

Christmas is coming! Are you ready? If not, then let us help.



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



In this month's newsletter...

- The Great Friends of Kananaskis Christmas Gift Guide!
- News and Updates: Congratulations Kayla!; XC Ski information sites
- The Winter Speaker's Series returns!

Back by popular demand (*okay, only about 12 of you, but that's pretty popular by our standards*), it's time for our annual special Christmas edition, full of ideas for giving your favourite outdoors person! We've been doing these guides every year since 2012, and

looking back through our newsletter archives [here](#) can give you even more ideas.

Once again, if you've been a volunteer with the Friends of Kananaskis this year, helping maintain or build trails and making a difference through out K-Country, then you're on Santa's "good" list. Given the number of hours Friends members put into trails this year, there are lots of folks on the "good" list. Here are some ideas you might want to put on the Christmas list for you or your loved ones.



Takedown! A cougar attacks a sheep. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

The Great Friends of Kananaskis Gift Guide!

There's an old Manfred Mann song called "*Blinded By The Light*" (which was actually written by Bruce Springsteen). The song lyrics are pretty meaningless, but the thought isn't -- at least in the back country. In the winter, snow blindness on an icefield is a real risk, and in the summer, long term retinal damage results from significant sunlight exposure. A good pair of sunglasses is essential. Now, you could go to [London Drugs](#) and buy a \$12 pair of essentially disposable Foster Grants (not a bad stocking stuffer, actually). But the differences in optical quality makes a good pair of sunglasses a great investment. [Julbo](#) makes specialty sunglasses like the [Bivouack](#), specifically designed for

the outdoors with removable eye shields and multiple lens styles, and have others, too, like the [Vermont](#) style with elastic earpieces. Prices start at \$135.



If you're a serious winter person, especially a downhill skier, snowboarder, snowshoer or mountaineer, cold feet can turn your day from fab to crap in a real hurry. The best investment I have ever made in my



skiing and wandering was in pulling out my boot liners (even the ones in my Sorrels) and replacing them with [Intuition](#) liners. These are super lightweight and exceptionally warm, and can be fitted into almost any boot that has a removable liner -- including waterski boots. They are heat fitted to mold to your boot. Intuition is a company out of Vancouver and they now supply liners to some downhill ski boots manufacturers. You can read more about them on my skiing blog [here](#).

If you're a technical outdoors person, you need great pants. Ask Santa for the [Patagonia Simul Alpine pants](#). They're designed with lots of great features for climbing or scrambling, like a DWR coating, stretch fabric, tiedown loops to connect your pants to your ice climbing boots and much, much more. All the pockets have zippers, including the cargo pocket which is perfectly placed to stay out of the way of your climbing harness. Don't believe me? Watch the video explaining all the features [here](#). All this and much more for just \$169 from the Patagonia Stores in Calgary or Banff.



Many people today are moving beyond hiking into scrambling; I see lots of them on my adventures in K-Country. Sadly, many scramblers are not wearing helmets, and in scrambling, rockfall -- natural or caused by those folks on the route above you -- is a real (and painful) risk. A rock shattered my helmet when I was a lad of 19, but that helmet saved my life. Lots of companies make helmets, including [Petzl](#), [Edelrid](#) and [Black Diamond](#), and they start at just \$60. With a helmet, fit and comfort are everything. If it doesn't fit, it won't protect, and if it's uncomfortable, you won't want to wear it. Maybe try one on somewhere and ask Santa for the brand that fits you the best.



Climbers (ice or rock) can never have enough gear. Ice climbers ALWAYS need more ice screws. Rock climbers ALWAYS need more nuts and cams. Get them from a reputable store (elves don't make great ones at the North Pole) and you can be assured of getting quality gear. Good places to head are MEC, [Outdoor Approach](#), or [Out There](#) in Calgary, [Vertical Addiction](#) or [Monod's](#) in Canmore/Banff. Ice screws are available in various sizes and run from \$40 to \$100, and nuts and cams go from \$15 to \$150. Get Santa to buy one, or several, or a whole set.



In our 2014 guide, we suggested you ask Santa for a SPOT device. That's still a good idea, and you could also consider a [DeLorme inReach](#). SPOTs are one way devices; push the button and help will be on the way. But an inReach is a two way device. You can use an InReach to post to Facebook from that mountaintop if that's your thing, but far more importantly, you can send texts or e-mails in an emergency and tell your rescuers what your problem is and what help you need. As you talk with the amazing folks at Kananaskis Public Safety, you learn that the more they know about your problem, the more they can help you faster. Also, inReach is now owned by Garmin, and as time goes on, more of Garmin's GPS functionality is being incorporated into inReach. [Still available](#) is the inReach for Android or iOS that links directly to your phone. You can buy an inReach at many retailers in Calgary.



