



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

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



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### **Executive Director's Report**

*by Nancy Ouimet*



**Celebrate Kananaskis Country**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Trails Fest**

**June 11 at the Canmore Nordic Centre**

**Free for the whole family**

*Trails Fest is a fun day of all things trails related. Learn about cool trail projects, explore diverse trail related clubs, groups and associations, and take part in facilitated trail activities, workshops and presentations. Invite all your trail enthusiast friends to join in!*

### **Event Itinerary**

10:00 – 2:00 Connect with over 30 Clubs & Organizations, Screen ‘*Living with Wildlife*’

12:00 Welcome with Banff - Cochrane MLA Cam Westhead and Canmore Town Councillor Ed Russel, BBQ Lunch (free)

1:30 – 3:00 Guided Activities & Workshops (hiking, biking, trail running, orienteering...and more)

**WORKSHOP SIGN UP** - click on the topic you are interested in and register. All workshops are free of charge and begin at 1:30 pm.

[Bear Necessities](#)

[Trail Running](#)

[Monitoring Human Use of Wildlife Corridors in the Bow Valley around Canmore](#)

[Introduction to Orienteering](#)

[Map Reading Skills](#)

[WildSmart on the Trail](#)

[Trail Crew Orientation](#)

[Maintaining Historic Horse Trails](#)

**Organizations, groups and businesses exhibiting their work at TrailsFest.**

[Alberta Environment and Parks](#), [Alberta Hiking Association](#), [Alberta Nationals Mountain Bike Race Association](#), [Alberta Wilderness Association](#), [Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley](#), [Bow Valley Riding Association](#), [Bow Valley Stand Up Paddleboarding](#), [Calgary Outdoor Council](#), [Calgary Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts \(CORE\)](#), [Canmore Trail Alliance](#), [Canmore Community Cruisers](#), [Canmore and Area Mountain Bike Association \(CAMBA\)](#), [Girl Guides](#), [CPAWS Canada Parks and Wilderness Society](#), [Great Divide Trail Association](#), [Foothills Orienteering](#), [Kananaskis Trails](#), [McElhanney](#), [Meanderthals](#), [Mountain Equipment Co-op](#), [Norsman Ski Club](#), [Outward Bound](#), [Rocky Mountain Adaptive](#), [Red Bull](#), [Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association](#), [Rundle Mountain Cycling Club](#), [Seniors Outdoor Club Calgary](#), [Slow and Steady Hikers](#), [TrailSports](#), [TransRockies](#), [Wildsmart Canmore](#), [Yamnuska Mountain Adventures](#)

**We look forward to celebrating Kananaskis trails, people, and culture with you at Trails Fest on June 11!**

[Google Map Directions](#)

[Map of Event Location at CNC](#)

[Event Poster](#)

For more information and to sign up for a free activity or workshop:

<http://www.kananaskis.org/trails-fest/>

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## **Upcoming Volunteer Projects**

### **Visitation Monitoring**

Alberta Parks has a lack of social science data essential to understanding the potential impacts of recreation on park ecology and if recreation-based management objectives are being met. Understanding where people are recreating, what kinds of recreational activities they are pursuing, and where they have come from are essential components of this process. Increasing knowledge about the number of users, their type of use, and basic demographics can assist in site planning, developing robust social science research questions for future investigation, and future management planning initiatives.

*We have an opportunity to help Alberta Parks learn more about trail users.*

**How it'll work:** The Friends volunteers will be stationed at randomly selected trailheads two days per week (one weekday and one weekend day) during the afternoon to ask trail users to complete the survey. The start time will be randomly selected between noon and 2:00pm; volunteers will be at the trailhead for four hours.

This exact sampling schedule will be created once the list of trails with a remote camera or trail

counter has been finalized and the Friends has determined volunteer capacity for this project from July to September. Volunteers will approach trail users at the end of their recreational experience and invite them to participate in the survey, which will be filled out on tablets and take less than 5 minutes to complete. It's a series of quick questions that could make a big difference for Alberta Parks.



