and Common

Redpoll at BowKan Birders; Lapland Longspur at Brooks (with a CW at Cold Lake); Peregrine Falcon, Northern Pygmy Owl, and Dusky Flycatcher at Calgary; Bullock's Oriole and Northern Cardinal at Claresholm; Greater White-fronted Goose (only seen here during CW), Yellow Rail (and a CW at Calgary), Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone (only during CW), Parasitic Jaeger, Pacific Loon, Sabine's Gull, Sedge Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, and Harris's Sparrow at Cold Lake; Wild Turkey and American Tree Sparrow at Crowsnest Pass; Bohemian Waxwing at Fort McMurray (with a CW at Lac La Biche); Palm Warbler and Golden-crowned Sparrow at Lac La Biche; Yellow-breasted Chat at Medicine Hat; Snow Goose at Taber-Vauxhall; and Dusky Grouse, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Steller's



FIRST PLACE – FRANKLIN'S GULL. AVICEDA/WIKICOMMONS

Jay, Cassin's Finch (with a CW at Crowsnest Pass), White-winged Crossbill (with a CW at Cold Lake) and Pine Grosbeak at Waterton.

Of the species found in two locations: Northern Goshawk (with a CW at Calgary) and Semipalmated Plover at Central Alberta and Cold Lake; White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Herring Gull, Barred Owl (with a CW at Central Alberta), Nashville Warbler, and Nelson's Sparrow at Calgary and Cold Lake; Burrowing Owl at Brooks and Fort McMurray; Great Gray Owl at Calgary and Central Alberta; Cape May Warbler at Calgary and Fort McMurray; Connecticut Warbler at Cold Lake and Lac La Biche; Canada Warbler at Cold Lake and Fort McMurray; Grasshopper Sparrow at Brooks and Taber-Vauxhall; Red Crossbill at Calgary and Lac La Biche; and Indigo Bunting at Central Alberta and Claresholm.

Last year, 5 species were seen in all areas that reported; however, this year we upped that to 15 species in all areas: Canada Goose, Mallard, American Coot, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped

Chickadee, American Robin, Yellow Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird. In 2009, 3 species were found in all but one area and 11 species in all but two count areas. This year, it was 10 species in all areas but one: Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Least Flycatcher (one of the areas saw it only during CW), Common Raven, Barn Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler (only during CW in one of the areas) and Clay-coloured Sparrow. Four species were found in all areas except two: Northern Shoveler (one of the areas saw it only during CW), Black-billed Magpie, Cliff Swallow and Common Yellowthroat.



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS WERE THE THIRD MOST COMMON SPECIES AND ONE OF FIFTEEN SPECIES SEEN IN ALL AREAS. SANDRA HAWKINS

For full results from each bird count area, check the Nature Alberta website: www.naturealberta.ca.

Watch for word on your local area's Spring and Summer Species Counts, and sign up to take part. It is fun even when the weather is not overly good!

Ponderables

"Climb up on some hill at sunrise. Everybody needs perspective once in a while, and you'll find it there."

ROBB SAGENDORPH

Nature Alberta Conservation Strategy for Large Carnivores in Alberta

INTRODUCTION

This document is a result of a request by the President of Nature Alberta (Federation of Alberta Naturalists) to develop a position statement on a conservation strategy for Alberta large carnivores. Definition of large carnivores in this case is restricted to bears (both Grizzly and Black Bear), Cougars and Wolves. The policy was approved by Nature Alberta's Board of Directors on Sept 25, 2010.

We can assume that the distribution of these species was widespread in 1754, when Anthony Henday, first European to visit Alberta, explored the region. In general, the Grizzly Bear population likely occupied much of the Great Plains region, all of the Rocky Mountains/ foothills region, portions of the boreal forests and most of the Aspen Parkland regions. Similarly Cougar likely were common along the Rocky Mountains, probably also some areas in the southern half of the province in the Cypress Hills, and along major rivers with incised coulees. Wolf distribution was the most widespread and covered all bio-geographic regions of the province. Black Bear occupied the same ranges as the Wolf population with the exception of the Great Plains where the species was largely

excluded because of the presence of Grizzly Bears.

