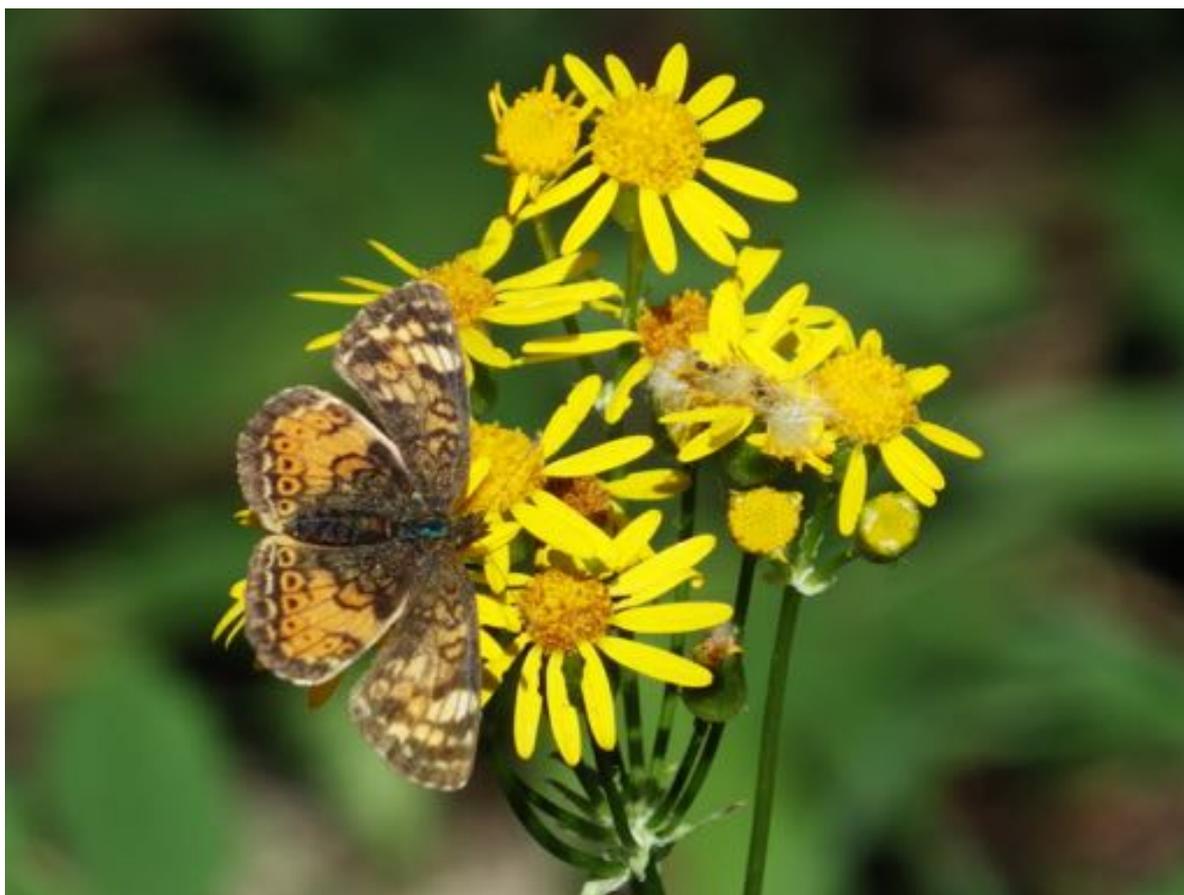


The great part about hot, dry weather is that it makes for good trail care, hiking and biking days



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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July's Trail Care Update

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

We have had a productive month working with Alberta Parks and ESRD trail crews on Boulton Creek Trail and Prairie Creek Trail.

Boulton Creek Trail, located in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, is a hiking, interpretive, and groomed cross country ski trail. The portions of the trail that follow the creek, including all the interpretive signs, were washed away in the 2013 flood. A new route was flagged, then cleared using chain saws, by the Alberta Parks trail crew, and Friends volunteers have been working to haul the woody materials away from the trail and out of sight. Once all the wood has been cleared, the trail will be machine cut to accelerate the trail building process, with potential for volunteers to return and do the bed cleaning and finishing of the trail. This new reroute will be quite different from the original trail, with more variation of hills and bends, making the ski trail most likely rated blue in difficulty in comparison to its original green rating.



We need your help to remove what is left of the woody material so the machinery can start working on the tread. Next Boulton Creek Trail Day is scheduled for Monday, July 27. Sign up [HERE](#).



