

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



TREE SWALLOWS. SANDRA HAWKINS

feature article

Picturing Love of Nature



GRIZZLY BEAR MOTHER AND CUB IN THE FOOTHILLS. KIRK DAVIS

**PYRAMID LAKE,
JASPER NATIONAL PARK.**
ASHLEY HOCKENBERRY



*Nature Alberta:
Celebrating our natural heritage*

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JUNE VERMEULEN.

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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.

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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

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Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild	Friends of Little Beaver Lake Society
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President's Report 2010

BY CHUCK PRIESTLEY, NATURE ALBERTA PRESIDENT (2010-11)

For Nature Alberta, the year 2010 was defined by challenges and a heavy workload. However, we maintain our sense of optimism and enthusiasm about future opportunities for our organization and the goals we collectively aim to address.

After becoming President in April 2010, I enjoyed the opportunity to work closely throughout the year with our Executive Director, Philip Penner, and our Executive, Ted Hindmarch (Vice President), Peichen Gu (Treasurer) and Sandra Foss (Past President). Our Secretary position remained vacant during 2010 [a position now filled by Iris Davies – Ed] but duties which this position requires were taken on by Project Coordinator and Office Administrator, Christine Brown. We appreciated Christine's offer to help and for all her additional effort and support in this regard. The Executive also appreciated input from Dennis Baresco during various meetings and online communications.

Financially, Nature Alberta's cash flow constraints continued during 2010. This challenge was met head-on by Philip with positive support from Christine. Many of our Executive meeting discussions were focused on this ongoing challenge. Kudos to the Nature Alberta team for keeping

the organization afloat and for continuing to weather what has been a difficult financial storm.

Despite being in the midst of a tough financial situation, there is a sense of optimism and eagerness about future opportunities. The team is pursuing new funding opportunities with Foundations and exploring ways to most effectively engage potential corporate sponsors. In addition to fundraising with the Hypothermic Half Marathon (in partnership with The Running Room) again this year, Nature Alberta worked on new fundraising initiatives with the Edmonton Oil Kings. Not only did these events bring in money for the organization, they were also new and interesting ways to engage with the public, our membership and partners. Positive feedback was received from people who volunteered at these events. Many volunteers expressed interest in participating in the events next year. Certainly a good sign!

Despite funding shortfalls and reduced staffing capacity, Nature Alberta continued to run its three core programs, Living by Water, Young Naturalists and Important Bird Areas, during 2010. A heightened interest emerged for finding new ways to further

integrate these projects. There is a feeling that bringing these projects closer together could create efficiencies and increase effectiveness of each. Also, staff are exploring new ways to address the goals of these projects in closer partnership with the clubs. There are good opportunities to work together to address common goals and needs.

Added interest and discussion has been surfacing about how best to engage members under our newly adopted membership structure. Nature Alberta now has a new way to engage with Albertans via membership for individuals. There might be opportunities to bring in the folks who might not want to join a nature club but are inclined to support a provincial nature-oriented organization. For example, they might not want to (or have time to) join a nature club but might see value in contributing to, or hearing more about, projects which involve youth engagement with nature such as our Young Naturalists program.

Our new communication tool, Nature Alberta's e-Newsletter, was well-received during its first full year of distribution. This online tool, which was launched in March 2010, was used to

share nature-related points of interest to a wide audience across the province. Nature Alberta staff were also excited to use this tool to help share important information about club news and events.

Lu Carbyn developed a guiding principle policy for the four large predators in Alberta (wolf, cougar, grizzly bear and black bear). This policy was adopted during the Board meeting in September and printed in the Fall 2010 issue of *Nature Alberta* (Vol 40, # 3). Many thanks to Lu for his hard work on that. These types of policies are needed to ensure that our organization's positions on various topics or

concerns are clearly defined and accessible.

In closing, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all those who contributed to Nature Alberta during 2010. We all share the common feeling that Nature

in Alberta is something worth celebrating. Our organization would not exist without a blend of hardworking volunteers, devoted staff and strong partnerships with other organizations. Thank you for all that you do.



GREAT GREY OWL NEAR EDSON AB, MARCH 25, 2011. CHUCK PRIESTLEY

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:

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Editor's Page

BY DENNIS BARESCO

THE PUBLIC INTEREST

A while ago, a friend of our Past President, Sandra Foss, sent her a note responding to the submission which Nature Alberta and Grasslands Naturalists made to the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC). In our submission, we were requesting standing in the proposed public hearing for the Wild Rose 1 Industrial Wind Facility north of the Cypress Hills. He took offense to our claim that we are “mandated to represent the public interest... to ensure that the public interest is met...” Said he:

“Who and/or under what authority does FAN [Nature Alberta] and GN have to speak on my behalf? I have elected representatives and chosen organizations that I have chosen to [do] this. Don't make claims to represent the public and me without my consent. That is a misrepresentation of FANs and GNs status.”

He brought up an intriguing point. The fact is, it's always a good idea for any organization to occasionally evaluate its mandate, to question its claims, to look inward. And so, I thought about what he wrote and responded with the best explanation I could muster.

As registered charities, if our organizations represented only our own members, we would be seriously remiss, at the very least, in our moral and ethical obligation to fulfill our legal mandate. Obviously,

there are those members of the public who, for example, do not wish to protect wildlife, but that's not the point. The fact remains and it is indisputable that wildlife biodiversity and a healthy environment are in the general welfare of the public – both in the immediate and in the long term.

Our representing the public interest becomes clearer if one understands the definition of that term. *Black's Law Dictionary* (eighth edition) defines public interest as “the general welfare of the public that warrants recognition and protection” or “something in which the public as a whole has a stake, esp. an interest that justifies governmental regulation.” That is a reasonably good, in-a-nutshell definition.

Admittedly, exactly what that constitutes is not easy to determine; it seems to be a lot easier to determine what **isn't** in the public interest. Individuals may well consider ecological damage, generated for their own short term gratification, to be to their personal welfare, but that is their private interests; such things may be bad for society – bad for the general welfare of the public. And, as we all well know, there are a great many examples where elected representatives do NOT work for the public interest. Essentially, that is why many non-profits continue to exist: to provide for the general welfare of society a service that

may be deficient or lacking altogether. For the naturalist groups that make up Nature Alberta, that service is ecological protection and conservation.

It's true that we do not speak directly for any one person, but neither do we speak only for our members. As community service organizations, our voice is spoken and our work is done in “the public interest.” There is a world of difference between public interest groups (eg Rotarians) and what could be called hobby groups who, though they may do some community work, are together mainly to pursue their hobby amongst their hobbyist peers.

There is another important distinction: we are NOT, as he said in the same note, “fighting the wind farm industry.” In her reply, Sandra put what we are doing very well: “defending wildlife and attempting to educate the wind industry about the damaging effects on wildlife, and how placement of turbines is key & critical to the survival of much wildlife.” To that end, Nature Alberta and Grasslands Naturalists are strongly against placing turbines and infrastructure on, for example, native prairie, one reason being that such placement is completely unnecessary.

In the end, I think that my comments make it clearer why we, and the vast majority of ENGOs (environmental non-government organizations) use terms like public interest, and why to do so is not “a misrepresentation of FANs and GNs status”; it is, in fact, one of our major roles in society and one expected of us if we are to fulfill the conditions of our charitable status.

cont'd on page 5

The gentleman who wrote the note (who himself is very active in NGOs) accepted my explanation, with the caveat that we should still be careful when making claims. That's good advice for all of us – and a good exercise in making any organization accountable.

It's...uh...??



HOLLE HAHN

Time for some fun! This photo was taken in mid-April on the road to the photographer's house in Westeros AB. Can you guess what it is?

Send your answers to:

wildhavn@memlane.com

Answer and winner(s) will be announced in the next Nature Alberta. The prize? Naturalist bragging rights and a pat on the back from Nature Alberta!

On the Covers:



FRONT COVER

Tree Swallows are found throughout Alberta. Their numbers appear to be increasing, probably because they very readily use nest boxes – sometimes to the chagrin of those who run Mountain Bluebird nest box trails! Like all swallows, which fly swiftly and erratically, photographing them in flight borders on the impossible; however, patience can reward one with a scene such as captured by Sandra Hawkins. See the Feature Story, page 24.



INSIDE FRONT COVER

For naturalists and photographers like Kirk Davis, few things in nature match the excitement of spotting a Grizzly, in particular if there are cubs trailing along. Long lenses are helpful and beat trying to stalk a Grizzly and cub for a close-up! Besides, distance provides a scene that tells a story, always a bonus in photography.



Pyramid Lake is in Jasper National Park at the foot of Pyramid Mountain which overlooks Jasper townsite. A relatively small lake, it drains into Pyramid Creek and then the Athabasca River. It is truly beautiful, as Ashley Hockenberry's photo illustrates.



INSIDE BACK COVER

Mount Yamnuska, or just "Yamnuska" as it is often called, is close to Calgary on the north side of the Bow Valley. Its official name is Mount John Laurie, but the native name Yamnuska – meaning "wall of stone" – is what it is called most commonly. Its south cliff, shown here in Bonnie Mullins' photo, is huge: 360 metres (1,200 ft) high and almost two kilometres wide.



American Avocets obviously make for stunning photography (see Sandra Hawkins' photography story, pg 24). With a recurved bill for scraping food from mud and water and, unlike most shorebirds, the ability to swim, they are also interesting and unusual subjects for birdwatchers.



Rick Price has a knack for being there when a great photo is about to happen. And really, does it get any cuter than this? It is hard not to crack a big smile when looking at this little Black Bear cub!



BACK COVER

A pleasant day, a hillside of wildflowers, Mount Allen rising in the distance...ahhhh, Nature: how splendid and rewarding! And how lucky we are that Bonnie Mullin carries her camera with her. Mount Allen (often spelled "Allan") is on the Continental Divide.

ALBERTA ISSUES IN BRIEF

At Risk! Grasslands

“Potatogate” isn’t over! The plan to turn 16,000 acres of mostly native prairie near Bow Island into potato monoculture still appears to be in the works. There are strong rumours and open talk that the government has told the potato proponent to wait until the dust settles and then apply again. Of course, despite Alberta-wide condemnation of this project when it was uncovered, the fact that it is still “a go” is no surprise to anyone – more of a foregone conclusion.

What can we all do? Stay vigilant and informed. And when it comes up again – raise a fuss! Raise a BIG fuss!

At Risk! National Parks

“On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada’s natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.” So reads Parks Canada’s mandate.

Sounds good, but what is happening now is seriously disturbing, and that is not an exaggeration. As Rod Wallace, on behalf of the Park Warden Alumni Society of Alberta, states, there now “appears to be a redirection of park priorities [and] shift in park management to a tourism

At Risk! Greater-Sage Grouse

With probably less than 100 Greater-Sage Grouse in Alberta (and a similar number in Saskatchewan), the terms “At Risk” and “Endangered” are overly optimistic. Dr Mark Boyce has suggested that this magnificent, iconic grassland bird could be extirpated next year.

There are two major reasons for this: 1) human disturbance of critical habitat in southeastern Alberta, first and foremost from natural gas (wells, service roads, power lines and poles) but also agricultural expansion; and 2) government’s seeming indifference to extinction and unwillingness to do anything meaningful about the situation.

The provincial government has suggested releasing birds from northern Montana into southeastern

Alberta to supplement the population. Since what little habitat remains continues to be eroded, the likely result of supplementation will simply be a reduction in the Montana population.

What can we all do? Raise a fuss! Raise a BIG fuss! Ask your friends to raise a fuss! “Yeah, but it won’t help,” you say? Maybe it will, maybe it won’t. But one thing we know for sure: apathy and resignation add two more nails into the Greater-Sage Grouse coffin!



THE ROYAL GROUSE OF THE GRASSLANDS!

GORDON COURT

priority, rather than one of conservation and preservation of natural and cultural resources...” [Please read his letter, page 15 and on Nature Alberta’s website].

In fact, the increasing degradation and damage being foisted on our busier national parks (like Banff and Jasper) is leading inexorably – and faster than you might think! – to these parks being put “at risk”. And yet, much of this is completely avoidable.

The culprits are the usual suspects: lust for more money; and federal government

indifference (plus, one could add, outright hostility) to Parks Canada’s mandate. Fortunately, more and more Canadians are getting the picture – and getting angrier and angrier about turning these heritage gems into “National Amusement Parks.”

What can we all do? As with all issues: inform ourselves, and then raise a

A SCENE IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK – BORING? BETTER AS AN AMUSEMENT PARK? ASHLEY HOCKENBERRY



fuss! Raise a BIG fuss! Ask your friends to raise a fuss! One thing we know for sure: apathy and resignation will add two more nails into the National Parks coffin!

At Risk! Rehabilitated Wildlife

This story is one for “Ripley’s Believe it or Not”! Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) has a new plan to make a whole component of wildlife safer: kill them! A recent decree demands that wildlife rehabilitation centres immediately kill, rather than save, a long list of mostly smaller animals as they come in; this includes some species listed as “sensitive” and “may be at risk”. Almost all larger animals (like ungulates, felines, canids and bears) are to be turned over to SRD staff within 72 hours. Since SRD has no staff, facilities or money for rehabilitation, they will likely have to kill the animals (perhaps a few might be sold to zoos).

SRD has given some terribly weak – one might say desperately clutching-at-straws – excuses for this profoundly draconian requirement. Spokesperson Dave Ealey said that SRD staff has

Nature Alberta has a section on its website dedicated to this extremely important issue; please go to www.naturealberta.ca, under “News and Issues”.

the “scientific knowledge and experience” to make this decision. Undoubtedly they do. In which case, one has to wonder who actually made the assessment that led to the rules and why, because science strongly supports rehabilitation. In an article by Jeff Gailus in *Fast Forward Weekly* (www.ffwdweekly.com), “Dr. John Beecham, an international expert on rehabilitating bears” told Gailus that “the Alberta government has no scientific rationale for this approach,” adding: “The best you can say is that it is a weak rationale for an action that is totally out of date. Apparently, they prefer to remain in the 19th century in terms of how they respond to public demand for more responsible wildlife management” (*Fast Forward Weekly*, March 24, 2011).

