

There are still trails out there worth riding and hiking -- but ski season is nearly here!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

If You Admire the View, You Are a Friend Of Kananaskis



Jane Potter, "Along the Highwood River, Oct 2011". FOKC Photo Contest 2nd Place

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STOP PRESS: The Government of Alberta commits \$60 million to restore flood damage in K-Country

Just as we were about to go to "press" for this issue (by that, we mean "press" send), the Government of Alberta announced a commitment to spend \$60 million to restore flood damage in K-Country. You can read more about it [here](#). As strong partners of Alberta Parks, the Friends of Kananaskis Country were present on October 23, 2013, for the Government of Alberta's announcement.

Over the past four months, the 1,100 members of the Friends of Kananaskis Country have put forth a monumental effort to raise funds and search for volunteers to assist with the flood recovery that has occurred so far. To date, Friends of Kananaskis Country volunteers have logged over 4,000 of volunteer time restoring flood-damaged trails, and there is still much to do.



“Kananaskis Country is the place where millions of Albertans and visitors come each year to recreate, rejuvenate, and rediscover the wonder in their world,” says Derek Ryder, Co-Chair of the Friends. “It is the tonic to recover from their daily lives, and the elixir that reenergizes their souls. The floods hurt K-Country like it hurt all Albertans, deep to the cores, and restoring that loss helps us all recover.”

James Early, Friends Co-Chair adds: “It is well established that being in the outdoors is beneficial for people's physical and mental health. But the true definition of 'outdoors', in my mind, is Kananaskis Country. It isn't just some local park that attracts some local residents. Kananaskis Country is internationally renowned for the sheer scale of its beauty and wilderness. This is, I believe, because of its exceptional recreation opportunities and how close it allows visitors to get to true nature.”

We are extremely thankful for, and strongly support the Government's recognition of the financial capital that will be required to begin the restoration of Kananaskis Country. The Friends will continue to provide whatever services we can to ensure that Kananaskis Country, post-flood, is even better than it was before.

It is important to remember that our efforts in Kananaskis Country are never over. In 2014, and beyond, we will need the same dedication from volunteers, will still require financial support, and will continue to work with the Government on Kananaskis Country issues, for the benefit of all.

October Trail Care Update: Looking Back at an Unexpected Year

by Rosemary Power, Program Coordinator

Back in the spring, I had everything organized and was looking forward to a leisurely summer in the Rockies. I had a roster of trail maintenance days lined up for volunteers

and a newly hired co-worker to take care of things. About all I figured I had left to do was add a new coat of waterproofing to my hiking boots and I was ready for summer. Never did I realize how much waterproofing I was going to need as the sky opened and the flood washed away all my plans, including my newly hired assistant.



When the rain stopped, 280 mm later, many of the Kananaskis trails and other facilities were damaged or destroyed. For the Alberta Parks trail crews, their plans too, had been washed away. Once the water levels began to drop and stranded hikers had been rescued, the assessment of the damage by trail crew staff began. For the most part trails in the high country were left undamaged but many of those that followed streams were altered beyond

recognition, and bridges that cross drainage seemed to use the flood as an opportunity to take up traveling. It was clear that there were years worth of rebuilding to be done but many roads were closed making it impossible to even get volunteers in to help the government trail crews and move runaway bridges back to where they belonged.

Even before the TransCanada Highway was reopened 59 eager volunteers gathered at the Canmore Nordic Centre and in a few short hours were able to repair the worst of the storms damage (the Canmore Nordic Centre received very little damage compared with other areas). Heart Creek became our first project after that, not because it was urgent to repair but because it was accessible while much of Kananaskis Country was still closed. Six days and 750 volunteer hours later a major log jam was removed and a new trail and bridges were in place; 6 km down and 500 km more trail to go.

The rest of the summer was one mad scramble as the government trail crews tried to reopen as much as they could with little or no time for advance planning. Approximately 250 volunteers responded over the summer when trail crews needed more muscle. Now, 30 volunteer days and four months after the Heart Creek trail was rebuilt, there is still plenty of work ahead -- but most trails are open and winters skiing lies ahead.

