

August has been an incredibly busy month for our trail care program! Flood damage, be gone!



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KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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August Trail Care Update

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

Its been a superb Trail Care season so far! Good weather and a variety of trail projects has kept our volunteers busy. On behalf of the Friends of Kananaskis Country **THANK YOU** to our superstar volunteers and volunteer crew leaders who carved time out of their

summer schedules to give back to Kananaskis trails. Trail Care projects so far this year have included:

Diamond T Loop - Worked on a drainage problem where the culvert was pushed off the trail from the 2013 flood. Repositioned the culvert, dug trenches, and armored with rocks.



Galatea Creek Trail – We worked on building the new reroute through rugged terrain followed by the finishing touches to complete the mid-section of the Galatea trail.

Prairie Creek Trail – We spent several days working here, building reroutes, and fixing many of the drainage issues. We are pleased to say Prairie Creek Trail is in good shape!



Jumping Pound Ridge – Several sections of this trail had become overgrown. Volunteers brushed the trail to improve line of sight, in addition to fixing drainages, and raking loose gravel off the trail.

Canmore Nordic Centre – Volunteers worked on various bike trails, building a new reroute and improving drainages.

Boulton Creek Trail – This has been one of our biggest projects, with almost a dozen days. It started off with clearing brush and trees off the new trail reroute. Once the trail was cleared, we decommissioned sections of the old flood-damaged trail, did the finishing work of removing rocks and roots, fixed the side hills and raked and tamped the trail's final tread.



Ribbon Creek Trail – On the lower section of the trail, we moved organic material to reclaim 40 meters of the old trail.

Mount Shark Ski Trail – Worked on 5km of the 15km un-groomed ski loop. Pulled and cleared all trees that were overgrown on the trail.

The Trail Care season isn't over, though. We still have interesting trail projects coming our way, such as working on the TransCanada – High Rockies Trail. This trail will run 80 km from the boundary of Banff National Park near the existing Goat Creek Staging Area to the provincial border with British Columbia at Elk Pass, and will provide additional linkages between many isolated trails and trail networks in Kananaskis Country.

Upcoming Trail Care Projects

Sat, Aug 29: Mist Creek Trail

Sat, Sept 19: Canmore Nordic Centre

Dates to be confirmed: High Rockies Trail

To sign up: Click [HERE](#)

Results from the Membership Poll

Over the last few months, we asked for your feedback so we can continue to improve our volunteer Trail Care program and other initiatives that might be of interest to the membership. A big thanks to the 60 members who took the time to complete the survey, we appreciate your feedback.



Thank you
for your feedback!

Here's some of the take-away from your responses:

- Most people joined Friends to support Kananaskis Country in a tangible way and help work on trails.
- To our surprise, most of the survey respondents have never volunteered on a Trail Care day.
- Prime reasons for not volunteering are: not enough notice, work is scheduled on weekdays, and work is too difficult.
- Preference for scheduling trail days were weekends, Saturdays, and weekdays.
- What people enjoy most from Trail Care days: a sense of giving back to Kananaskis Country.
- What they enjoy the least: not accomplishing enough and having to carry in tools and equipment.
- As for recognition, most people feel they don't need any recognition... maybe just a personal thank you's at the end of the work day.

We have taken note, and will incorporate your feedback to improve and strengthen our volunteer programs. We continue to seek opportunities that offer something to all our members regardless of their age, physical capabilities, and experience.



Wolf in the Bow Valley. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: Know what you're good at

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

I've always had this theory that says you should know what you're good at, and more importantly what you're not good at. Every day I am out Crew Leading or just volunteering with the awesome Alberta Parks trail crews, I am reminded of this.

The Friends train our Crew Leaders in trail work. About a third of our Crew Leader training is about how to design and build a trail. Another third is about people and volunteer management, and the final third is about safety, paperwork and procedures.

This means that the Friends Crew Leaders are more knowledgeable about trail construction than most of our members and volunteers. But our expertise is limited, and pales in comparison to Parks' "Boot Camp" held in the spring each year when new crews come on. In that camp, both new hires and veterans spend more than a week *just* on trail

construction and design methodologies. Yes, they get training in operation of machinery from chainsaws to mini-excavators to quads, too, but they have knowledge of soil types and trail grade design which the Friends can't even touch on. They thoroughly understand their tools, and what they are good for – and not good for. The right job with the wrong tool is a mess that takes time and energy to fix. Then, after all that training, they build and maintain trails every day, so that even the newest newbie has a high level of expertise in very short order.

So every day when you come to volunteer, you should hear a mini-speech from the Friends Crew Leader, and there are a few key messages in it. One is: **when in doubt, ask the Parks crews**. No matter who they are, they know more than us Crew Leaders, and more than you, no matter your background. They do it every day, and they're good at it. Crew Leaders understand what Parks is up to, but no matter what the issue, Parks knows best.