**The Survey:** The survey will gather baseline demographic information about trail users in Kananaskis. Questions will be designed to complement, and not duplicate, data generated from the remote cameras and trail counters. The survey objectives are:

- To define what kinds of recreational activities trail users engage in while in Kananaskis
- To define group size and the number of vehicles belonging to each party
- To define basic demographics of the Kananaskis trail user (e.g., age, gender, city of residence).

**Volunteers:** We are recruiting volunteers to help with this project. Volunteers will be trained on how to conduct the surveys and gather information. A one-hour training session will be offered on June 11 at 9:30am at the Canmore Nordic Centre (*allowing participant to then enjoy Trails Fest!!*).

[Interested in helping Alberta Parks meet their conservation and recreation goals without digging dirt? Here's a great opportunity to get involved.](#)

## [SIGN UP HERE](#)

### [Canmore Trail Alliance](#)

The Friends launched the Canmore Trail Alliance (CTA) in 2016 to engage trail users and local land stewards in trail maintenance and building in the Canmore Area through community initiatives that improve Canmore's recreational opportunities, enhance its trail conditions, and emphasize the importance of ecological integrity and sustainability.

Community trail days are every Thursday night from 6-9pm and occasional weekends. No sign up required.

See [CTA Website](#) for more details.

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### **Crew Leader Training**

We held our annual Crew Leader training on Saturday, May 27 at the Canmore Nordic Centre. This year we combined the Kananaskis and Canmore Trail Alliance leaders into one session

which made for a total of 26 Crew Leaders.

This training is essential as it covers the roles and responsibility of Crew Leading, tool safety, trail anatomy, and hands on trail design and construction.

We worked on a new section of trail that will be included in the Canadian National Mountain Bike Championships on July 22 and 23.

Professional trail builder Matt Hadley generously donated his time to facilitate the trail component of the training.



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### **Thanks for Cleaning Highway 40**

A BIG thank you to all the 75 volunteers who participated in the Annual Highway 40 Cleanup on May 6...you got the job done! We were assigned 32km to cleanup from the Casino to Galatea Day Use, and volunteers went the extra stretch - cleaning an extra 5km for a total of 38km...You Rock! We've demonstrated that we can do more, so we are taking on a challenge next year...cleaning all way to the Kananaskis Lakes Trail turn off, a full 50km section from the Casino!





Working on new antlers. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

## News from the Board -- Ways you can help Kananaskis

By Derek Ryder, Chair

Normally in this space, I try to provide a bit of an update about Board activity that affects your Society. I was planning on writing this month's about Policies we develop to help our organization run better and our volunteers (you) have better and safer days out while helping Parks "do their thing". But something arrived in my inbox yesterday that reminded me there are lots of ways we can help Parks and Kananaskis Country.

It was yet another photo of graffiti someone found in the back country. In this case, the graffiti is on the top of Heart Mountain near Grant MacEwan peak, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way around the Heart Mountain Horseshoe scramble. This location is about 7 km into the scramble, some 900 m up on the mountain.



Now, while I am sure that whomever did this really "misses their dad," this isn't an appropriate way to show it. Various volunteers and Parks staff will have to go up there and remove it, as we do with all graffiti. I have personally volunteered on several occasions to

remove graffiti in Cougar Creek and Grotto Canyons, and once way back at the back of Upper Kananaskis Lakes near the Point campground. I just saw a post from photographer Paul Zizka showing graffiti at the top of Mt. Rundle in Banff National Park.



Vandalism in Kananaskis Country isn't a small problem. Other issues include torn down or defaced signage, damaged buildings, damaged fences and gates, cut off locks, damaged research equipment (*including cameras; a few of the HUMR study cameras were vandalized each month of the 2-year study*) -- and that's on top of parking lot break-ins and campground thefts.

