



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



In this month's newsletter...

- The Patagonia Trail Care Program Report: Making progress
- News from the Board: Ticking along
- Other News: The winter speaker series is back!
- Kananaskis Special Places: Spray Lake Reservoir
- The Critters of K-Country: Clark's Nutcrackers

The Patagonia Trail Care Program Report: We are Making Progress

Parks Flood Recovery Completed Trails & 2015/16 Projects

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

Kananaskis Country sustained the most extensive damage in its 36-year history from the June 2013 flood. The Alberta government has committed \$60 million to restore 41 damaged campgrounds, 51 day-use areas and over 160 kilometres of recreation trails with more than 65 trail bridges.

Trail Crews and Friends of Kananaskis volunteers have dedicated vigorous effort and time to rehabilitate recreation trails damaged by the flood event. That hard work is paying off as bridges are being repaired and trails are being completed. As we prepare and look forward to embarking on 2015 flood recovery projects, we thought this would be a good time to acknowledge and celebrate what's been accomplished to date. Here's a timeline of progress:



By December 2013

- 84% of front country campgrounds reopened in Kananaskis Country.
- Access to 50% of backcountry campgrounds restored.
- 73% of day use areas in Kananaskis Country open, including parking lots and recreational staging areas.
- 87% of Kananaskis trails open.
- Trail system at the Canmore Nordic Centre open for winter operations.
- Peter Lougheed Visitor Information Centre repaired and reopened for 2013 /14 ski season.
- 36 Friends of Kananaskis volunteer trail days completed.
- 3,400 Friends of Kananaskis flood recovery volunteer hours recorded by 372 volunteers.

By June 2014

- Only 2% of front country campsites unavailable for the start of the 2014 camping season.
- 12 additional trail crew hired for the 2014 season, for flood repair throughout Kananaskis Region.

By December 2014

- 13 trail recovery projects completed by Alberta Parks seasonal trail crew and Friends volunteers, including: Peter Lougheed Paved Bike Trail, Chester Lake Trail, Fullerton Loop, Crystal Line, Lynx Ski Trail, Skogan Pass, Terrace Ski Trail, Cat Creek Interpretive Trail, Macabee Creek Trail, Rolly Road & Mountain

Road.

- 21 trail bridges repaired or replaced.
- 35 Friends of Kananaskis volunteer trail days completed.
- 2,107 Friends of Kananaskis flood recovery volunteer hours recorded by 300 volunteers.

In 2015-2016, Alberta Parks trail crews will be working on 25 flood recovery projects. In no priority order, these projects include: Three Isle trail, Ribbon Creek, Little Elbow, Buller Pass, Burstall Pass, Elbow Trail to Fullerton Loop, Boulton Creek, Galatea Trail, Heart Creek Trail, Elbow Pass, Mist Creek, Pocaterra Trail, Rawson Creek, Wedge Connector, Baldy Pass, Bill Milne Trail, Beaver Flat Interpretive, Powderface Creek Trail, Whiskey Jack Trail, Forks Campground Trails, Diamond T Loop, Prairie Creek, Elk Pass, Kananaskis Village Ski Trails & Moose Loop.



In the coming months, Alberta Parks planning for 2015 priority projects will get finalized. Some of the projects that you can expect Friends volunteers to be working on include: Ribbon Creek, Galatea Trail, Pocaterra Trail, and Boulton Creek, to name just a few. We will keep you posted on how the upcoming trail care season is shaping up, plus how you can get involved and help. So stay tuned, 2015 is going to be another great trail care season!



A napping bobcat. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: Ticking along

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

As you have read in Nancy's article, things in our world are ticking along at a steady pace. Winter is ostensibly our "down time," with planning for the upcoming season. All the Board subcommittees have met recently, and in a month or so we'll be doing our annual budgeting and strategy session for the 2015/16 fiscal year. We have two main focus areas to think about for those sessions.

The first is about you: creating and managing our volunteer opportunities. Between Alberta Park's regular work, flood restoration work and the High Rockies Trail work, it's looking like we're going to easily set a record for number of available volunteer days in 2015. We want to make sure that when Parks calls, we are there to respond with sufficient volunteers to make each trail care day a success. There were a few days last year where we were too tight for our liking, especially in projects at the Canmore Nordic Centre. So we're going to discuss ways to make sure we enable you to participate in the restoration of K-Country, and assisting with trail care –



which is why you joined us.

