

The snow is deep, the sky is clear. What could be better weather than to get outside?



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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Chester-Sawmill Winter Trail Plan

In the June, 2015 Newsletter, we mentioned that Alberta Parks was exploring the concept of expanding the Chester-Sawmill trail system. We're happy to share there has been development regarding this initiative. To re-cap on what this initiative is all about, here's a bit of context:

Project Overview

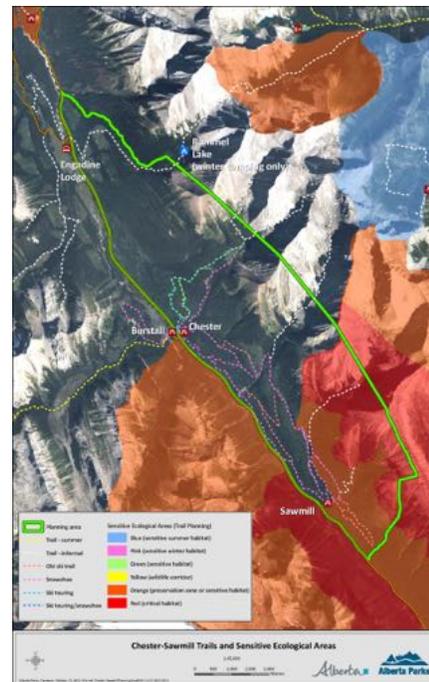
Chester-Sawmill trails area is located in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park (see map to the right), approximately 43km southwest of Canmore and 140km from Calgary. The area currently features a mix of snowshoe, ski, hiking and biking trails ranging from popular designated trails, to undesignated and unmaintained ski trails. Most of these trails resulted from the Spray Lakes Sawmills logging activity that took place in the area prior to being designated as part of the Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. From 1985-1992 the area was designated as a groomed cross country ski trail system, further becoming a designated snowshoe trail system in 2005. The area receives consistent and significant snowfall, with no or low avalanche hazards, making it a natural destination for snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and fat biking activity.



This plan process will explore the Chester-Sawmill winter recreational opportunities and experiences that merit consideration while carefully considering the approved park management plan. It will set forth recommendations to enhance and expand the winter trail system within the planning area (see map to the right). Additional new trails may be considered as part of the plan, but it is expected that the majority of the plan will incorporate the existing and former trail systems in order to reduce forest disturbance and maintain existing ecology and wildlife habitat.

Conceptual Plan - Terms of Reference

The Chester-Sawmill Advisory Committee was formed with representatives from Alberta Parks, the Friends of Kananaskis Country, and stakeholders from the snowshoeing and cross country skiing communities. This group compiled a Terms of



Reference (TOR) to inform Kananaskis Region decision makers (Kananaskis Trail Committee, planners, ecologists and operations-management team) about the proposed *Chester-Sawmill Winter Trail Plan*.

The purpose of the Chester-Sawmill Winter Trail Plan is to develop recommendations for a trail network in the Chester-Sawmill plan area of Kananaskis Country. The following objectives were presented at the Kananaskis Trail Committee meeting in November:

1. To identify existing gaps for winter trail use;
2. To assess the feasibility and desirability of these defined needs based on existing supply as well as known natural and cultural values and other provisions of the park management plan;
3. To consider additional snowshoe trails by restoring the previously maintained cross country ski trails and incorporate destination look-outs;
4. To determine where/if fat biking access is appropriate on existing and recommended snowshoe trails (considering multi-use trail access);
5. To determine where/if cross country skiing access is appropriate on existing and recommended snowshoe trails (considering multi-use trail access);
6. Options for reintroducing cross country ski grooming on recommended ski trails;
7. To consider potential summer use impacts subsequent to increased winter use;
8. To recommend connections and linkages with the TransCanada – High Rockies Trail;
9. To enhance educational opportunities in the area for the following programs: Kananaskis County - Environmental Education Program; Avalanche Awareness; Wildlife, Habitat and Ecology; Public Education and Interpretation; Trail etiquette, respect and use;
10. To consider the installation of up to two longer-term warming huts, one at the Chester Day Use and the other at the Sawmill Day Use.

