

Have you been out to check out the larch colours in K-Country yet? There's still time!



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KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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Trail Care Updates and Upcoming Projects

by Nancy Ouimet, Program Coordinator

We hosted 6 trail days in September plus 6 Canmore Trail Alliance trail days. Here's a summary of what we worked on:

Big Elbow Loop Rock Clearing, Sept 17: The group hiked 7 km from Elbow Pass day use to the junction of the Sheep Trail and then worked their way back moving loose rocks off the trail surface, primarily using hockey sticks! The hockey sticks were effective and saved everyone's back - making for good fan banter and many quizzical looks from other trail users.

Canmore Nordic Centre, Sept 1, 8, 15, 17, 22 & 24: With the completion of the Lower Loop - Terminator Extension we moved on to help build the [Lower Loop - Green Trail](#). This section of new 'beginner/intermediate' trail extends past the meadow and parallel's the Banff Trail (winter ski trail) towards the Banff Park boundary.

Canmore South Habitat Patch, Sept 18: In an effort to improve the ecological integrity of the South Canmore Habitat Patch, the Town of Canmore initiated trail improvements. We helped reclaim some of the less used trails in this habitat patch by loosening the tread, transplanting trees and shrubs, and adding deadfall to obstruct passage.

Tom Snow Trail Clearing, Sept 19: This new reroute requires significant tree clearing. The weather the week of Sept 19 was wet forcing us to cancel some of the days scheduled to work on this project. A crew did help with clearing trees and adding gravel to wet areas that were slippery.

Peter Lougheed Paved Bike Path, Sept 22-23: Although the paved bike trail requires low maintenance, every few years the sides of the trail need to be brushed. The crew helped clean the debris made by the brush mower from the Peter Lougheed Discover Centre to the Elkwood Day Use.

Upper Kananaskis Lake Loop Trail, Sept 24: This trail crew lucked out with getting a boat shuttle to their worksite on the Upper Kananaskis Loop Trail. Parks staff had been cutting brush from the sides of the trail. We helped rake, trim, and gather the cut brush to then broadcast it off the trail. After the work was completed, the crew declined the boat ride back and hiked out...after all...there wasn't any champagne and oysters served, so might as well enjoy the hike!



Upcoming Trail Care Projects

- Thurs, Sept 29: CTA Trail Night at Canmore Nordic Centre (6-9pm)
- Sat, Oct 1: Powderface Trail Reroute (FULL)

Volunteer Appreciation Eventing -- October 20!

Friends of Kananaskis Country and Alberta Environment and Parks would like to take this special opportunity to THANK YOU, our outstanding volunteers and members for your time, effort, and contribution to our beloved Kananaskis Country Trails.

EVENT DATE: Wednesday, October 20, 2016

EVENT TIME: 6:30 – 9:00pm

EVENT LOCATION: Capitol Hill Community Association

ADDRESS: [1521, 21 Avenue, Calgary NW](#)

ITINERARY:

6:30 – 7:30 Food, drinks, mingling, slide show

7:30 – 7:50 Thank you presentation, door prizes

7:50 – 8:30 Guest presenter: **Cheryl Hojnowski** - Grizzly Bears and Risks - How are bears adjusting to human use on trails, roads, and campgrounds.

8:30 – 9:00 Drinks, dessert, mingling, slide show



Please [RSVP HERE](#). We look forward to celebrating with you!

Canmore Trail Alliance - Tool Fundraising Blitz

The Canmore Trail Alliance is doing a fundraising blitz to purchase quality trail building tools and storage units so we can carry out Canmore area trail projects. Here's is a [brief proposal](#) outlining what we need to buy. If you know of people, businesses, or friends who would be interested in donating to the tool cache, please share this opportunity.

Folks can send a cheque made to Friends of Kananaskis Country or donate online (through ATB Cares, donation will receive an additional 15% match from ATB <https://www.atbcares.com/causes/124-890214430RR0001> - project named 'Canmore Trail Alliance - Volunteer Tools Purchase').

