

Spring has sprung, the grass has riz!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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Come join us at Trails Fest!

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator



The Friends of Kananaskis Country is excited to introduce **TRAILS FEST**, a celebration of Kananaskis trails, people, and culture on May 30th at the Canmore Nordic Centre, 11am – 3:00pm. The event will consist of multiple activities that showcase the many ways trails are used.

- Learn how the West Bragg Creek All Season Plan was realized – and the newest Trans Canada Trail section: High Rockies Linkage project from Goat Creek to Elk Pass.
- Connect with local hiking, biking, skiing and outdoor clubs & organizations showcasing their activities and how you can get involved.
- Afternoon guided trail activity will include hiking, biking, trail building, bird watching, disc golf, orienteering, trail running and more. Sign up for your favourite trail activity or try something new! There's something for everyone to enjoy.

Join us for this fun, festive & free community event.

Event Itinerary

11:00 – 12:00 Presentations:

- Realizing the West Bragg Creek All Season Plan *presented by Greater Bragg Creek Trail Association*
- Trans Canada Trail: High Rockies Linkage *presented by McElhanney Consulting Services*

11:00 – 1:30 Connect with local Clubs & Organizations

12:00 BBQ Lunch (*free, donations welcome*)

1:30 – 3:00 Guided Activities (hiking, biking, trail building, bird watching, disc golf,

orienteering, and more...)

For more information and to sign up for a guided activities, go to our website at www.kananaskis.org. Guided activity sign up will start May 1st.

If you want to be a part of the celebration and help out, we have lots of cool jobs for you. Contact Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator, at 403-678-5593 or nancy@kananaskis.org.

We look forward to celebrating Trails Fest with you!

Don't forget Kananaskis Country is bear country – please bring bear spray!

Additional Crew Leaders Wanted!

Are you interested in leadership and trail work? Why not consider becoming a Friends volunteer Crew Leader. The role of the Crew Leader is to ensure volunteer participants have a safe and enjoyable Trail Care experience. This person represents the Friends at the trail site and liaises with Alberta Parks/ESRD trail crews.

We ask that people interested in becoming a crew leader have volunteered a minimum of two Trail Care days and are willing to volunteer as crew leader at least 2 times during the 2015 Trail Care season.

We will provide first aid training and two days of direct crew leader training.



As crew leader, it is required that you have basic first aid certification. Full course and recertification training will be offered by Alberta Parks, free of charge, May 2-3.

To ensure volunteer crew leaders are well prepared to lead volunteer groups we provide an annual Crew Leader training which consists of;

1. **Indoor Session:** Review the role and responsibility of the crew leader, risk management, first aid protocols, paper-work logistics, volunteer tracking, and trail day event reporting. This is a good opportunity to meet other crew leaders and hear more about our plans for the upcoming trail season. Crew leaders will receive a Crew Leader Manual that includes information related to the above outlined topics covered during the meeting in addition to information about trail anatomy, maintenance, construction and tools.
2. **Field Session:** Training is facilitated by a professional trail builder who will go over trail anatomy, and the specifics around how to construct a trail, followed by trail maintenance.

Crew Leader Training dates are not confirmed, but are tentatively set for:

Thursday, April 30: Indoor Training Session, 6:30pm-8:45pm, MEC Store (meeting room)

Sunday, May 10: Field Training Session, 9:30am-3:00pm, Canmore Nordic Centre

Returning crew leaders are asked to also attend the training sessions. For more information on volunteering as a Crew Leader, or anything else you can help with, contact Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator, at 403-678-5593 or nancy@kananaskis.org.

Upcoming Projects

In addition to posting these on [our web site](#), we will be dedicating this section of the Newsletter to listing upcoming trail care projects and other volunteer opportunities.

It's guaranteed to be another exceptional year of flood and non-flood related trail projects with Alberta Parks, ESRD, and High Rockies Trail. We are projecting about 45-50 trail events, 30% more than 2014. We currently have the following dates **confirmed**, and we will be posting more dates on our [Current Projects](#) page of our website throughout the coming months.



Sat, May 2: Highway Clean Up (same Highway section as 2014). This is a great event open to many volunteers and families are welcome.

Fri, May 22: Jumping Pound Ridge (North)

Sat, May 23: Jumping Pound Ridge (North)

Sun, May 31: Canmore Nordic Centre

Sat, June 13: Diamond T

Wed, July 15: Prairie Creek

Sat, July 18: Prairie Creek

Sat, Aug 15: Jumping Pound Ridge

Note that sign up procedures will change again this year as we migrate to the official Alberta volunteer tracking system called Better Impact. Stay tuned for instructions on how to use it.