The above objectives were well received, with the exception of #6, "Options for reintroducing cross country ski grooming on recommended ski trails". The reality is, Parks can't support the resumption of grooming because they have no budget for the equipment and manpower required. Although Parks recognizes the benefits and merit of having groomed trails in this area, it simply isn't feasible at this time. The compromise will be to include recognized non-groomed cross country ski trails in the trail system. In addition, while the consideration for seasonal yurts at each Day Use area hasn't been ruled out, there are several logistical components to be evaluated.

Next Steps

Now that we have direction on what Alberta Parks is willing to consider, we are moving into the Detailed Design phase of the proposal, which will illustrate and outline proposed new trails, destination look-outs, yurt style and location, and an implantation plan. The Committee is aiming to submit the Detailed Design proposal to Alberta Parks for review in April.

We anticipate that this project will create volunteer opportunities in the summer of 2016, which will include brushing and clearing old ski trails and logging roads. We will keep you posted on further developments of the exciting initiative.

Kananaskis Country Speaker Series

We hosted our first of three [Speaker Series](#) presentations on January 20 at the University of Calgary. Ben Gadd's *Icefield bunnies, gullible bees and why the tallest mountain is not the highest* presentation was both enlightening and entertaining. He shared interesting facts about geological formations, theories about grizzly bear evolution, and the amazing relationship between the calypso orchid and the golden northern bumblebee, to list just a few things he talked about.



The event was a great turnout, with close to 300 people attending. Thanks to those who came to the presentation and supported the Friends.

We have two more presentations coming up this winter you'll want to see:

Kevin Van Tighem - February 24, 7:00pm, University of Calgary, Earth Sciences, ES 162

In the course of researching and writing *Heart Waters/Sources of the Bow River*, Kevin Van Tighem delved deeply into the history, hydrology and ecology of Alberta's Front Range landscapes to try and find answers to the damaged fisheries, destructive floods and shrinking river flows that threaten to confound our future. In this illustrated presentation, he explores some solutions for a water-challenged region whose headwaters are among the most beautiful in the world. Illustrated with images by award-winning Jasper-based photographer Brian Van Tighem.”



Kevin Van Tighem was born and raised in Calgary. His family roots in what is now Alberta go back to 1875. He graduated with a degree in plant ecology from the University of Calgary in 1977 and went on to work as a biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service. In 1985 Kevin joined Parks Canada and subsequently worked in Jasper, Yoho and Waterton Lakes National Parks. He went on to be

superintendent of Prince Albert, Elk Island and Banff National Parks before retiring in 2011.

Kevin is the author of eleven books on wildlife and conservation and writes a regular column ("This Land") in *Alberta Views* magazine. His newest book, produced in collaboration with photographer Brian Van Tighem, is *Heart Waters: Sources of the Bow River*.

Matt Mueller - March 23, 7:00pm, University of Calgary, Science Theatre, ST 141

Kananaskis Public Safety is a government agency that is responsible for mountain rescue, avalanche forecasting, and public awareness with respect to the mountain environment. Mountain rescue operations are carried out by a unique blend of Public Safety Specialists and provincial Conservation Officers to deliver a world class level of rescue response. Their home environment includes swift water, high mountain terrain, technical climbing, backcountry skiing and even the local Off Highway Vehicle areas.



Join Matt Mueller, Public Safety Specialist, for a look into the program's history, what the day to day operations involve and how they train and prepare for a given mission.

All presentations at the University of Calgary – General Admissions – \$5 Suggested Donation – No Pre-Show Ticket Sell – See you there!



In partnership with the University of Calgary's Palliser Club.



January Coyote high on a ridge. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

Letter from the Board: Focus Area #2

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

I had the pleasure of introducing Ben Gadd at our January Speaker Series event. If you were there, pardon this bit of repetition.

The Friends has several focus areas. The primary one is trail care, and needless to say, it gets the most press. As you know, we work with Alberta Parks and ESRD on restoring flood damaged trails, maintaining trails generally, building new trails, and participating in trail planning processes such as Kananaskis Trails Advisory Group and Kananaskis Trail Committee. We are the primary link between the volunteering public and the Alberta Government for trail activity in Kananaskis. These days, that even means working with the Alberta Parks and the Town of Canmore trying to develop a community-based approach for Bow Valley trails.