This could well put Alberta’s seven wildlife rehabilitation centres in jeopardy. All seven, by the way, “operate entirely by donations from voting Albertans,” said Clio Smeeton of the Cochrane Ecological Institute (quoted in *Wildlands Advocate*, Apr 2011, Vol 19, No. 2).

Since to our knowledge, no Alberta towns have been devoured by rehabilitated Long-toed Salamanders, the question

Enbridge Northern Gateway Project

The Joint Review Panel (JRP) for the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project has issued a Hearing Order (OH-4-2011) outlining the joint review process along with the available participation options. The joint review process is designed to gather information from all viewpoints. The process is public and open to anyone who wishes to participate.

Information sessions will be held in June and July, though at the time of writing, only two in Alberta: at Bruderheim and Grande Prairie. The Panel’s website contains information about the Panel, the joint review process, and anything new about the process; go to:

www.gatewaypanel.review.gc.ca. If you would like to receive information and future updates from the Panel, you can sign up for email updates at:

Gateway.Review@ceaa-acee.gc.ca.

being asked around the province is: what on earth is the real reason?

So, what can we all do? Raise a fuss! Raise a BIG fuss! Ask your friends to raise a fuss: with Members of the Legislative Assembly, with all media outlets, with government workers (especially in SRD, most of whom probably can’t believe this either), with whoever thinks that saving orphaned animals is a good thing. And remember: apathy and resignation will add two nails into the wildlife rehabilitation coffin!



THIS BLACK BEAR CUB WAS ORPHANED DURING THE 2009 SPRING BEAR HUNT, THEN TAKEN IN BY THE COCHRANE ECOLOGICAL INSTITUTE. PERHAPS WHOEVER BROUGHT THESE RULES IN SHOULD BE THE ONES TO ACTUALLY DO THE KILLING? COCHRANE ECOLOGICAL INSTITUTE



DEBBIE GODKIN



DEBBIE GODKIN

Nature Diary: Mother Black Bear and Cubs

BY DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

When my neighbor said that he'd seen a mother bear with three cubs eating spilled grain from a bin on his property adjacent to ours, I couldn't resist the opportunity to try and photograph them.

But first, I had to persuade a friend to come and sit in the pick-up truck with me and wait, possibly for hours, for the bears to show up.

The following evening we drove over and parked so that we had a good view of the bin and the treed area behind it. We watched and waited for one, two, then

three hours in the stifling July heat, with the truck windows shut tight to keep out the mosquitoes.

Upon looking in the rear view mirror, we saw the bears approaching from behind us. The mother bear was standing up sniffing the air, with three little cubs standing beside her, with only the tops of their heads visible in the tall timothy grass. We hadn't expected the bears to come from across the hay field. The bears could go around a large group of trees and emerge at the back of the bin, or continue the path they were on, which meant they would have to walk right past the truck to get to the bin. This was getting a little too close for comfort.



DEBBIE GODKIN

We sat motionless as the mother bear lumbered past us; the cubs followed close behind her until they were at the bin. The mother bear and cubs lay down in the tall grass and began to eat the wheat that had spilled from between the rotted boards at the base of the old bin. All three cubs were a cinnamon brown color, while one had a white patch on its chest. The mother bear was as golden in color as a wheat field in the fall; the tips of her ears were frozen off giving her an aged look. We assumed the two larger cubs were males and the smaller one was a female.

Within about ten minutes, the two male cubs had satisfied their appetite and were ready for some play. They rolled about and wrestled each other in the grass. Suddenly the mother bear stood up and sniffed the air. She then went back down on all fours and slowly walked off. The cubs formed a line behind her and disappeared into the bush. A minute later, what looked like a two or three year old Black Bear emerged from the trees, only fifteen yards or so away from the trail the mother bear had just taken. She must have sensed the other bear's presence and took her cubs to safety.

The next time we only waited a matter of minutes before the bears showed up. It was apparent that they had gone for a swim in the dugout just back of the bin to cool off from the July heat

before coming to eat. They were caked with mud and dripping wet from the belly down. The bin door was open and the two male cubs climbed over the boards, lay down on top of the mound of wheat – and ate! The mother bear lay in the same spot in front of the bin along with the smallest cub and remained watchful. Having filled up on grain the two male cubs climbed out of the bin and played 'catch me if you can' around and over top of the mother bear, who showed great patience. Then one of the cubs climbed up the front of the bin into the attic opening. I raised my camera and took a few photographs through a dirty window. The cub wasn't as agile or as graceful coming down as it was going up.

One day we spotted the bears approaching from some distance away when suddenly the mother bear stopped in her tracks; immediately all three cubs made a rapid ascent up the same poplar tree. She must have given them the signal to climb. A few minutes later she signaled the cubs to come down. The cubs backed down the tree in a series of short, five foot falls, digging their front claws into the wood just enough to control the fall, and then they casually continued on the trail to the bin.

We returned every three or four days hoping to catch a glimpse of the bears. Sometimes our timetable coincided with their



THE CUBS WERE NOT AS AGILE COMING DOWN AS THEY WERE GOING UP! DEBBIE GODKIN

appetite for wheat and we were rewarded with a few minutes of the cubs' playful antics. All in all, we felt fortunate to have had a chance to observe this bear family interacting with each other in a relatively natural setting.

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!

Up Close Naturally: Fish-eating Birds

BY MARGOT HERVIEUX

Fish is a menu item for many different birds, but the slippery, fast moving creatures are not easy to catch.

This means that there are just about as many different fishing techniques as there are birds that fish.

Diving is the most common method for birds to catch fish, and loons and grebes are diving specialists. They are very stream-lined, and their feet are located at the back of their bodies where they act as flippers. The birds also have heavy, pointed bills for snapping up small fish along with other aquatic prey.

Cormorants also chase down fish under water. They are excellent swimmers using their long necks to reach fish as they pursue their zigzagging meal.

Pelicans use their famous pouches to scoop up fish, water and all, and then strain out the fish before swallowing. You will often see pelicans fishing in groups, herding their prey into tight schools before filling their bills.

Mergansers are fish-eating ducks. I have watched Red-breasted Mergansers swim around with just their heads underwater,

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



FEMALE COMMON MERGANSERS VID BIJELIC



watching for a potential meal. When they spot a fish, they dive after it, holding on to their slippery prey with tooth-like serrations on the edges of the beak. Like pelicans, they will also fish in groups.

Some birds dive onto unsuspecting prey from above. Osprey fish by flying slowly over the shallow waters of a lake before dropping onto a potential meal feet first. They have rough foot pads for grasping slippery prey and usually turn their fish to point head first before flying any distance.

Terns also dive on fish but they are after minnows which they catch with their bills. These birds are expert flyers, hovering above the water before plunging on their dinner.

Belted Kingfishers are another species that fishes from above.

They can often be seen along streams or lakeshores sitting on a branch and then suddenly diving down into the water. The birds then return to their perch, whacking live fish on the branch before swallowing.

Herons stalk fish and other prey as they wade or stand motionless in the shallows. They usually stand with their backs to the sun so that they can see passing fish in their shadow.

Herons also have a special adaptation for dealing with fish slime. They have special, powdery feathers on their neck which they work through any slimy feathers using a comb-like claw on one toe.

Whether a bird dives, hovers or stalks, fish are worth going after. The trick is developing ways to handle a slippery, wiggly meal.

COMMON LOON, WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK
RICK PRICE



Nature Alberta NEWS

"CHUCK A PUCK"

Nature Alberta held two "Chuck a Puck" Events (Oct 2/10 and Jan 22/11) at Edmonton Oil Kings games in which a total of 17 volunteers participated, helping raise well over \$2,000. Executive Director Philip Penner, on behalf of everyone at Nature Alberta, thanks all of the volunteers for coming out and having some fun to "Chuck a Puck." Their support is very much appreciated.

"COMMUNITY SPIRIT"!

The Culture and Community Spirit Department of the Alberta government has a program designed to increase individual charitable giving. The program is donor-driven, meaning it recognizes and encourages Albertans to support their favourite organizations.

Simply put, the Community Spirit Program will match your donation to Nature Alberta. For last year, we received a Community Spirit grant of \$18,731.41 – an amount that truly makes a big difference in the success of our organization, plus it gives our donors the opportunity to effectively double the value of their donation.

During the past three years of the Program, 5,031 applicants have shared a total of \$52.9 million.

CHRISTINE MOVING ON

It was with great regret that Nature Alberta accepted the resignation of Christine Brown as Office Administrator and Project Coordinator. Christine was offered, and accepted, a position with Alberta Recycling.

Christine's work with Nature Alberta for close to three years has been invaluable. Organized, efficient, knowledgeable and personable, she has been a tremendous asset to the Directors, Executive Director Philip Penner and the organization as a whole.

In her letter of resignation, Christine acknowledged the "amazing opportunity" she had at Nature Alberta. "Being part of this organization has given me a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience and has made me into a naturalist," she wrote. "I have enjoyed the challenges and issues faced and I am proud to have been part of the conservation movement in Alberta."

Nature Alberta sincerely wishes Christine a great future; she will be missed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Annual General Meeting is the time when Nature Alberta Appointed Directors and Executive are chosen and/or confirmed. Directors representing Corporate Clubs are chosen by their respective organizations (see list on page 1).

Jim Gendron has stepped down as an Appointed Director (though he will still volunteer); all other Appointed Directors were confirmed for 2011-12: Dennis Baresco, Dawn Dickinson, Peichen Gu, Ted Hindmarch, Chuck Priestley and Don Stiles.

Iris Davies, the Elected Director of the Vermilion River Naturalists, put her name forward and was acclaimed as the new Secretary for Nature Alberta. All other Executive positions were filled by acclamation as well: Chuck Priestley (President); Ted Hindmarch (Vice-President); and Peichen Gu (Treasurer). Sandra Foss rounds out the Executive as Past President, which is an additional Appointed Director position.

Awards...



VICE-PRESIDENT TED HINDMARCH WAS THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES FOR THE AWARDS BANQUET. JORDAN BROWN

AWARDS

Three awards were presented to dedicated naturalists at the Nature Alberta Annual General Meeting banquet the evening of April 2, 2011.

Frank and Alice Harper Memorial Award

There are many “unsung heroes” in naturalist groups: those people who give of themselves in carrying out the often less-than-glamorous duties associated with the running of a Club – people

who play an important role in keeping the group on track, active, organized and able to provide the services that are basic to the Club’s continued existence. Frank and Alice Harper were two such naturalists for the Lethbridge Naturalists Society (LNS). In honour of Frank and Alice, and recognizing the vital role that naturalists like them fulfill in all naturalist clubs, Nature Alberta created the annual Frank and Alice Harper Memorial Award.

recognition as a “Club Builder” after almost 25 years as Secretary, Newsletter Editor, designer and author of the Club’s Marl Pond Trail Guide, and recently writing, compiling and producing a booklet about the trees of Wagner. Patsy leads the May Species counts and a variety of organized events. She is a valuable asset to Wagner fen, and a resource for the biophysical studies and inventories of the area.

Patsy Cotterill

of the Wagner Natural Area Society of Edmonton is the 2010 recipient of Nature Alberta’s Frank and Alice Harper Memorial Award. She has more than earned

Patsy’s commitment to the Society’s mandate to protect, preserve and educate about Wagner Natural area is of tremendous value to the organization. In addition, she gives her expertise as a botanist to other Nature Alberta member groups, such as the Edmonton Nature Club, and is a founding member of the Alberta Native Plant Council and the Stewards of Alberta Natural Areas.



PAT CLAYTON PRESENTS THE FRANK AND ALICE HARPER MEMORIAL AWARD TO PATSY COTTERILL.

JORDAN BROWN

Loran Goulden Memorial Award

The Loran L. Goulden Memorial Award is the highest accolade that Alberta naturalists have to offer to those special individuals who stand out within the naturalist community. It is awarded by Nature Alberta for a life-long commitment to Natural History education.

Judy Boyd of Red Deer has demonstrated a long term passion for teaching about nature, and in many different ways: from her work with the Medicine River Wildlife Centre, to volunteering for the Red Deer River Naturalists (RDRN), to her many years as the nature nursery teacher at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre in Red Deer.

Judy has been active as a volunteer with the Red Deer River Naturalists for more than 10

years. She has served in several capacities, including RDRN president from 2004 to 2006, and since that time as secretary. Her total contributions have been in every aspect of RDRN activities and have assisted RDRN in remaining a very successful organization.

Judy also works and volunteers her time at the Medicine River Wildlife Centre; she does many different things for them, and most include teaching in one form or another. Judy deals with problem wildlife complaints, spends time with the public, assists in the production of educational handouts, helps to spearhead research programs and innovative protocols at the Centre and delivers presentations to groups inside and outside Canada, representing the Centre.

She leads many different field trips (including regular birding trips), writes newspaper columns, has organized Christmas Bird counts and compiled May Species counts for the last five years, and was on the Nature Alberta/Federation of Alberta Naturalists Board for five years, four of those on the Executive. Judy instigated the Young Naturalist's program in Alberta, and is still working with the program.

What tops everything for Judy is her infectious enthusiasm for all aspects of volunteering. She can make the dullest things fascinating just by her energy, humour, forcefulness and genuine interest. She is a true dynamo with a boundless supply of energy, never sitting still, and spreading her enthusiasm as a naturalist to all she encounters.



TONY BLAKE, NATURE ALBERTA DIRECTOR FOR THE RED DEER RIVER NATURALISTS, PRESENTS THE LORAN GOULDEN AWARD TO JUDY BOYD. JORDAN BROWN



Special Award

A "Special Award" was presented this year to Cochrane area teacher **Kim Kendall-Knitter**, from Glenbow School. The award recognizes Ms.

