

**BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS**  
**NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2004**  
**BOX 1693, BANFF, AB**  
**T1L 1B6**  
**PHONE: 762-4160**

**OUTINGS**

**MAY SPECIES COUNT**  
**Saturday and Sunday, May 29 & 30**

The May Species Count is a province-wide event that looks at species in flower and birds seen and/or heard. It is always held on the last full weekend in May. This year's count falls on the last days of May. That fact plus the very early signs of spring this year will make for a challenging couple of days in the field. Provided, of course, the snow stops falling by then.

Last year, in the **Yamnuska**, we reported 53 species of plants in flower compared to a low 14 in 2002. **Banff** had 57 species compared to a low 20 in 2002. **Canmore** had 30 species, count not done in 2002.

The bird numbers were low compared to the previous year:  
**Yamnuska:** 57 species (69 in 2002).  
**Banff:** 68 species, (73 in 2002).  
**Canmore:** 54 species, (not done in 2002).

Over 20 people participated and hopefully we will get as many or more this year. The count gives you the opportunity to spend a couple of great days in the Bow Valley observing, listening, and learning about your surroundings.

The count this year will take place on:  
**Saturday, May 29 at the Yamnuska**  
**Sunday, May 30 in Banff and Canmore**

For more information and to find out how to participate contact:  
**Diane & Mike McIvor at 762-4160**

**EVENTS**

**LIQUID THUNDER: THE GREAT BRAHMAPUTRA DESCENT**

"All the water that will ever be, is right now."  
National Geographic, October 1993

As part of their Annual General Meeting, the Mountain Parks Watershed Association will be presenting a slide

show and documentary on a 9-day self-contained descent of a large-volume river,

**The Great Brahmaputra Siang,**  
presented by  
**Kim Hartlin**

**Monday, May 31st at 7:30pm,**  
doors open at 7pm

**Canmore Collegiate High School Theatre**  
(1800 - 8th Ave Canmore)

Tickets will be available at the door at a cost of \$5.00. All proceeds go towards the Mountain Parks Watershed Association.

The mystic Siang Brahmaputra originates in Tibet, near Mount Kalias. As it flows gently eastwards, it cuts through a deep gorge past Namche Barwa and enters Arunachal Pradesh where the river expedition begins a few miles inside the line of control from Tibet. The documentary will take you through remote hillsides dotted with Adie villages and untouched rain forests. It features a run of the finest, large-volume white water in the area, which is surely, one of the most inaccessible in the world.

If you have any questions, or require further information please feel free to contact me by phone (762-0591), or email ([mpwa@telsuplanet.net](mailto:mpwa@telsuplanet.net)).

Rachelle Haddock

**Banff National Park**  
**2004 Research Updates Speaker Series**

**Thursday, May 13, 7:30 – 9 pm**  
**Banff Seniors Centre**

- **Argia vivida A Damselfly in Distress?**  
*Christine Rice*
  - **Burns and Birds: Affects of Prescribed Burns on Songbirds**  
*Bryan Chruszcz*
- (\* note later start time for this evening only)

**Thursday, May 20, 7 – 9 pm**  
**Banff Seniors Centre**

- **Black Bark: Interpreting Long-term Montane Ecology with Repeat Photos**  
*Cliff White*
- **Fire, Beetles, the Fairholme and the Summer of 2003**  
*Jane Park*

**!PLUS!** a visit to the Whyte Museum's new  
**"Elemental Inspiration" exhibitions:**  
**Out of the Wildfire and The Lens of Time**

**Thursday, May 27, 7 – 9 pm**

**Banff Seniors Centre**

- **Five Years Later: The Elk Management Strategy**  
*Tom Hurd*
- **The Ecology of the Ya Ha Tinda**  
*Mark Hebblewhite*

**Thursday, June 3 – 7:00 - 9 pm**

**Banff Seniors Centre**

- **Forest Fires and Mercury Rising – its' not just about temperature anymore!**  
*Erin Kelly*
- **Ghosts of the Siffleur – Caribou in Banff National Park.**  
*Allan Dibb*

*“The task is to think of ourselves as within ecosystems...” Stan Rowe*

**All events are free! Call 762-1464 for more information.**

**Lower Middle Springs Trail Project**

*by Mike McIvor*



Photo: D. McIvor

One of the truly special places in Banff National Park lies just outside the Town of Banff boundary reaching from inside the big bend of Mountain Avenue and flowing down behind the Valleyview sub-division. It contains the outflow streams from the Middle Springs as well as many of its own smaller springs and seepage zones. A rich and unusual assortment of plant species complement the complex physiography of the site.