Still on the electronics side, there are a lot of apps available for your Smartphone that are fun to use in the backcountry. Some eat your batteries, but others manage them pretty well. Ask Santa for an iTunes or Android Store gift card and get some. For my iPhone,

here's just a few of the ones I like and use:

- **Kananaskis Trail Map** by David Crawshay. His trail and route database is getting bigger and bigger with every new release.
- **Topo Maps Canada**, also by David Crawshay. Get an official NRC topo map for anywhere you travel in Canada. Maps download for free, and you can have as many maps as you need that fit in your iPhone's memory.
- **GPS Tracks** by DMorneault. Plug in your way points and off you go. Works in multiple units including UTM's, and allows you to preload the satellite images to reference when you're out of cell range.
- **Bike Tracks** and **Ski Tracks** by Core Coders. These two apps are VERY battery efficient. I use Bike Tracks for my hiking and Ski Tracks for my downhill skiing. Many folks I know use MotionX but these are easier on your battery life by far. Ski Tracks is downhill resort focused, but still works just fine for backcountry work.



As I type this, we're out of the time window where bird feeders are prohibited where I live, and today, I'm watching nuthatches, 3 kinds of chickadees, Grey Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, Blue Jays and others use my feeders -- and a red squirrel trying to share in the feast. Since Santa likes birds, he's happy to get people bird feeders. Fill them not with that junky mix you can buy in stores that no birds like, but rather with a mix of black oil sunflower seeds, peanuts and shelled raw sunflower seeds. My little pigs chow down 6 cups

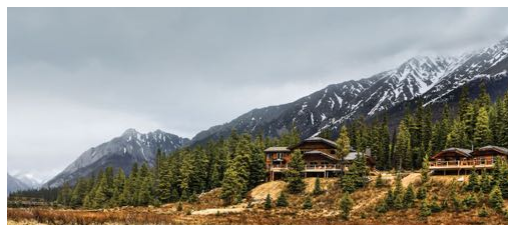


of this mix per week, plus they would eat 2 suet cakes a day if I let them. Lee Valley has a bunch of different bird feeders that [prevent squirrels from getting at them](#) that are a little more expensive, but if feeding the squirrels is OK, there are other kinds of feeders that are much cheaper at [Canadian Tire](#).

If you can hammer in nails, you can build a bird house from a kit. Ideal for your kids, it's a quick and easy project that will keep birds in your garden for years. [Here's](#) an easy and inexpensive kit available from The Home Depot. My only complaint with it is that the hole is too big; when it's too big, predators can get in. So Lee Valley sells [un-chewable metal hole protectors](#); I'd recommend a 1-1/8th" hole for these areas; that will allow chickadees and nuthatches in but keep squirrels and magpies out.



Want to sweep someone off their feet? Mount Engadine Lodge is featuring special Chef Series dinners these days. Held every month or so, the lodge brings in a guest Chef to work with the Mount Engadine team to deliver a very special dining experience. Make it an overnight experience, too, and wake up to moose in the meadow in front of your window. You can read about the last event they had [here](#). [Contact the lodge](#) to arrange for advanced tickets.



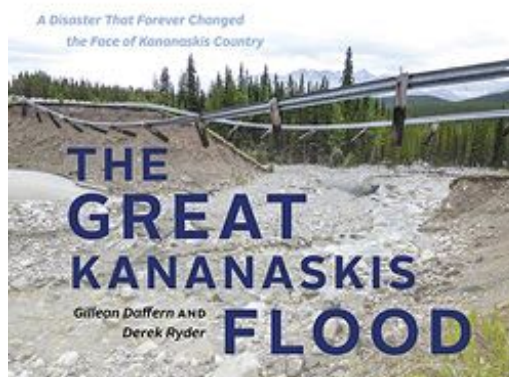
And you will find exactly no one who wouldn't appreciate Santa sending them to the spa... say, the [Summit Spa](#) at the Delta Lodge in Kananaskis. Just think... a massage with a mountain view... after a day of cross country skiing or snowshoeing... you can feel the tension slipping away... Mmmmm... heaven.



And are you new to the snowshoeing game? Maybe want to go stargazing, with a chocolate fondue to end your walk? Perhaps go fat biking to a frozen waterfall? Snowshoe to see a full moon? These are just some of the winter tours offered by [Kananaskis Outfitters](#). Their fully certified guides lead you on magical adventures from the Kananaskis village. Tours start around \$70 including everything you need.

