

FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER

BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS
BOX 1693, BANFF, ALBERTA, T1L 1B6

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BVN evening speaker series returns October 2015 – April 2016 on the 4th Tuesday of the month (except December, see Christmas Bird Count). Admission Free. Donations at the door.

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LET THEM KNOW YOUR MIND...

[Contact information](#) for letting politicians, governments and land managers know what you're thinking. Give credit where credit is due and otherwise good, better, best, never let 'em rest – they work for you.



Thanksgiving Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*)
at Muleshoe. J. Buchmann-Duck Photo

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

CARNIVORES BY CAMERA FROM BANFF TO BHUTAN

Jesse Whittington will speak about his experience contributing to wildlife monitoring practices in Bhutan. 7:30 pm, Tuesday October 27, Banff Seniors Centre. Admission free to all. Donations at the door.

Our regular November evening program will be on November 24. Watch the BVN web site prior to that date for details.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Save Saturday December 19th for a day with friends and feathers outside. Then join us inside for warm conversation and a potluck supper.

NEWS AND ISSUES

FAREWELL TO MARY SMITH

Mike McIvor

The Bow Valley Naturalists lost one of our founding members and one of our most solid and consistent supporters when Mary Smith died in early August at the age of 91. She and her husband Bob along with about 20 other people attended a meeting at the Banff Firehall on February 22, 1967 to determine the level of interest in forming a natural history organization. One month later the first regular meeting was held at the Firehall - a former meeting place for the community and for a number of years the venue for BVN's monthly programs.

Mary and Bob were living in Seebe at that time as he was partway through a long career with Calgary Power (subsequently called TransAlta Utilities). Mary, who was a substitute school teacher also taught many local children how to swim. Their 2 daughters were raised there and the family spent countless hours and days exploring their backyard - the Bow Valley. They particularly appreciated nearby opportunities in Bow Valley Provincial Park. Also nearby was the Yamnuska, a wonderful place that was relatively unknown except to climbers and Lafarge. It was the Smiths who introduced BVN to this area, leading walks through it, sharing the very fitting names they had attached to some of its most distinctive features such as Reed Lake, Crescent Lake, the Bluffs, the Great Swamp, and the Aspen Jungle.

In 1974, the year following province-wide public hearings on Land Use in the Eastern Slopes at which BVN, the Calgary Field Naturalists, and individuals including the Smiths argued for permanent, meaningful protection of the Yamnuska, BVN published "Yamnuska: Introductory studies of a natural area with proposals for its protection and use". It was based on information collected by volunteers that involved a great deal of field work and was intended to provide further evidence of the special nature of the area. Mary and Bob were front and centre in that process with Bob chairing the Study Committee. A year or 2 later the annual May Species Counts began and the Smiths, who moved to Canmore in 1978, were



Mount Yamnuska. H. Dempsey Photo

regular participants. Often Bob would lead a group of people up to the East Shoulder while Mary took others who were less mobile or had less time to some of the interesting sites at the base of the mountain.

Although the Yamnuska played an important role in the early years of BVN and continues to offer a rich, varied landscape for our members and others to explore, it would be a big mistake to think that this particular area or even natural history in general was the sole focus of interest for Mary. Far from it: she and Bob were avid photographers and helped form a camera club in the Valley. They also were active members of the Canmore Art Guild. Nor was their interest limited to the visual arts. Without any great affection for the big city they frequently travelled to Calgary to enjoy ballet or opera performances. Similar events at the Banff Centre attracted them regularly. Yet perhaps of greatest importance to Mary was their family that had grown from children to grandchildren and great grandchildren.

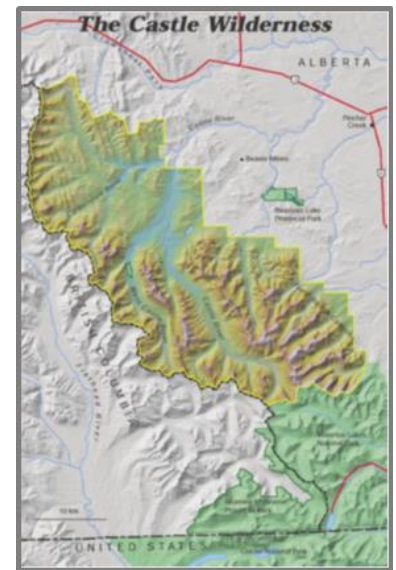
A celebration of Mary's life was held in Canmore on August 21st. And there is no question hers is a life worth celebrating. We may have lost a long-standing member but for many of us who wandered in the woods with her and Bob or chatted with her at BVN meetings the memories are very much alive. We extend our deep sympathy to Bob and our very best wishes.

