

IN THIS ISSUE

COMING BVN PROGRAMS & EVENTS

BVN's 2018 monthly evening speaker series continues in January through April. Admission is free. Donations at the door. Mark your calendar and join us on the [dates below](#).

NEWS & ISSUES

[Do We Need Fireworks?](#)

[Do Bird Feeders Count in the Count?](#)

[Rogers Pass Redevelopment](#)

WILD THINGS

[A Bit About Bats](#)

[Do Birds Spread Fire?](#)

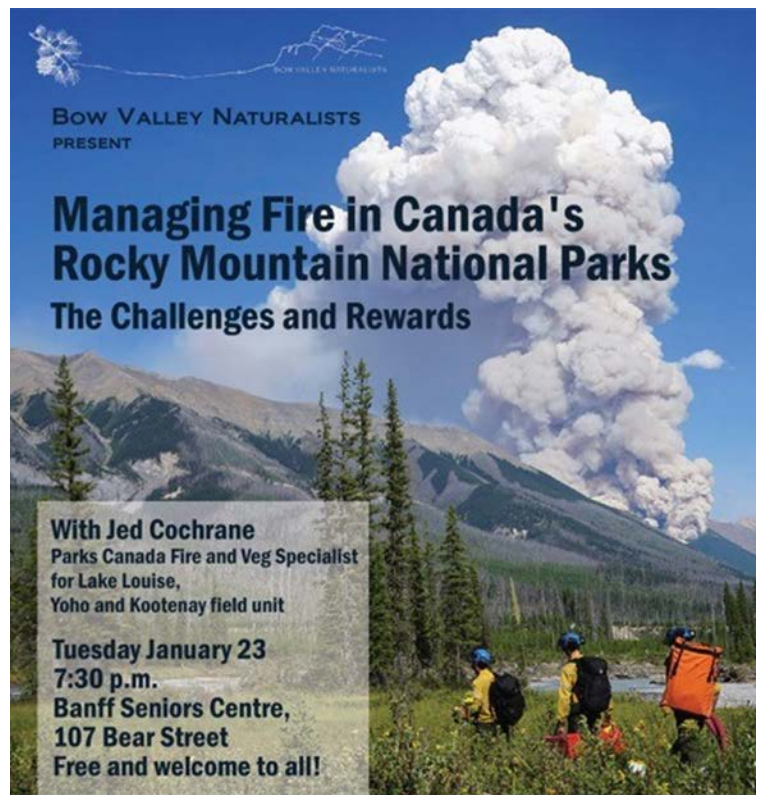
[Banff-Canmore Christmas Bird Count](#)

[BowKan Birders Christmas Bird Count](#)

[The Magnificent Nose Of A Dog](#)

BOOK REVIEW

[The Sweetness Of A Simple Life](#)



Bow Valley Naturalists
PRESENT

Managing Fire in Canada's Rocky Mountain National Parks

The Challenges and Rewards

With **Jed Cochrane**
Parks Canada Fire and Veg Specialist
for Lake Louise,
Yoho and Kootenay field unit

Tuesday January 23
7:30 p.m.
Banff Seniors Centre,
107 Bear Street
Free and welcome to all!

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.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

2017 EVENING PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND OTHER EVENTS

Our program of free presentations occurs on the 4th 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!

January 23 Managing Fire in Canada’s Rocky Mountain National Parks, the Challenges and Rewards

The Bow Valley Naturalist speaker series will kick off 2018 by looking back on 2017’s very active wildfire season. Jed Cochrane, Parks Canada Fire and Veg Specialist for Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay field unit, will look back on the 2017 fire season and highlight the Parks Canada fire management program. Fires such as the Verdant Creek wildfire will be part of this talk.