Prairie Creek Trail located in the Elbow Valley is both a hiking and biking trail. It is known to have wet sections that get muddy. Friends volunteers worked with the ESRD trail crew, building reroutes around the wet areas or improving drainages. In one area a raised walkway was built with armoured drainage. We have one more trail day scheduled at Prairie Creek on Saturday, July 25. Come out and help complete this trail project. Sign up [HERE](#).

Upcoming Confirmed Trail Care Projects

Sat, July 25: Prairie Creek
Mon, July 27: Boulton Creek Trail
Sat, Aug 8: Canmore Nordic Centre
Sun, Aug 9: Canmore Nordic Centre
Wed, Aug 12: Jumping Pound Ridge
Sat, Aug 15: Jumping Pound Ridge
Wed, Aug 19: Jumping Pound Ridge
Sat, Aug 22: Jumping Pound Ridge
Sat, Sept 19: Canmore Nordic Centre



To sign up: Click [HERE](#)

Membership Poll: Last Call For Your Input

Over the last few years, the membership of the Friends of Kananaskis Country has increased significantly. While this was partly triggered by the strong desire of volunteers to help repair the damage caused by the Floods of 2013, in general there has been a growing interest in supporting the Kananaskis region.

This [short survey](#) is intended to provide the Friends of Kananaskis Country with background information that will be used to adjust the Trail Care program and highlight other initiatives that might be of interest to the membership. In particular we are interested in understanding what type of activities people want to work on, what areas of the Kananaskis region are of most interest, are there some days that are better than others to hold a project, and what can the Friends work on to enhance the volunteer experience.



We hope that you will take this opportunity to provide your valuable input that will help steer the future directions of our volunteer programs. Thanks for your time and contribution. And for those who have taken the time to complete the survey, we appreciate your feedback, thanks!

Link to survey: Click [HERE](#)



July cougar. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: Exciting news for snowshoers!

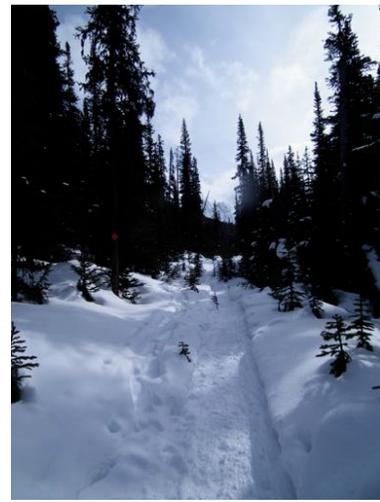
By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

As I have written in the past, an area of focus for the Friends these days is to help Parks as much as we can with developing improved infrastructure for snowshoeing in K-Country. This sport is growing rapidly, and snowshoe-focused trail development has not kept up. The Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association has built a few new snowshoe trails in the West Bragg area, but the low elevation and limited snowfall in that area places its own constraints on the season.

The Friends and GBCTA are not the only ones thinking about improving snowshoe infrastructure. Recently, Alberta Parks staff hosted a session with some key interested parties including the Friends. Trading ideas around the table, the concept that evolved was the vision of making the Sawmill area a new "mecca for snowshoers". The area has a lot going for it:

- Reliable and plentiful snowfall
- An existing old XC trail network that is no longer maintained
- Connection with the new High Rockies trail, which will run right through the area
- Substantial interest in snowshoeing demonstrated in the next valley at Chester Lake
- An area with virtually no avalanche exposure, and that, which is there, can be readily avoided

So June saw the formation of the “Sawmill Council”, spearheaded by **James Cieslack** of Alberta Parks. This council is developing a Terms of Reference and a Long Term Plan to submit to Parks for implementing this vision. The Friends are taking a central role in coordinating the development of these plans. **Nancy Ouimet**, our Program Coordinator, recently explored the status of the existing trail conditions with James.



The ideas and planning for this vision are still in their infancy, but they foresee:

- Restoring many of the old, disused & overgrown XC trails back to life through clearing and brushing.
- Developing of “destinations” for snowshoers, such as ridge walks and viewpoints. Some of these “destinations” would have to be new, some are existing but “hidden” by overgrowth
- The construction in the longer term of a warming hut of some kind, similar to what is being built at the Nordic Centre with the Friends assistance;
- The development of the trail system into true “multi use” for both snowshoeing and XC skiing in the winter, and hiking and mountain bike use in the summer.
- The possible return in the long term of XC ski grooming in the area.