Kendall-Knitter, a Grade 4 teacher, for her great work teaching students about provincial issues and, in the process, how to do research, gather information and look at all sides of an issue. Their computer skills are honed and enhanced as they do research on the internet. The example she was using (at the time of the award) was the issue dubbed "Potatogate" (see sidebar).

Ms. Kendall-Knitter has taken her classes outside and done willow plantings to enhance a riparian stream bank area and learn about improving fish habitat. Students also learn skills such as film-making while they are doing these projects.

This is an innovative approach by this talented teacher, who has also planned and organized workshops to aid other staff at Glenbow School in their knowledge of local natural history and how to get the children involved: everything from water and fisheries issues, to bird life, geology, and non-native species invasions.

Ms. Kendall-Knitter works hard at building community in her classroom and tries to have her students outside as much as possible, developing an appreciation for and sense of wonder about the natural world in everything they do. She has

KIM BROUGHT A POCKET GOPHER TO CLASS, GIVING HER STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE ONE OF OUR MORE UNUSUAL CREATURES!

also helped to start a Community garden in the school yard and a school recycling program, as well as introducing worm composting.

Of course, this is all done with the blessing of the School Principal, who is supporting these innovations.



THE "POTATOGATE" EXAMPLE

Kim Kendall-Knitter's class has heard about "Potatogate" from a variety of sources. They have had presentations from a rancher who pointed out the need for land to be used to grow food, from a grass specialist, a First Nations person speaking about the sacred values of the land, a naturalist speaking about the species that occupy grasslands (especially endangered species), water issues, and carbon sequestration. They have heard from a potato farmer, talked by conference call to a potato chip factory, and heard a heart specialist doctor talk about the health attributes of potato chips. They have potato plants growing in their classroom, are doing art and mapping projects on the topic, and are doing more research on native grasses, with a view to naturalizing part of their school grounds. Their research book of grasses will provide knowledge to the school's groundskeeper. After their research is completed, they will be debating the "Potatogate" issue, with half the class on each side of the debate.

HONOURARY LIFE MEMBER AWARD

According to the Nature Alberta constitution, "The Board of Directors may honour outstanding naturalists or conservationists by electing them to honorary membership". The Honourary Life Member Award recognizes individuals for substantial volunteer contributions over an extended period that are directly linked to Nature Alberta initiatives and/or benefit Nature Alberta as an organization. The award need not be presented every year (for example, it was not presented the past two years). Also, as the list below shows, there were several multi-year gaps in the award, though this was a result of administrative functions, not the lack of worthy candidates.

Nature Alberta has great pride in its Honourary Life Member Award recipients, who have made a huge contribution to Alberta conservation. The honourable recipients are:

- Dewey Soper 1971
- Kerry Wood 1971
- Ray Salt 1973
- Robert Lister 1982
- Dorothy Dickson 2001
- Lloyd Lohr 2001
- Edgar T. Jones 2001
- Pat Clayton 2004
- Ian Halladay 2005
- Don Stiles 2006
- Dawn Dickinson 2007
- Glen Semenchuk 2008

National Parks: an open letter

To: Mr. Bill Fisher
Director General, Western and Northern National Parks, Parks Canada
1550, 635 - 8 Ave, S.W. Calgary, Alberta T2P 3M3

From: Park Warden Alumni Society
7 Glenport Road, Cochrane, Alberta T4C 1G8

March 8, 2011

Dear Sir;

It has come to the attention of the Park Warden Alumni Society of Alberta, and a number of concerned former Parks Canada employees, that there appears to be a redirection of park priorities in the review and update of the park management plan process. The apparent shift in park management to a tourism priority, rather than one of conservation and preservation of natural and cultural resources is of great concern to many Canadians.

An example of grave concern for many of us is the present review of the Jasper Management Plan which allows for the possible development of a "skywalk" project at Tangle ridge. Brewster Transport's "conceptual approval" of such a project which is in a wildlife sensitive, and in a physically restrictive highway corridor, is most alarming. A considerable number of mountain sheep use this location on a year round basis, and are certain to be disturbed (and fed!) with the construction of an "attraction" and the resultant increased numbers of visitors at this specific location. Mountain sheep may well be forced to relocate from established good habitat to a poor or marginal one. Traffic is congested at Tangle ridge now, with slow moving RVs headed uphill, and fast moving northbound traffic navigating a ninety degree corner at the summit, as well as visitor foot traffic at Tangle Falls. Any increase in visitor traffic at this location will prove chaotic and dangerous.

As for the structure of a plastic "viewing platform" over the edge at Tangle ridge, we find the concept revolting and degrading in a National Park. Are National Parks becoming a Disneyland concept to "entertain" visitors? A similar structure at the Grand Canyon is not in the National Park, but rather joins an array of tacky tourist attractions on reservation lands nearby. Shame on Parks Canada for even thinking of approving such an eyesore in our National Parks!

The reality of this attempt to increase visitor appreciation at Tangle ridge is that there are much more spectacular opportunities for viewing of the alpine and glaciated areas nearby. Why not encourage visitors to ascend the Wilcox Pass trail for spectacular views of Sunwapta Pass, the Columbia Icefields, and the surrounding mountains? Parker Ridge, Tangle Falls or Stanley Falls are all excellent walks with spectacular views of the Rocky Mountains. A guided walk up one of several already established trails in the area, and Brewster Transport employing summer students to conduct them for a fee, would provide a most worthy visitor experience and contribute to more knowledge of park resources.

The Park Warden Alumni Society collectively represents several hundred years of conservation/protection experience in our National Parks. All the ecological gains made over the decades will be for nought, if Parks continues to head its present direction. Parks need to refocus their efforts, and realign their present priorities, to regain the public trust in the conservation and protection of both natural and cultural resources in our National Parks. Appropriate visitor activities, which maintain and foster enjoyment of the natural landscape, should be mandatory. Gimmicks or gadgets to attract visitors at any moral cost, degrades the long established values of National Parks.

It appears to be a possibility, that Parks may well risk losing the designation of World Heritage Site, if inappropriate visitor activities are allowed and promoted. Perhaps Parks should consider a name change to National Amusement Parks, if present trends continue.

Yours sincerely,

Rod Wallace
On behalf of the Board of Directors, Park Warden Alumni Society of Alberta
cc. Mr. Greg Fenton, Superintendent, Jasper National Park

Close to Home: Nature Photography in Alberta



JOHN WARDEN

Sounds like Alberta

BY JOHN WARDEN

I was out at Hastings Lake one morning, working a grove of aspen trees with my camera, trying to find just the right combination of colour, light and line.

The leaves were yellow and orange against a frieze of green and the smooth white bark of the aspens. The vertical lines of the tree trunks carried me up from the ground and into the image with feelings of height, power and grandeur. And the light! It was that magical golden hour of sunrise when the light was soft and mellow, pumping up and saturating the colours.

I wasn't even conscious of pressing the shutter release on my camera; the pictures were taking themselves. Some people might call such an experience 'being lost in the moment', but I wasn't lost. I was a part of that moment. And then something extraordinary happened. Coyotes started howling.

The Coyotes began with some excited yipping and then the bunch of them began to howl. They sounded close, perhaps just on the other side of the trees. I paused, and listened. Their chorus

punctuated the moment with howling exclamations.

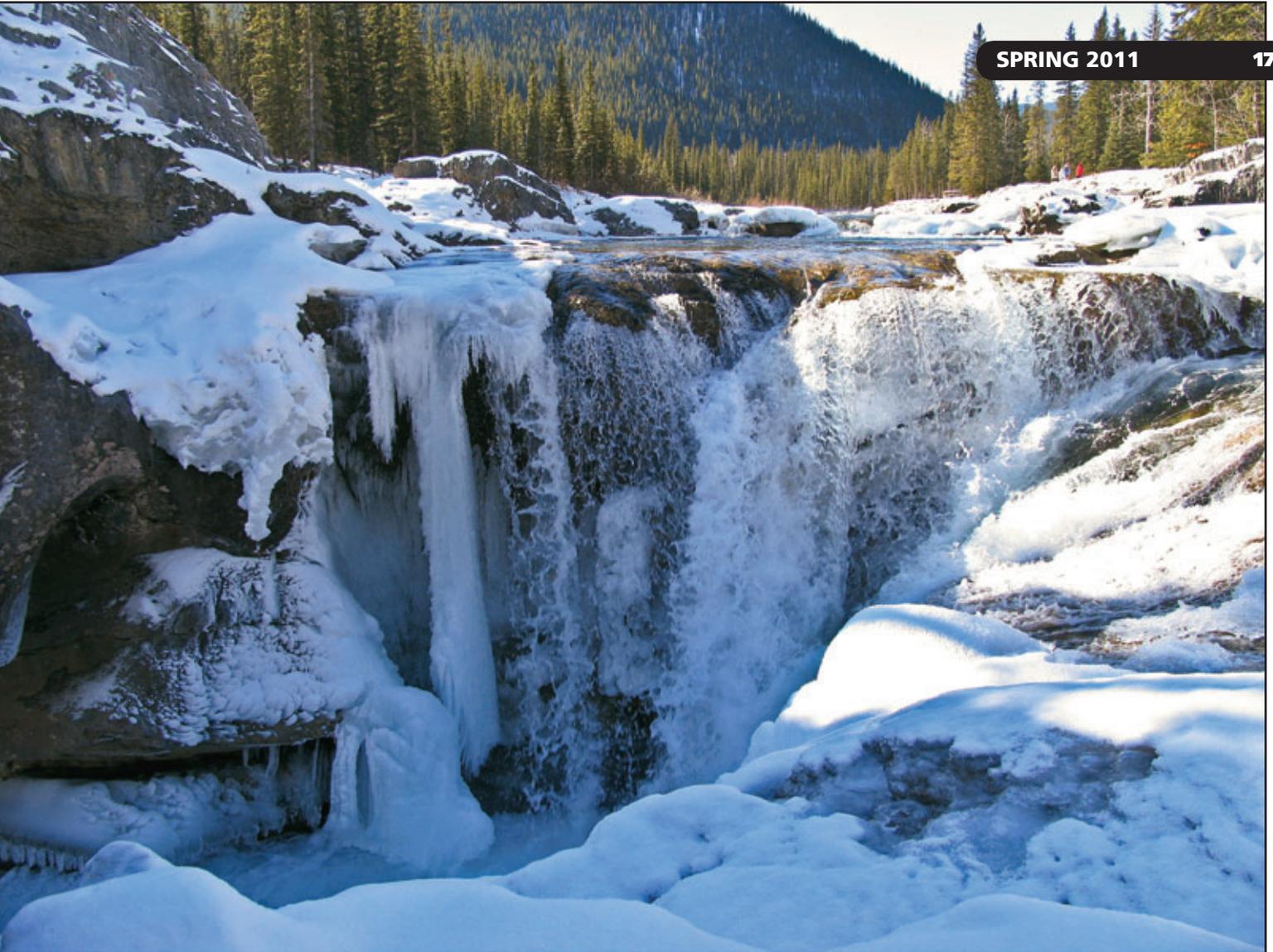
They were so close, I suspected that if I moved, they would hear me, but I had to try and see them. Sure enough, as I worked my way quietly around the trees, hoping to get a photograph, their howls

turned into yipping and then their voices began to move away.

It was an amazing moment. I experienced the Coyotes, without actually seeing them. I put my camera away and walked down to the edge of the lake. What a moment, a symphony to the



JOHN WARDEN



JOHN WARDEN

tune of colour, light and line, with Mother Nature leading the orchestra. And I was there.

Not all of the sounds in nature though, are as pleasant.

Elbow Falls at Bragg Creek near Calgary has always been one of my favorite places. My wife Debra had never been there and wanting to share it with her, we went one February when the sky was a gorgeous Alberta blue.

The Elbow River was still open but the falls were choked with ice. Despite the roar of the falls, it was a quiet, pristine, almost sacred

moment. But then, the serenity was shattered. The ripping and snorting of off-road motorcycles blasted away the quiet. There was a pack of them and they came out of the trees, just across the river from us. Like vulturous carrion birds, they perched for a moment on a point just above the falls, gunning and revving their engines as they looked down at the falls. Then they were off, roaring through the bush looking, no doubt, for small children to devour.

Of course I exaggerate. I know intellectually that they were

people, not monsters and that they have a right to ride their noisy, smelly bikes in a provincial 'recreational area'. Yet on a more personal, visceral level, they were an orchestra of the obscene.

People though, are naturally part of our experience. While I for one work hard to find places and times when few people are around, they (we) are almost everywhere, a fact of life. What's the balance? How do we find or create a harmony between people and nature?

I was fortunate to experience such a balance one evening.



JOHN WARDEN

Looking to escape the throngs of tourists in Canmore, I followed the Spray Lakes Road out of town and stopped along the way at Goat Pond. It was a beautiful evening in the mountains, the sun was setting and the lake was a deep blue, all still and tranquil. I was setting up my camera in the silence, enjoying the solitude, when out of the cosmos came the sweet yet haunting melody of a flute. The notes were soft but clear, drifting across the pond like an autumn mist.

The sound of the flute was similar to the wild call of a loon, beautiful and perfect in its own way, but different. It was a sound, originating from the human, that didn't detract from the moment. Here was a person, adding to the specialness of a moment in nature. It was a harmony, a synergy, a perfect balance.

Interesting how people have created snorting motorcycles and soothing sounds of music. Interesting that people can add

to a moment, or completely and utterly ruin it.

The ratcheting chainsaw-like sounds of motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles are sour notes in my adventures close to home. They are notes that linger, but I can tune them out or turn them off. So I do.

But oh, the wonderful symphonies that I have heard in nature...the Coyotes, the loons, the flute, that's what I wish to share with you.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a condensing of Ryan's May 18, 2011 blog; to read the full, fascinating entry, see <http://akayokaki.blogspot.com>. All photos by the author.

AKAYO'KAKI A'PAWAAWAHKAA



BY RYAN HEAVY HEAD; SIKOOHKOTOKI, KAINAISSKSAHKOYI

My Walk through Ecology, Dreams, Natural Education and Experience in Blackfoot Territory.

