BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS
NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2005
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PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Wed., January 26 7:30 pm.

The NJ Academy Awards: a show featuring research about the nature of Banff National Park with Nadine Fletcher and Joel Hagen.
Location: Banff Seniors Centre.

Wed., February 23 7:30 pm.

Lizzie Rummel and the High Open Spaces: a portrait of a woman and wildflowers with Shirley Truscott.
Location: Banff Seniors Centre.

NOTE.
February 23 is the evening of our Annual General Meeting and elections. Anyone interested in participating on the Board of Directors should contact any member of the Board before mid-February.

REMINDER!

Memberships are now due.

Our financial year is the calendar year. Memberships, still at a low cost of $5.00 are now due for year 2005.

Wed., March 23 7:30 pm.

Tracking the Caribou of Jasper National Park: looking for answers with Jesse Whittington.
Location: Banff Seniors Centre.

Wed., April 27 7:30 pm.

Birds, Bears, Beetles & Blister Rust - what's the connection to pines? with Cyndi Smith
Location: Banff Seniors Centre.

Annual Great Backyard Bird Count:

February 18 - 21, 2005
from Bird Source

This year the dates for the 2005 Great Backyard Bird Count organized by the National Audubon Society with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are February 18-21, 2005. Look for more details and submit your results at: www.Birdsource.org/GBBC.

2004 Christmas Bird Counts

Mike McIvor

The Banff-Canmore CBC and the Bow Summit CBC both confirmed what many people had been noticing throughout the late fall and early winter: the woods are quiet this year. December 18th, the day of the Banff-Canmore count was mild and pleasant with a bit of wind at times. (We appreciated these conditions even more in retrospect as we watched the rain pour down the next day.) A good turnout of 48 participants helped celebrate the 30th year for this count but found only 1981 birds of 44 species. This was10 fewer species than our record-smashing total of the year before, although still slightly above our long-term average. But the number of individual birds was almost 1000 fewer than the previous year and the lowest total since 1986.

Two new species for the count were recorded: a Horned Grebe at Lake Minnewanka and a Lesser Scaup in the 2 Jack Lake canal. A Pied-billed Grebe that would have been another new species was observed at Minnewanka before and after count day but managed to remain out of sight on the day itself. In Canmore, Canada Goose was reported for only the 5th time with 11 birds setting a new high. But not surprisingly, in general, the lowlights outnumbered the highlights this year. It should be remembered however, that in terms of the value of the information from a long-term census such as this, the results of a "low" year when numbers are down, are just as important as the results of a record year.

As of 2 years ago, the long term average (28 years) for Common Goldeneye was 121 birds. Last year we had 19 and this year we had 10. The only time we had fewer was in 1979. And 11 American Dipper tied the lowest number reported for this species in 1996. It is only the 4th time we have been under 20. We have no idea if these results are telling us something about changing conditions in the Bow River or simply reflect natural variability in over-wintering populations. Continued monitoring through subsequent CBCs will help answer these kinds of questions. (If anyone feels they have detected changes in the numbers or distribution of birds along the river in any season in recent years, I would be very interested to hear from you.)

One of the big reasons the woods are quiet this winter is because there are so few Red-breasted Nuthatch. Last year we had 202; this year we found only 25, the lowest number since 1987. Those of us who were used to hearing this

distinctive voice almost every time we went for a walk, are not hearing it very often these days. And the thin, high-pitched call notes of Golden-crowned Kinglet are not being heard at all: this is the first time in 20 years we did not report any.

The distinctive chattering of flocks of White-winged and Red Crossbills was absent this year for the first time since 1999. Last year these 2 species along with their very closely related cousins known as "unidentified crossbills" accounted for 301 of our total birds. Numbers of some other winter finches also dropped: Common Redpoll from 138 to 31, and Pine Siskin from 148 to 22.

It is interesting to note that some species we may be inclined to take for granted, are not necessarily found in large numbers elsewhere. Our 214 Mountain Chickadee last year were the most in Canada while our 119 Clark's Nutcracker were the most in North America. Both showed a drop in numbers this year.