We have a long, long way to go to make this all a reality. The Sawmill Council's and the Friends' current focus is to develop a proposed plan to submit to Parks in the fall for implementing this vision. We anticipate that this project will create lots of volunteer opportunities in the summer of 2016, that will include brushing and clearing old ski trails and logging roads. We will keep you posted on our progress and look forward to sharing the Sawmill expansion plan with you.

Parks Day

On Sunday, July 19, Parks Day was celebrated in Bow Valley Provincial Park's Willow Rock Campground. It was a great success with thousands of visitors learning about K-Country, its animals and plants, and how the area is managed. There were horseback rides, birds of prey, interpretive shows, free food and a lot of fun.

The Friends booth was staffed by **Derek Ryder**, **Manika Suri** and **Nancy Ouimet**. They had a chance to show folks the kind of work we do. The focus of our displays was the work we are doing revamping the Interpretive trails, and we held a quiz for folks – that most everyone got wrong – about Kananaskis' Interpretive Trail System. It was a lot of fun, and illustrated to need for reinvigorating these trails.



The Fire Lookouts of Kananaskis: Kananaskis Lookout

First in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

Fire lookouts are a natural magnet for hikers, for fairly obvious reasons. They sit up high with commanding views that often take in a 360° panorama, and oftentimes have supply trails leading up to them (though most supply is by helicopter these days). In this series, I'm going to take you to some of those lookouts.

Kananaskis Lookout is one of the lowest elevation lookouts, and features a really good and easy access “trail” that is mostly a road with a gentle grade leading up from Highway 40 that can be biked or hiked. If you hike it from Highway 40, it’s an easy hour walk up with only 280 m height gain. It’s close to all the Peter Lougheed facilities, so can also be readily accessed from Boulton Creek campground using the Whiskey Jack trail.



The first lookout here was built in 1952, but the present building was put up in 1976.



Despite being a low elevation (just under 2,100 m ASL, about 350 m above Upper Kananaskis Lake), it offers a broad panorama across the lake basins including Elk Pass, plus north up the valley including views of the Opals. One of the best things about this hike is that it’s a good one on less than pleasant days; if you find yourself down in Peter Lougheed and it’s drizzly and overcast (as I did on my last visit), this is a nice short walk.

Like most all fire lookouts, it’s closed in winter, but this one is a popular XC ski destination, being right on or near the Lookout and Tyrwhitt loops. One other thing I noticed on my last summer visit is that the lookout is home to the fattest golden mantled ground squirrels I have ever seen (no, they are not fed by Lookout staff. And you shouldn’t feed them either).



As always, remember that this lookout is someone’s home and workplace, so stay away from the buildings, but feel free to use the picnic tables that are there for visitors.



The Flowers of K-Country: Indian Paintbrush

Second in a Series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

I freely admit, I am not the flower person in my family. That honour goes to my partner, Karen, who is forever stopping on trails to take pictures of every flower she sees. Her diligent and patient teaching has introduced me to some of K-Country's pretty spectacular flowers, both big and small, and in this series, I will be sharing her fabulous images of some of them.

When summer fields are full of tall bright red flowers, you can be sure you're looking at a sea of Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja*). There are many subspecies of this flower, and as a result it is widespread and varieties can be found from the Andes to western North America to Asia and northwest Russia. The most common one here is the **Giant Red** indian paintbrush, *Castilleja miniata*, which ranges north to Alaska, south to New Mexico and east to Ontario.





However, you can also find **Stiff Yellow** indian paintbrush (*Castilleja lutescens*), or ones that are purple or pink (*Castilleja rhexiifolia*, pictured at left and at the bottom left) thought to be a cross-breed between Stiff Yellows and the Giant Reds. There's even an **Alpine Yellow** paintbrush (*Castilleja occidentalis*, below right) that is only found at higher elevations; it is similar to the Stiff Yellow but much shorter.

The red ones are the primary food for hummingbirds in the area, and some research suggests they co-evolved. These flowers have almost no scent (hummingbirds are attracted to red colours, not aroma), a long deep flower that hides its nectar, and tough flowers that can withstand hummingbird bill stabs.



The other fascinating aspect of this plant is that it is parasitic. It attaches itself to the root systems of other plants in order to gain nutrients. And by being parasitic, the paintbrush will eventually kill off the host plant by destroying its root systems, then will die itself.



The flowers of Indian paintbrush are edible, but eat too many and they can kill you. The plant stores selenium from the soils it lives in, though more is concentrated in the leaves and roots than the flowers, but even flowers have too much selenium for regular consumption.



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 \$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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