MYSTERY SIGNAL FOR THATCHERS, MAY 10, 2011

18:12. A meadowlark sings me down to the hibernaculum, where I'm a bit surprised to find only two rattlesnakes basking. One of them is a yearling, the other I'm guessing an older male, judging by the considerable number of buttons

he carries on his relatively slender body. Not even the black widow is in view this evening.

18:26. Like the snakes, most of the insects seem to have already gone dormant for the day. I do see a couple of cabbage white butterflies and naamooyiksi stopping off at the goldenbean blooms. I also

notice redwing clickhoppers and the occasional ant on the path. But compared to my noontime visits, it is exceptionally quiet.

19:15. Before turning back, I decide to hike up one of the ridges I haven't much explored. A couple of my rock-hound buddies told me they've been



finding scorpions when digging into the soil along the black cliffs. I figure if I turn over a few rocks on the ridge above, maybe I'll find some there as well. So I head up, and I turn probably a dozen flat rocks that look like they might have potential, but all I end up accomplishing is the disturbance of a few ant colonies. I do, however, come across two tiny, brown beetles I've never seen before. And I also find, on the peak of the ridge, an ancient stone effigy of some sort. It's a rectangular box of stones about five feet long by a meter wide, with what appear to be a couple lines coming off, in an order I can't make sense of. Could be an animal effigy, could be a vision quest sight, or it could be a grave. Hard to tell. In any case, it's situated to provide a really nice view of the river confluence

SUSPECTED FISH RUN, MAY 12, 2011

17:25. I've hiked about halfway down the slope, almost to the hibernaculum, spotting among the new goldenbean blooms a sulphur butterfly (probably pink-rimmed) and a second naamoo species, the Nevada bumblebee, both of whom immediately depart as I approach. But I'm going to keep an eye on these flowers as I continue. The big news, however, is that I didn't need to go all the way to the hibernaculum before encountering my first rattler of the day. Apparently they are now on the move, as I just came upon a very nervous older male making his way uphill. I wouldn't have even known he was there, several meters away and well off the trail, if he hadn't notified me. And he continued to

buzz anxiously as I climbed up to greet him

18:11. Presently, I am atop the ridge overlooking the [empty] hibernaculum, and from here I can see there are at least fifty pelicans down at the river confluence. About half of them are resting on a small river island, while the others hunt for fish. They drift downstream in one large body, and when they get to a certain point fly back upstream and begin again. Obviously, there is a fish run underway. I'm going to hike over to the nearby cliff above the river for a better view.

18:47. On the way to the cliff, I stop at several rocks where I know there to be ant colonies of two different species. Both are very small, with larvae far larger than their bodies. The one species keeps its larvae clinging to the underside of the rock, while its eggs (of the same orange color) are kept in a chamber below. The other species does not have its larvae cling to the rock, but rather in tunnels right below it. In both cases, I wonder if the rocks themselves are being utilized purposely to keep the eggs and babies warm. Of course, when I get to the cliff after making these ant stops, those pelicans who were actively hunting are nowhere to be seen. The remaining birds are sticking to the island.

19:30. Coming back down off the cliff, I notice a relatively small thatching ant colony off the side of the trail. Looking closely, I see that some of them are busy maneuvering a caterpillar they've caught, trying to bring it into their



hive through one of their entrances. I've seen thatchers collect this same kind of caterpillar before.

Then, at the base of the coulee slope where I start climbing again, the goldenbeans that had been earliest to flower now comprise a significant patch of yellow blooms, and they are buzzing loud with naamooyiksi - both Hunt's and Nevada species. The Nevada's behavior is very different from the Hunt's. They make a hasty retreat when they see me paying attention to them, even if it's from a distance. The Hunt's Bumblebees, on the other hand, almost always make an attempt to chase me off with loud fly-bys toward my face.

COOTS NESTING AND THATCHERS SWARMING, MAY 13, 2011

11:54. Arriving at the southeast end of the pond, I find (as was fully expected) that, like the rattlesnakes, the wandering garters are also leaving their hibernaculum. In the marsh below where they winter, mi'sohpski has done all the work

for me in terms of gathering grass. There are several large flotillas they've constructed as feeding stations, and I don't have to impact them very much to quickly take all the matoyaan I need. From my perspective, this is preferable to pulling the sedge myself. The part that the muskrats eat, and will continue to eat, is the portion of stem at the very base of the plant. The rest just gets piled up, but is completely sufficient for my needs

12:13. Since I'm already here in my waders, the temptation to survey the marsh for coot nests is too much to resist. I take a quick stroll around. Dozens of turtles, basking on dead cattails, dive as I pass. The reeds are alive with pike, frantically swimming away from me. And at the western edge of the marsh, I find what I'm looking for, a coot incubating seven eggs. This is a small clutch for the coots, and I'm curious to learn how many eggs the others here at the pond have this year, but I need to leave now.

THE RIVER RISES, MAY 17, 2011

13:15. Pitsiiksiinaikawaahko - On a whim this morning, I grabbed a handful of young dandelion greens from our front yard and ate them. They provided not only a slightly bitter breakfast, but also a strong reminder that NOW is the opportunity to seize the season and really make the shift to a natural foods diet. I feel motivated. So today I am walking this coulee not only as a lifetime student of phenology, but also as the omnivore I was born to be. They



say there is a food shortage. Ha! The food is everywhere

13:42. Phenology-wise, there are some changes to note since my last decent survey. First of all, the goldenbeans are now flowered all the way to the top of the coulee. It's fairly windy today, so not too many insects, but those I've observed visiting the buffalo bean are still the Hunt's and Nevada bumblebee species I noted last week. On the dandelions, there are tiny sphaerophoria flower flies, excellent bee mimics. Some of the blue penstemon are starting to bloom, as also the early yellow locoweed

15:32. It has been a while since I've had an opportunity to visit the forest, and now I'll need to wait still longer. But before I begin my ascent back toward the rim, I hike at least down to the river. Today I find the river has risen quite high, resulting from snow melt in the mountains. I turn around and begin my climb, traveling a part of the slope I rarely visit, picking

more violets along the way. When I near the hibernaculum area again, I spot a giant black widow in a badger hole. This is one of the largest widows I've ever seen, and I'm sitting with her now. When one learns to recognize the black widow's web, it becomes apparent that they have a huge population in this coulee. Practically every decent badger hole houses one.

16:01. A barely perceivable coyote and deer trail takes me up along the side of the slope to the coulee rim. As I pass the hibernaculum, I see there's still at least one rattler left at the main den entrance. This is not too surprising, because last year there was one who stuck around quite a while after the others departed. Further up the slope, I startle first a flicker, then a small flock of perhaps a dozen brewer's blackbirds, all of them insect hunting. These birds are the last encounter I have. I'm already looking forward to my next visit.

Ryan Heavy Head and his wife Adrienne are caretakers of a Beaver Bundle for the Blood Tribe of southern Alberta. He works as the coordinator of Kainai Studies at Red Crow College, on the Blood Reserve, where he teaches field courses in phenology and traditional foods.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Picturing Love of Nature

A picture is worth . . .

BY DENNIS BARESCO

“One of the greatest pleasures as a nature photographer is to share my images and to see the impact they can have. I love to encourage appreciation of the beauty and wonder that nature provides.” — June Andersen, professional photographer.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Ivan Turgenev wrote, in *Fathers and Sons*. “A picture shows me at a glance what it takes dozens of pages of a book to expound.” We humans are visual creatures. Illustrations grab our attention, elicit emotions, and form our opinions and perceptions – both overtly and on a subconscious level.

“Pictures” – stills or moving – are the elixir of all sectors of advertising. Most are positive (lovely, fun, exciting), but negative (ugly, scary, angry) works in the same way. Illustrations of nature are no

different: on the positive side, gorgeous scenery, wild babies, a lofty rock-face; on the negative side, oil-soaked birds, horrific clear-cut scenes, waterways clogged with toxic effluent.

Regardless, there is a storyline inherent in every photo. Disney’s movie “Bambi” might well be the finest, illustrative, classic example of emotional stimulation.



NOW HOW DID SHE GET THERE?? RICK PRICE

**NOTHING TO GET
EXCITED ABOUT?**

RICK PRICE



Both the positive and the negative are intensely important for the conservation of nature; it's the balance, situation and goal that define the often perplexing task of determining when to use what, and how much!

Nature Alberta, the magazine, has as its mission, "Celebrating our natural heritage." As such, most of its illustrations show the beauty and profoundness of nature. Nature Alberta, the organization, tries to follow a similar, positive perspective towards conservation, though through actions and projects. And what beauty we have here in Alberta! The photographers and writers in *Nature Alberta* (and other environmental publications) offer readers a huge variety of topics, but they all have one thing in common: a love of nature, with a desire to share that love with everyone else.

For most photographers, and for *Nature Alberta*, the sharing

goes beyond simply providing entertainment and a warm, fuzzy feeling. In Dr. Robert Berdan's slideshow on the home page of The Canadian Nature Photographer (www.canadiannaturephotographer.com) is a photo of an eagle soaring over a misty forest scene, captioned with these words: "Photography is more than a way of seeing...It can bring about change, make us think, and make us feel like no other medium can. It can also make a difference."

The awareness of the beauty of nature, drawn from photography, hopefully

provides feelings of caring, responsibility, protectiveness and a desire to never, ever lose this beauty. In turn, that desire hopefully leads to commitment and involvement when pieces of nature are scheduled for senseless elimination. Because being successful in protecting those parts of nature which depend on us for their future is the ultimate in warm, fuzzy feelings.

**MT. PESKETT, NORTH
SASKATCHEWAN RIVER AT
KOOTENAY PLAINS BONNIE MULLIN**



FEATURE ARTICLE CONTINUED

My Personal Rationale for Bird Photography

BY SANDRA HAWKINS

It is difficult for me to remember when birds did not play a significant part in my life.

My father and his father before him were enthralled by the mysteries of nature, and the love for all things wild is their greatest legacy to me.

Some of my fondest memories involve tagging along behind my father to seek out the denizens of a prairie marsh. The whinny of Sora Rails (water chickens, as my Dad called them), the screech of the “Red Wing” in early spring, the mad honking frenzy of Snow Geese (“Waveys”) heading northward, the plop of a turtle as it slid from a log, and the call of the Whip-poor-will at dusk are all a part of that legacy. If, in future, I become a pauper, these memories are riches that no one can ever take from me.

Sadly, many of these riches, often taken for granted in my childhood, are truly fading into memory. The call of the Whip-

poor-will is rarely heard now. Marshes are being drained and entire ecosystems are being lost. Sora Rails and Red-winged Blackbirds and turtles have fewer places to live and raise their young. The feeling of loss is palpable.

Coupled with such deep personal memories, classic books such as Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring” and Lois Crisler’s “Arctic Wild” have greatly influenced my desire to record and promote nature’s treasures. Crisler wrote about her fear that, at some future time, wilderness would be replaced by “captive wild” when creatures that now live freely would exist no more or only in zoos.

We humans can yield to the negative feelings of helplessness and do

nothing while the beauties of nature slip away, or we can each do whatever is in our power to retard or prevent additional losses. I hope my photographs will serve to illustrate what the world has to lose and why we must never cede to the forces that strive to tame or destroy what deserves to remain wild.

The “Bird Photography Tips” article [page 25] is the synopsis of a talk I



NORTHERN HAWK OWL. SANDRA HAWKINS

FEMALE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. SANDRA HAWKINS



RED-NECKED GREBES.

SANDRA HAWKINS



BARN SWALLOW NESTLINGS.

SANDRA HAWKINS

was asked to give to a group of camera enthusiasts (most of whom could not tell a robin from an oriole). As many folks do not have the means and/or opportunity to travel, I wanted to emphasize that one may obtain excellent photos of birds without ever leaving home. Bird feeders, back yards and balconies can yield terrific photos. Keep in mind that birds are just as photogenic at feeders or in urban parks as they are in the “wild”!

I began my talk with a short AV presentation. All photographs in the show were of birds that are resident in or migratory to Canada. When photos of such



beautifully coloured birds as Avocets, Red-necked Grebes or Tree Swallows appeared on the screen, I was most surprised to learn that many in the audience would not believe that these birds

actually were “ours” and not some exotic tropical residents. I knew then that I was accomplishing my goal and doing my “bit” to educate others about the beauties around them.

Bird Photography Tips

BY SANDRA HAWKINS

“By viewing Nature, Nature’s handmaid, Art, Makes mighty things from small beginnings grow”.

— John Dryden

The natural world is wondrous and complicated, and learning its eccentricities is a never-ending challenge. Start small, gradually expand your horizons and revel in the journey.

If you live in a house and have a garden, begin by feeding the birds and photographing those that frequent your feeders and

bird baths. Planting fruit-bearing bushes and sheltering evergreen trees will only increase your popularity! Apartment or condo dwellers may consider (if allowed) providing seed bells, suet balls and small feeders. When I lived on the 12th floor of an apartment building, I enjoyed the company of a variety of birds including



Blue Jays, House Finches and Chickadees!

Observe and be one with the natural world that surrounds you. Be especially aware of anomalies such as differences in size, shape, colour, and sound. The more time one spends in the company of Nature, the more these anomalies will become apparent. Often, the “oddity” that stands out from the background will become a great photo.

There is no simple recipe that works for everyone. Experiment and see what is best for you, your level of interest and your particular combination of camera and lenses. My personal biases for Bird (*true “Nature”*) Photography



do not include photographing caged (e.g. in a zoo or game farm) or entrapped subjects (e.g. “baiting” tame owls with mice), the use of flash (natural light only), or recordings (as lures).

Be aware. Familiarize yourself with your subjects’ **habitats** and **niches**. Think of a habitat as the neighbourhood (e.g. a marsh) and a niche as an address in that neighbourhood (e.g. mud flats, clumps of cattails, willows along the edge, etc.).