We would like to also take this opportunity to thank the following supporters who have contributed towards these tools:

[Town of Canmore](#)

[Rundle Mountain Cycling Club](#)

[McElhanney](#)

[Canmore & Area Mountain Bike Association](#)

[Trail Sports](#)

[Canmore Cycling Culture](#)

[Rebound Cycle](#)

[Outside Bike and Ski](#)

[Active Edge Chiropractic](#)

Anonymous Donors



Heart Creek -- New Interpretive Signs

We embarked on refreshing Kananaskis County interpretive signs two years ago with a generous grant from the [Calgary Foundation](#) to kick off the project. The first phase of this project is focused on replacing signs that were damaged or destroyed in the 2013, with a goal to foster a relationship between the visitor, the natural environment, and the flood affected area.

In collaboration with the Alberta Parks and Environment - Kananaskis Country Interpretive Team, we are working to replace and add new interpretive trail signs at 6 trail locations, they include: Heart Creek, Rawson Lake, Elbow Fall, Beaver Flats, Ribbon Creek, and Eau Claire. Funding from the [Banff Canmore Community Foundation](#) and [Canmore Museum and Geoscience Centre](#) will support the refurbishment of interpretive signs at Grassi Lakes.

We are please to announce that Heart Creek interpretive signs are done, installed, and look great! Here's a quick glance at a few of the signs, but you should go and see them for yourself.



Temporary Office Closure -- Oct 3-16

Please note our office will be temporarily closed from October 3 to October 16. I'm going east to visit

family in Sherbrooke, QC and Ottawa and take in the eastern fall colours...which will hopefully look like this!





September bull moose. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

News from the Board -- Helping Out

By Derek Ryder, Chair

In our June 2016 meeting, our Board discussed ways we could give members more participation opportunities doing what we do. As I have mentioned in many past newsletters, our mission is to create opportunities for folks to participate with us, and so this seemed like a logical conversation.

Our primary venue for you to participate is to come out on a trail care day, of course. You can also put your hand up to be a Trail Crew Leader and help others as well as the trails. However, the Board wanted to look beyond our normal trails focus, and see what other volunteer opportunities we could create for you.

For instance, we thought it would be fun to invite some Trail Crew Leaders to help out at our Parks Day booths in July. Parks Day is a fun event, and the role of the folks who staff our booth (normally Board members) is to wave the Friends flag and tell folks what we do. Who better to do this than our Trail Crew Leaders? Several came to Glenbow Ranch and others came to Fish Creek, and while the rain for both events kept a lot of the crowds away, we all still had fun, and it was a pleasure to have them there with our Board members.

We also discussed that while the Board or Nancy do most everything for the Friends, we do have the occasional person in the background helping. For instance, **Olga Soklova** has been assisting us with our website since 2012. She helped migrate us off Drupal and onto WordPress, manages the site's security and back ups, taught us how to do stuff like post and create/edit pages, and creates cool programming

(that we can't) for things like buttons. We asked ourselves whether others were out there with skills or interests that could help us, and our community.

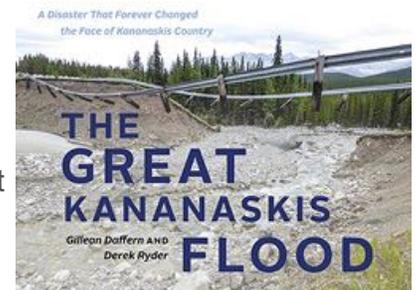
Vince Zafra has been working with us for 3 years now on the Winter Speaker's Series. Vince is a member of the University of Calgary's Palliser Club (who co-sponsor the series), and a frequent Friends volunteer (*that's Vince in his natural element in the photo*). One area the Board wanted to improve in 2016 was our social media, and Vince offered us some suggestions. So conversations about publicizing speakers led to other conversations about improving social media, and I'm pleased to announce that **Vince has now joined our Communications Subcommittee** – the first Board subcommittee to have a non-Board member on it.