This area also is part of the Sulphur Mountain wildlife corridor but has been caught in one of those peculiar

situations where a land management agency – Parks Canada charged with a legislated mandate to maintain or restore ecological integrity has utilized a human-built feature – Mountain Avenue – to determine the extent of enhanced protection. In this case, the Middle Springs area above Mountain Avenue is designated an Environmentally Sensitive Site and the portion of the Sulphur Mountain wildlife corridor above Mountain Avenue has been permanently closed to human activity. No satisfactory explanation has been received from Parks Canada as to why the same, high, ecological values on the other side of the road have not been recognized with similar management consideration.

The forests and riparian areas in the vicinity of the Lower Middle Springs wetland are laced with a network of trails most of which have been developed by casual or random human use over a period of years. Recently, members of the Bow Valley Naturalists, Parks Canada staff (aquatics, trail crew, communications), and residents of Valleyview and nearby Middle Springs sub-divisions have been thinking about ways to accommodate human use of the area while at the same time, reducing the impacts that have occurred and appear to be increasing.

Now, something positive is going to happen. The necessary catalyst came by way of a scholarship awarded last year to Banff Community High School graduate Jenna Tessolini by TELUS Super Pages. The scholarship took the form of a grant that was to be directed towards a community-based project. Jenna decided that the goals that had emerged from the discussions about the Lower Middle Springs trail complex were worthy of support:

- To protect the sensitive plant communities by installing modest boardwalk structures and using natural on-site materials to direct pedestrian traffic to preferred routes and
- To engage the local community in natural area protection through participation in trail management and education.

Therefore, at her request, BVN received #3500.00 to help undertake the project.

Thanks to Jenna's efforts it became clear that the time for simply thinking and discussing had passed and it was time for work to be done. Peter Duck prepared an environmental assessment (EA) with assistance from other BVN members who provided photographs, sketches, and information about flowering plants. Parks Canada approved the EA and also committed to some generous, in-kind support from its trail crew to help with trail work and boardwalk construction and from its communications staff to assist in the design of interpretive material. We applied for additional funding from the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation who we expect to hear from soon after they review applications in mid-May, and the Banff Community Foundation who recently informed us that they would contribute \$1800.00 towards the project.

Further planning will take place over the summer and actual work is scheduled to be done in September. With funding

targeted at the purchase of materials and in addition to the donated expertise from Parks Canada, this is a project that will depend very heavily on volunteers. (Incidentally, we expect to be working alongside volunteers from the Valleyview Condominium Association, the Mountain Parks Watershed Association, and other members of the community.) We will need people to carry lumber and perform other physical labour duties as well as people to aid in the process of designing and arranging for production of interpretive signs and pamphlets. Post-project monitoring also will be required to determine how effectively the goals have been met. BVN members will be notified as the construction date approaches but anyone really keen to participate in any aspect of the project should contact Diane and Mike McIvor (762-4160) or Heather Dempsey (762-3056).

## ISSUES

### Trans Canada Highway Phase IIIB Improvement Project

*by Mike McIvor*

The above title was chosen deliberately because while Parks Canada as the proponent refers to this as a “twinning project”, conservation groups are working hard to keep everybody’s sights set on overall improvement within the context of the 3 stated goals:

- Improve motorist safety
- Reduce wildlife-traffic conflicts thereby bring about environmental improvements
- Increase efficient movement of people and goods.

It makes many of us uncomfortable to see the emphasis on goals other than the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity but it is impossible to deny the reality that Canada’s first and flagship national park is bisected by the nation’s primary national transportation corridor. The complex mix of values and their related conflicts render a process of review that is both fascinating and frustrating.

Our representatives on the Stakeholders Advisory Committee, Jim Pissot, Defenders of Wildlife, Canada, Dave Campbell (alternate) UTSB Research, and Dave Poulton, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Association have done a great job to prevent this from becoming nothing more than a fast-tracked paving operation. Their insistence on improvement in all aspects of the highway’s effects has broadened the discussion to realms beyond that of asphalt expansion. This is not to say that conservationists will be pleased - or should be - with the final outcome, but at the moment, conservation values appear to be more securely rooted in this process than when it began.

As Parks Canada pursues its “twinning” agenda it acknowledges that the \$50 million received from Infrastructure Canada is approximately one-third of what is required to complete the section of TCH between Castle

Junction and the Alberta/B.C. border. Jim and Dave had to be extremely vigilant to “help” Parks Canada resist the temptation to extend the length of the twinning by cost cutting on the wildlife mitigations. And so far, Parks Canada has indicated an intention to follow approximately the recommendations based on years of monitoring and research by Dr. Tony Clevenger et al in their 2002 final report: **Roads and Wildlife in the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks – Movements, Mortality and Mitigation.**

Some researchers believe these recommendations do not go far enough, particularly with respect to the size of crossing structures required to sustain long-term connectivity of wildlife populations. But if implemented, the mitigations will be an improvement over those in earlier phases. Probably it would be fair to suggest that many conservationists view the Clevenger recommendations as representing the minimum standards – the starting point beyond which more generous concessions to wildlife should be sought – for a “world class” highway project in a “world class” national park.