Our second focus area is education. This is slightly more fuzzy, as Parks has staff responsible for education and interpretation, and we truthfully don't do much with them. The Friends uses other methods to advance our education mandate. One vehicle is the Kananaskis Country Speaker Series we introduced 3 years ago. We bring awesome people (like Ben Gadd) to give talks about issues of interest to people who like trails in Kananaskis. Another vehicle is the work we are doing to assist Parks to reimagine the interpretive trails in Kananaskis. This gives the day-to-day user of K-Country ways to learn

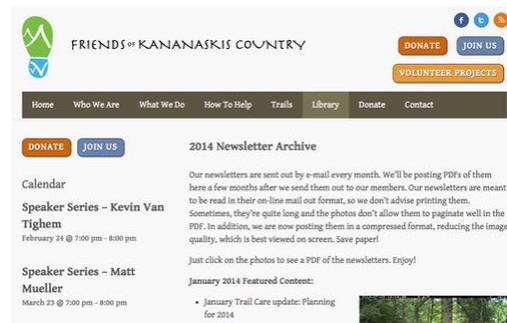
about all sorts of things.

But the most important way we advance our education mandate is this newsletter. Every month, we try to inform and teach you about “stuff” in K-Country. Sometimes it’s about the animals, sometimes it’s about policies, sometimes it’s about history, and sometimes it’s about geology. Since mid-2012, we have published:

- 13 articles about various critters in K-Country;
- 13 articles about K-Country’s “special” or more unique places, aspects or things;
- 3 articles about K-Country fire lookouts;
- 3 articles about K-Country flowers;
- 3 articles about the components of K-Country;
- Articles about 16 movies (and one music video) filmed in K-Country

And a whole lot more. We don’t get a lot of feedback about the newsletter, but readership increases with every issue we publish, and the newsletter is opened 3-4 times for every person we send it to, so we must be doing something right.

People I talk to always mention that they learned something new with the last issue they read. I know you click the links to dive in deeper to some of the things we publish; the October article on Bow Valley Wildland Park was particularly intriguing to about 100 of you.



So keep reading, and tell your friends to [subscribe](#). Note that after being somewhat behind, past issues up to October 2015 are now [up on the website](#). Poke around the archives if you’re new to our organization. Who knows what you could learn?

Hellos & Goodbyes!

After serving on our Board since 2012, **Jeff Eamon**, Trails Supervisor for the Bow Valley District, has stepped down. Jeff has had a significant influence on the Friends and the Board. He has provided us with an extraordinary insider's perspective on trails and their management and development. He was with us through the flood and helped us understand the Government's response to it. He has facilitated the volunteer program working on such ideas a tool trailers, and assisted us in setting expectations for Crew Leaders and their training. Working with Jeff, The Friends achieved some our greatest trail care successes, including Quait Creek, Jewel Pass and Heart Creek. We will miss his exceptional experience and insight.

In his place, **Jody Cairns** has joined our Board. Jody lives and works in Peter Lougheed

Provincial Park, where he is James Ceislak's "right hand", managing summer trail work and winter ski trail grooming. In fact, he does the "midnight shift" grooming for Peter Lougheed and Mt. Shark trails. We have spent a lot of time working with Jody in the field over the years on summer projects like Fox Creek and Mt. Shark Ski Trails, and are excited to have him join us.

Birds and Windows Project Results

About 2 years ago, we put a call out for help with a University of Alberta Master's Student project looking at bird collisions with windows. Some 13,000 people, including Friends members, provided information to this project, and if you're interested in the results, you can see them [here](#).



The Elements of Kananaskis: Spray Valley Provincial Park

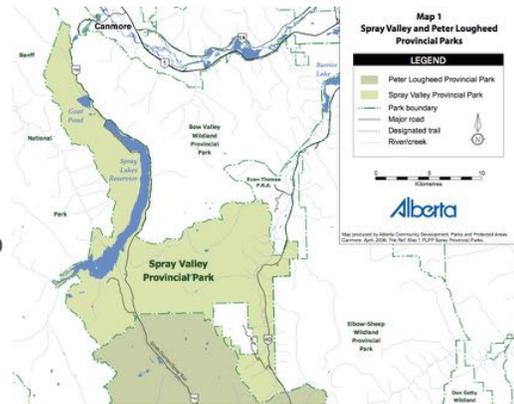
3rd in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

Kananaskis Country is not one park but a multi use landbase consisting of numerous parks and public lands, all managed under one framework. In this series, we're going to look at each part that makes up K-Country. We'll look at the history, the rules, and significance the area plays.