Jed is a dynamic speaker who is passionate about fire ecology in our National Parks. He started his fire career in 1997 at 19, witnessing the dynamics of fire ecology first-hand as an initial attack crew member. Over the next nine fire seasons Jed returned to the mountains on a fire crew and completed a BSc in biology at the University of Victoria and an MSc in fire ecology at the University of British Columbia. After a stint as a national fire management officer in Calgary he took on his current role with Parks Canada. Jed’s time is spent overseeing operational response to wildfires, planning and implementing prescribed fires, mitigating/managing non-native plants and protecting/restoring rare and threatened ecosystems and native flora, such as Whitebark Pine.

This event is free and welcome to all. Tuesday January 23 at 7:30 at the Banff Senior Centre, 107 Bear St.

January 27 Parks Canada presents: Photo Moments with Amar. Poster at left.

February 27 Andrea Kortello returns to the Bow Valley from Nelson to keep us up to date on the wolverine research she’s been doing in BC.

March 27 Alex Taylor

April 24 Corrie Olsen will provide a presentation on bats in Alberta.



The poster is for a photography event titled "PHOTO MOMENTS" and "MOMENTS PHOTOGRAPHIQUES" featuring Amar Athwal. It features a photograph of a red fox in a snowy environment. The event is scheduled for Saturday, January 27, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. The cost is \$4.90 per person, payable at the door. The poster includes the event details in both English and French, along with the Parks Canada logo and the Canadian flag.

PHOTO MOMENTS with *Amar*
MOMENTS PHOTOGRAPHIQUES avec *Amar*

Saturday, January 27
7 to 9 p.m.
Cave and Basin National Historic Site
\$4.90 per person, payable at the door.

Le samedi 27 janvier
De 19 h à 21 h
Lieu historique national Cave and Basin
4,90 \$ par personne, payables à l'entrée.

Join local nature and wildlife photographer Amar Athwal as he re-visits some of his favourite photographic "moments" of the past year.
Joignez-vous à Amar Athwal, photographe de la faune et des images de la nature de la région, qui vous propose un retour sur certains de ses « moments » photographiques préférés de la dernière année.

Canada

NEWS AND ISSUES

DO WE NEED FIRE WORKS?

BVN is currently supporting the need to reconsider the use of fireworks displays in the Bow Valley. We recognize that fireworks has been the focal point of community celebrations for many years. However, with more and more protected area managers preventing or stopping this practice is it time for our communities and surrounding ecosystem managers to evaluate the appropriateness of fireworks in our setting? BVN does not pretend to be the experts on this issue but we are aware of research to show fireworks can have environmental effects that are not consistent with ecosystem protection values. Trauma to wildlife including impacts to the sensitive hearing organs of birds is a concern. BVN looks forward to hearing what information can be assembled by those promoting and managing these events and any recommendations that may be offered. If members have questions about BVN's perspective on this topic please drop us a line.



New Years 2018 fireworks above the Banff Administration Building. Heather Dempsey Photo

DO BIRD FEEDERS COUNT IN THE COUNT?

During the Christmas Bird Count BVN discourages participants from directly watching bird feeders and including the birds they see on feeders in their reports. During the recent count there seemed to be some questioning of this policy. After all, it's hard not to argue that the birds at the feeders are indeed present in the count circle on the count day. And what's the difference if you see the bird at the feeder or a few metres down the street? Why would we fail to include those observations in our data, especially when many CBC data sets across North America include bird feeder observations?

As an organization BVN must be aware of all the considerations at play in this situation and ensure that the policies and practices that direct our activities are consistent with how BVN represents itself and ecosystem values in a variety settings. Our Board will be reviewing this no-feeder observations policy for the Christmas Bird Count and we look forward to sharing the discussion with our members and future CBC participants.

ROGERS PASS REDEVELOPMENT

Parks Canada is currently in possession of the lease of the old Rogers Pass Hotel and intends to tear the existing building down. This building is currently in a poor unsalvageable state. In response to some stakeholders the Parks Canada Agency is soliciting feedback about what services should be offered at Rogers Pass. The following questions are being asked on the [park web site](#) and at the Rogers Pass Information Centre:

- What services and amenities, if any, would you like to see in Rogers Pass?
- During the summer months, there are currently three basic campgrounds (un-serviced sites) in Glacier National Park. Should there be other options to stay overnight in Rogers Pass? If yes, what kind of overnight options would you be looking for?
- In your opinion, what else can Parks Canada do to improve the visitor offer at Rogers Pass? Please share your vision of what the offer could look like.

