



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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New volunteer sign up system

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

If you were one of the 1,100 emails that went out from my inbox on April 28, you're aware that we have upgraded our volunteer management system to a program called *Better Impact*. This system will facilitate how we post our volunteer events, track volunteer participation, and allow you to better manage and view your signed up activities. Setting up your profile only takes a few minutes. To login - go to the [Friends Volunteer Page](#).

If you have been emailed a username and password, simple login and create your profile under the 'My Profile' tab. And if I missed you when generating usernames and passwords, you can create your own at the same login page outlined above.

We encourage you to completely fill in your 'My Profile' including your address, email, and phone number so we have the required information for communicating event updates, reminders, cancellations, etc. As new Trail Care projects become available, we will still send notification emails highlighting the project's details and link to sign up.

Here are a few additional steps to get you going when you're logged-in:

Signing up for a volunteer Trail Care day or other activity

Once you're all setup, have a look at the upcoming volunteer Trail Care projects under the 'Sign-Up' tab. To sign up, simply click on the project you want to join and click in the 'sign up' box, followed by the prompt to confirm. To remove yourself from a signed up event, go to the 'Assignments' tab and click remove, up to 48 hours prior to event (for short notice cancellation, email Nancy at nancy@kananaskis.org)

Mobile access

You can also access myvolunteerpage.com on your mobile device by going to: www.myvolunteerpage.mobi

Have an existing volunteer profile on Better Impact

For those that already have a username and password, you can use your current username and password to sign up for multiple organizations. For instruction on how to do this, click [HERE](#).

We greatly appreciate your cooperation as we transition to this new volunteer management system. If you have questions or feedback, please let us know.

Come join us at Trails Fest!



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.

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 schedule and to sign up for a guided activities, go to our website at www.kananaskis.org.

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!

Upcoming Trail Care Projects

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

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

Sat, May 23: Jumping Pound Ridge (North)

Sat, June 13: Diamond T

Wed, July 15: Prairie Creek

Sat, July 18: Prairie Creek



Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: A space of our own

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

As you are probably aware, we operate on a “Parks calls, we come” methodology for our trail care work. Parks sets the projects, picks the dates, and then calls us with a volunteer requirement. We turn that request around to you, organize the day, and trails get fixed. You can read more about that whole process on our website ["How We Work"](#) page.

There are issues with this model, though we work to improve them all the time. A big one is that we can't predict when Parks will call. We spend a lot of time with Parks early in the season, and get ideas about what work will get done when, but locking in a commitment to a date for trail work is like nailing Jell-o to a tree. In addition to the obvious issues of weather unpredictability, many Parks post-flood volunteer work projects exist after heavy equipment work on a trail. Parks spends days or weeks doing work in preparation for you to come in and help. The variability of how long that takes means a “Parks calls, we come” model equates to unpredictability and that we can't tell you what work will be done where.

In March, the trail folks at ESRD approached us. They manage trails on Crown land in Kananaskis that is not Parks land. They were seeking assistance in building a management framework for their designated trails, which exist in three primary areas: Jumpingpound/Powderface, East Elbow around Moose Mountain, and the Mesa Butte area west of Millerville and south of MacLean Creek OHV area. They have proposed that the Friends take on trail care assessment for projects not related to flooding (hiking trails annually to identify projects that need doing), then helping or even leading those trail care projects they approve. The benefits for the Friends include that we would have a “space of our own” where we could plan and execute at least some of our own work in advance.

There are many, many issues that need sorting out before we could take this on. We have already noted that our partners in the Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association would be better to support the East Elbow trails. Issues include a need to cooperate with a large equestrian community that use the Mesa Butte area, a need for a new cooperating agreement with ESRD (ours only covers Parks), an understanding of the exact scope of work, and a framework for proposing and executing work. Plus, there are logistical issues, such as the fact that the Friends own no tools to do work, and practically can't work on trails more than 5 km from a trailhead access point.

We are entering this opportunity with our eyes wide open. As we keep mentioning, we already see a substantial amount of post-flood work coming in the next 2 years, and don't want to have our commitments exceed our capacity – though partnering with ESRD would be a long-term plan that would affect us primarily post-flood recovery. We will keep you informed as the Board works our way through those issues.

