

# FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

BOW VALLEY NATURALISTS  
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### COMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

BVN's 2016-2017 evening speaker series starts Tuesday of October 25 and takes us through to our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday events in March and April. Admission is free. Donations at the door. Mark your calendar and join us on the [dates below!](#)

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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 remind them that they work for you.



**A LAST BIT OF GREEN** – This caterpillar was found crossing a Rocky Mountain hiking trail among melting snow and golden larches on a cold, late September, afternoon. If you can tell us the species please let us know!

[WWW.BOWVALLEYNATURALISTS.ORG](http://WWW.BOWVALLEYNATURALISTS.ORG)

1967 - 2016

Ecosystem Protection And Education

# PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

## 2016-2017 EVENING PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Our program of free presentations occurs on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Banff Seniors Centre starting at 7:30 pm. Watch the "[Events](#)" tab on the BVN web site for the beautiful posters advertising these special social and informative evenings!

October 25

Bison Restoration In Banff National Park with Karsten Heuer.

November 22

Confirmations of Whirling Disease in more National Park streams continues. Paul Christensen, Senior Fisheries Biologist with Alberta Environment and Parks will take explain the ecology and update the status of this parasite.

January 24

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society continues to work hard for wilderness protection across Canada including our National Parks. A representative from CPAWS will update us on their activities and results of some of their research.

February 28

National parks and protected areas serve as landscapes where ecosystem and species evolution can continue without influence from human activity. Step back and look at the big picture with Jessica Madeleine Theodore from the University of Calgary as she discusses mammalian evolution after the dinosaurs.

March 28

Join us for presentation about a good ol' fashioned family canoe trip - Dan Clark and his family in the Arctic.

April - Do not miss this special 50th anniversary event with the specific date to be confirmed.



## 2016 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

BVN's 41<sup>st</sup> annual Banff-Canmore Christmas Bird Count will be on Saturday, December 17th. The count is followed by a potluck supper at the Banff Seniors Centre where results are compiled and stories exchanged about the day's activities. [Contact](#) us if you would like to participate in this fun citizen science event.

This Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*) should have been somewhere east of Manitoba but Ethan Denton spied it on September 25<sup>th</sup> in Canmore, one of only five records for the Alberta Rockies. What avian treats will be revealed on Christmas Count day? *E. Denton photo.*

# NEWS AND ISSUES

## SUNSHINE SUMMER GONDOLA AGAIN

After a break of many years Sunshine Village ran the gondola and Mount Standish Express chair lift on summer weekends this year. This effectively extends the Sunshine Road to the top of Mount Standish facilitating full visitor access into the core of the backcountry along the Great Divide. With the change in level of use on the Sunshine Road that may be expected as this visitor opportunity takes hold the distance between high-use mechanized access points across this part of the Yellowstone to Yukon Corridor is cut in half and reduced to about 15 kilometres.

To add insult to wildlife corridor injury, the Sunshine Meadows area is recognized in the Banff Park Management Plan as the most insecure grizzly bear habitat after the townsites. Signs of grizzly bear foraging habitat, including diggings, are common beside the trail shortly after getting off the chairlift. Why are we encouraging larger volumes of people in this area? It can only lead to conflicts with wildlife.

According to the 2010 Park Management Plan:

- “The Healy Creek/Simpson Pass/Ball Pass area is an important regional wildlife-movement corridor connecting the Bow and Vermilion valleys;
- Wildlife use is expected to increase as habitat improves in Kootenay National Park as a result of the extensive forest fires in 2003;
- The Healy Creek drainage provides important seasonal grizzly bear habitat, and pockets of high-quality habitat are associated with many of the cirque basins and wet meadows along the divide;”

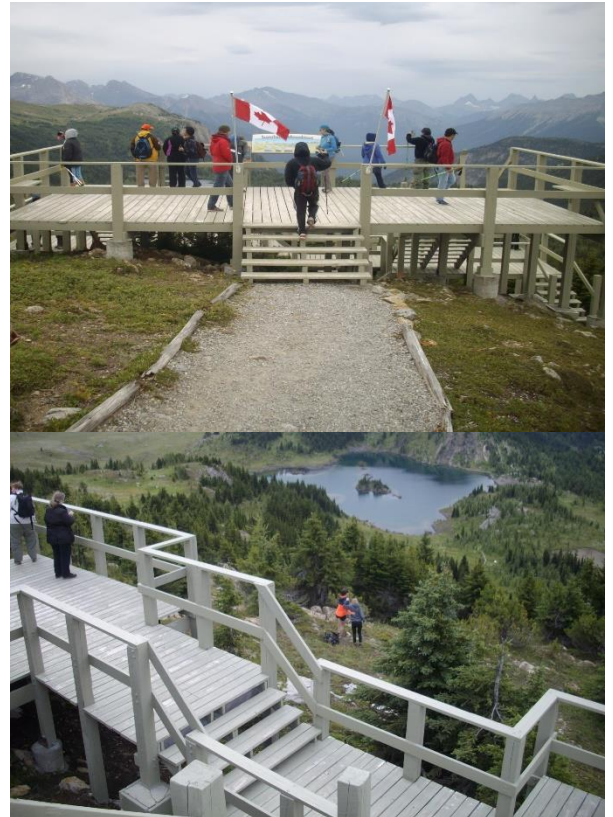
And

“Parks Canada’s Ski Area Management Guidelines will guide all future ski area development at Sunshine ski area, including summer use.”