Since the arrival and expansion of Europeans in Canada, the numbers of large carnivores have declined significantly. Expansion of human activities resulted in the shrinking of carnivore distribution to more remote wilderness areas where direct competition between man and carnivores was generally reduced. Cattle and sheep production created problems, as carnivores have resorted at times to predation on domestic livestock. In areas without livestock production, farming practices (mostly grain production) often have depleted most of the natural prey for larger carnivores, thus rendering these areas less suitable for Wolves, Grizzly Bears and Cougars.

Declines of the large carnivores are the consequence of countless and cumulative actions by humans that have resulted in the incremental erosion of suitable habitat. This historic decline has involved the permanent loss of natural systems in some areas and impacted functional systems in other areas. However, it is notable that all the original carnivore species are still present within representative ecosystems in the province.

The foothills and mountains, and associated valley systems

are particularly important to the survival of Grizzly Bears and Cougars. Black Bears frequent these areas but are also widespread in the northern half of the province. Habitat fragmentation is a major problem in providing suitable refugia for large carnivores. This is particularly true for the Grizzly Bear population. The problems associated with increased access to wilderness areas through road construction have been well documented.

Nature Alberta is particularly supportive of the Y to Y initiatives (Yukon to Yellowstone), which attempt to consolidate as much as possible the existing wilderness areas, and reverse negative human impacts on adjacent, potentially suitable areas for carnivore conservation. The diversity of large mammals, including a full range of large and mid-sized carnivores, found in the Rocky Mountains and foothills areas are not exceeded elsewhere in North America. Alberta's share of that range is of key concern and importance. Currently, there are significant portions of the Alberta Rockies and foothills that provide varying degrees of habitat preservation and protection from human influences. Large carnivores, though, have very large home range requirements

and that results in the need for buffer zones around core protected areas to reduce the loss of wide-ranging individuals (bears) or social units (wolves). Many reserves were originally set aside to protect landscape features (eg. National Parks) rather than to preserve ecologically sustainable functional units. Appropriate inter-institutional management programs (federal and provincial agencies) need to be put in place to overcome those deficiencies.

GRIZZLY BEAR (*URSUS ARCTOS*)

Of the four named large carnivores in question, our greatest concern is that of the fate of Grizzly Bears. Scientific evidence suggests that the 2010 Alberta Grizzly population is estimated at about 760 individuals. Some populations are fragmented and contain fewer than 100 bears. That number is alarmingly low. We fully support the management recommendations to delineate an immediate moratorium of any new road access corridors into designated Grizzly range areas, rapid closures of some road systems and carefully controlled access to other roads where a high level of need has been established by Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee. We urge that all decisions be based on a scientifically defensible basis, involving peer review and a fair public review process. Nature Alberta does not, on principle, oppose a limited and controlled hunting of bears. Limits need to be set very low, and be reviewed as conditions change. However, we suggest that such hunts can only be supported if it is shown

that the Grizzly Bear population is not negatively impacted by it. We recognize the negative optics that hunts create; therefore, in the light of good will, and to reduce negative publicity, we recommend that such actions not be taken. Hunting of bears will never result in a consensus of all interest groups. For the sake of a few bears, we therefore suggest that a no hunting policy would be in the best interest of moving on with Grizzly Bear conservation issues and concentrate efforts on habitat protection.

COUGAR (*FELIS CONCOLOR*)

In relation to Cougar conservation, we see no significant issues in the near future, with the possible exception of the adjunct population in the Cypress Hills area. We urge the province to continue monitoring any changes in the status of this carnivore.

BLACK BEAR (*URSUS AMERICANUS*)

We do not see any major problems with Black Bear conservation, although, the once prevalent market for bear gall bladders, and other parts, needs to be closely monitored.