So long to Kaylyn Airey!

Kaylyn has been a Parks representative on our Board since late 2013. Her role with Parks was to coordinate post-flood volunteering for all of Parks in the Calgary region. She has moved on to a new role with Parks and a new park in Lac La Biche, and is leaving our Board.

Kaylyn has helped us in the last 14 months with ensuring our focus remained on trail care, and on linking us with other volunteers assisting with flood recovery. She was instrumental in pulling together the justification for the new “tool trailers” that are coming: self contained trailers full of hand tools for volunteers, plus a workbench to keep them sharp and even a BBQ to keep them fed. We will miss her on the Board. Parks has not yet announced her replacement.



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 Glenn Naylor, District Conservation Officer for the Bow District of Kananaskis Country (pictured at right;

Canadian Press photo). Glenn 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 first part ran in the March issue and looked at what a CO does, how Glenn got his start, and how the job has changed in the last 30 years.

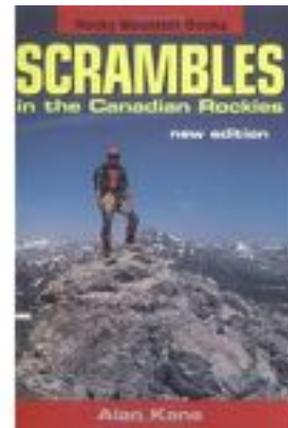


How have you seen K-Country change in the last 30 years?

Thirty years ago, you would go into the backcountry and see no one; that's no longer the case. When the Kananaskis Trail Guide first came out, human use exploded.

Unfortunately, there were people going to places that they really shouldn't because they didn't have the skills - - but they went because there was a book. There are a lot of activities taking place today that didn't exist back then. There was no mountain biking in 1978.

Snowshoeing was non-existent. There was some technical rock climbing, but not much. There were not very many scramblers; I provided input to Alan Kane's first "Scrambles" book. There were hikers, mountaineers, fisherman and campers and that's it. And look at things like fishing; I use to be able to go to most any back-country lake and catch big fish; now, the fish don't have time to grow big as the fishing pressure's too high.



What are some of the good things you have seen?

Well, the Bow Valley Steward program has grown to be the best in the Province, with over 120 volunteers supporting parks all through the year. I started our Parks Day in 1996, which has become a really solid community event in the Bow Valley. We'll get 3,000 people coming out for the day. The Bear Aversion program didn't exist when I started, and look how successful that is now. Bow Valley WildSmart didn't exist, and that's been super impactful.



What's the toughest job of being a CO?

That's really a function of the individual, because some like enforcement and some don't, some like public engagement and some don't. One of the beauties of a different people working here is that while everyone has to do all the job, some people really enjoy the

enforcement part the most, some people really enjoy the public safety component most. Some enjoy the wildlife management, most. So if you show the leadership and desire in an area, you can specialize in it. My personal two favourites are wildlife related activities, and public engagement and education. I firmly believe that ongoing education is how you change anything.

How does someone become a Conservation Officer?

That's harder now. It used to be easy. It used to be a 2-year diploma from a recognized school such as Lethbridge College. Now it's a 4-year degree program, and that program has enforcement components, wildlife components and visitor services, but no real safety piece. There are lots of things like first aid and technical climbing or guiding designations that would be beneficial, but the degree matters. You could apply with a 4-year Biology or Environmental Science degree, but you'd lack the enforcement bit, and you must have that. In Alberta, the prime school is Lethbridge College and their Bachelor of Applied Science in Conservation Enforcement program; Ontario has Sir Stanford Fleming College, Vancouver Island University has a program. And we're hiring seasonals from all over Canada right now. Our seasonal staff must be enrolled in those degree programs, and are eligible to apply for permanent positions on graduation.

Seasonals come in as "Seasonal Park Service Rangers." I've personally always liked the job title of Park Ranger because everyone knows what you do; Conservation Officer is a lot fuzzier. I'd be proud to have "Park Ranger" engraved on my headstone.