We look forward starting the season in May and working with you to improve our beloved Kananaskis trails.



Bighorn sheep, March 2014. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: The Annual Offsite

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

This past weekend, your Board had its annual day-long retreat at the Delta Lodge in Kananaskis, and we were pleased to be joined by our Advisory Council members (two in person, two on paper). The Board has an evening meeting about every second month, and generally focuses on the day-to-day activities. Our March session is our opportunity to take a step back and discuss some more strategic issues or larger scale opportunities we have, in addition to finalizing our budget for the coming fiscal year.



I'm pleased to report that we are in excellent shape financially, and though we continue to seek out a Trail Care title sponsor for this year, it looks like we have a balanced budget. This creates opportunities in and of itself, and we will be approaching Parks soon with some proposals that we'll talk about in later newsletters as they come to fruition.

We discussed how to ensure you all have opportunities to participate in trail care events. A number of trail care dates have already been selected and this gives us planning opportunities. However, we concluded as a Board that we want to better understand our volunteer and membership base, and so will be pulling together a brief survey for you to tell us what kind of work you like to do and where you like to do it. We're also going to be doing a bit of promotion in the Bow Valley corridor to ensure we have a solid supply of active volunteers to work upcoming projects in the Canmore area, including the Nordic Centre.



We also discussed ways to “diversify” our volunteer opportunities, too. In addition to our current trail care offerings, we host events that you can help at (like our upcoming Trails Fest, or Parks Day, or our Speakers Series), have administrative functions that you could assist with (like the newsletter or in-house IT), and other such tasks. We, in fact do, more than swing pulaskis, and will be offering you as much as we can.

The offsite left me as Chairman very excited about this coming year. We see lots of work coming up, lots of ways to help Kananaskis, an excited and engaged Board and Advisory Council, and solid funding to do what we need. It's going to be a great year!

Only One More Talk Left in The Friends Winter Speakers Series!

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

World famous adventurer **Will Gadd** will share his thrilling adventures that start in Kananaskis and take him around the world. Come early to get a good seat! Tickets are not required!

Will Gadd's 20 Trips of a Lifetime in 60 Minutes

DATE: April 1, 2015

TIME: 7:00pm

LOCATION: University of Calgary, Info Comms. Technology ICT 102, 856 Campus Place NW

ADMISSION FEE: \$5 suggested donation

Up, down and around, starting in Kananaskis Country and through the rest of the world! Try to keep up with National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, Will Gadd, on some of the wildest expeditions ever, ranging from stunt doubling for Jason Bourne to setting world records in paragliding, climbing ice (icebergs, caves, mountains, 24 hours), and other mountain, TV and Hollywood adventures.

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. And in case you just missed it, he and partner Sarah Hueniken just [ice climbed Niagara Falls](#). All-around 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.

IT help needed!

The Friends need an interested volunteer to help with supporting its IT infrastructure in Canmore. Our office is located with the Government of Alberta building located at suite 201, 800 Railway Ave in Canmore.

The volunteer help we need would best be located within Canmore itself, as we're looking for someone to be available on short notice to answer questions about the PC and it's software used by our team, specifically to help when our office suffers hardware failures or has more in-depth questions about Microsoft Office suite.



Our configuration is Microsoft PC based. We used basic Microsoft products, including Outlook, Word and Excel, plus Skype.

Our time requirement is not large, but when we suffer from equipment failure, we'll need some help the same day to get us up and running again.

Please apply to Ed Engstrom at Ed.Engstrom@shaw.ca and Nancy Ouimet at Nancy@kananaskis.org with an updated resume highlighting your IT skills.



Conservation Officers: A conversation with Glen Naylor (part 1)

by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

In chatting with Friends members, I am often asked about Conservation Officers; who they are and what they do. In February, I had a chance to sit and chat with Glen Naylor, District Conservation Officer for the Bow District of Kananaskis Country (pictured at right; Canadian Press photo). Glen will be retiring this year on June 1, so was able to answer my questions not only about what a CO does, but also how the role of being a CO has changed in the last 37 years. We had a long chat, so I have broken this interview into two parts; the second part will run in the April issue.



What is the current "job description" of a Conservation Officer in Kananaskis?

Well, let's start with understanding that the Kananaskis Region includes the Ghost, Glenbow Ranch and Fish Creek, as well as Kananaskis Country. Within Kananaskis Country proper there are 3 Districts: Bow, Kananaskis District and Elbow/Sheep. Bow District includes the Canmore Nordic Centre, the Bow Valley, Sibbald, the north part of Hwy 40. Kananaskis District is the rest of Hwy 40, Peter Lougheed and all of the Spray Valley. Elbow/Sheep encompasses the Elbow, the Sheep and all of the Highwood.