I wonder if I should waterproof my ski boots?



Wolverine. Photo courtesy John Paczcowski, Alberta Parks

Moose on the Loose

By James Early, Co-Chair

A picture, so the saying goes, speaks a thousand words. That's what I had in mind when recently taking a stroll around Upper Kananaskis Lake. It seems that every 100m another thousand words stream through my mind. Stop. Look. Listen. Breathe. Continue on.

I think that a common misconception is that, in order to see truly specular views, one must be prepared for a six-hour hike, generally on a vertical incline, to the top of some peak. Kananaskis Country is not like that. For every challenging hike, there is a gentle stroll that fits the bill for a lazy Monday afternoon. The Thanksgiving-turkey walk-off.



Upper Kananaskis Lake is one of those places. From leaving the city limits of Calgary, you barely travel thirty minutes west before heading south for a short distance on Highway 40. As you drive, thousands more words run through your head. They all seem to be similar in vein. Breathtaking. Beautiful. Inspiring. Perfect. Wild. Vast. Perhaps these words go some way to providing the definition of Kananaskis Country?



We brought a picnic lunch consisting of -- you guessed it -- turkey sandwiches. Had we have known, however, we would have brought a pot of chili and some firewood. Upper Kananaskis Lake has a number of picnic benches and fire pits that provide spectacular views of the lake. It is not inconceivable that this lazy stroll could be turned into a day or weekend-long outing.

The floods didn't miss this place though. A short walk around the south side of the lake and a bridge, once sturdy and purposeful, lies limp over rushing water, falling from a waterfall 15 metres away. Yellow tape, frustratingly, does not prevent people from crossing the lop-sided and icy structure -- with dogs or young children in tow.

PLEASE, do not ignore yellow tape. It is there for your safety, clear as the water in Upper Kananaskis Lake. Even without the tape, sometimes it is just obvious that danger lies ahead. Sometimes words truly escape, and a roll of the eyes occurs. Common sense should prevail.



On this day, we simply turned around (as everybody else should) and headed the other way along the north shore. Basking in sunlight, the words begin to flow again. Incredible. Mesmerizing. Crisp. Clean. Peace. Serenity. Moose.

Moose? Yes, turn one corner and, there we are, face to face with a full-grown moose. It's a cow.

Chewing away, minding her own business, probably with a thousand words running through her mind. Grass, I expect, would be the first. Yum, a close second. Of course, we grab our camera, add the zoom lens (rather than getting closer) and shoot. We venture up to a tree to provide some stability. Then, to the right, in the corner of our eye, a big black shape. The bull, a much larger moose with impressive antlers, is laid, calm, in the shade, just supervising his cow.

I had never seen a moose in the wild until this moment. My moose exposure to date had been several carcasses on the side of various highways and at the Calgary zoo. Huge. Sturdy. Ugly, but Noble. More words run through my mind.



Had we not have seen Mr. and Mrs. Moose, our Upper Kananaskis Lake experience would have been perfect. With this moose encounter... ..words cannot describe.

Farewell to Mark Hecht

In early October, the Board received the resignation of Mark Hecht from the Board. Mark made a significant contribution in the all-too-short 16 months since he joined the Board. He worked on the Governance Sub-Committee and the Trails Sub-Committee, and was instrumental in delivering the FOKC Crew Leader Training Manual this past spring. His teaching schedule kept him from attending most Board meetings, but he was always involved in Board issues via e-mail. When he joined the Board, he was an instructor at Mount Royal University, and has since moved on to the faculty of St. Mary's University College where in addition to being an instructor in Geography, he is working on his Ph.D. through the University of Ottawa. It is a shame that his increased workload prevents his continuing as a Board member; we will miss his enthusiasm and active participation.