Try to blend in with the natural world. Manufactured “blinds” are readily available and cost approximately \$50-\$100. As an alternative, use your motor vehicle (sit inside or stand behind it), or blend into the natural vegetation if possible. If you are in an exposed location, sit down on the ground and reduce your profile. Kayaks and canoes provide quiet access into water bird habitat.

Above all, have **PATIENCE!!!** Sit still, be very quiet and nature will come to you.

TECHNICAL/EQUIPMENT PREFERENCES

- Tripod: Panning vs. Ball Head. Personal preference is a panning head.

Tripod use is not always feasible: use a bean bag, jacket, towel, etc. to protect your camera while stabilizing it on your vehicle, a tree, a fence, etc. Image stabilized lenses are very effective.

BOTH DOWNY WOODPECKER AND THE LARGER HAIRY WOODPECKER (PICTURED) COME TO FEEDERS, ESPECIALLY FOR SUET, USUALLY STRIKING A NICE POSE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

SANDRA HAWKINS



PATIENCE, FOLLOWED BY SPEED WITH THE CAMERA, CAPTURES NUTHATCHES, INCLUDING THE WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH. SANDRA HAWKINS

- Shoot in RAW if your camera allows. [“A camera raw image file contains minimally processed data from the image sensor of either a digital camera, image scanner, or motion picture film scanner. Raw files are so named because they are not yet processed and therefore are not ready to be printed or edited with a bitmap graphics editor.” From Wikipedia]
- ISO setting varies with the prevailing conditions, e.g. light, action, etc. For most action-filled (with good lighting) bird photos, 400 ISO works well.
- Depending on your personal budget/desires, many experts suggest that, as a priority, photographers invest in good lenses. Make certain that your camera is able to accommodate them.

- **Teleconverters** (of good quality) often work well (especially when light conditions are good); just remember that you will reduce F-stop capability when using them. Get ones certified to work with your lens maker.
- **Mode:** May vary with available light, action, etc. “Av” at 6.3 or 7.1 is effective.
- Best time for bird photography is the same as for any other outdoor photography. Birds are most active in the early morning and evening.



BLUE JAYS ARE A GREAT FEEDER BIRD WHICH MAKES FOR GREAT PHOTOS! SANDRA HAWKINS

- **Cable releases** work well during conditions with wind, low light, waiting for something to happen, etc.
- **Focus Tracking:** For Canon cameras, use the AI Servo setting; for Nikon cameras, use AF Continuous. Other cameras? Check your manual.
- **Exposure Compensation:** e.g. To photograph a bird against a bright monochrome gray sky, experiment with exposure compensation settings on the “plus” side. For shady situations, use the “negative” option.
- For bird photography, try focusing on the bird’s eye (centre-weighted focus).

INTERNET RESOURCES/ BIRDING LOCATIONS IN ALBERTA

- **Flickr**, www.flickr.com, (free photo-share/comparison site)
- **“Google”:** Bird Photography Tips, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Alberta Environment & Natural Resources
- **www.birding.com/wheretobird/alberta.asp**
- **http://birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/ALBR.html**

REFERENCES

- **Birds of North America** by Kenn Kaufman: pocket-sized, excellent photos for comparison and identification. Good photos are often superior for identification than poorer quality art work.
- **Field Guide to the Birds of North America**, National Geographic Society. One of the most popular guide books available.
- **The Sibley Guide to Birds** by David Allen Sibley, National

Audubon Society. Superior reference source. Detailed, very accurate art work. Not pocket-sized.

- **The Birder’s Handbook: The Essential Companion to Your Identification Guide** by Paul R. Erlich, et al. Detailed information about habitat preferences, nesting habits, nestlings, etc.

DIGISCOPING

- Alternative method used by “birders” to increase focal length: combination of telescope + camera
- Less portability and manoeuvrability
- Google “digiscoping” for additional information

Remember: **PATIENCE** is the key!

Do Nothing – For Wildlife

BY LORNE FITCH

The phone rang, as is the usual case, in the middle of a meal. My negative reaction was partially mollified by the soft, female voice asking if I was the head of the house.

I quietly answered “yes”, hoping my wife wouldn’t hear. The call was from a national conservation organization that had teamed with a major credit card company. As it was explained to me, if I signed up for a card, a percentage of my purchases would go to the conservation organization to help fund more good work.

“Imagine”, said the lady, “the more you spend the better it will be for conservation”. Alarms bells began to toll. To clarify I asked “So, the more stuff I buy, the more things I do that are channeled through my credit card, the better off wildlife will be and more habitat will be saved?” “Yes!” was the enthusiastic response. “But”, I said, “wouldn’t all that activity, caused by me buying more stuff, actually cause habitat to decline and wildlife to suffer? After all, stuff has a cost outside of what I pay for it – the impact on the environment of more oil pumped, trees cut, minerals mined, factories built, roads constructed, trucks operated, stores opened, water diverted and so on. The more I spend, the more I consume; the more I consume the more I am responsible for using up the natural environment your organization is trying to protect.”

I was really warming to the subject when the initial sweet voice turned

sour and snarled, “I guess you don’t care about conservation”. She then hung up on me.

“The split between what we think and what we do is profound.”

“But”, I struggled to say into a phone receiver already dead in my hand, “I do care”. Many of us do. Bird identification guides outsell bibles. Wildlife shows are some of the most popular TV programming. I just don’t think you can put conservation on a credit card. Consuming our way to a better world seems self-defeating. I believe we have developed a societal blindness to our consumptive, or more to the point, over-consumptive habits. “The split between what we think and what we do is profound”, says Wendell Berry, the Kentucky farmer and philosopher. In our myopia we can’t connect the dots between consumption and loss of valued pieces of the natural world. It is a truism in nature: everything is connected.

What is it about human nature, especially we North Americans, that drives us to keep acquiring stuff? We feed mostly our wants, far in excess of our needs. That’s not a vision for tomorrow but

rather an obsession with today. A quote from Punch, the British magazine of humor and satire, sums this up with characteristic satire: “I am not hungry; but thank goodness, I am greedy”. Owning more stuff may provide a short term version of pleasure but, imbedded in each item is a loss for wildlife.

Humans have been consumers for millennia; our survival depends on some level of use of the resources around us. The lock on unsustainable over-consumption is, in part, a recent phenomenon of population size but mostly the impact of media and political institutions. Its genesis is strongly related to the post World War II era. It seems axiomatic that war is a boost for the economy, especially if the war isn’t playing in your country. But what happens to a wartime economy when peace breaks out? The ramping up of production for war time purposes in WW II helped to build the foundation for today’s unceasing goal of consumption. The industrial colossus with capacity for seemingly endless production had to be shuffled from rifles to radios; tanks to toasters; and, bombs to bathtubs. To support this production requires us to live, eat, drink, dress and drive with more stuff and do so with a high pace of product turnover. From a wartime society starved of consumer products we now drown in the dross of overproduced, overpriced and unneeded crap.

The drive for material goods infects us and is driven by the power of advertising and messaging about consumer products. These render many of our older, societal values as quaint and irrelevant. It is a manipulation of people's world view from solvency, thrift, conservation, postponement of desire and community fidelity to self definition through purchases, instant gratification of urges and emphasis of the individual, especially social status and image. I think of a product advertised not long ago – "Friendship shampoo" – presumably aimed at those who could form no human relationships. It's a perceptible shift to a "me first" mentality with a pathological "right now" attitude.

The shift from consumption to consumerism has created a "consumer class" where "self denial is something to do when you're old, not now". This class, which consists of many of us, have diets of highly processed food, a desire for bigger houses, more and bigger cars (Hummers anyone?), higher levels of debt and lifestyles devoted to the accumulation of non-essential goods. It might also be said we are self absorbed, disconnected from natural systems, ecologically illiterate and, when confronted by reality, denialists.

We delude ourselves with "lifestyle" – living life with style – a pursuit with regrettable consequences. Every time the topic is discussed in the media of today it looks more like "living life with stuff", expensive, often trivial stuff. "It is not even affluent in any meaningful sense, because its abundance is dependant on sources that are being rapidly exhausted by its

methods", says Wendell Berry. Disposable this, plastic that, cheaply made goods with built in obsolescence (or breakability), all of which lead to a "throw away" mentality. There is enormous waste in the way we consume; there is an incredible waste in resources as well.

Consumerism is ever touted by our political leaders as a solution to a struggling economy. The shortsightedness embedded in the admonishment to spend more is breathtakingly stupid, not only ecologically but also in terms of the debt load carried by citizens who follow this rubric. It is the inability to see the economy as a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.

Political and media driven agendas for consumerism may seem good for the economy but the Worldwatch Institute reports that "unprecedented consumer appetite is undermining natural systems". A 1998 United Nations Human Development report emphatically states "runaway growth in consumption in the last 50 years is putting strains on the environment never before seen". More recently, the Worldwatch Institute indicates 37% of species could become extinct due to climate change which is directly linked to our consumptive habits.

In 1964, C.D.H. Clarke and T. Madson concluded that, "The consummate offence to wildlife is not hunting, but the extirpation of species by an indifferent technology in which wildlife is wiped out – not by man's passion – but by his single minded devotion to a material world in which creatures have no place." With the additional, expanding footprint of our development and

consumer zeal, here, there, and everywhere, we subtract from our ecological bank account and that of wildlife. It happens with every swipe of the credit card. As that plastic facsimile for wealth warms with our use of it, we don't realize we are adding to our ecological mortgage. The earth holds that mortgage and it rises astronomically because we have made few, sometimes no payments to bring down our indebtedness.

The apogee of consumerism must be Kurt Vonnegut's character Eliot Rosewater who said "Grab much too much or you'll get nothing at all." Many of our landscapes, especially the prairie grasslands, challenge conventional economics because they will not tolerate overload. But our consumerism drives the need to wring even more from these places. Eventually something has to give; the first thing to go is wildlife. Unfortunately our landscape, and its wealth of biodiversity, is poorly adapted to a growth dependant economy.

So, if you really want to do something for wildlife, consider doing nothing. Do nothing that diminishes habitat. Consider that doing nothing means relieving the relentless pressure on natural resources caused by rampant consumerism. Do something that gets you outside, even for a walk, but not a drive. Leave the car parked. Take the bus, ride a bicycle. Revel in the quiet places. While doing so, recall that the presence, diversity and abundance of wildlife is a signal the world is well; so too might we be if we pay attention to the critical indicators.

Learn where your food comes from, ask how it's produced, determine the footprint of the food you eat and, buy food produced closer to home. Cook

at home, with real food that has been sustainably produced and minimally processed.

Turn off the TV; research shows too much watching of the tube erodes critical thinking skills. Unplug the computer, turn off the cell phone and ditch the video games. Allow yourself to be bored. The constancy of our need to be stimulated and entertained adds to the acquisitions and activities that have an ecological cost. Artificial types of entertainment supported by electronic gadgetry separates us from the real world, waiting just outside our doors. Disconnect from the artificial World Wide Web and reconnect with the natural web that is world wide.

A little introspection might focus on how good most of us have it. Very little of our sense of well being is connected to possessions but rather health, safety, relationships, meaningful work and a quality environment. Reacquaint yourself with your community and who lives in it. You might find a rich supply of engagement and entertainment amongst your nearby neighbours.

Practice being a skeptic; question authority. Don't blindly follow the dogma of government that it is our patriotic duty to consume. What is our duty is conserving the natural resources (wildlife included) entrusted to our care. Tune out the advertising which is generally about persuading us to buy stuff we don't need and don't want, for more than its value.

Ask for the details, read the fine print, push for full cost accounting on resource development projects.

Consider carefully your investment portfolio; does it aid and abet those activities that imperil landscapes and wildlife? Allowing the corporate world to externalize costs to the environment is a recipe for wildlife losses. Follow the money; who benefits, who loses? Ask that the real costs of consumer products, especially the externalized costs, be disclosed. Support "green taxes" that penalize those who wish to profit at the earth's expense or can't be bothered to make responsible choices.

Read labels; force stuff to be labeled. Think before you buy. Will your life be measurably enriched with this purchase or, will it merely add to an overflowing closet, cupboard or garage? Buy quality products that last, both physically and psychologically. Refuse to buy over-packaged goods; let manufacturers know you won't buy unless they

"... learning as a modern society how to live the good life on earth without abusing the generosity of our hostess."

reduce packaging. Recycle, reuse, repair or do without.

In an ironic twist, prosperity, whether the spark for increased consumption or caused by it, reportedly isn't making people happier or healthier. Increased consumption comes with a high price and not just for the junk we buy. The cure is to lower levels of consumption, forging a path to a higher quality of life, using fewer raw materials in the living of one's life and decreasing the footprint of our consumption. Douglas Chadwick

observed about these alternatives that: "All are part of the challenge of learning as a modern society how to live the good life on earth without abusing the generosity of our hostess." Wendell Berry suggests we consider "an economy of necessities rather than an economy based upon anxiety, fantasy, luxury and idle wishing".

Maybe we should listen to the advice in one of John Prine's songs:

*"I don't want your big French Fry
I don't want your car
I don't want to buy no soap
From a washed up movie star . . .
It's enough to make a grown man
Blow up his own TV
Quit hollerin' at me..."*

The battle to maintain wildlife (and their habitats) won't be waged solely with protest signs, chaining ourselves to trees or by writing letters to politicians. The fight will be won (or lost) at supermarkets, shopping malls, classrooms, fast food outlets, car lots, gas pumps, polling booths and finally in the hearts and minds of consumers.

Now, if nothing I have said moves you and, if you must buy the stuff anyway, well then at least get one of those fancy credit cards that a conservation group gets a cut of your consumer zeal. You could choose to make a tax-deductible donation to aid some conservation work. The reality is we humans will remain consumers; we have to for survival, yet our disposable income allows us to make choices about and contributions to conservation. What is critical for wildlife (and the planet) is a shift away from our over consumptive, wasteful habits. A donation to conservation, well intentioned as it might be, without an attitudinal and behavioral shift might be "virtual", or "feel good" conservation, but largely

ineffectual for wildlife. It doesn't mitigate, compensate or take us off the hook for bad behavior.