Conservation Officers, or COs, are there to insure the parks are protected. There are four main components to the job. First is enforcement, second is public safety, third is human-wildlife conflict prevention with all aspects of that, and the fourth one is “anything else” which is all the campground management, working with the campground operators, dealing with anything else that comes our way, which is quite a bit actually. That also includes volunteer programs and involves things like Parks Day -- a public engagement piece, though we're doing that in all of the components -- plus going to Court when needed.



My job as District CO is to make sure that the Bow District runs, to make sure that everything gets done, and that we're balanced and don't get too focused on one thing. We need to remember the big picture. Enforcement definitely takes a lot of time in the front country, and often, that doesn't mean we get into the back-country as often as we should. It's not that we don't want to be in the back-country; it's just by default, the front country is where we have to be. We have to respond to issues fairly fast, so if you're three hours down a trail when a call comes, that doesn't bode well for quick response, so we have to deal with that, and have much less staff than we used to.

How many COs are there just in Kananaskis Country?

We have 16 full-time Conservation Officers in Kananaskis Country and some seasonal Officers are added to that number during the summer season, depending on budgets.

Conservation Officers' main duties are enforcement, public safety, resource management, administration and education. An officer can be dealing with any or all of these in any one day. The job is very diverse and rewarding.

How are you associated with the Kananaskis Public Safety team?

The Public Safety Team is composed of three “supervisors” who do all our training. COs do training in all aspects of Public Safety, and are involved in virtually all the incident responses; Public Safety doesn't do it alone. The Public Safety team is the lead, they are in charge of rescue incidents, but COs are heavily involved in the avalanche program, and in their rescue program including water-related rescues, searches, technical rescues, rock rescues, you name it. The dedicated Public Safety team came into being in 1978, and it runs the same now as it did



back then. We had 2 Public Safety Specialists at the start, but the response and responsibilities haven't changed, though now we have 3 specialists, which is good.

Tell me a bit about how you got started as a CO.

I started in a little park just south of Brooks called Kinbrook Island. This is a beautiful place, and I worked there for four months. I'd never done the job before. Every single shift was 3 PM till midnight, and we didn't get overtime because we had something called "5 Pay Grades In Lieu". So if you had to work six hours overtime, you didn't get paid extra for it. You were getting paid more per hour than you



should have been to compensate for that. When I worked there during the week you could generally get home at midnight, but every Friday, every Saturday and a lot of Sundays, I was working to at least 3 AM and commonly 5 AM. It was a rowdy place. But as soon as the September weekend finished, use dropped to nothing, and the park was taken over by the migrating waterfowl. I had a wonderful time there.

The second summer I came back and I worked at Dinosaur Provincial Park. I learned right then, that I was more suited to the large resource-based parks, not the small recreation parks. I spent countless hours in Dinosaur hiking, walking, and learning about dinosaur paleontology. I learned so much and have forgotten nothing that I learned that summer. I found two complete skeletons, one of them is still on display in the museum. The most unique thing I found was in 1979: the only spear point found in the Park, and it was 3,500 years old. I believe it came from South Dakota. The campground was great and ran itself. I spent 90% of my CO time in resource-based work. For instance, I found a heron colony and I did work on trying to determine how many herons were nesting.

In 1979 I moved to Kananaskis, to what was then Kananaskis Provincial Park (today it's Peter Lougheed), in the role of a Park Ranger. I was given the backcountry as my area of responsibility, and I stayed with that until I left in 1995. Because we had the staff, I spent 2 weeks out of every 4 in the back-country for 15 years. Each permanent Ranger had 2 seasonal rangers; some had 3.

So this leads into the question of how the job has changed in the last 37 years?

Well, use was certainly less in K-Country 30 years ago. I don't know the numbers, but it was way less. That was pre-Hwy 40 being upgraded & paved; the highway stopped at the Kananaskis turn-off and was still being constructed over the Highwood Pass. The Smith-Dorrien didn't go all the way through, and the area was just being discovered. We had more staff. We were able to do all the 4 major responsibilities, which were the same: enforcement, public safety, etc. The wildlife responsibilities were not as high as they are now; Fish and Wildlife had more of the responsibility, and we primarily helped with

observations or if they needed extra hands. We were out on the lakes in boat patrol. The staff was there, we had a healthy budget to get what we needed. Over time, budgets and staffing have been gradually but steadily reduced. Of course, the area's name was changed to Peter Lougheed, and I left in 1995, coming to Bow District as District CO. Since then, it's been endless budget cuts and staff reductions.