WOLF (*CANIS LUPUS*)

Wolf conservation is in a constant state of public concern. Nature Alberta opposes any large scale programs of Wolf control to increase ungulate populations for consumptive use. However, we do not rule out the need for limited controls when it is scientifically defensible. Nature Alberta is supportive of Wolf control to assist in the conservation of Alberta's

Woodland and Mountain Caribou; such actions, however, must be preceded by well-executed plans and actions to protect Caribou's year-round habitats.

We believe, that the need for more intensive Caribou studies is well past, and we are at a stage where our knowledge base scientifically justifies immediate and broad scale actions to protect remaining Caribou herds and to increase their numbers by broad scale management actions. These actions include aggressive and effective predator (i.e. Wolf) control, but only when preceding or in conjunction with on-the-ground, active habitat protection.*

It is important, though, to carefully monitor the effects of such control programs on the desired Caribou recovery. Ultimately, it may also be necessary to establish large predator free enclosures to aid in Caribou conservation. Such actions should not be an end in itself, but could be used as a tool to more broadly put in place the most efficient, and balanced, approach to nature protection and conservation.

*NOTE: In relation to the Large Carnivore Policy, it is stated in one section of Nature Alberta's Pesticide Policy that:

The Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN) does not support indiscriminate use of pesticides, but recognizes that there are some situations where use is warranted. However, FAN supports the complete ban of the chemical pesticide, strichnine.

FAN does not support widespread, untargeted use of chemical pesticide on native ecosystems for any purpose, including the suppression of one species to favour other species for economic reasons.

In Memoriam

She was filled with good humour.

Her personality and warmth made you feel like you were a good friend even after a first meeting with her. She loved the outdoors and nature.

Previously Editor of the *Sagebrush Chronicle* (Grasslands Naturalists' newsletter), Barb was extremely active with the Society as well as with other animal and wildlife rights causes. Her dedication and

passion for the environment was truly an example to those who knew her or worked with her.

On Sunday, Sept 19, Barb Kuz passed away at home at the age of fifty-one after a year-long battle with a brain tumour and cancer. Nature Alberta sends its condolences to Barb's husband, Wade, as well as her family and friends. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

FALL 2010

37

Barb Kuz



(1959-2010)

The Prairie & Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program

Wetlands are an important part of the prairie landscape, improving water quality by filtering and absorbing pollutants, recycling nutrients that move through the natural environment, and providing habitat for many animal and plant species. In recent decades there has been a drastic reduction in the amount and quality of wetland habitats across North America, particularly in the Prairie Provinces of Canada. As a result, many wetland-associated bird species have been in decline.

To improve conservation efforts for several species of wetland-associated birds, we need to improve our knowledge of species distribution, and patterns of species occupancy in relation to habitat characteristics. In partnership with the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture, Bird Studies Canada (BSC) began the Prairie & Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program (PPMMP).

Prairie and Parkland Marsh Monitoring Survey Coverage



K. Brewster
Surveys of marsh birds are conducted at wetlands across all three Prairie Provinces.

The PPMMP seeks to link the occurrence of wetland-associated birds to habitat characteristics at varying spatial scales

(i.e. wetland-specific to landscape-level); the overall goal being to serve efforts to conserve and manage habitats for wetland-associated birds. Support for this program has been generously provided by Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta NAWMP Science Fund,

Ducks Unlimited Canada, Environment Canada, Manitoba Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, TD Friends of the Environment Fund and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

Become a marsh bird monitor!

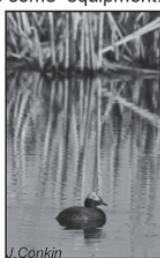
BSC is seeking enthusiastic individuals that have bird identification skills to conduct marsh bird surveys at these locations. Marsh monitoring is a fun activity that gives people an opportunity to experience a group of birds that are often overlooked!