FIGHT FOR YOUR PARKS

In mid-September Fight for Your Parks, a grass-roots coalition of individuals, businesses and organizations was launched in Banff. The coalition is addressing the simple fact: Canada's National Parks belong to all of us. An online petition addressing concerns about expanding commercial development in national parks has been posted at [Fight For Your Parks](#). Several recent newspaper articles and television and radio news reports about "Fight For Your Parks" can be found on-line by search in these news outlets: Crag and Canyon, Rocky Mountain Outlook, Fitzhugh, Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald, Global, CBC, CTV.

A CASTLE TO CELEBRATE

BVN would like to offer our congratulations and gratitude to all those who worked for about 50 years to preserve the Castle wilderness. With the recent commitment by the Alberta Government to establish parks and protect this area with legislation a very special place has finally been protected. Learn about this [special place](#) in the Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition brochure. [Alberta Environment and Parks](#) can help you learn more. There is some concern that some activities such as off-road vehicle access may still be allowed. Please send a note to provincial government officials to thank them for a good deed done. Include a line or two in your note to ensure that the maximum protection possible is given the Castle wildlands.



Map Source: The Castle Wilderness - A Case to Protect and Restore Ecological Integrity in a Critical Part of Canada's Rocky Mountains. Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition

BVN NEEDS A POSTER PERSON

Help! Colleen has been making the BVN posters since 2004 and she wants to quit — uh, no.... she wants to open the opportunity for someone who would enjoy liberating their creative spirit.

The posters have been created in the simplest of programs: MS Word letter format. Once finalized, each poster is saved as a Jpeg, posted on the Bow Valley Naturalists website and sent to others who can print, post or pass it along with little effort. Usually the poster is prepared two to four weeks before a program presentation, posted on the BVN website and sent to other individuals with written material about the speaker/s and their presentation.

Bow Valley Naturalists host six regular programs each year, manage the HELS page on our website and coordinate the Christmas Bird Count. Each endeavour is usually supported with a poster. On occasion we may also host a special program, sometimes in collaboration with another like-minded group.

And now, we are looking for someone interested in creating our posters, a periodic task that requires communication with the Board for the poster content and photos. Two people could share this work. Colleen will be available to coach (if needed). If you are curious, please call Colleen at 403-678-2051.

GUIDELINES FOR EXPANSION AT LAKE LOUISE

In June Parks Canada released the Lake Louise Ski Area Site Guidelines for Development and Use (89 pages) and the Strategic Assessment Draft for Public Engagement (173 pages). An astoundingly short period of time for comment was provided at a very busy time of year for those who may have wished to comment. However, two members of Bow Valley Naturalists Board put on the kettle, found their reading glasses and ignored the solstice sunshine to spend some time deciphering the documents. Their mission: try to understand how the proposal could be interpreted as the “net gain” for Parks Canada, as expressed by Parks Canada personnel.

“Net gain” appears to disguise the near doubling of the functions and facilities at the Lake Louise Ski Area, in spite of returning some terrain that cannot be developed with lifts and other facilities. The return of the Purple and Wolverine Bowls to Parks Canada will not reduce “side-country” skiing in that terrain and that diminishes the “net gain” to nothing.

Summary of changes in the LLSA Development Proposal:

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>New Total</u>
Lease and Licence of Occupation (hectares)	2,190	- 537	1,653
Skiable terrain (hectares)	551	+ 466	1,017
Current number of active lifts	9	+ 9	18
Lodges + Warming huts	4	+ 5	9
Commercial space (m ²)	6,515	+ 10,485	17,000
Current parking (vehicles)	1,176	+ 2,803	3,256
Bus parking spots	30	+20	50
Skier numbers	6,000	+ 5,500	11, 500

The Government of Canada accepted the LLSA development proposal with no changes. The approval announcement was made on August 1, 2015 on the day before the election was called that resulted in 67 percent of Canadians voting against current direction of the government. Several NGOs submitted a joint letter to Daniel Watson (contact information below), recently appointed Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada Agency.

The Lake Louise Ski Hill proposal is the final straw for many who feel that commercialization is eroding the intrinsic values of our National Parks and that Parks Canada is making decisions that contradict legislation intended to protect our National Parks.

Other recent announcements include Marmot Ski Hill expansion and a proposed resort at Malign Lake in Jasper national Park. These developments follow other recently privatized sites such as the “Glacier Skywalk” at previously popular public pull-out on the Icefields Parkway and the Via Ferrata at Mt. Norquay, which once negotiated to give up summer use in exchange for increasing ski terrain. The confining fence at the Skywalk warning visitors to stay away is an additional insult denying views to drivers as they pass the development.



Visitors can no longer stop at the once popular Sunwapta Canyon viewpoint on the Icefields Parkway now that it is managed by the private sector. Will similar restrictions on public access be required to mitigate the effects of the Lake Louise ski area guidelines?