Prior to the campgrounds being privatized in 1995, we ran the campgrounds, collected all the self-registration envelopes, accounted for all the money, and all the campgrounds operations staff were under the Park Rangers. We used to be in the campgrounds all the time because they were *our* campgrounds. They still are, but we don't run them, just contract them out to private operators, who maintain them, are required to annually upgrade them, and pay a portion of campground fees to the Government. With that change came a huge manpower reduction.

In 1998 or 1999, Alberta Parks merged with Fish and Wildlife. F&W officers and Park Rangers became Conservation Officers (*That's Bow Valley F&W Officer Dave Dixon in the photo at right -- Ed.*). Both jobs were combined into one job, and each of us assumed the duties of the other group. After 4 years, it became obvious that Provincial Parks across the province were becoming run down for various reasons, so we were pulled apart again to boost the focus on Parks. However, despite being split again, the job description didn't change. The difference became land base. If it's in a Provincial Park or protected area, COs do it; if it's on Crown Land or non-Park land, F&W do it. So there's no real difference between a Conservation Officer and a Fish and Wildlife Officer other than what land they work on. If an incident happens on Crown Land, it's a F&W Officer's job, and if the incident crosses onto Park land, the COs start helping but F&W continues to be lead -- or vice versa.



So the biggest change since I started is manpower -- much, much less. Bow Valley Provincial Park in 1981 had over 20 seasonal Rangers. Now there is 1, and we have more visitors and are way busier. We don't get in the back-country often; we can't. We have expectations to respond to incidents when they occur, and the majority of incidents occur in the front-country. Usage has gone way up, both front-country and back. And our budgets to manage it have gone way down.

But the level at which we do things has improved. Our standards for enforcement have improved. Our standards and management methods for wildlife conflict are dramatically improved, much higher than they were in the 1980's. Our Public Safety standards and training are super up to date and always current, and they've just gotten better and better over the years.

Interestingly, there was a push a few years ago to put all provincial enforcement bodies in

one in order to gain more enforcement consistency. F&W Officers went first, going to Justice (*Ed: Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General*), and about 18 months later, the COs followed suit, so we're all officially "in JSG." However, because we have all this other "stuff", which is not JSG, we're also in Parks. And with the merging of ESRD and Parks, we're now in ESRD, too. The biggest impact about the move to JSG is that our enforcement standards got higher still. Some folks love that and think it's the best thing that's ever happened to Parks, but others get concerned about that. I spent many, many, many, years where you'd be out there on your own, with no backup, no tools, no radio and no "stuff". All you had was your head, and that got you into trouble, or kept you out of trouble. I would spend countless nights and weekends dealing with people down, say, in the West Spray, getting folks to shut it down, turn down the music, pouring out the beer. I could have been killed and no one would have noticed until I didn't show up for work the next day. But then it's a changing world, and in society today, that's not something I think anyone would want to do. There seems to be much more willingness to challenge authority than there has ever been. We have had increasing numbers of COs assaulted, like last year in the Heart Creek parking lot, of all places.

In Part 2 of this interview, we'll talk about how K-Country has changed in the last 30+ years, how someone becomes a CO, and a legacy of years invested in Parks protection.



The Critters of K-Country: Varied Thrush (and other spring things)

10th in a Series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

There are many harbingers of spring -- crocuses, pussy willows, migrating tundra swans, the return of robins and juncos, the emergence of bears. I have seen each of these somewhere in K-Country in the last few weeks.



One of my favourites is the return of the Varied Thrush. After spending their winters on the west coast as far south as Mexico, they start showing up in the end of March, and I find them easiest to see as they arrive and look for homes among the conifers.



This is an absolutely beautiful bird, with splashes of black and orange, looking like it should arrive for Halloween instead of March. Its song is glorious: three sustained notes that sound like a cross between a whistle and a hum.

They like damp coniferous forests, of which there are many in K-Country. A nice thing about the Varied Thrush is that it's not a little bird; it's a little bigger than a robin, and given that nothing other than a Redstart is a similar colour, they're easy to identify when seen.



But I'm keeping my eye out for other spring arrivals, too. As the snow recedes, other "stuff" shows up, as in the photo below. Even though the weather has been very spring-like this winter, Mother Nature does a pretty good job of telling us when seasons actually change.



What's that?

Take a look at the photo above. Can you correctly identify the octopus-like things on the ground? Send your guess to info@kananaskis.org by 5 PM, April 1st, 2015. One correct guess will be selected and receive a Friends Swag Bag.

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, and who continue to support our work with grants.

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 restore flood damaged trails. Friends of Kananaskis Country is a registered charity in good standing and we provide charitable receipts for donations over \$25.00. 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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