K. Brewster

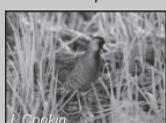
Marsh bird surveys involve recording all birds detected during a 15-minute period at a specified survey location. Participants will survey a route of ~6-8 survey stations, which in most cases will require walking a few kilometers over uneven terrain, a minimum of three times throughout the survey period (May 20th – June 31st). Surveys are conducted between sunrise and 10am or between 6pm and sunset to coincide with peak bird activity. The survey targets 10 focal species (including rails, bitterns, and grebes), but many other wetland-associated birds are documented. Participants need to be able to identify 60 species of birds by sight and ~60% of these birds by sound. Participants will require some equipment.

Training materials will be provided, but prior experience with bird identification is necessary. Participation in this program can require as little as 20 hours per year, but we encourage folks to do as many surveys as they wish. Volunteer opportunities also exist to annotate audio recordings of bird calls made in the field. Participants must be proficient with all target species vocalizations and be willing to annotate a minimum of twelve 5-minute recordings within a set deadline. Headphones and a computer are required.



J. Conkin

To learn more about the program, please visit our website at:
<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/ppmmp/index.jsp>



Or contact Katherine Brewster:

prairieprograms@birdscanada.org
(306) 249-2894
115 Perimeter Rd. Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X4

CELESTIAL HAPPENINGS

Starry Nights

Winter/Spring: February to April

BY JOHN MCFAUL

FEATURED CONSTELLATIONS: HYDRA, CRATER AND CORVUS

With the coming spring, the brilliant winter constellations of Orion and his retinue will soon be leaving the western celestial stage. They will be replaced by the less prominent spring constellations. The lack of bright stars in our spring sky is because at this time of year our gaze is directed away from the plane of our galaxy toward the less populated regions above us and beyond into intergalactic space.

There are a few prominent spring constellations such as Leo, the Lion, and Virgo, the Virgin which have already been discussed in previous articles. However, the rest of them do require a little more diligence to see, especially when viewed from urban centres.

Beneath the lounging lion and the virtuous goddess lies Hydra, the Water Snake, the largest of the 88 officially recognized constellations. The head of Hydra consists of a small circlet of stars beneath Cancer, the Crab. Its sinuous body consists of a line of faint stars stretching east almost to the constellation Libra, the Scales. The brightest of these stars is 2nd magnitude Alphard, located below Regulus, the principal star of Leo.

Hydra represents the nine-headed serpent that lived in the Lerna marshes. It was the second task of

Hercules to dispatch this terrifying creature. This task was made much more difficult because two new heads sprouted from each severed stump. Fortunately Hercules friend Iolaus joined the fight and managed to sear each stump with a flaming torch before the new heads could form.



Lying above the tail of Hydra are the small constellations of Corvus, the Crow, and Crater, the Cup. One story tells of Apollo sending the white Crow to fetch him some water in his cup. The crow lingered waiting for some figs to ripen. He lied to Apollo saying that his tardiness was due to Hydra. Thus he was turned black and his beautiful voice was changed to the dry cawing that we hear today.

CELESTIAL HAPPENINGS

Sun: Rise – Feb 1 (8:19 MST), March 1 (7:22 MST), April 1 (7:07 MDT)
Set – Feb 1 (17:16 MST), March 1 (18:11 MST), April 1 (20:09 MDT)

*Note: Day Light Savings Time will start on March 13th.
Spring Equinox occurs at 17:21 MST on March 20th.*

Moon: Full – Feb 18, March 19, April 3
New – Feb 2, March 4, April 17

Planets: **Mercury** will emerge from the solar glare in mid-March when it will lie above Jupiter in the western sky just after sunset.

Venus will be very low in the ESE sky just before sunrise from February to early March. It will be close to the crescent Moon on March 1st.

Mars will lie to close to the sun to be seen except perhaps the last few days of April when it will rise just before the Sun. It will be close to Jupiter at this time.

Jupiter can be seen low in the western sky after sunset from February through to mid-March. The thin crescent Moon will be close by on Feb. 6th and March 6th.