The Bow Summit CBC was held on January 5th, the last possible day to do an offical count. We had been scheduling and re-scheduling it in an attempt to avoid stormy weather and bad roads. We chose well. It was a clear, bright, spectacular day at the Top of the Bow. And although it was a touch on the cool side, perhaps the brilliant sunshine gracing the snowy peaks was responsible for the fact the WI* was rated "Low" for most of the day, only occasionally inching towards "Moderate". (* WI is an abbreviation for "Whining Index" which is a somewhat technical term used to measure the number and intensity of complaints directed towards me, your humble bird count compiler, by our treasurer, who apparently is convinced I always – always! – choose days for our CBCs that are the coldest in the history of the planet. These lamentations take a variety of forms but are structured around a consistent theme – "So much cold! So few birds!")

However, after wisely – if not courageously – spending the first part of the morning huddled around a coffee pot, Shelley did venture forth to join us. And on a day when there was a perceptible rise in temperature as elevation was gained, she and Barb Bertch skied down to the lowest – therefore coldest – place in the count circle, the outlet of Hector Lake, where they found 3 Mallard and the first Bufflehead we have recorded in the 27 years of this count.

We finished the day with 13 species, 1 more than last year and 4 above average. But although we had 7 participants with at least as good coverage as the year before, the number of individual birds dropped dramatically from the record high 542 last year, to 67. Actually, this number only seems low until you realize there have been 13 years that even fewer birds than this were found.
It isn't difficult to account for the drop: Last year – 269 White-winged Crossbill, this year – 0; last year – 105 Pine Siskin, this year – 0; last year – 83 Pine Grosbeak, this year – 3. It is interesting to speculate about where "our" winter finches are spending this winter; presumably somewhere with a better crop of conifer cones. Results from other CBCs may provide some hints.

Aside from the new species, other highlights included a Northern Hawk Owl, a Pileated Woodpecker for only the second time, and 13 Mountain Chickadee, a species we haven't recorded at Bow Summit since 1991. Unfortunately, despite diligent searching, no flesh and feather White-tailed Ptarmigan could be found. For the 11th time in the history of this count we had to be content with a tantalizing abundance of tracks.

On behalf of the Bow Valley Naturalists I want to express our sincere appreciation to Tim White and Lee O'Donnell of Num-Ti-Jah Lodge for offering the Lodge as home base for the Bow Summit CBC. Two die-hard bird-watching skiers had to be plucked from the side of the highway later, farther south, after completing the Dolomite Circuit, but the rest of us were able to enjoy a few minutes of warmth in the Lodge (I stress "a few" because no one should imagine we were slacking off) along with a hot beverage generously provided by the innkeepers. It was a fine end to a beautiful day.

Banff-Canmore Count:

Pied-billed Grebe	CW	Blue Jay	11
Horned Grebe	1	Clark's Nutcracker	76
Canada Goose	11	Black-billed Magpie	177
Green-winged Teal	1	American Crow	13
Mallard	385	Common Raven	225
Lesser Scaup	1	Steller's Jay	2
Common Goldeneye	10	Black-capped Chickadee	201
Barrow's Goldeneye	8	Mountain Chickadee	136
goldeneye sp.	5	Boreal Chickadee	46
Common Merganser	3	*chickadee sp.*	84
Bald Eagle *adult*	4	Red-breasted Nuthatch	25
Northern Goshawk	CW	White-breasted Nuthatch	10
Merlin	1	Brown Creeper	5
Killdeer	1	American Dipper	11
Wilson's Snipe	2	Townsend's Solitaire	4
Rock Pigeon	23	Bohemian Waxwing	132
Northern Hawk-owl	CW	European Starling	4
Northern Pygmy-owl	1	Song Sparrow	1
Belted Kingfisher	4	White-throated Sparrow	1
Downy Woodpecker	7	White-crowned Sparrow	2
Hairy Woodpecker	3	*sparrow sp.*	1
Three-toed Woodpeck	6	Pine Grosbeak	73
Pileated Woodpecker	CW	Common Redpoll	31
woodpecker sp.	3	Pine Siskin	22
Northern Shrike	1	Evening Grosbeak	16
Gray Jay	45	House Sparrow	146

CW: reported count week

TOTAL SPECIES: 44
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 1981

Bow Summit Count:

Mallard	3	Black-capped Chickadee	3
Bufflehead	1	Mountain Chickadee	13
Northern Hawk Owl	1	Boreal Chickadee	9
Pileated Wood Pecker	1	*chickadee sp.*	5
woodpecker sp.	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Gray Jay	8	American Dipper	1
Clark's Nutcracker	9	Pine Grosbeak	3
Common Raven	8		

TOTAL SPECIES: 13
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 67

Count results from 1900 to the present are available through the Bird Source web site:
http://www.bsc-eoc.org

Shelley Mardiros at outlet of Hector Lake on Bow Summit CBC. Photo: Barb Bertch

FROM THE PRES

Peter Duck

"A new mountain valley leads you on." And when I lived in the north end of Banff National Park in the early 80s those valleys lured me. Many were surrounded by sedimentary castles and, like castles, were protected by moats of surging meltwater and thick buttresses of untracked forests. These valleys beckoned like sirens to any heart receptive to their call. Some academic grounding in the ways of the earth found synergism in a young man's wanderlust and I was stricken with the awesome and lonely evidence of it all.