Another is: **we are here to do what the Parks crews ask**. When I first started volunteering with the Friends, full of vim and vigour, I would tackle jobs even if they didn't ask. Bad strategy. Parks crews know what needs to be done, and in what order. They really do have a plan for the project they want our help on. They're not just there for the

day, but often have been working on a project for weeks, a bit at a time. Root out a back slope on a sidehill before it's shaped and you've wasted your time and theirs. I've learned that projects progress faster when we simply do what Parks asks.

We all bring something to the table when we volunteer. By the same token, we all have things we can learn. Every day I Crew Lead or volunteer, I learn something from the awesome Parks staff. I hold them all in high esteem and treat them that way – as experienced, seasoned professionals with expertise I do not have.

I'd like to think I'm pretty good at working on trails. But I know Parks staff is better. I know that my limited knowledge is a dangerous thing, and I am proud to admit that I know what I'm not good at. Learning every day I'm out makes my trail care work even more fun.



The Fire Lookouts of Kananaskis: Hailstone Butte

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.

The trail to Hailstone Butte lookout isn't long – a pleasant 350 m climb through open meadows with nice views to the south seen in the photo to the right – but offers challenges; a short section of easy scrambling, or a traverse high on a scree slope to even easier scrambling. The reward for the short 1.7 km walk is WAY worth it.



Hailstone is one of the lookouts in the “forgotten corner” of K-Country. In fact, it is the most southerly lookout in K-Country, just north of Hwys 532 and 940, the K-Country southern boundary road. Coming in from the east via 532 treats you to pretty awesome views without getting to the lookout anyway, for the shortest of several routes

up starts from The Hump, a high pass on 532 from which the views are stellar as you can see in the photo to the left.

The first lookout on the site was built in 1954; the second was put up in 1980, but that one had its siding quite literally blown apart by wind over the winter in 1981 (yes, it's almost always windy up there). The current structure was brought up on the old access road in 2006. One of the lookouts who has been stationed here, Tom Johnson, has spent his free time over the years building elaborate and beautiful rock mosaics on the ground, and more recently, repainted outbuildings in awesome graphic designs.



In fact, the main scramble route up got its name from Tom's dog: The Roper Route. Now marked with a floppy metal post to be seen from below (and concrete barriers to be found from above), Roper would guide lookout visitors up and down through the break in the cliffs at the top. Gillean Daffern's brand new Volume 5 of the 4th Edition of the Kananaskis Country Trail Guide has the story in it.

The views are stunning; I could even make out Calgary when I was up there recently, despite the city being 97 km away. The flat top of Plateau Mountain dominates (and blocks) the west view as you can see in this photo; to the north, you can easily make out the long-abandoned fire lookout on Mt. Burke, which Hailstone (and Raspberry Ridge) replaced; it's the left peak in the photo below. Another plus is that you can wander the length of the butte itself with ease, and visit a (not-very-interesting) FireNet radio repeater station at the butte's south end.



There is a long route up the mountain via the old access road, however, I'm not sure it's a wise choice these days. Spray Lakes is actively logging along the road, so riding a bike up it probably isn't the smartest idea. Stick to the Roper Route and you'll be fine.

As usual with fire lookouts, remember that this is both a

workplace and private place of residence. If you're lucky, the lookout may come out to say hi and let you sign the visitor register, but he may also be too busy, so please respect his privacy.



The Critters of K-Country: Golden Mantled Ground Squirrels

Eleventh 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.

Ben Gadd calls them “the junk food junkies of the rodent world”, such is their love of begging handouts from passers-by. Too many people call them chipmunks. But the Golden Mantled Ground Squirrel, stripes and all, is a squirrel, not a member of the chipmunk family. It is, however, a fearless fan of begging from humans. While this offers awesome photo opportunities, too many people also feed them, which is bad. I have had them try to get in my backpack, and crawl over and up my legs trying to get handouts. Be aware that not only do they bite, they can have fleas.





They are differentiated from chipmunks easily: chipmunk stripes pass through the face and eye, but the stripes of goldens stop at the shoulder. Probably confusing is that these gregarious little guys like to live in proximity to other rodents, notably chipmunks and pikas. Unlike their pika neighbours, they do hibernate, though wake up regularly to eat and urinate in their burrows -- though they drink nothing for 6 months. Like pikas, they get fluids from the grasses of their diets.

Their burrow is a little different than other ground squirrels; it lacks a dirt mound and basically is just a hole or two on the surface. It's usually just 1-2 m deep and has only 2 or three chambers; one for sleeping, one for food storage, and a bathroom. The males arise in April, the females in May, breeding immediately, and the newborn kits are grown and leave home by August.



When not eating food begged from you, they eat grasses, flowers, fruits, berries and seeds, plus underground stuff like roots and fungi (note that potato chips, cheezies and bread are not on the list). They often stuff their cheek pouches full of food, as you can see in the photo to the left. Being plentiful, they are predated by most any carnivore with 4 legs bigger than them (including weasels and fox), plus birds, from owls to eagles. To that

end, they are an important link in the K-Country food chain.



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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