The environmental community is accused of endless rants and pointless polemics without solid solutions to the dilemmas that face us with landscape integrity and biodiversity. Well, this is different. Here is a practical, pragmatic, simple, cheap and easily adapted solution. All that is required is that we change ourselves.

If acquiring more stuff eventually equates to less natural capital then it might follow that a smaller economy would equate to better maintenance of wild species and spaces. If we buy less, consume less (especially of the resource products whose extraction threatens species and spaces) and generally do less as individuals (especially of activities that further threaten imperiled species) that

puts us a step closer to keeping the full array of wild species and spaces. When you see a bumper sticker that says, "Do nothing, for wildlife" don't be alarmed. Doing nothing (or less than we currently do) would be a positive thing for wildlife and the planet.

Buy less, consume less and live on a healthier earth longer. Connect the dots. This may be said about maintaining biodiversity – the truism that if we want a better world we will have to become better people.

Lorne Fitch is an esteemed Professional Biologist, Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary and a retired Alberta Fish and Wildlife Biologist. He is a well-known speaker, writer and photographer, living in Lethbridge AB. "Do Nothing – for Wildlife" is the second in a series of articles by Lorne.



www.wolverinewatch.org

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LOOKING FOR WOLVERINES

Wildlife biologist Tony Clevenger and his team of researchers conducted an extensive survey of Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) this past winter, covering over 5,000 km² in Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks. Data on Wolverines is sparse at best. The research will be the first effort in the national parks of the Canadian Rockies to systematically collect data on Wolverine occurrence and the first ever to examine movements across transportation corridors (i.e., the Trans-Canada Highway). The research results will have a direct implication for landscape management on federal and provincial lands and management of a trans-boundary Wolverine population of international significance.

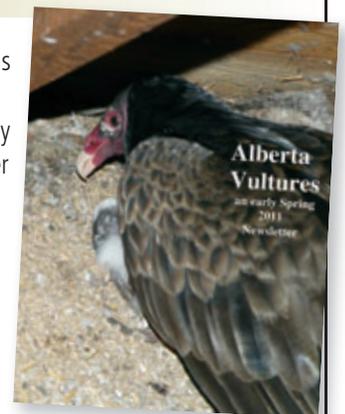
Federally, the Wolverine is listed as a species of 'Special Concern' in western Canada, while in Alberta it is listed as 'May be at Risk'. Measuring the number of Wolverines in an area and how and where they are distributed across the landscape is critical to ecosystem scale management objectives and preservation of wilderness in the Canadian Rockies.

For more information, reporting of sightings and a Wolverine track ID card, go to the website www.wolverinewatch.org, from which this article was directly taken.

First Turkey Vulture Newsletter

Wayne Nelson has announced the first Alberta Turkey Vulture newsletter (it is in three parts.) According to Wayne, "it summarizes some of our findings to date and provides some views of other things that we are working towards. It is being sent to members of our vulture 'crew', landowners, informants/tipsters, and a number of other people who are very interested in what we are doing."

The newsletter can be found on the Nature Alberta website: www.naturealberta.com, under "News and Issues."



The following letter by Bob Gainer is the latest in a series that began in the Fall 2010 edition of Nature Alberta, motivated by a "Letter to the Editor" by Dick Dekker. Everyone is invited to share their thoughts, whether from a professional aspect or through personal experience, on the predator-prey relationship between Coyotes and other wildlife.

Coyotes: the discussion continues

Coyotes and Nature

BY BOB GAINER

Like Dr. Dekker, I have observed changes in my little world caused by Coyotes.

I have lived for over 20 years on two quarters of land south of Hanna. When we first moved here, our neighbours with stock would all have a "dead pile" off of which they would shoot or trap or poison Coyotes. Their pelt in late November or December (when most stock losses occurred) was worth up to \$200.00. Many ranch payments and household bills were paid this way. There were very few Coyotes to be seen in the countryside, and those you did see were nervous. However, my creek had a Long-tailed Weasel family, the hay field was full of Foxes, approximately every ten years the countryside was overrun with Jackrabbits, Burrowing Owls, Antelope and deer fawns; ground dwelling fauna in general, seemed to be much more common.

About 1990 the price of Coyote pelts plummeted to about \$10.00, not worth skinning and marketing. Overnight it seemed Coyote numbers skyrocketed, or at least they are bolder. Touring the countryside, especially in winter,

they are everywhere. Most nights you hear their calls. Day and night they appear to be scouring the ground looking for a meal. Everybody still uses them to clear up their dead piles, probably still their main source of food, but as a supplement it seems there are no more ground dwellers.

Except for my gophers! I have gophers more than ever. Legend has it that the more coyotes there are the fewer gophers you'll have. Not in my case. But the Long-tailed Weasel family I used to have is long gone. Weasels used to be trapped in the thousands in this area during the 1930's. At that time Coyotes were rare because one pelt represented several months' farm hand wages. Now the rural community is reluctant to kill them; they really are beautiful creatures, if not for commercial gain. The non-ground-dwelling predators other than Coyotes, like Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks, have a more important role to play in my gopher population.

Coyote populations were always controlled by wolves and man. Without these controls, and with the addition of dead piles, their numbers are probably higher than ever historically. With these unnatural conditions the natural selection for the species has undoubtedly changed, probably favouring bigger and more aggressive animals. The occasional wolf is shot in this area (Gammie, Drumheller Mail, 2011), and it is not unusual to see dark or even black coyotes. They all seem bigger and bolder, and in several parts of the continent hybridizations with wolves and dogs have been documented (Zimmerman, 2010), so much so they are often technically referred to as *Canis soupus*. I'm sure that if we had Sage Grouse around here now, they too would be hammered by Coyotes along with this winter's emaciated Antelope and deer herds.

This is totally anecdotal of course, but why wouldn't what Dr. Dekker has been warning us about make sense? I can't make myself shoot these cute, attractive animals either, unless they are threatening my animals, but I am sure there is some place for management.

Your Editor welcomes any further comments by readers on this whole fascinating subject. Please email your thoughts to wildhavn@memlane.com.



RICK PRICE

First Hand: “Spirit”

BY RICK PRICE

Well, I'm like a kid in the candy store when I get to see wolves in the wild.

Yesterday morning [April 16, 2011], when we went out looking along the Bow Valley Parkway in Banff National Park, we ran into Spirit, the Alpha male of the Pipestone Pack. Lucy [Rick's wife] spotted him and we watched as

he walked through the forest; then he came and crossed the road just in front of us.

Like a rookie I had the wrong lens and settings, so the image isn't great, but I thought I would send

it any. We also met John Marriott, a very well known Alberta wildlife photographer, who identified Spirit for us.

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.

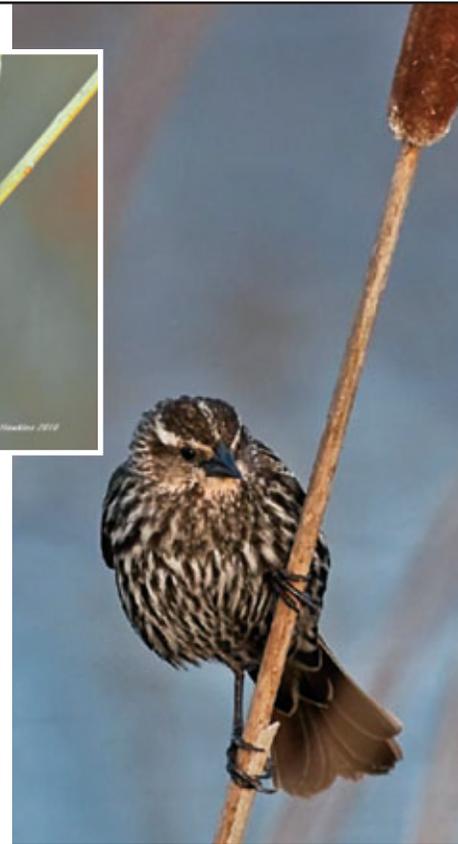
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**MALE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (LEFT);
FEMALE (RIGHT).** SANDRA HAWKINS



Wildlife! Starring... Red-winged Blackbird

BY SANDRA HAWKINS

*There are few birds that herald spring with as much verve and enthusiasm as the Red-winged Blackbird (*Gelaius phoeniceus*).*

With its raucous song, flashing red wing patches, and aggressive antics, it cannot help but command respect. The long prairie winter is quickly spirited away when, upon its arrival, the marshes once more come alive.

DESCRIPTION

There is a dramatic difference in colouration between the sexes. The male is glossy black with bright red shoulder patches (called epaulettes) that are edged with yellow. Such finery serves him well for defending his territory and attracting a mate. The streaky brown feathers of female birds provide cryptic camouflage that is invaluable during times of brooding eggs and raising young. Red-wings are medium-sized songbirds with females being slightly smaller than males.

DISTRIBUTION AND BREEDING ACTIVITY

The Red-winged Blackbird ranges throughout North America from southern Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories and coast to coast in the rest of Canada and the United States. It is one of the most common land birds found in both Alberta and North America. It winters throughout most of the USA and as far north as southern British Columbia. Some birds venture farther south to areas such as Baja and Costa Rica. It is opportunistic and may be found in a variety of habitats including marshes, pastures, and meadows. Their migration northward begins as early as February and by August the reverse is true.

It is not an elusive bird. Territorial defense between males begins immediately upon arrival on the breeding grounds. Vigorous bouts of aerial display and loud calls of “O-KEE-REE” alternate with quiet

times for feeding and resting. Morning is often the most active time for heightened male rivalry.

Female birds arrive several weeks after the males. Their return marks the most active time in the marsh. Males are usually polygynous and each male may have multiple females resident in his territory. During this period females are often pursued by their own males and by neighbouring interlopers who dare to transgress territorial boundaries.

The breeding cycles of females in any given territory are generally not in sync with each other. One may be brooding when another enters the area. Pair bonds last only for the breeding season and males and females exist for the rest of the year in separate-sex flocks.

IT'S HARD TO KEEP UP WITH THE SEEMINGLY INSATIABLE NESTLINGS, MOUTHS AGAPE HOPING IT'S THEIR TURN FOR THE FEMALE (PICTURED) TO PROVIDE A TASTY INSECT!

SANDRA HAWKINS

NESTING

Female Red-wingeds are solely responsible for building the nest. A marvelous piece of avian construction, the cuplike nest is woven of reeds or other grasses most often in or near marshes or riparian habitats. It is suspended approximately 1 to 3 metres (3 to 8 feet) above the ground by anchoring the structure to vertical stems of adjacent grasses or shrubby branches. The nest is then lined with finer grasses in preparation for egg laying.

Incubation of 3-5 pale bluish-green eggs (spotted and mottled with purplish brown) is by the female alone. The 10-12 day incubation period yields altricial (naked and helpless) young that remain in the nest for 11-14 days. Both parents feed them a diet of insects. Two, occasionally three, broods are produced each year. Remarkably, although adult birds are unable to do so, young birds that tumble from the nest have some ability to swim over short distances.

Sadly, Red-winged Blackbirds commonly serve as Cowbird hosts, while eggs and nestlings are often predated by other marsh dwellers such as Mink, Raccoons and birds like the Marsh Wren.

DIET

Grass and other seeds make up the largest portion of a Red-winged's diet, although berries, spiders, insects, caterpillars, grubs and even snails round it out. At bird feeders, they are particularly fond of millet seed (Personal Observation).

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Red-winged Blackbirds may be some of the most numerous land birds in North America, but that does not mean their future is entirely secure. Remember the Passenger Pigeons whose flocks darkened the sun? Where are they now?

Because marshes and a proximity to wetland habitat are crucial for insuring continued Red-winged populations, these birds are vulnerable to the drainage of wetlands for new housing tracts and the expansion of agricultural and industrial lands. Pesticides

and herbicides take their toll both on the birds themselves as well as on their sources of food. Adult Red-wings may also fall prey to winged predators such as hawks and owls.

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- www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=426 (Canadian Wildlife Service's "Hinterland Who's Who" nature series)
- www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/framlst/i4980id.html (United States Geological Service's resource link—includes bird distribution atlases, check lists, information sheets, etc.)
- www.talkaboutwildlife.ca/profile/?s=327 (Alberta-related information; includes links to RWBB songs)



A FLEDGLING CLINGS TO A REED.

SANDRA HAWKINS

BOOK REVIEW

The Will of the Land

REVIEW BY: JOHN MARRIOTT, FROM HIS THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2011 BLOG.*

In the wake of...the untimely death of Meadow, the young Banff wolf killed on the railway tracks on March 7, 2011 [see "Saying Goodbye to Another Banff Wolf", pg 37], I have received a deluge of personal emails, blog comments, and Facebook fan page comments asking, simply, "What can we do?" to put some pressure on Parks Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway to address the situation in a meaningful manner.

So what can we do? In his gorgeous new book, *The Will of the Land*, fellow Canmore wildlife and nature photographer Peter A. Dettling tackles this issue head-on. Peter's book is a revelation to the idea that Banff National Park is supposed to protect its wild inhabitants, not cater to the whims of corporate greed.

The Will of the Land is one of the most important books to come out regarding conservation in Canada in years. That it focuses on my (and Peter's) mountain backyard and features some of the most breathtaking wildlife photography you will ever see is an added bonus to the must-read text for anyone that cares about the state of Canada's national parks, and in particular, Banff National Park.

In the book, Peter chronicles many of the relationships he developed from years in the field in Banff working on this project. While many of you may have seen Peter's name from time to

time in national publications and magazines, much of the reason his work has not been seen as much as other equally-talented wildlife photographers is because of the incredible amount of time he spent ignoring the call of his desk and office to search for and photograph many of the subjects of this book, like the Bows (the Bow Valley wolf family), Jolie (a Banff grizzly), and others. I have mentioned in previous articles and posts about the time I spent photographing the Bows in 2007 – a total of 47 days in the field in order to get 4 good photo days/opportunities with the wolves. Yet that considerable effort pales in comparison to the amount of time Peter spent in the field in Banff in 2007: over 250 days.

