



**FRIENDS**<sup>OF</sup>  
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

The Canmore community does not have an established trail stewardship program similar to what is offered in many communities. Local trail users and recreational trail groups have communicated the need and desire to give back to the trails they use and love. During engagement for the recent Canmore Human Use Management Review and Open Space and Trails Plan, a great deal of concern was seen from trail users regarding the levels of trail degradation due to heavy use and minimal maintenance. There was also a high level of enthusiasm for encouraging volunteer stewardship and maintenance of the trails.

The Friends have helped forged the creation of the *Canmore Trail Alliance*, a new Canmore community trail initiative that will function as a subset project to its Trail Care program. The Bow Valley Trail Advisory Group (TAG) will provide guidance around the initiative's planning and management. The TAG membership includes representation from local jurisdictions, trail user groups, and conservation groups to provide a variety of relevant perspectives.

The goal of this initiative will be to *engage Canmore area residents in trail maintenance and building through community initiatives that improve Canmore's recreational assets, enhance its trail conditions, and educate the importance of ecological integrity and sustainability.*

Through the Canmore Trail Alliance, Canmore residents will have the opportunity to maintain and improve their local trails. These experiences will help foster an ethic of stewardship and ownership for the Canmore trail network and the environment. The outcome will be a trail maintenance program with activities that offer community engagement, have a positive environmental impact, ensure sustainability, and better quality trails.



The Canmore Trail Alliance will be in full swing for summer 2016!

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### **Kananaskis Country Speaker Series**

We hosted our second of three [Speaker Series](#) presentations on February 24 at the University of Calgary. Kevin Van Tighem's *Heart Waters – Restoring Alberta's Rivers* presentation was informative and awakening. He explained how the Bow River headwaters function and the important of retaining snow precipitation. Illustrations demonstrated damaged fisheries, destructive floods and shrinking river flows that threaten the future of the river. Kevin shared solutions for a water-challenged region whose headwaters are among the most beautiful in the world.

Thanks to those who came to the presentation and supported the Friends.

We have our third and final 2016 presentation coming up:

[Matt Mueller - March 23, 7:00pm, University of Calgary, Science Theatres, ST 141](#)

### **Kananaskis Public Safety – Mountain Rescue Operations**



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.

Presentation 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.

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### **Recruiting Crew Leaders**

*by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator*

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 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 2016 Trail Care season.

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, in the spring.

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

**Saturday May 14 or Sunday May 15:** Field Training Session, 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](mailto:nancy@kananaskis.org).

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## **Gone Skiing!**

*by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator*

We can all use a break now and then, and connect with our passions. I'm heading to BC for a two week ski - road trip with my family. The office will be closed Feb 29 - March 11. Unless it's urgent, we'll respond to emails and messages March 14.



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February sheep at sunset. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

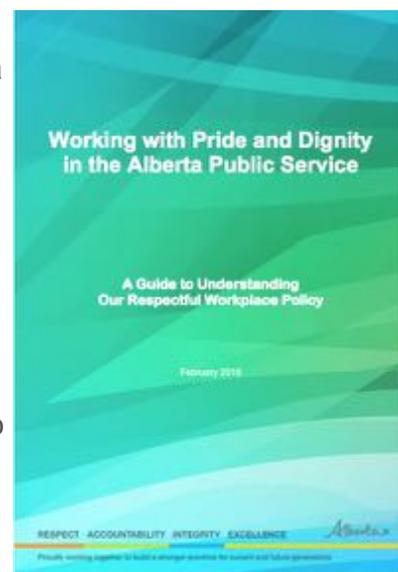
## Letter from the Board: Working With Respect

By Derek Ryder, Board Chairman

Back in June 2015, I mentioned that as a maturing organization, the Board was looking at policies around having a respectful, inclusive workplace. I noted that “We have members and volunteers of almost all ages, religions, belief systems and genders. Trails don’t care about any of that, and neither should we.”

Working with our partners at Alberta Parks and ESRD, we concluded that the best way to achieve a vision of having a respectful, inclusive workplace would be to align ourselves with the work Parks and the Alberta Government has done on the matter. In February 2015, the Provincial Government published an excellent document, “[Working With Pride And Dignity In The Alberta Public Service](#)”, as a guidebook to accompany their internal Respectful Workplace Policy. The Board recognized that both the policy and the guidebook were leading edge approaches to dealing with the issues we wanted to address.

It took us some time to establish how we could adopt and apply these to our organization; we needed to cover all of



our workplace situations, including those where the Parks or ESRD were not involved. In addition, some sections of the guidebook just simply don't apply to us. To add to the complexity, our discussion on the matter with Parks brought up issues related to volunteering in the Province in general, and the Parks representatives on our Board were looking at how to use the Friends as a model for other organizations. That happens a lot, by the way; the Friends is one of the largest volunteer organizations that the Government works with in the whole province, and is far more complex than any other.