The family fall challenge

There's still time to join the David Suzuki Foundation's Fall Family Challenge. If you have kids, here's a way to re-connect them with nature. They'll be exploring nature in our backyards and beyond, learning about how we're connected to the environment and how our actions affect it.

Join up, and you'll receive a month of weekly emails, each one containing a fun outdoor activity (complete with step-by-step instructions) as well as tips and ideas for exploring the outdoors with your family. We'll get up-close with aquatic ecosystems, explore biodiversity in our backyards, and even sprout some socks (yes, you read that right). You can sign up [here](#).

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Released

If you have some time on your hands, why not give a read to the recently released South Saskatchewan Regional Plan? It's a framework for management of almost the entire southern half of the province, and makes recommendations regarding creation of new, and augmentation of existing, parks and protected areas, including Kananaskis. It's a little, tiny 157 page document that you can download [here](#). The Province is hosting 21 sessions for stakeholders and the general public to discuss and provide feedback on the plan, the details of which are [here](#).

We had a blast!!

Thanks to all of you who came to our first ever fundraising party at Ceili's in late September. The party, organized by Board Members Thy Nguyen, Kayla Dallyn and Manika Suri, was a blast, and raised nearly \$6,000 to fund trail restoration work in K-Country. You can see a full (and really long) list of the event sponsors on our website [here](#).

Saying thanks back!

Attention to the ~450 of our members who came out and dug trails, cleaned up trash, fixed flood damage, or otherwise volunteered with the Friends in 2013: We're having a party and pizza dinner to say thank you, and you're invited (because you're the stars). Circle **Saturday, November 2nd** in your calendar. We sent you all a note. Please say yes!



On the lookout for Board Members

With the departure of Mark Hecht, we're back looking for some Board members to help us out. As the Friends continues it's process of renewal and reinvention, we're looking for active, dedicated folks to help lead the organization on its new path. Board members are committed to helping Parks make Kananaskis the best it can be. Currently, were looking for new Board members with interest in the following areas:

- Helping us design and deliver the best trail care program ever;
- Assisting in turning the energy to recover from the flooding into funding the organization can use to help heal K-Country.

Our Board is active and engaged -- working managers of specific areas of the Friends' organization. You need to be willing to dig in and get your hands dirty (including sometimes literally dirty, on trail care days) to help us execute our vision. We have monthly Board meetings, and are in daily contact with each other via e-mail. If you're as passionate about K-Country as we are, send a note to us [here](#) for more information.

Please, please help on this survey!!

Can you *please* spare 45 minutes of your time to do a survey? This is the last month the survey is open, and more input is desperately needed. Friends member and overall great lady **Lauren Zabel** is an active volunteer with us, *and* a Parks interpreter, *and* past Friends volunteer coordinator. If this isn't enough, she is also a Masters candidate at University of Calgary. Her Masters thesis is studying volunteerism in Kananaskis Country

(that would be you!). The objectives of her research study are to (1) investigate how volunteers perceive their role(s) within Alberta Parks, (2) gain insight into how Alberta Park's staff and partners in the Kananaskis Region understand volunteerism from their respective work units and experiences, and (3) offer recommendations on moving forward with positive volunteer management experiences for both staff and volunteers. She only needs 45 minutes of your time to complete an anonymous, on-line survey. Let's help Lauren get her Masters! Interested? Click [here](#) to get more info and start the survey!



Kananaskis' Special Places, Part 6: The Mystery of Springs

6th in a series by Derek Ryder, Co-Chair and Director of Communications

The greater Kananaskis area protects numerous special places, and in this series of articles, I'm going to take you to a number of my favourites. Some of these hide, and some are in the open but get passed by. All are worth exploring if you want to see the unique bits of our beloved space.

Kananaskis Country leaks. It really does. Water pours in from nowhere and pours out in some of the great rivers of North America. But where does all this water come from?