Our volunteer opportunities exist almost exclusively in the summer, and primarily from June to September. We have a huge volunteer army, and they ask us all the time if there are other things they can be doing, especially during the winter months. Exploring possibilities for this will also be a big topic of conversation.

The second area for Board attention is, of course, money. We have a renewed focus on fundraising, but you can read our annual reports and see that we are in excellent financial shape due to the generosity of donors like you. This gives us opportunities to examine ways we can increase our organization's sustainability, and potentially leverage some of our funds into other efforts that assist trails in K-Country.

For instance, there is an incredibly growing population of folks who snowshoe. However, K-Country only features 7 trails specifically earmarked as snowshoe routes. We're seeing folks wanting to do more than just those 7, and are selecting their own places to go instead. Some are good choices (Karst Spring, Shark Lake and Rawson Lake spring to mind), but some are exposing them to significant avalanche danger. As a Board, we're going to explore how we can use our solid financial footing to make the Friends sustainable for the long term, and continue to help make K-Country spectacular.



The more I look at our organization, the more excited I am by what we're doing and what we can accomplish. I look forward to digging more trail this summer.

The Friends Winter Speakers Series is Back!

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

You are in for a treat - our winter Speaker Series has two exceptional presentations coming up! **John Paczkowski** and **Gordon Stenhouse** will partner on a talk about Grizzly Bear research in Kananaskis Country and Alberta, and world famous adventurer **Will Gadd** will share his thrilling adventures in Kananaskis. Here's more information about these upcoming talks and the presenters.

Grizzly Bear Research in Kananaskis Country and Alberta: A Two-Part Talk

DATE: March 11, 2014

TIME: 7:00pm

LOCATION: University of Calgary, Room # TBD

ADMISSION FEE: \$5 suggested donation

Part 1: **Research, conservation and management of grizzly bears in Kananaskis Country** - John Paczkowski

Kananaskis Country provides an interesting challenge of balancing the needs of people and grizzly bears in a relatively small area with many different user groups. By combining prevention, research, aversive conditioning, managers maintain this delicate balance. Kananaskis Country was designed with grizzly bears in mind and staff are constantly working to improve the human bear interface. Research efforts use



cameras, radio-collars and genetics to better understand the distribution and abundance of grizzly bears in the region. On-going aversive conditioning programs endeavour to teach bears how to behave when they are around people. Interagency cooperation and an impressive team of volunteers and stewards are key factors in managing grizzly bears in Kananaskis. The Kananaskis Region plays an important role Alberta's grizzly bear recovery.

John Paczkowski is a Park Ecologist with Alberta Parks in Kananaskis Country, Alberta and currently resides in Canmore. Over the past 25 years John has focused his career on research, conservation and conflict prevention with carnivores including bears, wolves, wolverine and Amur tigers in Canada and Russia. John provides the camera trap photos from his research work for the Friends newsletter.

Part 2: **New insights on the influence of roads on grizzly bears in Alberta** – Gordon Stenhouse

There have been numerous studies throughout North America where researchers have investigated how grizzly bears respond to roads in grizzly bear habitat. Alberta has many roads and access features that are associated with resource extraction industries and many of these roads are found in key grizzly bear habitat. Over the past 15 years his research team has studied GPS radio collared grizzly bears along the east slopes of Alberta from the Montana border to the Chinchaga area in the northern part of our province. His work has focused on understanding survival rates among different age/sex cohorts of bears, physiological responses to roads, and how bears behave in the vicinity of roads in Alberta. His new research findings have implications for provincial grizzly bear management and recovery which will be reviewed and discussed.



Gordon Stenhouse is a research scientist and the leader of the Foothills Research Institute Grizzly Bear Research Program. This research program began in 1998 and has

grown to be one of the largest and most comprehensive bear research programs in North America. There are now over 1000 scientific papers from the research team working on this program over the past 15 years. Gord is on secondment from the Alberta ESRD and is an adjunct professor at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. He is also the past chairman of the Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Team.