You're retiring June 1. What you want your personal CO/Park Ranger legacy to be?

I just want someone to not get focused on one thing; to always look at the big picture. To remember that in public Parks, we need to involve the community; people need to know what we do. Back in 1996, I was talking to a lady in a campground about some of our roles, and she said "You do that? I thought you just collected envelopes in the campground." From that day onward, I made it a point to get out who we are, what we do, and why we do it. I was on the radio, on TV, and in the papers all the time. I've been proud of what the change in public perception from "we collect envelopes" to "you do all that?" I'm proud I've played a big part in getting Alberta Parks better known in the various communit

I'm also pleased that we're starting to increase cougar awareness. They're very deadly animals, very efficient killers, and unlike bears, you won't see them coming. We're lucky that we can live in their close proximity and we are not on their menu. They are powerful predators and exclusively carnivores, and they hide really effectively, including in trees. We have lots of trees. On top of that, they're always here, all year round, Every day, I'm certain someone in the Bow Valley walks within 5 m of a cougar and doesn't know it. I'm certain it happens every day, and they just watch you go by. They're opportunistic hunters,

and if you happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and your dog is off leash, and the cougar happens to be hungry, and you walk by with your dog, your dog is dead, or severely injured. They have to kill efficiently, because if they don't kill quickly, their prey could fight back, and the cougar doesn't want to be injured. All their prey runs away, so they like to attack from close range. On the bright side, tripping across a bear kill is very dangerous, but running across a cougar kill is less so. The cougar will likely just leave the kill and come back to it, and is unlikely to defend it. When we find a cougar kill in a problematic location, we drag it to a nearby, safer place. The cougar will readily find it and finish it in peace. But Canmore people need to know I've personally moved several cougar kills from the off-leash dog park at Quarry Lake. Those we take away. It's interesting that no dogs have been attacked in that area.

We've recently started to put up signage to increase cougar awareness. My long term hope is it reduces the complacency, because cougar attacks don't happen all the time and people tend to get complacent with infrequent events. The signage invites you in to get more information, but doesn't obligate you to do anything or ask you to avoid something. Interestingly, as soon as those signs went up, cougar sightings in Canmore increased.



Announcing the winner of last month's "What Was That?" contest

by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

Last month, we ran the photo above, and asked you to identify what it was. The correct answer is Meadow Vole tracks. To quote "Mammals of Alberta" by Pattie & Fischer:

"When the snows recede from Alberta fields every April, an elaborate network of meadow vole activity is exposed to the world. Highways, chambers and nests, previously insulated from winter's cold by deep snows, await the growth of spring vegetation to conceal them once again".

I haven't taken any photos of meadow voles (they don't hold still when I see them), but they are one of 5 vole species that are found in K-Country, and the only ones to develop these distinct subnivalian (below the snow, above the ground) tunnel structures. Meadow voles are an important species ecologically, and are food for owls, coyotes, foxes, bobcat, the entire weasel family and many other predators. They are fast to reproduce but rarely live longer than a year.



Other guesses included:

Pocket gophers. They leave behind large obvious dirt mounds, not a tunnel network. In addition, they are very uncommon in K-Country as they don't like rocky soils;

Moles. These critters dig underneath the surface, and leave only raised grass ridges, not dirt mounds – and aren't found in Alberta anyway.



Mouse burrows. K-Country is home to deer mice (who insist on trying to live in my house) and western jumping mice. Jumping mice only burrow. Deer mice can build subnivalian surface nests, but don't build a tunnel network. Deer Mice leave tracks under the snow too, but they are just runways like those in the photo to the right.

Interestingly, meadow voles are sometimes called "field mice" but are not, in fact, in the mouse family, so calling a meadow vole a "mouse" doesn't qualify.

Our closest guesser was Jean Pilch, who got vole correct but didn't guess which of the 5 species of vole it was. For being "close enough," Jean's the proud winner of an FKC 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 in 2015 made a two-year commitment to support the refreshing interpretive signage project.



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!

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