The north end warden at the time was Jay Morton, the kind of guy who could head up the road after dinner to earn the respect of a biker gang and come back to the station to discuss the local warblers at midnight over a platter of his home made corned beef. Jay gave me a fatherly warning not to tell anyone about the special places of the upper North Saskatchewan.

In the remote capillaries of the North Saskatchewan are the kinds of places one could and should take a stand. In the 80s, I said if "they" ever dare to construct a road to Howse Pass in Banff National Park I will lie down in front of the mud caked tracks and shiny blades of the techno-managerial juggernaught. Tourism industry players now seek to insult the senses by promoting more helicopter activity in this special place. How do you lie down in front of the shiny blades when they are suspended in the air?

There is no new mythical tradeoff between economy and wilderness here. The deal was struck by historical default. We have chosen to fill the Lower Bow with our rails, homes, highways, and tourism endeavours, including helicopter tourism
over mountain valleys. The upper recesses of the North Saskatchewan have been and should be left alone if their spirit is to remain unimpaired for future generations.

Those who could have influence to curtail this celestial graffiti are embarrassingly non-committal. Certainly, Parks Canada has not yet taken a public stand for silence in their portion of this wild place. They claim their hands are tied since they have no control and apparently no formal say in the use of airspace over national parks. It's more likely a different body part is tied to the political fence.

The opening quote continues with something like: "A new mountain valley leads you on and you round a point or push your head over a pass feeling that a moment before, that had you come a second earlier, you would have surprised the creator at his work. Up in those high places you can hear the silence which is the sound of the earth turning and of time going by." Will future park visitors who have grown up taking noise for granted have a chance to understand Howard O'Hagan's words? Or will it be "Up in those high places you can hear WHOP, WHOP, WHOP which is the sound of commerce going by."

Balls on a Brass Monkey: Lawn ornament or Naval Accessory?

Peter Duck

Here's my recent "How cold was it?" story. When I was a little kid my Dad spent many hours out in the cold pouring water on the back yard rink. More often than not he would return from an evening session claiming "It's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey!" My imagination just loved that turn of phrase and images of monkeys in the snow. I assumed that it was a phrase he learned in the service, probably shooting craps on the deck of a troop carrier somewhere in the North Atlantic.

I recently shared a nostalgic smile with one of my tour guests who used the same term handed down from his Dad. But as I once again conjured up images of the anatomical

details of abandoned metal lawn ornaments he explained the origin of the term. Apparently a brass monkey was a kind of tray to hold cannon balls on old war ships. By placing balls on the brass monkey they could be stacked and held in place against the movements of the ship. However, when it got cold the metal rack would contract, change shape, and allow the balls to roll loose like oranges in a collapsed market display. This made wonderful sense and set me off on another fantasy involving cannon balls rolling around the Royal Navy's decks during the search for the Northwest Passage.

Further research revealed that the explanation, while widely used, has no basis in historical fact except that "monkey" was a popular term for a variety of things on ships in the nineteenth century. So I'm back to images of a the lawn ornament and keeping my own long-johns securely fastened for a few more weeks. (Editor's note: apparently the spell of cold weather in January gave our President time to contemplate a broader range of natural history.)

Grizzly bear, Bow Valley Parkway photo: Donna McKown

On November 22, local resident Donna McKown photographed a large grizzly using the snow-covered Bow Valley Parkway as a 'wildlife corridor'. Grizzlies tend to den in a hierarchal order, with pregnant females tucking in earliest and dominant breeding males, like the one in this photograph, wandering about much later in the season. The bear in the photo is possibly the one known to researchers as GB #15. He is 17 years old, this winter, and was monitored for 10 years, from 1994. When last handled, age 15, his spring weight was about 500 pounds.