Will Gadd's Adventures of Kananaskis Country

DATE: April 1, 2014

TIME: 7:00pm

LOCATION: University of Calgary, Room # TBD

ADMISSION FEE: \$5 suggested donation

Will Gadd was named one of National Geographic's 2014/2015 adventurers of the year, Gadd is an experienced paraglider, kayaker, and champion ice climber, widely thought of as being among the most versatile outdoor athletes in the world. Will's boundless energy has him constantly seeking new adventures, such as his ambitious 35-day, 650-kilometre paragliding flight over the Rocky Mountains from McBride, B.C. to the U.S. border. All-round action hero Will Gadd is a living legend in the truest sense.



For more information on our Speaker's Series, check the [Upcoming Events](#) page on our website.



Kananaskis' Special Places: Spray Lakes Reservoir

8th in a series by Derek Ryder, 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.

One of the parts of K-Country that you can't help but notice are the reservoirs. In later articles, I'm going to talk about K-Country's natural lakes (there really aren't that many of them), but to start, I'll be looking at the big lakes in K-Country, all of which are hydroelectric reservoirs.



Spray Lake is the largest lake in Kananaskis Country, and the views of the lake from various trails in the valley verge on iconic. Originally, it was two lakes, Upper and Lower Spray Lakes; the former running from what is now Sparrowhawk Day-Use south to Canyon Dam area, and the latter a much smaller pond who's north end was near the Spray West Campground. Though identified for hydroelectric power potential in 1911,

the lake itself was formed by the construction of the Canyon Dam in the south and the

Three Sisters Dam in the north in 1950. These dams increased the lake area to just under 20 square kilometers by increasing their level about 50 m, and flooding a 12 m waterfall that used to sit at the valley's south end near Smuts Creek's outfall.

The lake's maximum depth is 65 m, but from Spray West Campground to the Canyon Dam, the depth is a reasonably consistent at 50-60 m on the lake's west side. The dams collect from a drainage basin of just under 500 square kilometres (outlined in pink in the map to the right), including a significant chunk of the southern portion of Banff National Park all the way to Mount Assiniboine and Marvel Lake, plus south to Chester Lake and the Robertson Glacier in K-Country. The damming project included a small dam at the south end of Mud Lake (at the Burstall Pass trailhead) directing Burstall creek northwards, and a ditch that does the same with French Creek.

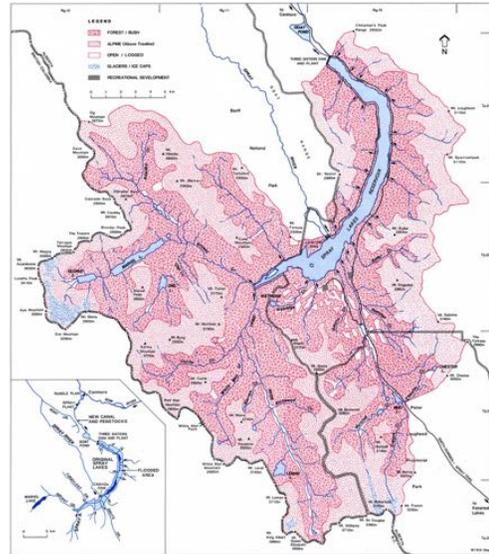


Figure 1. Features of the drainage basin of Spray Lakes Reservoir.
Source: Alta. Envir. A.D.S. En. Mines Resour. Can. 1977, 1980. Updated with 1982 aerial photos.



The reservoir is long and narrow like the valley it fills. The lake peaks at 21 km in length, but is only 1.6 km wide at its maximum. It feeds three power plants; first, the Three Sisters plant, through a drop of 18 m, then to the Spray and Rundle plants in Canmore. Until the 1970's the majority of the water release from the reservoir was done in the winter for peak power demands, but water is now drawn throughout the year.

The lake has always been popular with fishermen, even though the road leading to the lake via the Canmore Hill that was built to construct the dams was only upgraded in the 1980's. Pre-dams, the cutthroat and bull trout fishery in the original lakes and streams was considered very good, with some rainbow trout found as well below the waterfall near Smuts Creek. Unfortunately, as was predicted, the cutthroat trout catch in the reservoir quickly dwindled to zero after the dams were built. Cutthroat still can be found in the upper headwaters including Watridge Creek.