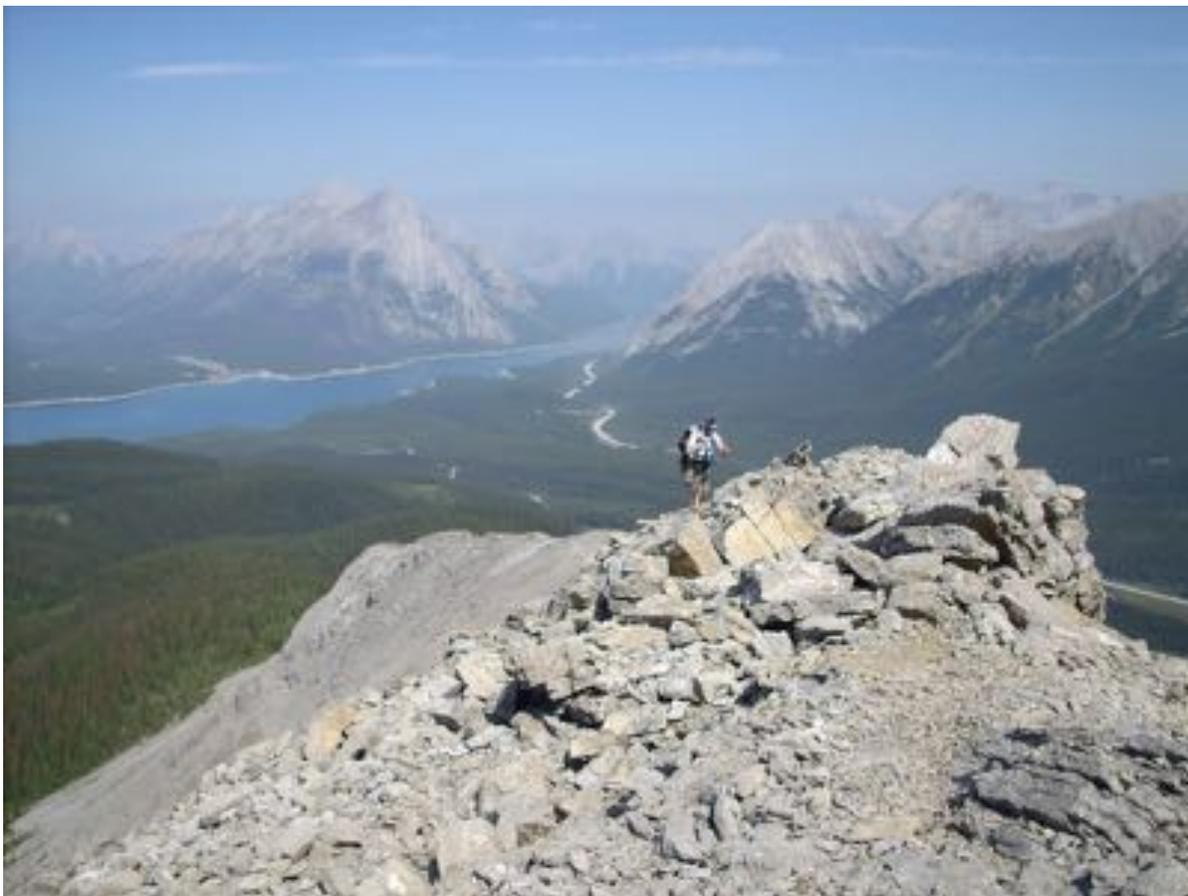
Again, I have personally seen, reported and fixed many of these issues. I've replaced wildlife corridor signage that was damaged after I helped put it up in the first place, re-closed a trail that was closed but folks tore up all the trees we planted and removed rocks and trees we put down, and fixed or replaced research devices including cameras. I've learned that graffiti is, in particular, difficult to remove from the porous limestone we have (but we're getting pretty good at doing it, though the chemicals are nasty).