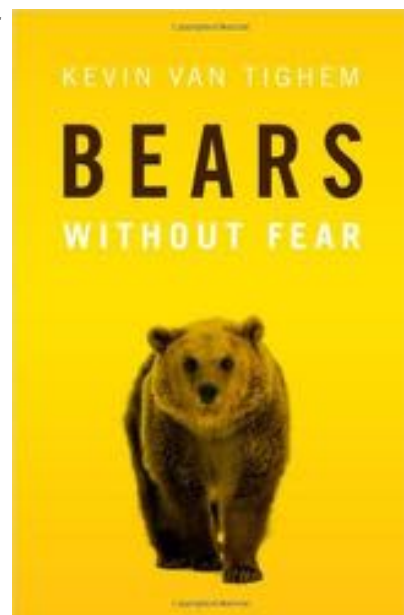


Books make awesome gifts -- especially a gift that gives twice. *The Great Kananaskis Flood Book*, written by co-authors Gilean Daffern and Friends Chair Derek Ryder, documents in words and pictures how the flood of 2013 affected K-Country, and what the Friends and others are doing to put our beloved place back together. Get Santa to give this book and not only will you be giving to the recipient, but all profits from the sale come to the Friends. Get your copy at Indigo/Chapters, Pages, Cafe Books, The Tin Box, the Canmore Geoscience Museum, or online at [Amazon](#) (where we're a bestseller these days!) or [Indigo](#).



Rocky Mountain Books, in addition to publishing *The Great Kananaskis Flood Book*, has put out numerous other titles of interest to Friends members this year. All are widely available in bookstore or on line. I'd suggest folks would love to receive some of these from Santa:

- *Bears (Without Fear)* by Kevin van Tigham. A fascinating look at how bears and people have been interacting for centuries, including all species of bears around the world, but focused on Grizzlies.
- *Sport Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* by John Martin. Now in it's 7th edition, this is essential reading for any local K-Country climber.
- *Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies* by Alan Kane. Alan updated his classic this year to the 3rd edition, revisiting every route and adding a few new ones.



And one final Christmas Gift idea...

Give the gift that keeps on giving. As we wind down the year, the time to top up your charitable donations is upon us. A Christmas Gift of a donation to the Friends of Kananaskis stays here and helps care for trails in your favourite part of the world. Even if you can't volunteer to dig with us, your donation makes a difference to the thousands who get out every weekend to enjoy K-Country like you do. It helps us deliver the over 2,000 hours of trail development work like we did in 2016. It helps us buy tools that we need to construct durable, easily maintained trails that will provide you, your kids, and your kid's kids endless opportunities for wonder. And your charitable contribution tax credit jumps from 15% to 29% when you donate over \$200 – meaning a bigger tax savings for you on bigger donations. Consider being a Santa to the Friends of Kananaskis. Donate on line at [ATB Cares](#). The trails will love you for it.





News and other updates

We're pretty excited to announce that our Secretary, Kayla Simpson, who has been on our Board since May 2013, has (probably) become a new mom by the time you'll read this. Congratulations for what's to come, Kayla!

For the latest in current XC ski conditions in Kananaskis this winter, bookmark these two site:

- [Skier Bob](#): If you ski XC, you need to follow Bob Truman. 7,000 page visits a day, multiple daily trip reports from the area, awesome links. Bob spend his winters skiing every day out of Canmore. Bob sat on our Chester/Sawmill Advisory Council, too.
- The official Alberta Parks ski condition sites, which has up to the minute grooming reports hosted on [SkiTrails](#). [Here's](#) the link for the Canmore Nordic Center, and [here's](#) the one for Peter Lougheed, but there are others for K-Country too, including West Bragg.



The Return of the Winter Speaker's Series!

The Friends are thrilled to announce that our Winter Speaker Series will be back! Produced in partnership with the University of Calgary Palliser Club, this year we will once again have three speakers. We're still working details, but here's our tentative lineup. Watch our website and Facebook Feed for further updates:



January: Barry Blanchard: Barry is an amazing and famous local climber and mountaineer. Author of "*The Calling: A Life Rocked By Mountains*", he has summited peaks on all the continents, but got his climbing start in K-Country.

February & March presentations will focus on a talk about Kananaskis related biology/ecology research and might also include something from the field such as Kananaskis Conservation Officer's history, role and mission.

Keep an eye on our website's [Upcoming Events](#) page for more details as we firm up the dates and presentation rooms at the University of Calgary.

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!

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