

What a weird snow year... lots of snow but it seems to want to avalanche a lot!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

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



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Program Coordinator's Report

by Nancy Ouimet

In the last few issue's we've talked about exploring ways to broaden our trail stewardship role with new opportunities for community engagement that supports Alberta Parks and Kananaskis County.

One of those initiatives is Trail and Visitation Monitoring. We're excited to be partnering with Alberta Parks to assist with the design and implementation of a data collection program targeting human use on trails within Kananaskis Country to ensure recreational opportunities and ecological requirements are maintained for current and future generation.

Alberta and Calgary's growing population is creating new pressures on the landscape and Kananaskis Country is feeling the strain. Alberta Parks is charged with managing its natural resources responsibly. Healthy ecosystems are vital to Albertan's mental and physical health and the wild places and species therein. Without informed management, species, historic and cultural landmarks and breathtaking landscapes could be lost.

To ensure Kananaskis Country is protected yet accessible to the growing number of Park users, Alberta Park's staff need to manage its recreational opportunities while ensuring they conserve its natural heritage for current and future generations. Alberta Parks will be implementing a two year monitoring initiative that will facilitate natural and social science research by the academic community, park staff, volunteers and others to inform the management of Kananaskis Country. This data-collection research will support evidence-based decision-making.

In partnership with Alberta Parks, we will assist with the design and implementation of a data collection program focusing on Kananaskis trail use. We hope our members/volunteers will be interested in helping service trail monitoring cameras and counters, circulate and collect social science surveys and record observations. Trail use will be gathered throughout Kananaskis and overall estimates of trail use will be developed from this program. The resulting trail use data will help quantify how many people use the trails at different times during the day, week, and months, as well as their origins and activities. It will also capture information regarding wildlife on trails.



This trail use data may be used for several purposes, such as managing natural resources, planning or developing new programs and facilities, quantifying the public health and physical activity benefits to park visitors, and determining the effects of human activity on wildlife.

We will provide more information soon on how you can get involved with this project and help Alberta Parks gather important information to help ensure Kananaskis is safe, enjoyable, accessible, and environmentally sustainable for future generations.

Which Trails Could Use Some TLC?

Alberta Parks will start shortlisting their 2017 trail work plan in the coming months and have asked for our input on which trails could use maintenance attention. We all know that the 2013 Flood required extensive trail repairing and rebuilding, which resulted in less attention devoted to the non-affected trails.

Now that Alberta Parks has completed most of the flood recovery work, they're ready to work on the many other trails that require maintenance.

If you know of trails you think need maintenance, please email us your suggestions to nancy@kananaskis.org and we'll pass it along to Parks. Our long term plan is to develop an on-line form or possibly an app to do that reporting, but for now an e-mail works just fine. Thanks!



Kananaskis Country Speaker Series

Now into its 4th year, the Friends of Kananaskis Country, in partnership with the University of Calgary's Palliser Club is hosting our Kananaskis Country Speaker Series. This is your opportunity to hear talks from leading experts on topics related to Kananaskis.

We have two great presentations coming up:

[Donna Schley - TONIGHT February 28, 7:00pm](#)

University of Calgary, [Science Theatres, ST 135](#) - 527 Campus Place NW

Conservation Officers - Guardians of Alberta Parks

Conservation Officers within Kananaskis Country perform unique and varied job functions. Join officer Donna Schley for a look into her role and responsibilities. Conservation Officers are often perceived as the 'back bone' of the park. Whether they are called upon to assist Public Safety staff during search and mountain rescue missions, to perform bear aversion near park campgrounds and facilities, or to investigate a wildlife poaching or other offence, Conservation Officers are the guardians of Alberta Parks. Donna will take a look at the evolution of Kananaskis Country Conservation Officers and the skills and



certifications necessary to achieve their goals.

