

Has spring sprung? Not up high in the mountains!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



Vince Zafra, "View from Mt. Baldy". FOKC 2013 Photo Contest Honourable Mention

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The Program Report

by Derek Ryder for Rosemary Power, Program Coordinator

Rosemary is off on a well-deserved holiday, so once again, I get to try and fill her shoes with the Trails Program status report this month.

We're still working the trail care program design for this year, but have high confidence we're going to be really, really busy. Alberta Parks will be contracting out trail rough in work for the most severely flood damaged trails, including Ribbon Creek and Galatea. Once the heavy equipment is done, we will be called in to assist Parks in sculpting the rough trail into the finished pathway.



We're working on building stronger partnerships with other trail use groups. We have initiated discussions with the Climbers Access Society of Alberta, who's stated mandate is *"...to provide and preserve public access for climbers to the montane and alpine regions as well as related and surrounding wilderness of the Rocky Mountain Cordillera and Eastern Slope foothills of Alberta."* We also had a presence at the recent Bragg Creek trails open house.

Deb and Kevin, our two Board members on the Trails Care subcommittee, have commenced work to set up the spring Trail Crew Leader training session. Currently targeted for May, it will build on learnings from our fall 2012 program. More time will be spent working in the field, and less will be in the classroom. We'll be doing a formal bear spray training session as well. Volunteer management will once again form an important part of the training. If you're potentially interested in becoming a crew leader with us, this is a free course you'll want to sign up for. In 2014, we'll need crew leaders who can work flood damage restoration on weekdays this year.

Winter is also grant application season. We have submitted several major grant funding applications this winter, plus provided reports on grants we received in the past. We have had some exciting results from these applications, which will be discussed further in the Board report. On-going funding is the only way your Society runs, and we appreciate our donors, sponsors and funders.



Skritchng grizzly. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

Spring is Here: News from the Board

By James Early, Co-Chair

Spring is officially here and, for a time at least, the weather seemed to be complying. The first of the Alberta grizzly bears are now out of their den and the Spring bloom is just around the corner.

The trail-building season is not quite upon us, but preparations are underway for the busiest building season that the Friends has ever undertaken. Your support and assistance are more important than ever for this 2014 building season, so stay tuned as details are announced.

Last month we introduced you to our two newest Board members: Deb and Kevin. This past month, Kim Archibald resigned from his position on the Board after almost 2 years of service; more on this later in the Newsletter. The Friends continues to look forward, however, with renewed energy and having just had an \$88,000.00 grant (\$22,000.00 per year for four years) confirmed thanks to our friends at the Calgary Foundation.



We are always on the look out for partners and members, and the donations and other support that this brings. For the past two years the Friends has been privileged to have TransAlta as our title sponsors for the trail care program. That sponsorship is now up for grabs so please contact us if you are interested in being the title sponsor of our work as we rebuild Kananaskis from the June 2013 floods.

As part of the Friends' Business Plan, one of our key aims for 2014 was to reintroduce an education component to the work we do. With two speaker-series events already under our belt in 2014, we are well on our way. We are currently scheduling meetings with our partner, Alberta Parks, to develop and install interpretive trail signage onto some key trails as part of a pilot project. Details will be fleshed out in the next few weeks.

The Friends are also in the latter stages of completing a brand-new Cooperating Agreement with Alberta Parks. Our current agreement expires on March 31, 2014 and the new Agreement will guarantee a continued partnership for the next four years. A recurring target of the Friends is 'excellence in trail care' with the goal of becoming Alberta Parks' partner of choice when it comes to trail care management and Kananaskis Country stewardship. The new Cooperating Agreement further envisages this goal by identifying the Friends as a future umbrella organization for trail groups in the Kananaskis region.

One of the other features of the Cooperating Agreement is confirmation that the Friends will engage the Friends of Kananaskis Country membership and trails volunteers – that is YOU - to identify potential projects for the Trails Program. Over the course of this year, the Friends will be looking at ways in which to collect these suggestions and organize them into a meaningful way to allow us to present those suggestions to Alberta Parks. This is just another way that you, as members, have a voice when it comes to the development and maintenance of trails in Kananaskis Country. Stay tuned for more information on this.

For now, enjoy the rest of what Winter (officially early Spring) has to offer in Kananaskis Country, your backyard, and start planning your season of activity in Kananaskis. Remember to “build”-in some “trail building” days to your plan!

Goodbye, and thanks to Kim!

As mentioned above, the Board received **Kim Archibald's** resignation from the Board in February. Kim joined the Board in June of 2012. At the time, Kim was with TransAlta, and joined partially as a result of our partnership with them. During 2012 and part of 2013, Kim provided the Board with a great connection to TransAlta that was much needed at that time in their sponsorship of the Friends. Kim's various personal commitments pulled him away from many of the Friends' activities in 2013, but Kim spearheaded the execution of

our highway clean-up day in May 2013, and also assisted with our fall 2013 fundraiser. We offer our thanks to his contributions, and look forward to seeing him out “digging trail” with us this summer.

The bears are out!

In case you haven't heard, Parks Canada caught a 500 lb male grizzly on camera on March 18th in the Hillsdale Meadows area of Hwy 1A. In addition, a black bear was spotted on in K-Country on the side of Hwy 40 the week of March 10th, and I personally saw another grizzly on the side of the TransCanada just west of the Banff park gates on March 21st.