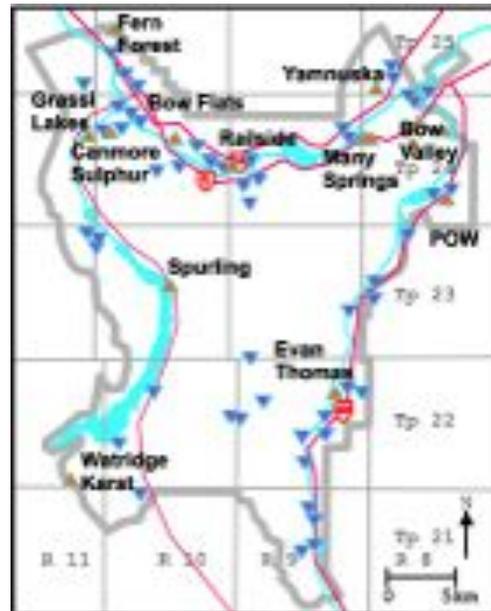
A lot of it is snowmelt. And it takes a LONG time for spring to come; "Spring Run Off" peaks in mid-June at Bragg Creek for the Elbow River, and the same is true for the Bow

River at Cochrane. At the Little Elbow Summit snow pillow station, having snow to the beginning of July is common. About 50% of the time, snow stays at the Three Isle Lake snow pillow until mid-July. So snow is a big contributor to river flows.

If snow is one contributor, then rain is another. Have you noticed it rains here, especially in the spring? We locals call it “June-soon season”.

Data on snow, rain and river flows is readily available at Alberta Sustainable Resource’s site that you can get to through [this link](#). Look at the Bow River sub-basin; then select, either: “Snow Data”, “River Flows and Levels” or “Meteorological and Precipitation Data”. This is a particularly interesting year to look, given this past summer’s flooding event.

But K-Country has one other source of water that’s harder to measure and even harder to understand: natural springs. K-Country is full of places where water just leaks out of the ground for no apparent reason. The Bow Valley is home to 40 documented springs, Spray Valley 9, and the Kananaskis Valley 26, and there are many more springs in the Sheep and Highwood areas. The map to the right shows some of them. Clearly, that water has to come from somewhere, but just where can be quite the mystery.



Take Spurling Creek, near the West Wind Pass trailhead. The creek is always flowing, and if you walk up the trail from the Spray Lakes Road, about 100 m up from the road you’ll see water just coming out of the hillside in excess of 9 l/min all year round, and at a constant 3.5° too. Why? Where does the water come from? Logic would tell you that the water comes from above. Look up all you want; up on the flanks of Mt. Lougheed all the way to the top of the Windtower. No lakes, creeks, or water of any sort to provide a year round source of water at a constant temperature and flow rate. Maybe the water comes from below, pushed up under some kind of pressure. Look across Spray Lakes Road and down about 200 m. That is Spray Lake, but if that’s the source of the spring, how does the water get pushed up 200m? It’s unlikely, too, given that Spurling Creek’s springs were found long before the lake was built. The spring’s source is simply unknown.



Take Grassi Lakes. These lovely azure blue lakes are the uppermost expression of a series of springs that total 600 l/min and make up the pretty waterfall on the Grassi Lakes Trail. No, the water doesn't leak out of the dam above; Grassi Lakes and falls have been here a lot longer than TransAlta's hydro system.

Take the aptly named Many Springs trail in Bow Valley Provincial Park. This pleasant and easy little trail will take you by

many wood lilies in the fall along boardwalks to a very pretty lake with Mt. Yamnuska as a backdrop. This variably-sized lake (thank the beavers who like to dam it, and Parks staff who remove the dams lest damage occur) is surrounded with about 30 places where water just bubbles up out of the ground, though most of the water comes out of just 3 spots. It keeps the ice on the lake thin or not intact on even the coldest of winter days, because the water is always the same basic temperature, around 8°. And a LOT of it shows up here, up to 9,000 l/min in the summer, making the complex of springs here the largest in K-Country. One of the sections is called "the Boiling Springs" because the water spews out of the ground with such force it looks like it's boiling.