[Lesley Peterson - March 23, 7:00pm](#)

University of Calgary, [Earth Sciences, ES 162](#) - 844 Campus Place NW

Whirling Disease

Lesley Peterson is Trout Unlimited Canada's Alberta Biologist, based in Calgary. She is a member of the provincial Whirling Disease Committee which was established in late summer 2016 in response to the first detection of Whirling Disease in Canada that happened in Johnson Lake in Banff National Park. Whirling disease, which affects salmonid such as trout and whitefish, was confirmed in Banff in August 2016 and has since been confirmed at dozens of sites along the Bow River and in some commercial aquaculture facilities.



Lesley's presentation will include a background on whirling disease including the life cycle of the parasite that causes it, the history and distribution of the disease and how it can affect fish. She will also provide an update on the situation in Alberta and what we can all do to prevent the spread of whirling disease and other aquatic invasive species.

All presentations are at the University of Calgary, and all are General Admission with a \$5 Suggested Donation. There are no Pre-Show Ticket sales.

Hiring Update

We have received numerous applications for the Program and Events Assistant position from a lot of well-qualified individuals. We are inspired to see people's interest in joining our team, and how passionate they are about Kananaskis Country.

We will be interviewing selected candidates in the coming weeks and look forward to introducing the new member of the team in next month's newsletter.

New Supporter!

We are grateful to receive funding from two new supporters this month:

Kananaskis Improvement District ("KID") - is an unincorporated municipality encompassing approximately 4,000 square kilometers and shares most physical boundaries with Kananaskis Country.



**KANANASKIS
IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT**

Kananaskis Improvement District funding will be used to support the Canmore Trail Alliance trail program. This program is part of our larger Kananaskis Trail Stewardship

initiative, and aims to successfully engage Canmore area trail users in building and maintaining their local trails.

Mountain Equipment Coop - Calgary Store

The Friends of Kananaskis won one of the MEC Calgary Staff Choice Awards for 2016. We are honoured to receive this award and appreciate their support!



A coyote with his lunch. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

News from the Board -- Plans and Budgets

By Derek Ryder, Chair

We're nearing the end of the Friend's fiscal year, which runs from April 1 to March 31, and the Board will be headed to our annual full-day offsite session in mid-March. This is the only opportunity that the Board has each year to take a step back from day-to-day comings and goings, and look at bigger picture issues.

As part of this, the Board reviews how we did against our previous year Business Plan and Budget, and we finalize the new plans and new budgets for our upcoming year. It's a time to reflect on what we have done (and not done that we wanted to) and plan new

strategies for the upcoming year.

Since the session has not yet happened, I can't tell you what we've concluded. But I can tell you that successful things we've been doing will be continued, so Trails Fest will return June 11 at the Canmore Nordic Centre, as will our winter Speaker's Series. Both of these have been attracting a substantial amount of interest, significant attendance, and feedback for both has been stellar.



Of course, our trail care and stewardship focus will be maintained. Having been on the Board since 2012, I can say that each year excites me with the potential of what we could do, and how we can assist Alberta Parks in developing and maintaining the trails we love so much. Sometimes, though, I have to temper my enthusiasm with the realities of the timelines that exist when working with government. A great example is the rejuvenation of the Chester-Sawmill area, which we have now been working on since late 2013.

Our focus on education will also continue. We're bouncing around ideas for ways we can give members some "in the field" education opportunities. We will continue forward with rejuvenating K-Country's interpretive trails. The more people know and understand about K-Country, the greater the impact we can have.

When we look at what we could be doing, we are always guided by our Vision and Mission, all the while thinking "How can we create opportunities to engage with, and enable, our member volunteers (ie; you), to help give back to K-Country?" For our organization is first and foremost a society of people who care about K-Country, who are willing to put their hands up to help make it and keep it great. It is an honour to facilitate that connection.



The Movies of Kananaskis: THE REVENANT

There have been many movies filmed in K-Country, some famous, some less so. In this series of articles, since I'm not a movie critic, I'm going to talk about these movies in a different light: how well they depict our favourite neighbourhood.