The dedication Peter showed on this project clearly shines through in *The Will of the Land*. The first 100 pages entrance the reader, leading one along a journey with Peter to visit the personal connections he has made with the animals he's photographed and spent so much time with. The stories are fascinating, the photographs equally as captivating. But then the book takes a decided

TRAINS RACE THROUGH BANFF NATIONAL PARK, CREATING A DEATH ZONE FOR WILDLIFE. PETER DETTLING



THE WILL of THE LAND



Photographs & Text by Peter Dettling

By Peter Dettling, ISBN 9781926855004; 11 x 8.75 inches; 176 pages. Hardcover; \$39.95 (CAD)

and purposeful twist, bringing to the forefront the hard questions that need to be asked and exposing the worst of the ecological problems that Banff National Park faces.

The book takes a rare look into the "realities of nature's growing struggle against developing tourism, ill-conceived transportation routes and questionable wildlife management practices." And importantly, in doing so, Peter does not sugarcoat the truth with a collection of pretty pictures surrounding the tragic and often harsh words. Rather, he exposes the worst of the park for all to see in graphic, vivid photos of his closest wild friends, the wolves of the Bow Valley family, after their deaths.

The Bows no longer exist in Banff National Park. Delinda, Nanuk, Chinook, Ranger, Lakota, Fluffy, White Fang, Silvertip, and Sundance no longer walk the Bow Valley. The same goes for Field, Blondie, #16, #66, and so many more grizzly bears, all that have died at the hands of man.

Peter's book comes at a time when it is needed most. Many Canadians, like myself, are extremely disgruntled with how our Parks are being managed and protected. I am fortunate enough to have a voice with Parks Canada occasionally, to be on committees and boards, or to provide input to research projects. However, I've become

disillusioned with this as well, not sure that it's helping at all. So in the face of this comes *The Will of the Land*, Peter's own impassioned cry for help with something even better: a vision for the future of Canada's most famous national park and a way that you can help make that vision a reality.

If this has touched a nerve with you at all, then I urge you to pick up Peter's book from a local bookstore (Cafe Books in Canmore, the Viewpoint in Banff, or any Chapters, Coles, or Indigo location across Canada) or order it directly online. It is a book that could change the way we view our national parks forever, and I'm proud of my friend and colleague for having the faith and perseverance to bring this significant project to fruition.

For more about Peter Dettling's photography and projects, please visit his website at www.terramagica.ca. For more about the book, please visit www.terramagica.ca/Porta_website/projects.html.

*Nature Alberta highly recommends John Marriott's website and blog: John E. Marriott Canadian Wildlife and Nature Photography (www.wildernessprints.com). John "shares photographic advice, tall tales, and beautiful pictures from his photography adventures in the Canadian Wilds and beyond." With superb photography in his web gallery, and his informative, entertaining blog writings, the site should not be missed. You can even sign up to get his blog posts in your inbox!

Saying Goodbye to Another Banff Wolf

BY JOHN MARRIOTT (FROM HIS WEDNESDAY APRIL 6, 2011 BLOG, AT JOHN E. MARRIOTT CANADIAN WILDLIFE AND NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY (WWW.WILDERNESSPRINTS.COM))

On March 7, 2011, Banff's Pipestone wolf family lost another member when Meadow, the smallest member of the pack, was run over and killed by a Canadian Pacific Railway train in the Bow Valley.

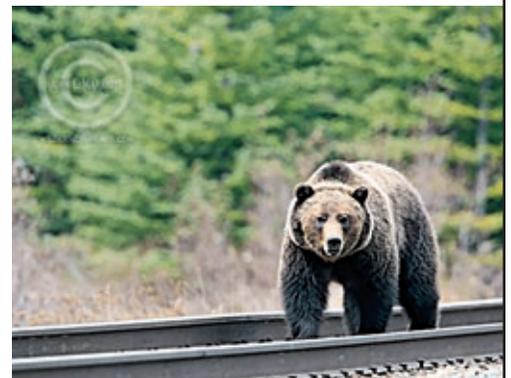
I got the devastating news the day before I left for my holiday in Europe, with too little time to do much to get the word out about the tragedy. However, I did manage to send the local newspapers images of Meadow, along with several quotes and stories, in the hopes that her death would not be in vain.

For the first few days in Europe, I got up before my wife and went online to scour the Banff and Canmore newspaper's websites in anticipation of the backlash that was sure to arise from the loss of another of Banff's most prominent wolves to human causes. Sadly, all I could find was a tiny backpage mention, though a week later the paper had a scathing and heartfelt "Letter to the Editor" from my friend and colleague, Canmore wildlife photographer Peter A. Dettling, asking once again why Parks Canada was not acting in the face of this ongoing debacle.

A month later, just as I had feared, Meadow's death has now been all but forgotten – another case of, 'another month, another dead wolf/bear, another incident that Parks and the CPR do nothing about'.

In February 2011, it was a train mowing down an unknown black wolf near the Town of Banff. Last June, it was a male grizzly. Last May, one of the Bow Valley's last remaining female grizzlies. Last winter (2010), it was Raven, a Pipestone wolf pup, thrown more than 30 metres by a speeding vehicle on the 60 km/hour Bow Valley Parkway. [Editor's note: During the night of May 9, 2011, a large (415 pound) adult male grizzly bear (called "bear 0148") was killed on the Trans-Canada Highway west of Lake Louise. Because the bear was 65 metres from the point of impact to where he landed, it's likely that it was hit by a speeding semi-trailer truck. A smaller vehicle would have had severe damage.]

GRIZZLY BEAR 0148 IN HAPPIER TIMES, WALKING THE TRAIN TRACKS IN BANFF IN MAY 2010. JOHN MARRIOTT





MEADOW FROM THE PIPESTONE WOLF FAMILY, AT SIX MONTHS OLD. JOHN MARRIOTT



MEADOW (LEFT) COMING UP TO GREET HER OLDER SISTER, BLIZZARD . JOHN MARRIOTT

And this time it was Meadow, a small, all-black female pup named by wolf behaviour expert Gunther Bloch. She had become separated from her parents several days prior to the accident and was hanging out with her siblings, Chester and Lillian, when she was killed. That her parents weren't around was likely a key factor in her death, as she was by far the most skittish of the pups and the most likely to panic without her parents' direction and expertise in traveling on the dangerous railway.

Because of Meadow's slightly nervous disposition, she was often harder to photograph than the rest of the members of the pack. Fortunately for me, whenever

she was with her parents or older sister, Blizzard, she would often stay out of the trees just long enough for me to get a few good shots of her.

Meadow's death is just another in a long line of wolves and bears that I have known and photographed, only to one day get the call that they've died at the hands of humans.

Meanwhile, Parks Canada plods on with their caribou and bison reintroduction programs, keeping a blind eye to the fact that we have far more pressing problems in our flagship national park. Why aren't we fixing the existing issues before tackling new ones? Why hasn't Parks Canada or the CPR done anything about the

death sentence that they have consistently provided for the past 125 years for Bow Valley wildlife? Why is this suddenly readily-available caribou and bison reintroduction money not being spent right here, right now, on the problems we already face.

Let me put it more bluntly. Who cares if we have bison and caribou if we don't have bears and wolves?

The count is already at two wolves just three months into this year, and Meadow is long forgotten on the desks of those who are supposed to be in charge of protecting her and her family. What's next in store for Banff's wildlife? And hopefully, the question isn't really: Who is next?



Besides writing books, running his photography business and travelling, John E. Marriott launched a wildlife photography tour company in 2010 called "Canadian Wildlife Photography Tours"; the tours are, to say the least, successful – the first four were all sellouts! Regarding his website, John says:

"My primary hope with this site is that it will give you a taste for my style of photography and for what the wilds of Canada are like, creating in you a longing to visit or re-visit magical areas like the Canadian Rockies and see them like you've never seen them before. I fell in love with this place long ago, and want you too to experience the beauty and grandeur of the Rocky Mountains and Canada and capture the secrets you discover on a camera." www.wildernessprints.com

Respecting the Wisdom of All Species

BY JIM COVEL

Dr. Steve Webster has been one of my mentors for many years. In addition to being one of the founders of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Steve is an invertebrate zoologist and a great storyteller.

On several occasions I've heard Steve describe how sponges may be fairly intelligent animals. His point is that sponges figured out how to make a good living millions of years ago and haven't had to change much since that time. Meanwhile, we humans with all our intelligence are still trying to get it right. Steve's point is that many species are well adapted to their environment, and if you want to consider the ability to survive and prosper as a type of wisdom, then perhaps that wisdom resides in many organisms.

I hadn't thought about that concept in many years, until I heard a TED talk¹ recently by Van Jones, author of *The Green Collar Economy*. Van offered an interesting definition of biomimicry as "respecting the

wisdom of all species." One definition of wisdom is that which empowers the ability to choose or act to consistently produce the optimum results with a minimum of time and energy. Many species exhibit this quality, although one can argue whether the choice is a cognitive function or is hard-wired into their genes.

Biomimicry is a rapidly growing movement to look to nature for ideas for everything from superior design and engineering to new pharmaceuticals. There are few inefficient designs in nature, few ineffective processes, and humans have learned much from studying other species throughout time. So respecting the wisdom of all species is making more and more sense.

The next step that Van Jones addressed is "respecting the

Reprinted from: *Legacy*, the magazine of the National Association for Interpretation. January-February 2011; Vol 22, No. 1. *Legacy*, published six times a year, offers a forum for professionals in the field to exchange ideas and information. Articles, columns, and commentaries deal with practical issues relevant to frontline interpreters, planners, and managers. Subscriptions are available separate from memberships.

wisdom of all people." When we can recognize that all people, all cultures possess their own wisdom and that wisdom is of equal value to all of us, we can eliminate indifference which may be the greatest challenge to our humanity. Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel wrote: "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." Indifference may be even more dangerous than ignorance.

Indifference makes it possible to suspend our sense of responsibility for fellow humans, fellow creatures and for taking care of our planet. It has been linked to the modern phenomenon of disposability. If we are unaware or indifferent about the resource footprint of the goods we use, we easily fall prey to the convenience of disposable

¹ TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design – a non-profit organization dedicated to "Ideas Worth Spreading"; www.ted.com.



Jim Covell is the senior manager of guest experience at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, California. He is also President of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). This article was written for Legacy, NAI's premier publication – hence the references to heritage interpretation, a profession which is a vital part of heritage conservation and education.

INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.

goods, packaging or containers. If we fail to respect the wisdom of species that live in a wetlands or a rainforest, it's easy to treat them as disposable. The ultimate injury is when we fail to respect the wisdom of other cultures and begin to treat some humans, some of our own heritage as "disposable."

This is why heritage interpretation is so critical to our future. Interpreters go beyond making people aware of nature and culture, we inspire them to care. In this process of knowing and caring we overcome indifference. We discover the wisdom of other peoples and other species. We understand the process of accumulating this wisdom has been going on for millennia – this wisdom is the heritage of all living

things. Interpretation is not value neutral. We model the values of esteem, of respect for other lives and other living things across time and space. In the company of an interpreter the audience soon begins to respect the wisdom of other living things. Ultimately, we hope to inspire our audiences to help us preserve this great reservoir of wisdom as we need all the wisdom we can get as we venture into a challenging future.



FRESHWATER SPONGE, *SPONGILLA LACUSTRIS*. KIRT L. ONTHANK/WIKIPEDIA

NAI

The National Association for Interpretation is a not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to inspiring leadership and excellence in advancing the profession of heritage interpretation. NAI currently serves about 5,000 members in the United States, Canada (including Alberta), and over thirty other nations. Individual members include those who work at parks, museums, nature centers, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, historical and cultural sites, commercial tour companies, and theme parks. Commercial and institutional members include those who provide services to the heritage interpretation industry. For more information on NAI: www.interpnet.com

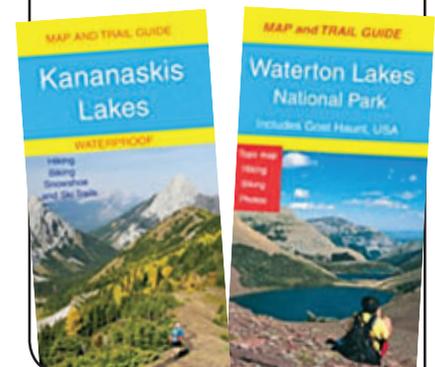


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CELESTIAL HAPPENINGS

Starry Nights

Summer/Fall: August to October

BY JOHN MCFAUL

**FEATURED CONSTELLATIONS: SAGITTA, EQUULEUS AND DELPHINUS**

Of the 88 officially recognized constellations that grace our night sky, many are large and outlined by bright stars. Such constellations as Orion and the Great Bear are easy to locate. However, there are a number of small, relatively faint constellations that populate the celestial sphere. These require dark skies and patience to find and appreciate.

Three of the smallest constellations visible from Alberta are Sagitta, Equuleus and Delphinus. They form a line between the beak of Cygnus, the head of Aquila and the nose of Pegasus. Although faint, they were all catalogued by Claudius Ptolemy in his great 2nd century AD writings, "The Almagest".

Sagitta is known as The Arrow. It is associated with many legends, including the arrow that Cupid used to strike Apollo so that he would fall in love with Daphne. It is also associated with the arrows used by Hercules to kill the Stymphalian birds Cygnus, Aquila and Vulture (Lyre) which are to be found near Sagitta. This was the fifth of his 12 labours.

Equuleus is the second smallest constellation and is known as The Colt or Little Horse. It is thought by some to represent Celeris, the brother to the winged horse Pegasus

which lies near by. The Arabs referred to it as Al Faras al Awal, The First Horse, as it rises before Pegasus.

Delphinus, The Dolphin, lies between Sagitta and Equuleus. It is the prettiest of this diminutive threesome and actually looks like its namesake. Delphinus is thought to represent the dolphin which convinced the goddess Amphitrite to marry Poseidon.