Now is a good time to dust off your can of bear spray and check its expiry date, or to pick up a can to carry with you in 2014. In celebration of this, why not consider coming out to Bear Days in Canmore on April 13th? It will be a full day of fun and education about bears. For more information see [here](#).

A celebration of wildlife at U of C

Our friends over at The Association for Protection of Fur Bearing Animals are hosting a day long celebration of wildlife at the University of Calgary on April 12th, 2014. This event will feature speakers such as Charlie Russell, who stars in the documentary “Walking with Giants: The Grizzlies of Siberia,” and images from leading wildlife photographers.

This event will truly be inspiring, and will bring together many members of the community who are concerned about wildlife and the environment.



For more information, visit the [APFA website](#)

The Birds and Windows Project needs your help!

The issue of birds colliding with windows is a serious one, and despite all that we hear about how bad city skyscrapers are for birds, it's actually at houses that the vast majority of collisions are taking place.



To better understand how to reduce the problem of birds hitting residential windows, University of Alberta masters student Justine Kummer has developed the Birds and Windows Project. You can help her out by completing a survey and checking around your house for evidence of collisions.

For more info, click [here](#).

The 2014 HELS Project is up and running!

The Bow Valley Naturalists are once again managing the High Elevation Localized Species project, and would love your observations. The project attempts to track sightings of Pika, Marmot, Mountain Goats and Ptarmigan in the Rockies. All you have to do is log in and document your sightings in K-Country and elsewhere. Logging a sighting takes about 1 minute, and the data goes to support research on these species. For more information, see [their website](#).





"I can see you!". by Derek Ryder. FOKC 2013 Photo Contest 1st Place

The Critters of K-Country -- Pine Martens

by Derek Ryder, Co-Chair & Director of Communications

Kananaskis Country is home to a wide variety of creatures, great and small. Big ones, like bears and elk, get a lot of attention. In this series, I'm going to look at some of the ones we pay less attention to.

It is a rare day that I am out in the wilderness and do not see some evidence of a pine marten's presence. Seeing a marten is more rare, however, because they are fast, very well camouflaged, adept on the ground and in trees, and very secretive. But the evidence that a marten has been around, including tracks you can find in the snow and the poop they like to leave in the middle of a trail summer and winter, means there are a lot of them around.





Pine martens, also known as the American marten, are relatively common in K-Country. They are not fans of logged, recently burned areas or meadows. These little critters are denizens of the mature spruce and coniferous forests – especially ones full of deadfall and understory litter – all of which are hallmarks of K-Country. They like this terrain because that's where their lunch lives.

Their diet is high in rodents, such as voles, mice and squirrels, but they're not picky and will eat bird's eggs, berries, insects, snowshoe hares or pretty much anything else edible. They are not large – about 50 cm, a third of which is tail – but like all members of the weasel family, they come with an attitude that far outstrips their size. They are downright ferocious. My next door neighbour live-trapped one to relocate it (it was regularly getting in his attic). It sounded like the Tasmanian Devil from those cartoons of yore, and it did its best to tear the metal cage to shreds.

Martens are a tough thing to see in the wild, typically staring at you (sometimes hissing or snarling) from a perch in a tree they have scampered up like in the photo at the top of this article. I've had a marten hanging in my neighbourhood for some time now, and see her about once a month, commonly going after my bird feeders in the winter (such as the photo at right). She terrorizes the squirrels, and not uncommonly, lives in an abandoned squirrel midden near my house.



I've seen her catch mice in my yard, too. Female martens are not as big as the males, and the one who visits me is fairly small, lacking the more distinctive spotted tummy pattern of the male. Martens are allegedly mostly nocturnal, but I have seen marten evidence in the wild day and night. They are solitary critters, and will get into fights with other martens they meet.

The marten population in K-Country is plentiful and stable, primarily owing to the high quality of their habitat. They are not that fast to breed, only starting to do so in their second year. Martens are actively trapped in the province, including K-Country. There are grandfathered traplines in some of the Parks, and numerous traplines on the non-Park land.



The Movies of Kananaskis: *Little Big Man*

11th in a Series by Derek Ryder, CoChair and Director of Communications

There have been many movies filmed in K-Country, some famous, some less so. In this series of articles, since I'm not a movie critic, I'm going to talk about these movies in a different light: how well they depict our favourite neighbourhood.



Little Big Man is a 1970 western starring Dustin Hoffman, Faye Dunaway, Martin Balsam and Chief Dan George. It tells the story of Hoffman being raised by the Cheyenne, then re-merging into society, becoming a gunslinger, re-joining the Cheyenne, leaving them and joining General Custer, and finally participating in the battle at Little Big Horn as a scout. It's a revisionist western, painting Native Americans as heroes and the US Cavalry as villains.

While the Battle of Little Big Horn was actually filmed in and around the actual Big Horn battlefield in Montana, the winter scenes were all filmed on the Morley reserve, though there aren't many references to tell you that.

Finally, at the 1:30 mark in the film, the movie's version of the famous Battle of Washita Creek takes place. But instead of actually being filmed in Wyoming where that battle really

took place, Yamnuska and the mountains of the Ghost are in the background.

There's a Forest Gump vibe to this film, because Dustin Hoffman coincidentally shows up at many critical points of western American history, sometimes on the side of the Native Americans, and sometimes not. It's certainly a movie that provides an "interesting" depiction of that history. It's a hard movie to find, though I lucked out several years ago and picked it up in a Wal-Mart discount bin for \$5.



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!

Friends of Kananaskis Country
201-800 Railway Avenue
Canmore, AB T1W 1P1

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