The Friends is always looking for ways to enable our members to give back and to participate in what we do. So we ask: what kinds of skills and interest do you have that could help us? Whether it's a little time or a lot, there's plenty of room in our organization for other people like Vince and Olga. If you have an idea, why not contact Nancy in our office?

Have you got your book yet?

Don't forget to pick up your copy of the Great Kananaskis Flood Book, co-authored by **Gilean Daffern** and Friends Chair **Derek Ryder**. Royalties from the book come to the Friends to help us continue our work of delivering sustainable trails for you to enjoy, and besides, it's 178 pages of photos of flood damage and how we're fixing it in your favourite space. Get your copy today online, through major and independent book sellers, or through the Friends office.



The larches are almost gone!

They're going fast, but you can still find a few larches around in glorious colour. If you see some in K-Country, take some photos, and post them to our Facebook site with the hashtag **#LarchWatch**. Let's share the golden beauty!



The logo features a large, stylized '20' in black. The '0' is a circle containing a green mountain range above a blue river. To the right of the '0' is the word 'TH' in a simple, black, sans-serif font. Below this is the word 'ANNIVERSARY' in a large, black, serif font, underlined. Below the underline is the word 'FRIENDS' in a large, black, serif font, with 'OF' in a smaller font to its right. At the bottom is the phrase 'KANANASKIS COUNTRY' in a black, serif font.

20TH
ANNIVERSARY
FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

Conversations with the Past: Jeff Grutz

3rd in a series by Derek Ryder, Chair

*In commemoration of the Friends 20th Anniversary Year, we wanted to look back into the Friends past. I looked up a few former Chairs of the Friends to talk to them about what the Friends looked like years ago. This month, I talk to **Jeff Grutz**, who kindly prepared for our discussion by going through all of his records to refresh his memory!*

D: When were you on the Board?

Jeff Grutz: I joined the Board in February 2005, and was on it until June 2011. I served as co-Chair with Bob Lee in 2010 and 2011. I took over as Chair from a gentleman named Ward Van Proosdij.

D: How did your connection with Kananaskis start?

JG: Well, it goes way back to the 1970's. A gentleman named Don Gardiner was responsible for the early trail development in K-Country, and I was a landscape architect. I was hired by Don to oversee the contractors hired to do the initial new build of many of the now-iconic trails in K-Country. These include Barrier Lookout, Ribbon Creek, Troll Falls, Ruthie's Trail, Maud Lake, Turbine & Three Isle, and the trails over north and south Kananaskis Passes. This led me to doing a Masters at University of Calgary, with my thesis work studying trail degradation in Yoho park in 1974/75.

D: How did you get involved with the Friends?

JG: Don Cockerton, who was then a planner for K-Country, encouraged me to join. In 2004, the Friends were working on ramping up their support of the trails program, and my background seemed like a natural fit. But my connection with Don started long before that. For instance, back in 1992, when I was Outdoor Recreation Coordinator with Calgary Parks, Don recruited some volunteers, primarily with the Elbow Valley Cycle Club, for a "pre-Friends" project: re-routing one of the starts to the Powderface Ridge trail near Highway 742. That's Don and other volunteers hard at work in 1992 in the photo. That project was done with help from Calgary Parks.



D: What kinds of things were the Friends involved with during your tenure on the Board?

JG: Six years makes for a long list, so here's just some of the highlights. Internally, we worked things like the Board Orientation Manual, Governance, Strategic Planning, time management, Liability and the like. Program wise, we worked on the Watershed Ambassadors, the Memorial Benches, the Junior Naturalist program and others. We participated in several regional programs, helping the Friends of Fish Creek and Friends of Cypress Hills get off the ground, and in a study being done by Don Carruthers Den Hoed regarding diversity. And we oversaw both the rise and fall of the retail operations.

D: What's changed the most since you were on the Board?