This fellow was possibly on the lookout for some protein in the form of fresh meat. Solitary male elk are vulnerable for a short period of time during early winter. The bulls leave the cows with which they have bred and search for other bulls with whom to spend the winter months. They are exhausted by the rut, less alert and sometimes injured; wolves and grizzly bears may benefit from this weakened condition.

Colleen Campbell

Cold Blood

Brenda Lepitzki

The recent cold weather reminds us of the severity of the climate which life in the Rocky Mountains is challenged to endure. When the temperature dips as it has this winter, I think it is remarkable that there are any amphibians or reptiles here at all. Climate does limit the presence of these cold-blooded animals to the hardiest species that have evolved ways to deal with the cold temperatures.

Amphibians and reptiles use both behaviour and physiology to avoid and deal with sub zero temperatures. Wandering garter snakes spend the winter in groups underground where they can keep body temperature just above freezing. They usually remain inactive and don't eat, maintaining very low metabolic activity. One of the most amazing wildlife experiences I've had in winter has been to see wandering garter snakes swimming in the Cave and Basin thermal streams in January and February. This is unusual activity for any reptile in Canada and deserves further study.

Frogs, toads and salamanders seek refuge from cold temperatures under logs, under leaf litter, in burrows, and in shallow mud under water. They don't dig deep into mud as they cannot survive the lack of oxygen in the sediments. Often the cold creeps into these refugia and they must make use of special physiological traits. Some amphibians can undergo supercooling, and some are "freeze tolerant". They can prevent freezing of their cells and tissues by using cryoprotectants which are carbohydrates like glucose and glycerol, that lower the freezing point. Liquids outside the cells may freeze but the cells are protected from damaging ice crystals.

Of the 4 amphibian species that occur in Banff National Park, only Columbia spotted frogs hibernate in the mud at the bottom of wetlands. Long-toed salamanders, Western (boreal) toads, and wood frogs, all hibernate in terrestrial habitats. (These habitats, not just breeding ponds, deserve consideration from a conservation perspective.)

Amphibians cannot survive the long winter fully exposed in this frozen state, so very much rely on their surrounding environment to avoid permanent freezing. In late autumn, even on those warmer days, you won't see amphibians around because they have begun the critical task of finding an over-wintering site. However, in early spring with ice and snow still covering much of the wetlands, some amphibians will be already beginning breeding activity. The hatchlings require as much time as possible to grow and obtain enough resources to help them survive their first winter. Sometimes they will over-winter as larvae, waiting for the energy to metamorphose until next year.

Next time your fingers and toes are tingling and your nose feels like it might drop off, think of those frogs, toads, and

salamanders in the cold hollows, and look forward to once again hearing the spring chorus.

Northern Hawk Oul. photo: Doug McKown

Year of the Northern Hawk Owl

Shelley Mardiros

The first indication I had that this was the winter of the hawk owl was on November 6th when Doug McKown e-mailed the spectacular photo (above) of the owl that he had found at Moose Meadows that day. Visitors to the Meadows over the next several weeks often saw the aptly-named hawk owl – a diurnal hunter – flying low over the grassland and perching at the tops of trees. Northern hawk owls also have been regularly seen at Vermilion Lakes though, sadly, not on Bird Count Day, December 18th.

Farther a-field, hawk owls were seen in December at Ross Lake in Yoho and at Sunshine ski resort. The McIvors bagged one near Helen Creek on Bow Summit Count Day, January 5th, and Donna McKown and friends saw one a week later just beyond Healy Pass. This "invasion" or "irruption" of hawk owls might be part of a cyclical range extension, the kind regularly observed in species such as snowy owls or northern shrikes, as predators are drawn south in search of prey that is scarce or absent in the north that year.

Whatever the cause, this is the winter to look for this elegant long-tailed owl that perches, flies, and hunts like a small hawk.

Northern Pygmy-Owl

Dwayne Lepitzki

The Northern Pygmy-Owl, one of the smallest owls in Canada, has been observed sporadically over the years in the Banff-Canmore circle during the Christmas Bird Count. According to the recently published summary from the North, South, and Central American count for 2003, only 4 of these owls were observed in all of Alberta, 2 of them in our area. This year on our CBC, 2 intrepid birders once again spotted a pygmy owl at the Cave and Basin. Later, on January 2nd of the new year, Brenda and I were lucky enough to spot this character sitting in a balsam poplar just a ski pole-length away from the elevated boardwalk at the Cave and Basin. While visitors casually walked by without noticing it, the snow crunching under each footstep in the -20C air, the owl kept an eye and ear out for movement and rustling in the dried grass and leaves under the boardwalk or for a hapless small bird trying to stay warm near the springs. Just as our breath condensed in a frosty halo around our faces, the chilling cold also seems to have condensed the bird's breath on its feathers surrounding its eyes and beak.