Working with our government Partners, we landed on language that we will be adding as an appendix to our Cooperating Agreement. At our January meeting, The Board adopted this language, but we still need to amend the Cooperating Agreement slightly to incorporate it. As soon as this is done, we will post the new appendix on the Library page of our website.

Our next steps will be to incorporate training for our Crew Leaders prior to the trail care season starting, and develop simple ways to communicate our expectations to all participants every day we're out working.

Getting this policy document to this stage has been interesting, to say the least, but it has been worth it. It highlighted to us some strengths and weaknesses in our organization, and clearly aligned all Board members on our commitment to insuring all volunteers – and everyone else we work with – feels respected and valued for the work they do.

I want to particularly thank **Michael Roycroft** and **Jennell Remple** of Alberta Parks for their incredible assistance and dedication with this process.

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### **A book is on it's way!**

There were many stories associated with the flood of 2013. Friends Advisory Council Member and Kananaskis Trail Guide author **Gillean Daffern** hatched an idea to document the stories about the impact of the flood on Kananaskis in photographs. Working with co-author and Friends Chair **Derek Ryder**, staff from Alberta Parks including **Jill Sawyer**, and Rocky Mountain Books, Gillean is producing a coffee table style book telling the tales of the flood. Proceeds from the sale of the books will go to support the The Friends work to continue to restore flood damaged trails after the Government project funding winds up in 2016. The book should be available in mid-2016.



You can read more about the project [here](#).



## The Fire Lookouts of Kananaskis: Raspberry Ridge

*4th 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.

In August 2015, I wrote about Hailstone fire lookout, the most southerly lookout in K-Country. Raspberry Ridge is the second of the lookouts in that “forgotten corner” of K-Country. Accessed from Hwy 940 at the head of the Lost Creek



logging road near Cataract Creek, the hike up is about a 15 km round trip with 650 m of altitude gain. It's most popular in the summer, but could be a winter trip as well, though is a LOT more challenging in the winter with steep sections, route finding issues and avalanche exposure. Note that none of the trails around here are official or maintained at all.



Raspberry replaced the Cameron lookout on Mt. Burke when that lookout was decommissioned in 1953. While the reasons for the relocation aren't really clear, most believe it was because you couldn't build a road to the top of Mt. Burke, and the pack trail was scary for horses. Accordingly, in 1953, a road was constructed to the top of Raspberry Ridge, zig-zagging up the steep south facing grass slopes (*pictured at left*). A new,

standard 12' x 12' lookout was constructed, and staffed for the first time in 1954. The present building was erected in 1977. In addition to the lookout, there's also a FireNet radio repeater station up there. Courtesy of helicopters, the access road ceased being necessary in the 1980's, and the road was reclaimed in 1986 – though remains obvious the whole way. Closer inspection of the uppermost switchbacks will show the road has collapsed and would be very unsafe to travel on.

The hiking route up follows the old overgrown road for the first 3.7 km, climbing gently the whole way. Aside from one steep creek chasm, it's a pleasant stroll. The road finally breaks out at south facing grass slopes on the end of the ridge at a rock cairn, and at this point, you have choices. When the road was decommissioned, some brilliant person decided that the best way from here to get up was straight up the cliff face,



gaining 350 m in 1.3 km the process (*that's the face you climb in the photo*). A good way down in the summer, maybe, but I like to stick to the old road and the grass on the way up. Either way would expose you to avalanche risk in the winter. The summer trail doesn't follow the old road the whole way; after one set of switchbacks, it makes a beeline for the ridge's south end then follows the crest to the lookout on the summit.



The views are fabulous. They stretch north up the Highwood Valley to Mist Mountain, northeast over Etherington Campground towards Holy Cross Mountain (*photo at the top of the article*), southeast towards Mt. Burke and Plateau Mountain, and west to Mount Etherington and Baril Peak on the Divide (*photo to the left*).

Crowsnest Mountain can be seen to the south.

As usual with fire lookouts, remember that this is both a workplace and private place of residence. This one in particular is surrounded by a locked, gated barbed wire fence about 100 m back from the lookout itself – which ought to tell you something. Enjoy your lunch at the picnic table next to the interpretive signs, but do make sure to skirt the fence and go north of the lookout for further spectacular views.





### **The Critters of K-Country: Mule Deer**

*14th 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.



With about 100,000 of them in the province, mule deer are without question the most common large animal you are likely to encounter in K-Country. Mule deer numbers peaked province-wide in the 1950's at over 150,000, fell to less than 60,000 in the 1960's due to severe winters and heavy hunting, but have stabilized in the last decade. With high numbers comes high predation; cougars, wolves and grizzlies target them – even coyotes, lynx and bobcat will give them a go. A full grown male cougar needs to take down a mule deer every 4-6 days.

Muleys actually change colour with the seasons. Their coat is a reddish brown in the summer (*like the photo to the right*), and a dull gray in the winter. They are quite gentle and often easily approachable, and when encountered in the forest, will stay stationary and check you out until you are “too close for comfort”, then suddenly turn and bolt.