THE REVENANT is the most recent big-budget Hollywood flick to be filmed in K-Country, and it starred Leonardo DiCaprio (who won a "Best Actor" Oscar®), Tom Hardy and Domhnall Gleason (Bill Weasley in the HARRY POTTER series). And, at \$135,000,000, the budget was indeed big. Filmed during the winter of 2014-15, I remember a casting call in the local Canmore newspapers for male extras that looked gruff, had beards, and were willing to put up with "challenging" filming conditions.

Scenes of K-Country are scattered through the movie, but I'm betting most wouldn't cause you to leap out of your chair and shout "I know that place!" The most obvious?

- At 1:55, Leo DiCaprio walks up the middle of Spray Lake, pictured above.
- At 2:06, Leo on horseback crosses the Engadine Meadows, with The Fist prominently in the background.



Knowledgeable K-Country scenery connoisseurs may (but only may) also recognize:

- Multiple scenes shot at the Horseshoe Rapids on the Bow River east of Seebee – but without backgrounds, you wouldn't know it without being there.
- The Army party crosses the Sheep River above Elbow Falls at 0:52.
- There are numerous shots of the Kananaskis River in the Fortress and Galatea areas, but again, without much context.
- Several scenes in mountainous terrain (1:07, 2:09) were shot on the backside of Fortress. I especially like the avalanche they set off for the film at 2:11.



Back in our January 2016 newsletter, we mentioned the biggest set construction for the project (that I noticed while it was still under construction): the fort used in the movie was built just north of Goat Pond in the fall of 2014, pictured at left. They only ever shot the fort looking generally westward, so all you really ever see is the somewhat non-descript peaks of the Goat Range.

Several sites report that they filmed at Dead Man's Flats; while possible, I didn't recognize it when I watched the movie (and I lived there). The "big" waterfall scene was shot in Montana. Because shooting ran long and spring arrived, despite the plan to shoot most things in Canada, the final sequence had to be filmed in Argentina.

It might have been nominated for an Oscar® for Best Picture, and have been based on a true story, but I'm not a fan of this movie for a bunch of reasons (*including: an unrealistic bear attack that, among other things, took place in the film in December when a mother bear would be hibernating; a January thunderstorm; and an uncanny ability for the characters to not get hypothermia*). For a preeminent "K-Country movie", it's light on K-Country identifiable features. It did win an award for cinematography, making extensive use of the depressing light that K-Country can get in the winter. Good for them, but give me an Alberta blue sky any day.



The Critters of K-Country: Ruffed Grouse

19th 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.

Back in October 2015, I wrote about Spruce Grouse. Kananaskis is home to three of the four types of grouse in the Province, and another common one you will see is the Ruffed Grouse. It is, in fact, the most common grouse in the province generally. Ruffed grouse are readily differentiated from other grouse because they are the only ones with a crest, though often, that crest is not standing upright, as in the photo to the right. The crest is a good thing, because without it, you need to look for black should patches on the males, or a black band on the tail, or a fan shaped tail, because the mottling pattern is so similar to the Spruce.





Like other grouse, they are ground dwellers and even ground nesters, and rely on camouflage to hide. While I don't see many in the summer, I see them all the time in the winter because they stand out against the snow. Interestingly, like their Spruce cousins, the feathers on their toes grow longer in the winter to act as snowshoes.

Ruffed grouse males make the iconic drumming sound in spring mating season, a sound that reminds me of a badly-tuned diesel engine starting and that is more felt than heard. Amazingly, this sound is made only by flapping his wings – not by hitting them together or stomping on logs.

The last few winters, I've had several Ruffed Grouse hang out in my yard for weeks at a time, and that's where some of these photos came from. In December 2015, there was a male, a female and at least 2 young of year. The male sadly died in my back yard after a severe window strike, and within 12 hrs of dying, became food for ravens and other scavengers, including squirrels and magpies. Ruffed Grouse chicks have abnormally high mortality, too, being a favourite prey of most anything that eats birds. Sad, but thus is the cycle of nature.



Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), [FortisAlberta](#), [TransAlta](#), [Banff Canmore Community Foundation](#), [Patagonia Elements](#), [Husky Energy](#), 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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