Saturn rises above the eastern horizon in the late evenings this spring and is best placed in the southern sky in the early morning hours. It will be close to the full Moon on Feb. 21st and March 20th.

At the end of April Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Venus will be aligned together very low in the eastern sky just before sunrise.

Meteor Shower: Lyrids , April 21, 15/hour in a dark sky

The rate of meteors observed is for dark skies well away from city lights and with no Moon.

CLUB PAGE



Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association

Stewards of Alberta Protected Areas Association (SAPAA) has been a Nature Alberta Associate Club since 2002.

SAPAA represents steward volunteers from around the province who are responsible for the monitoring of activities in their Protected Area and advising the AB Parks Department.

Stewards have a unique and intimate knowledge of what is happening in their areas. Many of its members have been working as volunteer stewards for close to two decades. They have invested years of work in Alberta's Protected Areas and they want to ensure that the integrity of Protected Areas is retained for future generations. You are encouraged to check out its new website: <http://sapaa.stewards.com/>. They hope that the site, still in its early stages, will become a place where Stewards and others can share information and ideas about Alberta's protected areas.

PURPOSES OF SAPAA

1. To establish a network of Volunteer Stewards to exchange information and expertise and to provide mutual assistance and support.

2. To promote the preservation, protection and restoration of the ecological integrity of Alberta's Protected Areas.
3. To promote the use of Alberta's Protected Areas for educational and research purposes, and for nonintrusive, nature-oriented activities compatible with each individual site.
4. To identify common issues of concern in Alberta's Protected Areas for the purpose of dealing with them more effectively and comprehensively.
5. To work with appropriate government departments and with other groups and agencies to resolve issues regarding actions and activities that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
6. To represent members of the Association at meetings of stakeholders and in events, issues and situations that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.

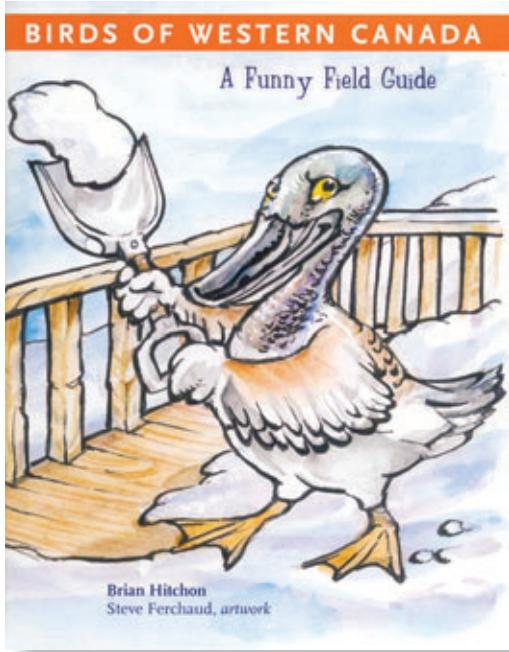
MEMBERSHIP

Membership in SAPAA is open to anyone who:

- Is a Steward who volunteers time assisting in the care and management of Alberta's Protected Areas (i.e., lands currently set aside under the Alberta Provincial Parks Act, the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas & Heritage Rangeland Act, and the Willmore Wilderness Act); and
- Is in general agreement with the above Purposes of the Association.

If you require more information:

Contact Alison Dinwoodie – phone 780-437-7183; email adinwoodie@shaw.ca; or Peter & Linda Kershaw – phone 780-662-3626; email lkershaw@xplornet.com



The "field guide" is \$6.75 and is available at Wildbird General Store, Geoscience Publishing (Box 79088, Sherwood Park AB T8A 5S3) and other bookshops in Edmonton.

Birds of Western Canada: A Funny Field Guide

BY BRIAN HITCHON AND STEVE FERCHAUD

A cute little 28-page booklet, called Birds of Western Canada: A Funny Field Guide, has been put out by Geoscience Publishing. The booklet is 28 pages of cartoons "for the birdwatcher who wants a different description of western Canadian birds to assist in their identification." The cover, which illustrates a *Northern Shoveler*, gives the reader the idea of what it's all about.