And this leads to what YOU can do to help the problem of graffiti and vandalism in K-Country:

- If you see it, report it to Kananaskis Emergency Services, 403-591-7755
- If you run across a sign that's been torn down and chucked into the forest, put it back, and report it as well
- Tell your friends (and their friends) that you don't want, don't like and won't stand for vandalism in your K-Country

If you're willing to help get rid of graffiti, Nancy in the Friends office can put you in touch with the group that does most of the graffiti eradication. Graffiti, in particular, needs to be removed almost as soon as it's done, or it breeds more graffiti. The team of "graffiti-removers" that I'm on needs to be able to go most anywhere (including, obviously, mountain tops) on pretty short notice, and it often takes several hours to completely clean something up, meaning occasionally long days.

The vision of the Friends is "***A Kananaskis country of exquisite natural and cultural landscapes enjoyed by present and future generations.***" Let's us do our part to help protect K-Country in its natural state for future generations.



## Safety in the Outdoors, Part 1

*1st in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications*

We all want to play safe in K-Country, and in this series of articles, I'm going to cover the basics of how to have a great day out there. Here's some of what the series will cover:

- What to **KNOW** before you go
- What to **CARRY** when you go
- What to **WEAR** to make sure your day is great
- What to **EAT** to keep your energy up
- What to **DO** if everything falls apart and you need help.

This series is being produced with the support of **Kananaskis Public Safety**, and in particular, thanks to **Morgan Funston** of KPS for her wisdom and suggestions.



## What to KNOW before you Go

Don't leave home without knowing the **WEATHER**. Whether you are planning a day on the bike, on foot or on horseback, the fun goes south with unexpected weather that you're not prepared for. There are lots of good weather resources out there, all of which you should check before you head out for a day, even if that day is just a short stroll to Troll Falls. In addition to looking at the general regional Environment Canada forecasts, look at these:

- [Mountain-Forecast.com](http://Mountain-Forecast.com) produces specific forecasts for many mountains in K-Country, including forecasts for 3 elevations for each peak. Their temperature forecasts are pretty reliable, and if they say it will rain or snow, it probably will, though how much is less reliably predicted.



- [SpotWX.com](http://SpotWX.com) enables you to see the raw, detailed data from the various weather model runs of Environment Canada and the US National Weather Service for anywhere in K-Country.



Just click on where you're headed. Good to look at one or two forecasts and see where they agree or disagree.

- Kananaskis Public Safety maintains weather stations at Burstall, Black Prince and the Highwood Pass, and that data's available at [Avalanche.ca](http://Avalanche.ca) on the map view. You can use these to ground truth the forecasts you get elsewhere.

- If thunderstorms are forecast – a common event in K-Country – consider that in your trip planning and destination selection. Standing on the top of a mountain, or biking across an exposed ridge, when there's lightning around is a poor survival strategy. In the photo to the right, we're in a rapid descent off Jumpingpound Mountain as a July t-storm rolls in; we were pelted with hail, and lightning cracked all around us for 20 minutes as we hid below tree line.

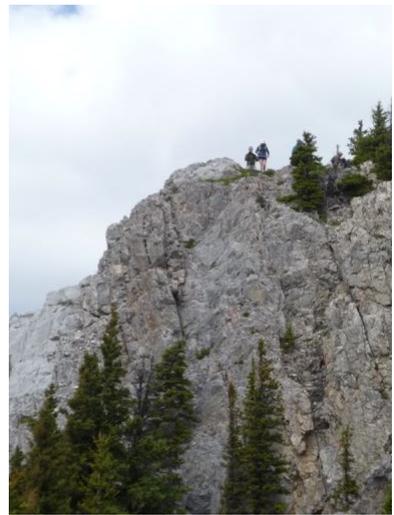


- Pay particular attention to forecast overnight lows and weather. If things go south, and you're stuck out for the night, think about what you might have to put up with.

Know your **ROUTE**. Whether you're travelling a popular, official trail, doing a long distance mountain bike, paddling the Bow, or planning an adventurous scramble to a new peak, study and learn everything you can about where you are going – before you get to your starting point.