Please visit the link above to get informed and then find the ["We want your input!"](#) button at the bottom of the page

to complete the survey and “let them know your mind”. This is a long way from the Bow Valley but national parks belong to all Canadians and we are continually reminded how regional ecosystems are connected. BVN hopes our members will speak strongly for ecosystem integrity and protection in this and other public consultation opportunities. BVN can provide more detailed background information on this project - info@bowvalleynaturalists.org.

OF WILD THINGS

FLAMES ON THE WING: A BIT ABOUT BATS - The amazing flying mammal. *Colleen Campbell*

Bats are a species we typically hear about only when a “bad” story is circulating - a story that panders to the myths about bats or presents an incomplete saga of some sort. Misinformation is so easy to spread. Bats are creatures we pay little attention to because we don’t usually notice them. They tend to forage at night and we do not.

Most people know that bats are mammals, the only true flying mammal, and their order, Chiroptera, is the second largest order of mammalian species. Bat species make up about 20 percent of all classified mammal species, worldwide. They are ecologically important. Knowing a little bit about them might charge our interest and might turn us into “bat champions.”

Why are they important? Bats species, approximately 1240 worldwide, work hard in several ecological niches.

- They are pollinators and they spread seeds through their foraging habits; some plant species such as the agave cactus would do very poorly without bats to carry pollen from one plant to another. Without agave, we would be without tequila.
- Many species of bat are insectivores and the wonderful little flyers spend the night eating mosquitos and other bugs that bug us.
- Bat dung, known as guano (as is bird dung), is rich in nitrogen; evidence suggests guano has been used intentionally for as long as 1500 years to enrich soils.
- Bats are also a source of food in some cultures. Populations of some species are seriously reduced due to this practice.

Bats do have eyes and, though many species have very poor vision, some see relatively well. However, most bats use echolocation to navigate or to target and snag an insect out of the air. Their ability to detect humans is extremely refined.

Bats have had a bad rap for a long time, in some cultures forever. They are maligned, subject of many “tales” and feature in few that praise their environmental importance. They are not known to attack us or even get tangled in our hair.

There is a poster showing mammals of the Mountain National Parks in the Parks Canada Information Centre in Field. The images are arranged by species, in alphabetical order and the first row shows bats, six different species: Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*), Long-legged Myotis (*Myotis volans*) and Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*). It has been hanging on the wall a long time. Parks Canada Resource Conservation personnel have confirmed that all six species continue to be present in the central Canadian Rockies.

An excellent book, the [Secret Lives of Bats: My Adventures With The World’s Most Misunderstood Mammals](#), by Merlin Tuttle was released in 2015. Tuttle has researched bats since he was in high school during the 1950s. He has spent his life working with bat researchers and volunteers all over the world. With a few careful words and facts about bats he has turned many a bat-hater into an advocate for their welfare. He even convinced Austin,

Texas to reconsider their relationship with bats and their presence in Austin is now part of the local tourism strategy.

The Secret Lives of Bats is filled with anxious and thrilling moments, discoveries, confrontations and successes. Like an excellent mystery, it is a “page-turner”, difficult to put down. It leaves the reader with a sense of wonder and the likelihood of future conversations about bats. It is also an easy book to shove into a shoulder bag to read while travelling or waiting for an appointment.

DO BIRDS SPREAD FIRE?

A January 10 article in the Calgary Herald by Richard Warnica reports that researchers in Australia are investigating observations of raptors assisting the spread of grassland fires. Apparently species such as Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*) have been observed carrying burning twigs and dropping them in unburnt areas ahead of a fire front and seemingly assisting fires to move beyond obstacles that fire managers assumed would stop or slow a fire’s spread. Work is continuing to try to provide more evidence and to determine if this behavior is intentional. These reports are consistent with reports of raptors congregating near active fires to take advantage prey that is either disabled by fire or more easily detected as prey tries to flee a fire front. BVN would be interested in hearing any reports of similar raptor behavior in our region. The original research by Mark Bonta et al., entitled Intentional Fire-Spreading by “Firehawk” Raptors in Northern Australia, is reported in the Journal of Ethnobiology 37(4):700-718. 2017.