Sunshine is the only ski area in Banff and Jasper National Parks that does not yet have updated management guidelines in place to guide this major new development - so why is it happening?

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE STANDING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Bow Valley Naturalists noted with interest that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development made a formal trip to Banff and Jasper National Parks in late September. They met privately with local federal and municipal representatives as well as representatives of commercial businesses and business associations. No individual members of the local public or groups that focus specifically on ecosystem education and protection were included in their visit. No notes were taken during meetings and no record was made of people who actually attended the meetings. The Lake Louise Ski resort has sent a thankyou letter to the Committee for the attention they received and this may give the public some insight into the business that was discussed during their meeting with the Committee. Their letter is posted on the [Committee website](#) along



The upper and lower viewing platforms in Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park, British Columbia leading gondola riders into the Sunshine Meadows trail network from the top of Standish Express chair lift. *P. Duck photo.*

with a submission by BVN and many others. The way in which this Committee conducted its business in Banff and Jasper Parks seems a little less like sunny ways and a little more in the shade.

## **CANMORE MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

In a letter to the Town of Canmore BVN has supported the Town's stance on development adjacent to the wildlife crossing structure near Dead Man's Flats as well as a policy requiring an environmental impact statement for any new development in a wildlife corridor. The BVN letter reiterated that we reside in a narrow valley with significant development and use pressures noting that wildlife in the Bow Valley is under constant pressure from loss of habitat and displacement from recreational users. Politicians naturally prefer to compromise but compromises on wildlife corridors do not create win-win situations. Wildlife corridors either function or they do not. BVN emphasized that, in order to ensure functionality, decisions by politicians need to be based on the best science available. The BVN letter strongly supported the efforts of BowCord to encourage the Town enshrine these concepts in the MDP.

## **BANFF TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

The Town of Banff now has a consultant's long term transportation study on its desk. Unfortunately, the 89 page report is a complex document making it very frustrating to respond to the public survey about the options it proposed. The assumptions about Banff facing continued vehicle and other serious problems related to continuing growth pressures are particularly troubling. In spite of all the good words in various documents over time about needing to recognize Banff's place in a National Park and World Heritage Site we seem to muddle on through time assuming growth is a great inevitable beast that controls us instead of the reverse. If the solutions to the townsite's long term transportation problems use adapting to more growth as the basic assumption then they will be short term solutions. Only by staring down growth itself will it be possible to find creative, long-term solutions that do not require, stepping on more of the natural systems that surround the town.

It was encouraging to see that the Town received 52 pages of survey responses that included many public comments about respecting Banff's National Park setting. Town Council deserves a vote of thanks for formally adopting these comments along with consultant's Long-Term Transportation Study as a guide to help inform decisions about transportation options for Banff.

# **OF WILD THINGS**

## **WHIRLING DISEASE**

It was disappointing to hear that whirling disease has been identified in Banff National Park. We continue to learn more about this new intrusion into our aquatic systems as federal and provincial staff work hard to understand its extent in the region and implication for ecosystems and park users. BVN has dedicated its November 22<sup>nd</sup> evening presentation to Whirling Disease with a presentation by Paul Christensen who is a senior fisheries biologist with Alberta Environment and Parks. Please join us then and in the meantime visit the [aquatics management](#) section of Banff National Park's website for updates and information.

## **HIGH ELEVATION SPECIES 2016**

Our citizen science database contains 395 observations of HELS species for the year 2016. This is below typical numbers and comes from relatively few observers so we know there is much more potential for people to report observations of Ptarmigan, Goats, marmots and Pikas. The 2016 records come from as far as the Coast Range, Okanagan region, Columbia Mountains and from Amethyst Lake to Waterton Park in the Rockies. The season is not over yet! Get registered on the [HELS section](#) of the BVN web site and help make our data base a robust source of valuable information about these special species.

## A MAPS NEOPHYTE *Colleen Campbell*



Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichans*) about to be released after contributing to science through BVN's MAPS project. MAPS reports and more pictures on the BVN web site.

*B. Gordon photo.*

One summer evening I opened an email with a request for help at MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorships) a couple of days hence. In spite of my relatively new habit of sleeping until about seven, I made my way to the MAPS site. So rare, driving along the Bow Valley Parkway when there is no traffic! Peter showed me the trail and headed to work (OK, it wasn't really early!) and I walked into a new experience and one of the highlights of my summer. Ken, Cyndi, and Peter willingly and patiently initiated me to the recording tasks while waiting the next walkabout to the mist nets. And then, little birds in nets and a modest sense of urgency to ease their anxiety. Every tiny creature we caught stole my heart. I am not a birder and do not remember the species. I do remember the delicacy, the colours, the variety of feathers on tiny wings and bodies and the absolute perfection of each wee thing. I was constantly impressed by the gentle handling and identification of details such as of age and species, whether it was a brooding female or a male, band numbers and sometimes a bit of history of an individual bird that had been caught at another time. During one of our many trips out to the nets Ken and I spooked up two different black bears who were very keen to avoid us. This was a good reminder that we were working in the home of the wild things. Unlike my long-term commitment to other wildlife projects, my helping at a single MAPS morning was essentially "hit and run". When we were done for the day, I knew I had been helpful and I was excited that I had encountered (yet more) perfect wild creatures. I had a smile that lasted all day. It was also a treat to be in the company of dedicated researchers and patient teachers. I will certainly find time to help again with MAPS.

# CONTACTS

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## 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.

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