JG: In the Friends, of course we were dominated by the retail operations, but mostly that was there to generate funds to support programs like the Junior Naturalists. I don't see the Friends as being in a position to support programs like that very much any more. In K-Country itself, there are new parks, and new areas with protected status. The diversity of the users of K-Country has dramatically increased, as has the diversity of the activities the users participate in. Different types of people are in K-Country now, and they're doing a wide range of things. This, unfortunately, has led to congestion in campgrounds and on some trails, like the overflowing Galatea parking lot.

D: What did you learn by being on the Board?

JG: Clearly the importance of cooperation with others to get stuff accomplished. I learned a lot about relating to Government, which in turn taught me a lot about patience. And I learned that there are a lot of people out there that love K-County; far more than I could ever have imagined.

D: What's your fondest memory of being on the Board?

JG: While the great relationships with other Board members stands out, I'm a trail guy. So I mostly look back on the great fun we had with the Trail Care Group.



Bear country awareness: Digs, Scat and Tracks

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

Kananaskis Country is home to a lot of animals, including bears. Recreating safely in bear country means understanding things from signs that bears are around, to what to do in a bear encounter. In this series of articles, we're going to help you learn about some really important "stuff" to be aware of in bear country.

As we wander in K-Country, we are travelling in a bear's home: their living areas, dining areas, and even their bathrooms. Recognizing food that bears eat can help raise your awareness of the possibility that bears are around where you are at any given moment.

Bears are omnivores, but while they love the ability to get a good protein source like an elk or a deer, almost 80% of a bear's diet is fruits and vegetables. This is true of both grizzly bears and black bears. While you will see bears "grazing" on some plants (like cow parsnip), their primary way of accessing their food is by digging – especially if you're a grizzly, who's claws and shoulder muscles are designed with digging in mind. The photos in this article are all from my trip on September 15th up Commonwealth Valley to the Birdwood Lakes.



In the fall – late September into November – after berry season, grizzlies in particular start moving up into the alpine and digging up any edible root. As we wander in the wilderness, recent digs at high elevation are a sure sign that bears are in the area. Grizzlies are amazing at excavating, and can dig a trench 3' long, 1' wide and 1' deep, like the one in the photo, in less than a minute. When you see evidence of digs, take a careful look and you can learn a lot about what they are eating and when they were there.

Bears dig for roots, but they also dig up ground squirrel or marmot nests. Are there ground squirrel den holes everywhere around a dig site? If so, the bear has probably started at a hole and dug through to the sleeping chamber. Digs can be large or small; at Birdwood I found an old one that was ~40' in diameter.

One sure sign of a recent dig is disturbed yet living, green grasses or mosses on the dig's edges.



These plants die reasonably quickly once their roots are exposed, and so live ones mean a dig that's probably less than 72 hrs old. Look for evidence in the turned up dirt of signs of precipitation; if you know it rained or snowed a few days earlier, you see signs in the exposed soils of that, or can tell it was dug up after it. The photo at right is of a very recent dig. Live grasses are visible, and there's no evidence of the snow that had fallen 48 hrs earlier.



If you find nearby scat, it will tell you if they're eating roots or animals. Never touch scat, but do look closely at it and maybe break it up with a stick. The photo at left is of scat that was ~100 m from the dig site above. You can clearly see evidence of grasses and seeds, but no fur or bone fragments, showing that this guy has just been "rooting" around. In berry season, scat is filled with berry detritus, which isn't normally in their scat at this time of year. Look at enough scat and you'll get good at discerning when it was dropped by how it is drying out. The scat in the photo was covered in flies and ~24 hrs old.

Finally, the obvious best sign is tracks, typically in mud, and again, knowing when it last precipitated is a great flag as to when the bears were around. The photo below right is one of those "heads up" pictures: recent tracks of a baby bear. The gate is obviously short, meaning a small bear, and the tracks themselves are also small. They're in mud that had snow on it 48 hrs previously. Time to make noise!

At this time of year, you should watch for signs like this in the high alpine near treeline, or in meadows and on avalanche slopes. As the bears move up to den in the winter, they want food nearby, and will be

actively feeding for at least another month.



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](#), [Rotary Club of Canmore](#) and the many individual donors and clubs & organizations 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!

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