So far in this series, I have covered Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve (in [September](#)

2015) and the highly complex Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park (in [October 2015](#)). See both in our [on-line newsletter archives](#). This month, I'm going simpler and looking at Spray Valley Provincial Park.

Spray Valley PP is a single contiguous park, but is slightly confusing in that it extends out of Spray Valley proper over to an area east of Highway 40. In total, it is 27,471 hectares in size. Starting in the northwest, the west boundary of the park butts up against Banff National Park all the way down to Mt. Smuts, where it connects to Peter Lougheed Provincial Park ("PLPP"). From there, the park boundary heads east to the Fist, then cuts around the Tryst Lake route, takes a beeline due east through Rummel Lake until it hits the Fortress Mountain leasehold. It almost surrounds this lease, continuing south along the summits of Mts. James Walker, Inflexible and Lawson before dropping into the Kananaskis Valley, intercepting Highway 40 at Grizzly Creek, all that way abutting PLPP. From here, it heads north staying east of Highway 40 (abutting the Elbow-Sheep Wildland Provincial Park) until north of Wedge Pond, when it meets up with the Evan Thomas Provincial Recreation Area, surrounding Mt. Kidd on its slopes. Meeting up with Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park, it then runs just north of Ribbon Creek a ways, then up to Ribbon Peak, Mt. Bogart and Mt. Buller, before dropping down to Highway 742. Everything west of 742 north from there to the Goat Creek day use area is in the park. See the general map of the park [here](#) or above right.



The park is relatively "young" from a Kananaskis perspective, having only come into existence in 2000 via Order in Council 365/2000. The boundaries were slightly adjusted in 2004 with OIC 484/2004. One day, I will understand why they made a new park in 2000 instead of just expanding Peter Lougheed Park, but that day is not today.

While native Canadians had been using the area for over 1,000 years, it was David Thompson and Duncan McGillivray who were the first Europeans down the valley in 1801, following a native trail in the Spray Valley down to White Man's Pass (in Banff Park, south and west of the south end of Spray Lakes). The fascinating book "Life of the Trails, Vol 5" by Sanford and Beck provides an in-depth history of usage of the route pioneered by Thompson & McGillivray, from the 1840's to today.

As we wrote about in the [January 2015](#) newsletter, the current Spray Lake was constructed by TransAlta building the dam in 1950. Prior to being a park, the area was actively logged, with one core of those operations near the south end of Spray Lakes. There's a reason the company is called "Spray Lakes Sawmills"; they started operations in 1954 in the Spray Lakes area and had mill sites in several spots including what is now Sawmill (surprise!) and the Commonwealth Valley, and they only moved to Cochrane in 1969. Logging in the area ended in 1978. A total of 1,495 acres was logged from 35 cutblocks; the photo shows cutblocks on the slopes of Mt. Engadine & the Tower. There was also historical logging in the Ribbon Creek area, as well as mining. The park is also the home to the first ever heli-ski venture in the world; Hans Gmoser flew guests to the Old Goat Glacier in the 1960's (read about that in our [August 2013](#) issue!).



There have been significant wildfires in the park, in 1867 and 1895, but the last major significant natural fire was in the Fortress/Galatea area in 1936. Prescribed burns for vegetation management are always under consideration. To quote the area Management Plan that I'll review below:

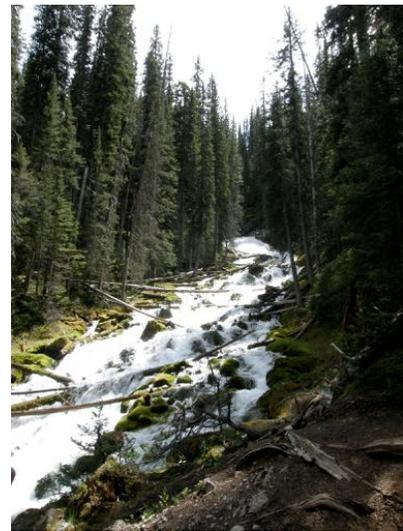
Large fires over 1,000 acres of medium to high intensity have occurred on an average of every 30 years since 1712. Smaller fires have occurred on an average of every 14 years. Records prior to 1712 are spotty, as more recent fires have destroyed evidence of earlier fires. However, no large fires have occurred since 1936.