Golder Associates has been hired to produce an environmental assessment (EA) that will be conducted at the Screening level (the lowest level of EA under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act) although conservationists argued the project was substantial enough to warrant a more thorough analysis. Time-lines are tight with the document expected to be out for public review by the summer.

Parks Canada has declared its commitment to provide opportunities for public consultation. These will include open houses but also may include some on-line options for commenting. The TCH is a very significant factor in the life of this national park. BVN members are encouraged to become informed about the project and to be prepared to present their concerns, criticisms, or support as appropriate, when the time comes.

**JEA web site is finally up and running at  
[www.jasperenvironmental.org](http://www.jasperenvironmental.org)**

Our friends with the Jasper Environmental Association have developed a website. Following are some of the subjects covered. Be sure to check it out.

- Funding cuts : a park on a shoestring
- Environmental assessments : mitigation magic
- Woodland caribou : "threatened species"
- Grizzly bear : "species of special concern"
- Wolverine : "species of special concern"
- The wolf : a crucial species in danger
- Montane ecoregion : heart of the park
- Roads and rails :the killing machines
- Fire : a park ready for burning
- Forest thinning : a necessary evil
- Trails : heading for trouble
- Dogs :unleashed and out of control

- Cavell Meadows : restored ... for now
- Tonquin Valley : stuck in the mud
- Maligne Valley : commercialization for future generations

**Pileated Woodpecker**

by *Shelley Mardiros*

This Pileated Woodpecker is one of a nesting pair seen at Muleshoe in the first week of May. The woodpeckers have excavated a nest cavity in the trunk of an aspen tree, where they appear to be incubating eggs. Given its large size, the hole is surprisingly cryptic. I noticed it only because I was watching the female woodpecker when she flew to the nest to relieve her mate from incubation duty.

The Pileated lays an average of 4 eggs, which hatch after 15-18 days. Both parents share nest-building, incubation and chick-care duties.

Woody Woodpecker is reputed to be a Pileated. Certainly his laugh is loud enough, if not an *exact* duplication of the Pileated. But Woody's all-red head and blue cover-alls just don't cut it. He's no more a Pileated than Goofy is a ... a...



photo: Michael Shuster

**Stan Rowe**

by *Ted Mosquin*

(Ted Mosquin, well known Canadian environmental activist circulated this message to: Ecologists, Philosophers, Environmentalists, Ethicists, Naturalists)

As some of you may know, ecologist and environmental ethicist, Stan Rowe, long time friend and supporter of

environmental causes suffered a serious stroke in March and died peacefully on April 6th. His passing is an indescribable loss to his family and many friends and to people working to curb the destruction of the Earth, its ecosystems and species. Just a couple of days before the stroke, Stan had the satisfaction of seeing in print the unique article 'A Manifesto for Earth' as published in the quarterly "Biodiversity, Journal of Life on Earth." The Manifesto was the culmination of a two-year project that I was fortunate to have worked on with him. Stan's superlative literary skills shine through in the Manifesto which is now available on the internet. Several magazines/journals have indicated their intent to publish it. One of these, "The Structurist," is a quality academic journal published at the Univ. of Saskatchewan and where the Manifesto is in the final proof stage.

The 'Manifesto for Earth' is unique among Charters, Proclamations and the like in that it describes a thoroughly ecocentric worldview, as implied by the title.

**The Manifesto can be found at:**

1). Html (text only) file at:  
<<http://www.ecospherics.net/pages/EarthManifesto.html>>  
(50 Kb). This takes about 30 seconds to download on a regular telephone line using a 28.8 modem.

2). Pdf (illustrated) file at:  
<<http://www.ecospherics.net/pages/EarthManifesto.pdf>>  
(2.5 Mb). This takes 20 minutes to download on a 28.8 modem but only 30 seconds with a high speed connection.

3). Editorial comment on the Manifesto by John A. Livingston:  
<<http://www.ecospherics.net/pages/LIVINGSTONED.htm>>  
(15 kb).

**BVN Newly Elected Board**

The new board was elected at our meeting in February. Congratulations to all elected.

President: Peter Duck  
Vice-President: Colleen Campbell  
Past-President: Mike McIvor  
Treasurer: Shelley Mardiros  
Secretary: Diane McIvor  
Directors: Dwayne Lepitzki, Jeanette Fish