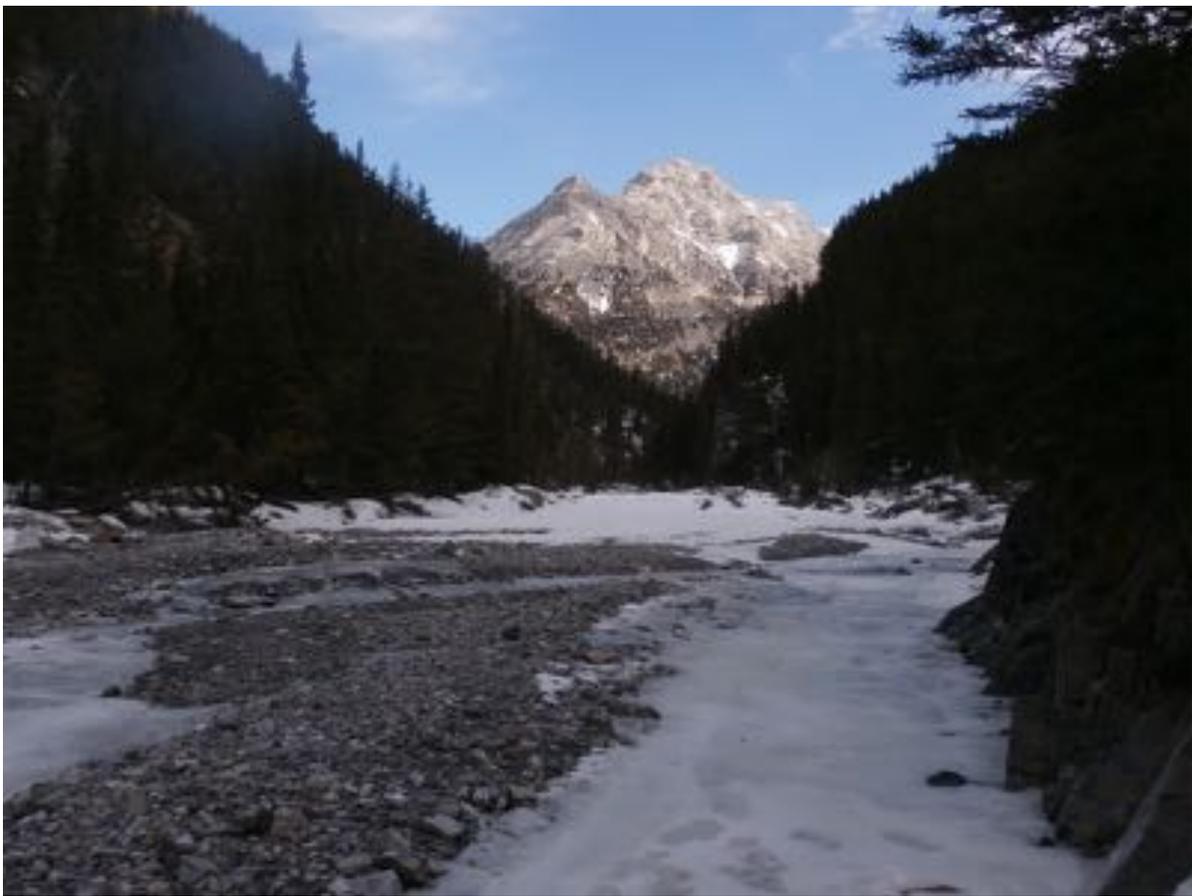
While their gait can look typical – they walk, trot and gallop – they also bounce along on all fours in a gait known as “stotting” or “pronking”. This is an energy efficient and very safe way to move quickly through a dense forest covered in deadfall. If they run away from you, keep watching; they often pause to “shoulder check” to see if you’re chasing them.

I personally see more of them in the winter when they forage on twigs, especially willows, and other woody vegetation (including in my yard). The summer diet is grasses and forbs, and they are especially drawn to areas of new growth created by fire or by logging. They have no “home”; they just bed for the night in a grassed area, leaving little depressions in the snow in the winter. A dead giveaway that you’re looking at a mule deer napping spot in the winter is that they invariably pee as soon as they arise, often in the space where they slept. Elk and white tail deer rarely do that.



They are differentiated from their cousins the white tail in a few ways. The tail of a white tail covers the white bum patch; the muleys always have a white showing, tail up or down. And the antlers of the male branch differently; white tails come forward, mule antlers split in twos. But most obvious are the muley’s canoe paddle sized ears, which are always rimmed in black.

Mule deer mate in the fall, but unlike elk, males do not build harems, rather just mating with any and all females they can find. Females give birth, normally to twins, in May or June, but they can give birth as early as March or as late as November. The fawns lose their spots in time for their winter gray coat. Mule deer don’t generally move around in herds of more than 4-6, and even those are normally just loose family groups of females and their young from this year or last.



### **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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