OF WILD THINGS

MAPS: A Bird in Hand Is Worth...

Thanks to all the 2015 volunteers! Since 1999 the Bow Valley Naturalists have been operating a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) station at Ranger Creek. This year with Cyndi Smith as the Bander in Charge and a group of at least 12 volunteers, the nets were usually set up well before the sun rose on 6 mornings beginning on June 17 and ending on July 26. A wide range of birds (37 species) were caught in the nets for the BIC to first band the bird and then make a number of important measurements. In all there were 254 birds ranging from Humming Birds that are not banded to Robins that were caught and released after banding. Each band is recorded along with the required information. Cyndi Smith travelled from Waterton for every session and this year the site was a bit of a training ground for Brenda Shepard (Jasper), Mike Potter and Ken Symington. Anyone wishing a summary of the 2015 MAPS data can contact [Peter Duck](#). To see how our MAPS station fits into a continent wide program visit the [Institute for Bird Populations](#) website. *Pictures below courtesy B. Gordon.*



Red-naped Sapsucker
Sphyrapicus nuchali



Evening Grosbeak
Coccothraustes vespertinus



White-Crowned Sparrow
Zonotrichia leucophrys



Common Yellowthroat
Geothlypis trichas

HIGH ELEVATION SPECIES: Observations Decline for 2015

At 377 observations the total records of high elevation species reported to [BVN's HELS web site](#) remains well below the 2014 total of 455 observations. Unless there are some folks still "snooping" around in the country side we are unlikely to approach previous years' numbers in spite of efforts to increase use of the site. The data recorded by this project has been recognized as a valuable contribution to ecosystem monitoring and we encourage readers, their friends and families to spread the word – when you wander in the wilderness let us know what you see! Visit the HELS web site, poke around at the various observations and see if you can find out where your friends were hiking this year. Maybe you can plan a trip to a valley that is in need of some HELS observations next year. Where would you go so you can try to report some Ptarmigan this winter?

BOOK REVIEW

BORN TO THE WILD: Journals of a National Park Warden in the Canadian Rockies, by Rob Kaye (2015)
Review by Blake Gordon

Rob grew up in the Town of Jasper, Alberta and as a young boy he hoped to become a park warden in the future. This dream came true in 1980 when he was assigned to Blue Creek District for the season. He talks about the life of a park warden and the various districts and conditions he worked in over the years. In 1989 he moved to Elk Island National Park and during his time there did a one year assignment in Australia on an exchange with a park warden from Lake Eildon National Park in the State of Victoria, Australia.

Chapter 30 is of particular interest as it is titled Changes...and Parks for Profit. Rob talks about the shift from being a Park Warden to that of being Conservation Officers, Resource Management Specialists or Public Safety Specialists. He also talks about the budget cutbacks and staff reductions as the parks have turned to revenue generation as we have seen in the past several years with ski hill expansions and skywalks at the Icefields. Rob retired in 2010 with his last year being spent back in Jasper where he began his career.



Hanging out over 6000 feet above sea level and looking through the glass floor of the Jasper Sky Walk. As transparent Parks Canada decisions?

CONTACTS

Let these people know your thoughts...

CANADA

Environment Minister
TBA
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

NDP Environment Critic
TBA
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Opposition Environment Critic
TBA
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Leader, Green Party
elizabeth.may@parl.gc.ca
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Blake Richards MP
Richards.B@parl.gc.ca
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

CEO Parks Canada Agency
Daniel Watson
Daniel.Watson@pc.gc.ca

Dave McDonough,
Superintendent, Banff Field Unit
Dave.McDonough@pc.gc.ca

Melanie Kwong
Superintendent, LKLY Field Unit
Melanie.Kwong@pc.gc.ca

Greg Fenton
Superintendent, Jasper National Park
Greg.Fenton@pc.gc.ca

Mount Revelstoke/Glacier National Parks
P.O. Box 350
Revelstoke, B.C. Canada
V0E 2S0
250-837-7500
Email

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
TBA
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

ALBERTA

If your call to your MLA, or any Alberta government office, is long distance then please dial 310-0000 then the area code and the phone number for toll free access.

Minister Environment and Parks
Shannon Phillips
Legislature Office
208 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2B6
Phone: 780.427.2391
Fax: 780.422.6259
lethbridge.west@assembly.ab.ca

MLA Banff-Cochrane
Cameron Westhead
Legislature Office
6th Floor, 9820 - 107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7
Phone: 780.638.1418
Fax: 780.415.0701

Constituency Office
102, 721 Main Street
P.O. Box 8650
Canmore, AB T1W 0B9
Phone: 403-609-4509
Toll Free: 1-866-760-8281
Fax: 403-609-4513
banff.cochrane@assembly.ab.ca