Nature Alberta *Celebrating our natural heritage!*

Nature Alberta welcomes submissions of articles, photos, humour and other suitable material on Alberta's natural history. Submission guidelines for articles and photos are available on the NA website at www.naturealberta.ca.

Subscribe Today!

REGULAR » \$30 per year

2-YEAR » \$55

SUPPORTING: SUBSCRIPTION RATE
PLUS DONATION (tax receipts issued upon
request) » \$40 or more per year

Your support means
a great deal to
Nature Alberta and its
conservation objectives.

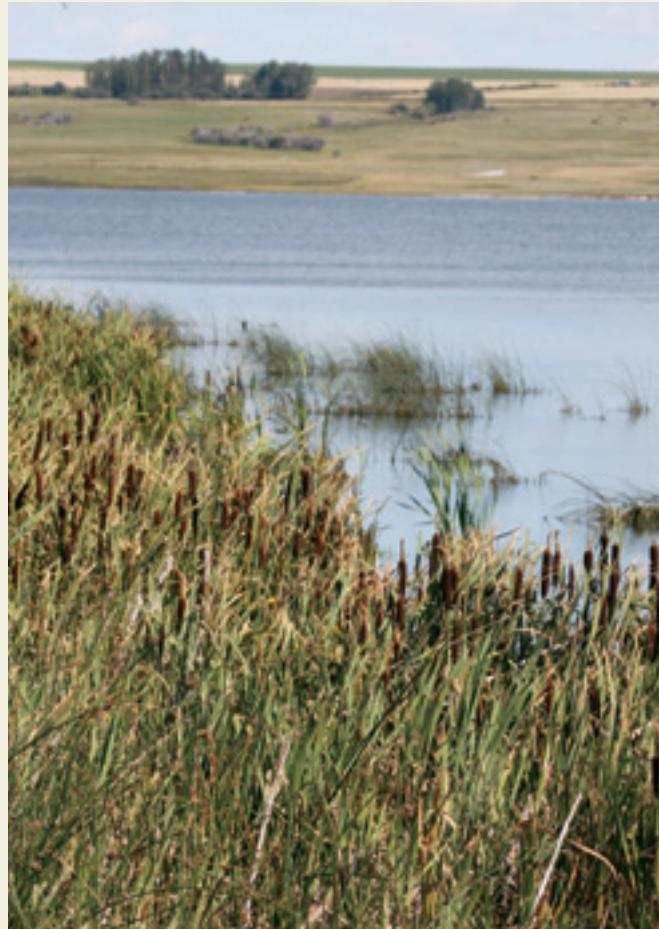
MAIL TO:
Nature Alberta
Attn: Membership
11759 Groat Road
Edmonton, AB
T5M 3K6





A RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD
FILLING UP BEFORE
CONTINUING SOUTH FOR
THE WINTER; SEE STORY,
PG 8. CATHY MOUNTAIN

ALONG THE WEST SHORE OF EAGLE LAKE; SEE "EYES ON IBAS" STORY,
PG 27. CHUCK PRIESTLEY



JUDY BOYD AND OTIS WERE BOTH BIG HITS AT THE NATURE ALBERTA SEPT
MEETING. SEE THE STORY AND MORE PHOTOS, PG 9. JORDAN BROWN



VOLUME 40 | NUMBER 3 | FALL 2010

Nature gallery



A BLACK BEAR FILLING UP FOR HIBERNATION. PAUL HORSLEY PHOTOGRAPHY



PRINTED ON  ENVIRO 100 PRINT

NATURE ALBERTA 11759 GROAT ROAD, EDMONTON, AB, T5M 3K6 PHONE: 780.427.8124 FAX: 780.422.2663



NATURE
ALBERTA