There are LOTS of facilities in Spray Valley Provincial Park.

- There are **2** car accessible campgrounds, Eau Claire and Spray Lakes West;
- There are **3** summer backcountry campgrounds: Lillian Lake, Ribbon Falls and Ribbon Lake. Lillian was flood damaged and has been closed since 2013 but is scheduled to be repaired in the summer of 2016;
- Kananaskis' only winter-only backcountry campground is at Rummel Lake;
- There are **9** day use areas: Driftwood, Galatea, Mt. Shark, Sparrowhawk, Spray Lake, Buller Mountain, Goat Creek, Opal and Wedge Pond;
- Driftwood Day Use has a boat launch;
- There are **14** official hiking trails all or partly in the park: Goat Creek, Watridge Lake, Karst Spring (*pictured at right*), Buller Creek, Galatea, Guinn's Pass, Terrace South Trail, Ribbon Creek, Eau Claire Interpretive, Wedge Pond Trail and Wedge Connector, the start of the Evan Thomas Fire Road, and small bits of the Bill Milne trail. The Spray West "trail" running south from the Spray West Campground is an active road used by TransAlta to service the Canyon Dam, and is managed jointly with Banff National Park as it provides access to Banff's "Trail Centre". More on Spray West below.
- Rummel Lake trail bears a unique distinction in K-Country as being an official trail

that is maintained in the summer for winter use.

- There are multiple kilometers of cross-country ski trails in the Mount Shark area (including a mass start space for competitions), and a full biathlon range. These are groomed regularly.
- There's even an official helipad near Mt. Shark, though its only primary use is shuttles to and from Mt. Assiniboine.
- Commercial dogsledding operations use primarily the west side of Spray Lake north and south of the Three Sisters Dam.



Interestingly, there used to be a 12 site, car accessible, winter only campground at Buller Mountain Pond, but it has been closed despite a recommendation in the management plan that it be maintained. I don't know why it was closed, but I'm betting manpower and lack of interest from the campground contract operators were the reasons. I have an old Gem Trek map that still shows the campground. Spray West campground used to have sites all the way down the west side of the lake to Canyon Dam (the campsite number signs are still there) but these were closed when the management plan (see below) was adopted for the reasons I'll get into in a paragraph or two.

A short list of just the most popular but unofficial (and thus not maintained) "routes" in Spray Valley Provincial Park include:

- East End of Rundle, Old Goat Glacier, Shark Lake, Tent Ridge and the Horseshoe (*pictured at right*), Tryst Lake, the Mount Kidd Fire Lookout, North Buller Pass, Rummel Pass & Lost Lake

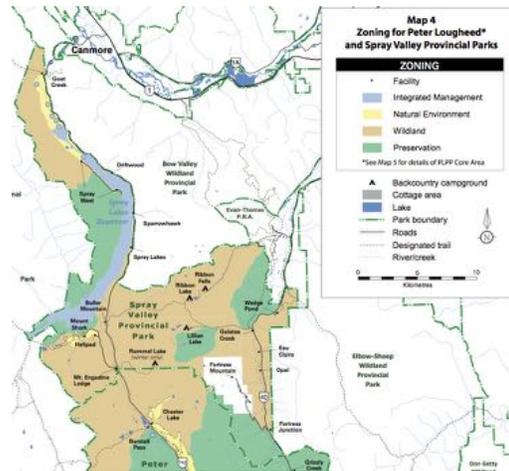


Like Bow Valley Wildland Park, the new High Rockies Trail (the "HRT") portion of the Trans Canada trail runs through the park, but that was built privately and is maintained separately. A significant amount of that trail runs through the park, including the section from Goat Creek to the Three Sisters Dam. 2016 will see the next section built, from near the Buller Mountain Day Use south into PLPP. The HRT that has been built to date is still a "work in progress"; it lacks much in the way of signage and access identifiers, and still has some small unfinished sections – patience, please! All will get better on that section in the Summer of 2016.