To rebuild the sport fishery in the reservoir, Fish and Wildlife Division introduced approximately 400,000 lake trout as eyed-eggs between 1951 and 1954, plus 6 million cisco eggs in 1953. Lake trout spawn successfully in the reservoir but numbers were still low in the early 1980s. From 1982 to 1986, Fish and Wildlife Division annually stocked 27,000 to 75,000 lake trout averaging 9.0 cm and



by 1988, anglers reported excellent fishing for lake trout. The lake has been regularly stocked with rainbow trout since 1991.

The cisco were to have provided a stable food supply for the lake trout. They spawned successfully for a few years, but in 1986, no cisco under 23 years of age were caught, indicating that no successful spawning had occurred since about 1964. Since Cisco rarely live over 30 years, they have effectively now disappeared from the reservoir.

Mountain whitefish are abundant in the reservoir and reproduce successfully in the tributaries, but they do not seem to be preyed upon by lake trout. The mountain whitefish population is largely made up of old fish; 50% of those caught in 1986 were over 10 years old. The oldest one caught was 29 years old; it may be the oldest fish of this species ever caught in North America.

The lack of appropriate prey for lake trout in the reservoir has led them to survive almost exclusively on plankton and midge larvae (hint, hint, fishermen!). Only 2% of 51 fish caught in 1986 had fish in their stomachs. The scarcity of fish in the diet of lake trout is likely one reason why the lake trout in Spray Lakes Reservoir die younger and are smaller at all ages than lake trout in lakes with abundant forage fish such as Lake



Minnewanka. In 1982, the lake was stocked with the same opossum shrimp that were introduced into Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes to enhance the trout food supplies.

Spray Lakes is popular with boats for fishing, less so with recreational boating due to the fairly constant winds that blow up the valley. A boat launch is available at the Driftwood Day Use area. In the winter, ice fishermen access the lake most anywhere along the Smith-Dorrien road, and dog sled companies use Driftwood as a staging area.



The Critters of K-Country: Clark's Nutcrackers

8th in a Series by Derek Ryder, 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.

Big. Brash. Bold. And tied forever to the whitebark pine. It's hard to miss a Clark's Nutcracker when you see one. Some confuse it with the Gray Jay, a fellow member of the corvid family (along with other jays, crows and ravens). But its prominent bill, smooth and crisp black and white marking and its large size are giveaways.



Like other corvids, Clark's are smart. They stash food all summer long, and are experts at finding it again in the winter. I watch Clark's out my window stuff seeds into notches in tree bark, then see them come get them again days later.



They don't crack nuts; when first identified, they were thought to be a woodpecker, and got misnamed. What they crack is conifer cones, and they are possibly the only birds that can crack into the cones of the whitebark pine (and they do a pretty good job at limber pine cones, too). Both the whitebark and limber pines are a "species at risk" in Alberta, primarily due to a disease called "white pine blister rust", a fungus accidentally

introduced into North America in the early 1900's. Whitebarks are almost entirely dependent on Clark's for dispersal and reproduction. Data suggests Clark's and whitebarks co-evolved, resulting in this symbiosis. Clark's even have a unique adaptation among birds: a pouch in their throat where they can store up to 150 whitebark seeds. They fly these up to 10 km before burying them in clusters of 10-15 seeds. This is why you will typically find whitebark pines growing in little clumps of 2-4 trees.

Most whitebarks in K-Country, and thus most Clark's, are found in the Spray Valley and Highwood Pass areas. In areas where there are Clark's but not many whitebarks, you'll quickly find out why they got the nickname "camp robber". They are bold enough to steal food from picnic tables, and the ones at my house are quite adept at breaking into heavily guarded bird feeders. They do not migrate, but my personal observation is that Clark's are primarily in the valley bottoms during the winter, and move up higher into the mountains in the summer.





Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), who in 2014, made a four-year commitment to support the Friends in flood recovery efforts.

The Friends are also supported by the [Patagonia stores in Calgary and Banff](#), who have been our 2014 Trail Care Program Title sponsor, and who are suppliers of high quality gear for the outdoor enthusiast.

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

[follow on Twitter](#) | [like on Facebook](#) | [forward to a friend](#)

Copyright © 2015 Friends of Kananaskis Country, All rights reserved.

MailChimp.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)