- Read the Guidebooks, and for K-Country hiking, that means Gillean Daffern's books. No other hiking guidebook comes close to the level of accuracy, with excellent maps and detailed description of routes that are always up to date (if you have the current edition). Check her [blog](#) for any updates, too. For mountain biking, the best book is the "*Find the Hidden Treasures: A Guide to Mountain Bike Trails In Kananaskis Country*" by Peter Oprsal (aka BikePirate). Peter's book is a bit out of date now, and Peter moved to Whistler, so it's no longer being updated.
- If it's a new (to you) and complex scramble route, do a bit of searching on-line for others who have been there, and read between the lines looking for route information and hazards, not just for the pretty pictures (but do study photos that would help you if you get fogged in suddenly.) Super experienced scramblers like [Bob Spirko](#) have probably been where you're going already; read his excellent descriptions and download his GPX formatted GPS routes to follow. The photo to the right is just one of the places people get "off route" and into trouble on the Heart Mountain Horseshoe scramble.

- If you're doing a big mountain bike ride, look at sources like [TrailForks](#), [SingleTracks.com](#), [MTB Project](#) and others. Study what others have written about the technical complexity of the ride and the hazards you are up against.
- If you use an app to track your hikes/bikes/skis, often you can do route planning in advance on-line and upload it to your device. Apps like [Gaia GPS](#) and their associated websites can give you elevation profiles of your planned route, though in K-Country, topo maps often aren't detailed enough to show the 20 m cliffs in your way.
- Look at the satellite images on Google Maps/Google Earth and Apple Maps (*each use different sat image data*). Try to get an understanding of what the terrain will be like. Often, the sat photo is detailed enough to see the cliffs that don't show up on the topo.
- Study the route on your GemTrek topo map. Look for landmarks and viewpoints that will help you navigate along the way. Count the number of contour lines you'll be crossing, and compare that to the guidebook's height gains and losses.
- Read the K-Country [official trail condition reports](#) for trails nearby. That will give you a sense of whether your trail will be dry or muddy.



Probably the most critical bit of info you want is “*How much vertical do I have to climb?*” A day's hiking objective of 500 m and under is doable by most people; 750 m is a serious workout and anything over 1,000 m requires you to be in very good shape.

Next in route planning is “*How far do I have to walk?*” Under 10 km is pretty straightforward for most; a 15 km round trip is serious, and anything over 20 km quite the outing.

After all of this, make the hard but honest decision: **Am I capable of doing this adventure?** If the answer is anything less than “Heck, yes”, dial it down, and pick something else. That mountaintop will be there to conquer another day.

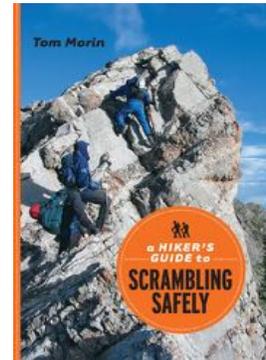
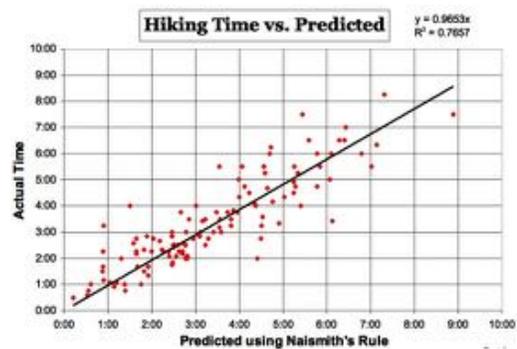
Know about **WARNINGS** and **CLOSURES** for wildlife, avalanches or other travel related issue like bridges that are out.

- Look at the K-Country [official advisory site](#). Are there bear warnings in place? Are there wildlife closures in place? I once missed this step, and wound up at a trailhead for a trail that was closed because of a grizzly bluff charge, without a backup plan.
- Read the WildSmart [weekly bear summary](#) for where bear activity is happening. While mostly focused on the Bow Valley, it includes some Kananaskis Valley info, too
- In the winter, study the avalanche reports and forecasts on [Avalanche.ca](#).



Know how **LONG** your trip will take, and what that means.