Where does this water come from? One suggestion is, that it is deeply circulating waters in fractured bedrock associated with the McConnell Thrust Fault. Another idea is a connection to a regional buried valley aquifer ("the Calgary Buried Valley") that allegedly runs under the center of the Bow Valley, a remnant water-filled glacial melt-water channel. But no one knows for sure, even

though it has been studied at least 3 times.

Water leaks out of the ground in the Middle Lake complex in the park as well, plus up at Willow Rock Campground – where water comes out of the ground at a constant 2°, which is mysteriously 5° colder than Many Springs.

And then there's Karst Spring. Down the old Watridge lake fir road from the Mt. Shark parking lot, this spring belches 2,400 l/min of water out from a small hole in a hillside. All that water at a basically constant temperature has made for a hugely lush dark forest that makes getting pictures of the spring difficult. It's a really fun place to visit on a really cold day in winter as even though the path to the springs overlook from Watridge Lake can get icy, all that



warm "water" prevents ice and snow from sticking around on the creek itself.



Believe it or not, in an effort to find out where this water comes from, someone actually donned SCUBA equipment and tried to “dive” into the springs and find the cave from which it flows. They only made it 30’ down before the power of the flow and the small space made it impossible to continue. Why would anyone do this? Well, because where there’s that much water there’s usually a cave system, and cavers want to know. The current belief, according to Dr. Chas Young, a noted spelunker and cave specialist, is that the water coming out of Karst Spring is sourced from under the Haig Glacier by a long cave system. Maybe. I’ve looked at the geological maps, and the Haig sits on Devonian lower Palliser and Carboniferous

middle Banff formations, the former of which can be prone to caves and other karst features. But the Haig also lies on the north side of the Robertson anticline, the springs on the south. Who knows whether or not the source will be sorted out any time soon.

Other really interesting springs in K-Country include:

- The Evan-Thomas spring, which flows at a whopping 7,200 l/min. I haven’t been to see this one since the floods; it would be interesting to see whether the floods, which devastated area near the springs at the confluence of Evan-Thomas Creek and the Kananaskis River, changed the springs in any way;
- The stinky Canmore Sulphur spring. At less than 9 l/min, it’s not big, but that aroma more than makes up for it. Lawrence Grassi tried to turn it into a therapeutic pool in the 1920’s;
- Sulphur Springs, off the Fullerton Loop near the former Allen Bill Pond. I’ve been there twice, and though I can smell them, I have difficulty finding them. Once upon a time, the spring water came out of a pipe someone stuck into the spring, making it look somewhat less natural;
- Railside Spring at the base of Grotto Mountain, with 1,700 l/min discharge;
- The “hot” (32°) springs on the top of Mist Mountain. K-Country doesn’t have a lot of hot springs, and I think it unusual to find one on the top of a mountain, but that’s K-Country for you. You can see a really, really bad video of folks sitting in that spring [here](#). It’s a spring with an impressive view. Spring water only gets hot by being pushed underground really, really deep, so the source of this spring is really a mystery.

There are the countless springs elsewhere in the mountains; most every valley from Rummel to Pocaterra feature ponds or streams that just appear out of nowhere.

Natural springs present an endless source of wonder and mystery about geological processes, including mysteries that may never be solved. K-Country plays an important role in protecting our precious water resources, in part because of the amount of mystery associated with where that water even comes from.



We extend our ongoing thanks to TransAlta, our Trail Care title sponsor. Without their support, we could not have executed the 2012 trail care program, and we are honoured to have them back as the title sponsor of the trail care program in 2013!



Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

There are many ways to express your gratitude for Kananaskis Country and we are always grateful for contributions that help us maintain our programs, operations and help us restore flood damaged trails. Friends of Kananaskis Country is a registered charity in good standing and we provide charitable receipts for donations over \$20.00. You can reach us directly by mail at the address below, through the [donations link on our website](#),

through [ATB Cares](#), or [CanadaHelps](#). Thank you for your support!

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