There may be lots of facilities, but there are no power or telephones lines in the Spray Valley south of Three Sisters Dam, and no running water or sewage treatment facilities

servicing the park. Cell service is unlikely to show up any time soon!

Spray Valley and PLPP are both managed under a [Joint Management Plan](#) that was passed in 2006. That plan places most of the land within the park under one of two designations as you can see in the map to the left (Map 4, from Page 20 of the Plan). To quote from the plan (emphasis mine):



- **“Preservation”** zones have been applied to those areas that are known to be important as wildlife habitat (e.g., sheep or goat range, bear habitat) or movement corridors. Existing designated trails will remain in the preservation zones but **no new designated trails, backcountry campgrounds or other facilities will be developed**. Non-designated routes will be low standard, unsigned and not regularly maintained.
- **“Wildland”** zones have been applied to areas that have both important natural and wildland recreation values. Preservation of natural values will be the priority and facilities will be limited to trails, backcountry campgrounds and signage where necessary. Off-trail use will generally be **allowed but not encouraged** by signage, upgrading or regular maintenance. Resource management and visitor use controls may be implemented in order to maintain or enhance natural and wilderness values.

A “Wildland Zone” management designation is not to be confused with a Wildland Provincial Park.

As you can see from the map of these spaces, the only areas that are not either Preservation or Wildland are a small area around the Mt. Shark day use area, and (interestingly) the valley bottom north of the Three Sisters Dam. These areas are considered **“Natural Environment”** zones “where there is more intensive year-round trail recreation and camping opportunities along with learning and interpretive opportunities for visitors.” I’m not sure why the valley bottom zone is so designated, but hey, they shoot movies there (like **THE REVENANT** -- that’s the fort under construction in the photo). Basically, the land on the west and south sides of the lake are Preservation, and the rest Wildland.



Those zone designations explain why you’ll never see a trailhead sign for the Old Goat Falls or Glacier, and why new formal trail development in the majority of the park is

unlikely to ever happen. Two Preservation areas in particular are worth noting.

The Spray West road/trail (which runs all the way from the Three Sisters Dam the entire length of Spray Lake on the west side, south to Banff Park's "Trail Centre") goes through two wildlife pinch points. Use of this trail/road is actively discouraged, and a quick look at a topo map will help you understand why. Wildlife wishing to move south on the west side of Spray Lakes must transit a narrow pinch on the flanks of Mt. Nestor, and from across the lake on Hwy 742, you can see the cliffs that block their way and force the animals onto the road/trail (*this pinch point is circled in the photo from Tent Ridge*). This is why the Management Plan resulted in the closure of the southern section of the Spray West campground to basically eliminate road traffic. The same thing happens south of the Canyon Dam on the flanks of Mount Fortune, where the Spray West trail basically hugs the only bit of level ground right down at the lake edge, creating a second pinch point. When the HRT was being planned, that "Preservation" designation kicked in and caused the trail to be routed to the other side of the valley instead of down the existing road. I personally suspect were it not needed for TransAlta's access to their Canyon Dam facilities, the entire Spray West road would be shut and reclaimed. Banff needs the section from Trail Centre to Canyon Dam to connect with their Spray River Fire Road trail.



The other Preservation area of note is the southern end of Spray Lake north of the Mt. Shark ski trails. This also is a high use wildlife movement zone and critical wildlife area where no new trails will be developed, according to the Management Plan.

The park contains a commercial backcountry lodge: Mount Engadine Lodge, a truly spectacular place at the extreme south boundary of the park in the Spray Valley. The lodge was built in 1987, 13 years before the park came into existence.



Fishing is popular in the park, mostly in Spray Lake, Wedge Pond and Rummel Lake. Ice fishing is popular in Spray Lake, too (I counted 26 huts last weekend). I watched kite skiers zipping around on the lake, too, plus have a neighbour who occasionally ice boats on the lake. Horses are only allowed on the Spray West road (*remember: use is discouraged*) and the Watridge Lake trail, and the primary reason for both is to access the Banff Park's trails. A horse corral that used to be at the Canyon Dam was removed and de-commissioned.