- Back in the [April 2013 newsletter](#), we published an article about estimating hiking times. The Naismith formula described there will give you a place to start for hikers. I've been working on developing a similar formula for calculating mountain bike times but don't have enough data to have developed a formula to rely on. Know your limit; play within it.
- Assuming that descending while hiking is faster than ascending can be a dangerous. Often, coming down off mountains safely is slower than climbing up them, and almost always, descending a scramble is slower than ascending. This is discussed extensively in Tom Morin's little book, [A Hiker's Guide to Scrambling Safely](#).
- Know what time sunset is. Plan your adventure so you are back at the trailhead at least an hour before sunset. There's rarely any downside in starting earlier, but often risk in later starts.
- Use your hiking or biking time expectation to help plan how much food and water you need to carry, and what other extra equipment you need as well.



Use that info to establish “we’ve bitten off more than we can chew” turnaround points for your day. The psychological urge to trying to make that summit or lake is compelling, but smart, prepared people know when to turn around and try again another day.

Here are just *some* "bad planning" things I've seen; Public Safety have far too many rescue stories that sound like this:

- I often run into folks on the trail getting to their lunch stop at 2:30 PM when they thought they would make it by noon. They have, in effect, underestimated their day by 5 hours.
- I once finished my day at 4 PM at the Lusk Pass trailhead on Powderface Trail, and ran into two mountain bikers who had started at 10 AM east of Moose Mountain, and were riding to Banff, hoping to make it by 6 PM -- and they still had to cross Lusk Pass, Barrier Mountain and Jewell Pass just to get to the Bow Valley. On the bright side, they had a food and water cache waiting for them at Barrier Dam.
- I ran into a solo gentleman one day around 11 AM by Mt. Engadine Lodge, on his way to the Mt. Shark trailhead, who was planning to hike to Mt. Assiniboine Lodge and back **that afternoon** (a round trip of 50 km with one-way elevation gain of 575 m), but he had no idea how far it was, nor really how to get there, and he had no map. I hope he was carrying dinner. And breakfast.

In summary for what to **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**:

- The **weather**;
- Your **route** and the **expected conditions**;
- **Warnings** and **closures**;

- How **long** your outing should take.



### **The Flowers of K-Country: Calypso Orchid**

*6th in a series by Derek Ryder, Director of Communications*

I freely admit, I am not the flower person in my family. That honour goes to my partner, Karen, who is forever stopping on trails to take pictures of every flower she sees. Her diligent and patient teaching has introduced me to some of K-Country's pretty spectacular flowers, both big and small, and in this series, I will be sharing her fabulous images of some of them.

In the land of “unique adaptations”, the fabulous Calypso Orchid – also known as a Venus Slipper or Fairy Slipper on account of the shoe-like shape of the flower – is a kind of a stand out. This lovely little flower (it's only about 1” tall, on a 4” stem) grows in damp to dry pine forests, sometimes alone but often in little (or large) clumps (*the photo to the right is a particularly large clump*). It has a single large leaf and a large bulb underground. It is very delicate; step on it, and it will probably die.





This beautiful flower is quite misleading. It has no nectar, and insects can't get at the pollen very well. But it fakes insects out by looking and smelling like something they should visit. In particular, juvenile Queen bees (who don't know better) climb inside looking for food, and visit a few until they figure out there's no reason to visit any more. But by then, they have cross-pollinated other flowers. To add to the bee's confusion, Calypsos change colour and aroma over time and between individual

plants (*note the different colours of the flowers in the photos, all taken in the last two weeks*), so further misleading the bees. And... it turns out the Calypso is exactly the correct size to squeeze in the rather large Golden Northern Bumble Bee – who happen to be out at this time of year.

So this explains the reason the Calypso blooms so early: to get the young, inexperienced, early emergent queen bumble bee who comes out in May looking to set up her hive location. And for the Golden Northerns, only the queens survive the winter, so there are no workers around at this time of year.



Sometimes, nature is just too cool for words.



### **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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