Northern Pygmy-owl. Photo: Dwayne Lepitzki

Golden Wings and Wapiti

Mark Hebblewhite

Many of us have been privileged to observe the migrating golden eagles in the skies of the Rockies every spring and fall on their annual migration routes connecting populations over the entire hemisphere. The sight of these large raptors, wings straight out in their efficient glide as they appear and disappear from our view, always captures my imagination and makes me wonder about their comings and goings. Because so often this is the only way we see golden eagles,

it may be natural to think of them as mere migrants in our midst, and not full participants in the park's ecosystems.

My thoughts were definitely not of golden eagles last July 15th as I braced myself against a summer snow squall breaching Divide pass in the remote Front ranges of Banff. I was here chasing the migratory elk that I have spent the last 3 years getting to know intimately as part of my PhD research on the important Ya Ha Tinda elk herd. As part of my research, I had 're-discovered' migratory routes of the elk population connecting Ya Ha Tinda to the entire park. Almost 70% of the elk in Banff during summer now hail from the Ya Ha Tinda. Alarmingly, however, I have also discovered the migratory behaviour may be in decline, with more elk failing to return to alpine ranges in Banff every summer for a complex array of reasons, some human related. My work has also revealed a diversity of sources of natural mortality for adult female migratory elk including an almost even split between wolf and grizzly bear predation. Simply put, the bears and wolves of Banff depend on these migratory routes connecting the productive Ya Ha Tinda with areas west where hundreds of Ya Ha Tinda elk summer all the way to the Icefields Parkway and beyond.

I was north of Divide pass where I had located about 40 migratory elk earlier that morning. They were camped near the rise of a small ridge, just sheltered from the winds howling in from the south, and enjoying lush alpine meadows full of sweet grasses and forbs. My task – to watch what they were eating and see which of the 7 collared cow elk in the herd had successfully given birth to calves. Fun work on a sunny summer day, but as the squall rolled in I contemplated the next 6 hours spent watching a wet and miserable elk herd. Perhaps a little part of me hoped I might get a bit of added excitement should one of those wolves or grizzly bears stumble into view.

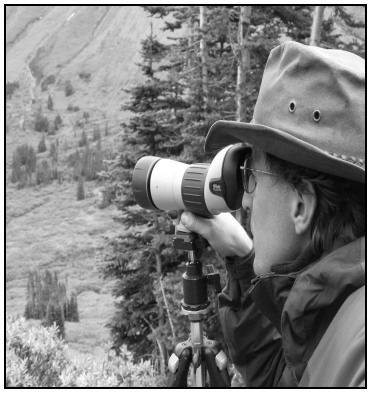
The squall ripped through, drawing a slight complaint from my horse, Cody, tied to a sheltering tree about 100 metres away. Then, as the squall cleared I caught view of the elk herd again and zoomed in on elk #177. Drudgery soon descended: I watched with wavering attention as she ruminated, and day-dreamed, waiting and hoping for her to go find her calf in the nursery herd to suckle it, or perhaps to eat some of the more identifiable forbs so I could fulfill the day's tasks of data collection.

Suddenly, there was a squeal and the entire herd exploded into action as two large streaks blasted over the ridge top aiming straight at the group of calves. I fumbled to zoom out on my spotting scope in time to see the dark streaks – now easily identifiable as two adult golden eagles - scattering the calf nursery herd like a stack of bowling pins! The eagles had come in low and fast, using the wind behind them and the shelter of the ridge to fly undetected to within about 25 metres of the calves, screaming into the young animals at ground level apparently intent on a kill. Bad luck for them that day, for all the calves scrambled to safety, quickly rejoining their mums as the entire herd fled the high ridge for the safety of the spruce below. As the elk ran, they cast furtive glances towards the two golden eagles that now circled lazily upwards watching the retreating elk with perhaps a tinge of disappointment.