Being a Provincial Park, bikes are only permitted on roads or designated trails, and

the short list of designated trails is:

- the Watridge Lake trail leading into Banff Park (also excellent for fat bikes);
- the Spray West road connecting to Banff Park (though again, **use is discouraged**);
- the Goat Creek trail leading into Banff Park;
- the Bill Milne trail and Wedge Connector;
- the Terrace South trail;
- the High Rockies Trail

Eventually, they're supposed to build a parking lot for the Rummel Lake trail, according to the management plan, but that's an Alberta Transportation problem.

It's not a Wildland Park, so you can't hunt in the park. Generally, usage restrictions in a Provincial non-Wildland park are more driven by conservation, so this is not surprising. Accordingly, you can't burn deadfall or standing dead in your backcountry campsite either, and you can't random camp (so no sneaking into the old Spray West campground area near Canyon Dam). Climber bivouac camping is permitted. Other "normal" park regulations are in force, so your dog has to be on a leash, you can't set off fireworks, etc.

Spray Valley Provincial Park:

Camping: 2 car accessible, 3 back-country summer, 1 back-country winter campground. Random camping **not** permitted.

Fires: Permitted.

Hiking: 14 designated official trails, plus one not maintained by Parks.

Mountain biking: On 6 permitted trails only.

Horseback Riding: On 2 permitted trails only.

Hunting: Not allowed.

Services: 9 day use areas



The Critters of K-Country: Red Squirrels

13th 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.



Calgary is filled with non-native Eastern Grey Squirrels. These large aggressive monsters out-competed and kicked out the native Red Squirrel that you'll find all over Kananaskis. For that, you can mostly thank the fact the Eastern Greys are acorn specialists and adapted to eat the seeds of non-native ash, maple and elm trees that Calgarians plant – and those don't grow outside the city.

Non-native trees reduced the appeal of the city to the Reds, and made it better for the Greys. So as long as K-Country forests remain basically native, they will be devoid of Greys, but home to Red Squirrels, probably the most common animal you'll see in the wild.

In fact, it's hard to go into K-Country and not see evidence of squirrels. Their tracks are everywhere in the winter, and they seem to have no fear of alerting predators by making noise. Stealthy they are not. In fact, it's common to be yelled at by squirrels for reasons that make sense only to them.



While Red Squirrels always sit in trees while yelling at you, unlike the Eastern Greys they almost never nest in trees. Their home is almost always underground (the ones in my neighbourhood love people's woodpiles) or



under their own personal "garbage dump", known as a midden. Middens can be huge; I've seen them 10m across, like the one at left. They're just layer upon layer of discarded cone scales from which they have eaten the seeds. Ben Gadd tells me that midden analysis shows they like spruce cones best, with Douglas Fir and Lodgepole Pine way down the list.

They eat more than just cone seeds. I've watched them hang mushrooms in trees to dry, then come back and eat them weeks later. They'll eat fruit, buds, catkins, the occasional baby bird, egg or rodent, insects, and even carrion. If you find bones or antlers in the forest, a careful examination will almost always show Reds gnaw on them to get the calcium; I have an elk pelvis in my yard they chew on often.

An animal's abundance is often a good indicator that they expect to be heavily predated. And lots of things eat Reds: coyotes, hawks and owls, pine martens, lynx, bobcats and the occasional wolf target them. I was out doing some winter tracking last week and saw evidence that a pine marten took a Red down on the fly.



They are obviously active all year round, hiding underground only during the coldest of cold snaps. But they rely on stored food caches to over-winter, or cutting cones down from trees as they go. My yard is often suddenly littered with cones, and the base of my trees (where I pile the raked up cones) is full of holes where they dig down through the snow to get them.

Despite dense spruce forests, they need to have their own space of at least 1 hectare to collect enough cones to survive a winter. The kits, born in June, are helpless and blind, but are out and about by late August. They have until the snow flies to figure out how to locate cones, establish a territory and claim trees. This leads to entertaining “squirrel wars” around my house. And the newborns aren’t the smartest, as the photo shows.



Red Squirrels can chew through nearly anything. Live in K-Country and you are at risk of squirrels in your attic. When we renovated our kitchen 3 years ago, we found 1 foot of insulation in the attic, topped by 1 foot of cone scales. They had obviously been in there for some time.



Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), [TransAlta](#), [Banff Canmore Community Foundation](#), [Patagonia Elements](#), [Husky Energy](#), and the many individual donors who support our work.

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
403-678-5593

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