Another story tells of a dolphin saving the minstrel Arion who lived in the 7th century BC. He was in danger of being killed by sailors who were transporting him to his Greek homeland. He summoned a dolphin with his music and after jumping overboard to escape the murderous sailors the dolphin carried Arion on its back to shore.

CELESTIAL HAPPENINGS

Sun: Rise – Aug. 1 (05:49 MDT), Sept. 1 (06:42 MDT), Oct. 1 (07:35 MDT)
Set – Aug. 1 (21:30 MDT), Sept. 1 (20:24 MDT), Oct. 1 (19:11 MDT)
Times are for Edmonton. Autumnal Equinox occurs Sept. 23rd.

Moon: Full – Aug. 13th, Sept. 12th, Oct. 11th
New – Aug. 28th, Sept. 27th, Oct. 26th

Planets: **Mercury** is too close to the sun to be seen at this time of year.

Venus like Mercury lies too close to the sun to be seen. It will reappear in the evening sky next spring.

Mars rises in the early hours in the east from August to October. The moon will be close to Mars on Aug 25th.

Jupiter appears above the eastern horizon just before midnight in August and rises 2 hours earlier each month thereafter. Watch for the Moon to be very close to Jupiter on Aug. 19th.

Saturn may be seen very low in the west after sunset in early August. Afterwards it quickly disappears in the solar glare as its path takes it behind the sun.

Meteor Shower: The Perseid Meteor Shower peaks in the late evening and early morning of August 12th into the 13th: 50 meteors/hour. The almost-full moon will interfere this year.

Orionid Meteor Shower peaks on October 21st: 25 meteors/hour

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

CLUB PAGE



Friends of Little Beaver Lake Society

At Nature Alberta's April 2 Annual General Meeting, the Friends of Little Beaver Lake Society became the newest member of Nature Alberta. We welcome this great group to our naturalist family! The Society's approach, as outlined in the article below, might well be considered a classic example of how to protect a local natural treasure. The article was received from Marilylle Soveran, Publicity Secretary for Friends of Little Beaver Lake. Lorne J. Ferguson is the Society's President.

MAKING FRIENDS WITH A LAKE

People who live in and around Ferintosh circle a small natural treasure that many folks who drive past on Highway 21 miss all together: Little Beaver Lake. It is a small body of water about one-quarter mile wide and two miles long – and mostly spring-fed. The Village of Ferintosh is on its east shore, and the County sub-division, “Little Beaver Lake Estates”, lines its west shoreline.

In the winter of 2006-2007, a long-time Ferintosh resident, Vera Jackson, began pondering how best we might preserve and care for this lake. She talked with friends and neighbours and the result was – by the end of May, 2007 – a Society, “Friends of Little Beaver Lake”. Within months, it was duly registered under the Alberta Societies Act.

Members of the new Society talked together about how best they might keep this lake healthy

and beautiful. The concept of “friending” the lake was uppermost. We needed to get to know our lake better, its birds, its wild plants, its aspen woods. The more we knew and understood, the more we would want to keep and cherish what we have. We invited guests to come and talk about waterfowl, green spaces, beavers, birds, and so on.

It seemed to the group that, compared with other Alberta lakes, Little Beaver was still in pretty good shape. How could we be sure? And

FERINTOSH, ON THE EASTERN LAKE SHORE. MARILYLLE SOVERAN



even if it is a healthy natural environment, a measurement now would give us baseline data with which to compare future conditions.

We applied for a grant from Alberta Stewardship Network and received funding to cover a shoreline analysis by “Cows and Fish” (Alberta Riparian Habitat Management). Six plots of lakeshore property were carefully studied by a research team. The owners of these properties will receive a full report with recommendations, and Friends of Little Beaver Lake will receive a general report card on the condition of the shoreline and what grows there or makes it their home.

Also, we worked with Alberta Lake Management to have water testing done.

The Village of Ferintosh has encouraged the Society and given us recreation grants towards our program. The Battle River Watershed group provided excellent help and advice in our grant application. Staff at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus have been great allies



and advisors. Our society may be new but it already has valuable and much-appreciated friends!

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR PROJECTS SO FAR:

Educational

- Hosting **presentations** from a number of people involved in wildlife and natural area preservation, including specialists in beavers, tree-

nesting ducks, grebes, and song-birds.

- Working with the U. of A. Augustana Campus to **involve students** in learning and sharing projects at Little Beaver Lake.
- Preparing a Little Beaver Lake **interpretive gallery** to be part of this summer’s Ferintosh Centennial celebration (Canada Day week-end).



SOCIETY MEMBERS GATHER FOR AN OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE INTERPRETIVE PROJECT. MARILYLLE SOVERAN



INSTALLING A NEW BIRD NESTING BOX LENDS AN AIR OF EXCITEMENT IN ANTICIPATION OF NEW OCCUPANTS. LORNE FERGUSON

Local Initiatives

- Building **nesting boxes** for waterfowl and installing them on lake shore trees, plus taking time each year to check and clean the boxes, noting how they have been used in the previous season.
- Building and erecting a large **interpretive sign** at the Ferintosh Campground, encouraging visitors to notice,



KAYAKERS MAKE EXCELLENT USE OF THE NEW PADDLERS DOCK. ANNA GRAHN

- enjoy and protect the waterfowl that also use our lake as summer home.
- Providing and installing a **paddlers' dock** for the village, to make it easier for visiting canoeists and kayakers to enjoy the lake.
- In spring of 2011, beginning work on an analysis and **reforestation plan** for the woodland surrounding the

Ferintosh campground; pending approval and co-operation of the Village, Friends of Little Beaver Lake would undertake this project, including the care and management involved.

Our Society has members who live here year-round, and others who own and treasure their recreational property here, but live elsewhere. We all work together to befriend our lake as best we can.

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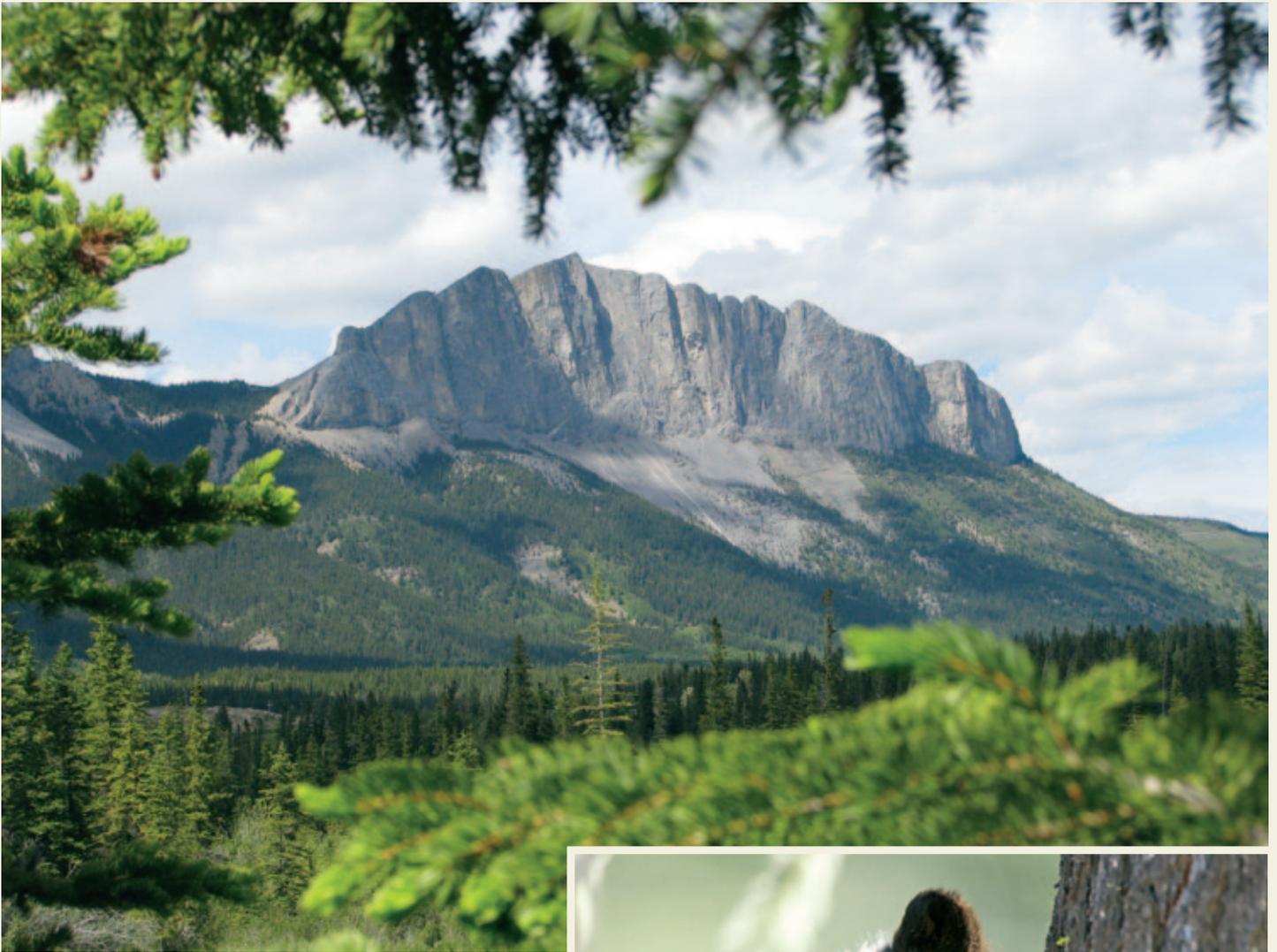
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A NICELY FRAMED VIEW OF MOUNT YAMNUSKA.
BONNIE MULLIN

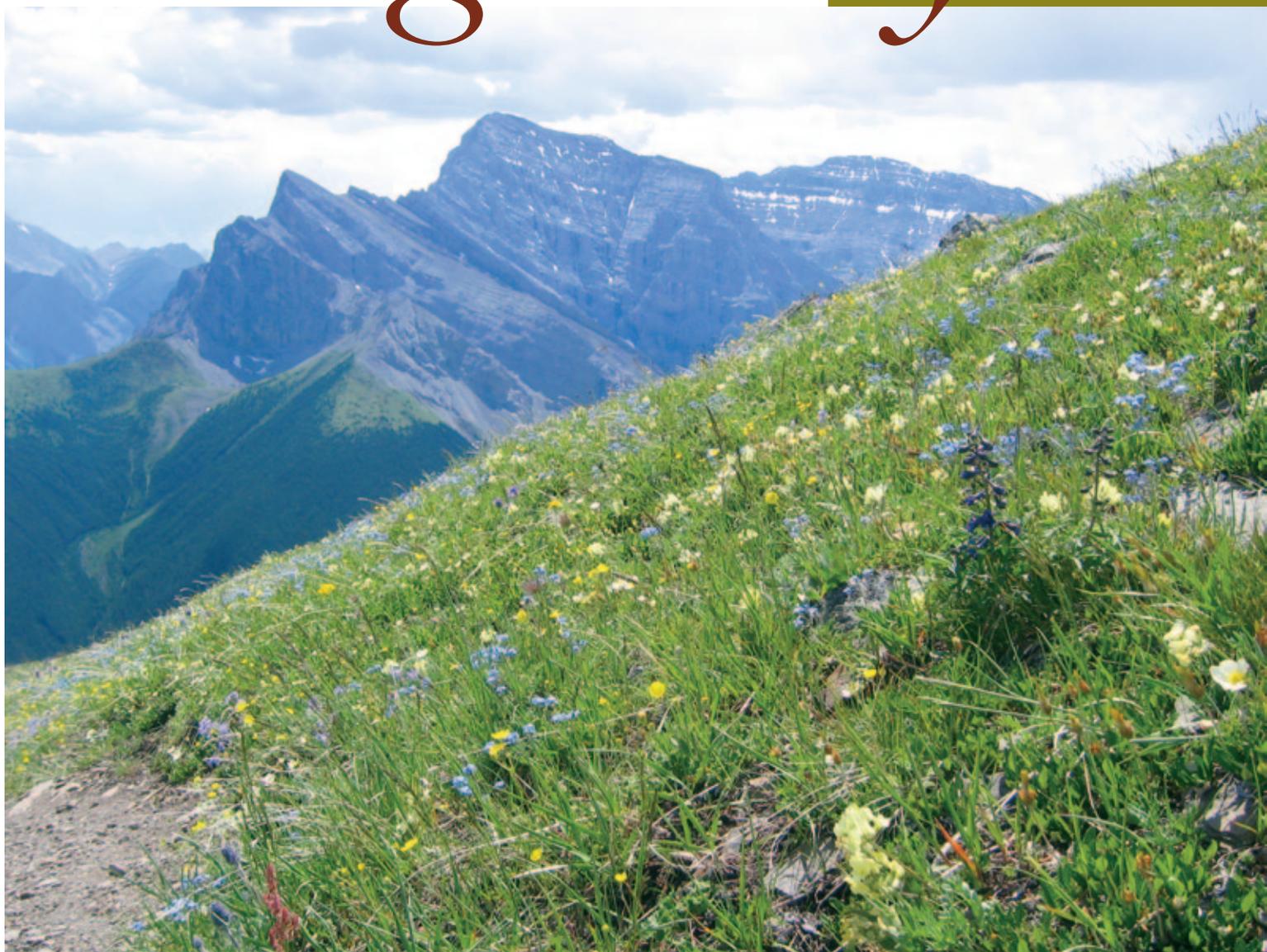


PEEK-A-BOO! RICK PRICE



**AMERICAN AVOCETS – ALWAYS STUNNING! SEE
PHOTOGRAPHY STORY, PG 24.** SANDRA HAWKINS

Nature *gallery*



THE FLOWERED SLOPES OF MOUNT ALLEN, TOWARDS MOUNT KIDD. BONNIE MULLIN



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