Instantly I had a dozen questions in my mind. How common might this be? Had this herd been attacked before, potentially explaining the low calf numbers? Were these calves not too large for eagles? Do eagles often work in pairs? Had others seen or documented this in the past? Much later, back at the University of Alberta, a bit of digging would reveal the answers to some. In North America, other biologists have noted golden eagle attacks on Dall, bighorn, and stone sheep, mountain goats, and elk. Golden eagles had been observed directly attacking young ungulates only in a few cases. More often, reports indicated that eagles knocked young off cliffs to their death. However, I recalled the Kazak golden eagle hunters in Western Mongolia that I had met a few years before. There, the Kazak's have used the golden eagles to hunt sable, lynx, hare, gazelles, and even wolf!

In Yellowstone, preliminary work underway on elk calf survival has documented one mortality caused by golden eagles out of 18 known deaths (~5%), and the calf killed was over 40 days old – around 20-25kg! While little is known elsewhere about elk, studies on Dall sheep in Alaska have documented anywhere from 20-50% of the young in a year being killed by eagles. So from the elk's eye view, an eagle overhead is a fair danger, and from the eagle's eye, ungulates make a critical component of their diet.

As I recall the wonder at seeing the two eagles dive-bombing the calves, I'm reminded that we know little of what golden eagles do in Banff, beyond migrate through the park. This pair of eagles was likely residents of Banff's front ranges – how far did they range? Did they stage similar surprise attacks on sheep and goats in the area? While my study of elk was focused on adult females, could part of the explanation for low numbers of calves I had witnessed in this herd be attributed to eagles? Conversely, how would changes in the numbers of elk migrating from Ya Ha Tinda affect the resident eagle population in Banff National Park? As I rode back, soggy and cold through Divide pass at the end of the day, my eyes were drawn upwards. There, in the sky high above the pass, I received an answer in the form of two golden eagles, perhaps the same pair, circling as if they had done so for eternity.



Mark watching the elk just before their encounter with the golden eagles.

Ya Ha Tinda Elk and Wolf Project Update, Winter 2005

In early **December 2004**, we completed the wolf component of the study, with the removal of the last of the 5 wolf GPS Collars deployed to collect data from radiocollared wolves in the 5 study packs, the Ranch, Cascade, Red deer, Wildhorse, and Bow Valley wolf packs. Of the 9 GPS collars recovered this fall from the study, we have released 7 of these wolves without GPS collars, marking the end of the wolf component of the project, and for the first time ever, releasing 7 of the 9 wolves back to the wild without wolf collars - they are presently enjoying being 'collar' free, and this marks the first time this has been done as part of wolf research in the Rockies.

Please visit our website at http://ursus.biology.ualberta.ca/yhtelkwolfproject/ to see photos of the wolf release, find out more about the wolf research findings, Banff wolf population sizes, view some of the GPS data, download reports and research updates, and, find out about upcoming talks (e.g. CPAWS Calgary, Feb 7th).

Over the next 2 months, we will be completing the elk research component of the project, moving to only monitoring survival of the remaining collared elk. As the field research component winds down, I have been accelerating data analysis at the University of Alberta. The next 10 months will be filled with analysis and I am excited at the stories and insights these data will reveal for my research at Ya Ha Tinda and indeed, about the ecology of the entire park. Please continue to check our website for updates about my research.

Contact information Mark Hebblewhite, 780-492-0083.

ISSUES

We have not covered a lot of issues in this edition of the newsletter but that certainly is not because they all have disappeared. Here are just a few of the ones we – and you – should be keeping an eye on over the months to come:

- Long range planning processes for the downhill ski areas in the park
- Decommissioning and closing of the Banff airstrip
- Proposed expansion of helicopter activity from a base east of Saskatchewan Crossing
- The Trans Canada Highway Project west of Castle Junction
- The Lands Adjacent to the Town of Banff planning process
- The Town of Banff Community Plan review process
- The need for constant vigilance to ensure viable wildlife corridors in the Town of Canmore and the M.D. of Bighorn
- Proposed Jumbo Glacier Resort in the Columbia Valley

You call this pruning, part II

Dungbeetle

An article in the last BVN newsletter reported vandalism along Vermilion Lakes Road where limbs had been torn and shredded from trees and unceremoniously dumped into the road's gutter. As promised, BVN reported the incident to the authorities. These actions, under the guise of "pruning" to protect the light-bars of snowplows and other highway equipment, were indeed perpetrated by authorized personnel. Thanks to other public servants however, the broken limbs have now been pruned properly. We truly hope that similar incidents don't occur again.