BANFF-CANMORE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS (Summary Below)

SPECIES	#	SPECIES	#	SPECIES:	#
Mallard	39	American Three-toed Woodpecker	10	American Robin	CW
Common Goldeneye	15	<i>Woodpecker species</i>	1	Varied Thrush	1
Barrow’s Goldeneye	1	Northern Shrike	2	European Starling	2
<i>Goldeneye species</i>	1	Gray Jay	33	Bohemian Waxwing	75
Common Merganser	4	Steller’s Jay	4	House Sparrow	319
Ruffed Grouse	4	Blue Jay	11	Pine Grosbeak	120
<i>Grouse species</i>	1	Clark’s Nutcracker	31	Red Crossbill	17
Western Grebe	1	Black-billed Magpie	192	White-winged Crossbill	3
Rock Pigeon	128	American Crow	5	Common Redpoll	56
Killdeer	4	Common Raven	325	Pine Siskin	24
Wilson’s Snipe	1	Black-capped Chickadee	118	<i>Finch species</i>	CW
Bald Eagle adult	6	Mountain Chickadee	271	Lapland Longspur	1
Northern Goshawk	1	Boreal Chickadee	18	Song Sparrow	3
Great Horned Owl	2	<i>Chickadee species</i>	40	White-throated Sparrow	2
Northern Pygmy Owl	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	37	Dark-eyed Junco	1
Barred Owl	CW	White-breasted Nuthatch	3	<i>Sparrow species</i>	4
Belted Kingfisher	2	Brown Creeper	4	Rusty Blackbird	CW
Downy Woodpecker	8	American Dipper	26	American Goldfinch	CW
Hairy Woodpecker	2	Townsend’s Solitaire	23		

A total of 46 species were seen on the Day of the Count with four more seen during the Count Week (from the Wednesday before to the Tuesday after). Average is 43 species per count with the highest number of species being 54 counted in 2003. There were 2104 individual birds estimated to be counted in 2017 with 1854 being counted in 2016 and 4581 in 2015. One new species, an American Goldfinch, was seen inside the townsite of Banff on the day after the count. There were 82 participants, 53 in Banff and 29 in Canmore just less than last year's record number of participants. The weather was pleasantly cool and calm this year with very little snow on ground.

BVN thanks Heather Dempsey and Ethan Denton for organizing another successful count and potluck supper. To learn more about previous Bow Valley Counts and the larger context for North America and beyond visit the [BVN website](#).

BOWKAN BIRDERS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Cliff Hansen

All-in-all, we experienced very pleasant winter conditions for our count. Our count of 1150 individual birds, although higher than last year, was still below our average of 1306 birds (includes count-week birds). Overall numbers of birds are inordinately influenced by a few species that are normally found in flocks. The presence or lack of presence of flocking birds such as Waxwings, Snow Buntings, and Finches, often seen in numbers exceeding a hundred per flock, will define whether a count is high or low in numbers. On this count, the 100 Bohemian Waxwings (still below the average of 138), 290 Snow Buntings (average 149), and the 96 Pine Grosbeaks (average 76) brought our numbers up. Other flocking birds namely, Grey-crowned Rosy-finches (only 3 counted, average 144) and White-winged Crossbills (count 0, average 60) did not contribute to this count, hence a below average count.

Yet, after several weeks of REAL winter weather, I consider this to be a good count. Of more importance than total numbers is the number of species identified. On this count 33 species were reported. This is up from the 28 identified last year but still below our 26 year average of 35. On the good news side, the eleven species (includes the Bald Eagle, a count week bird in 2006) seen on all previous counts were again represented. One new species was reported. Four Cassin's Finches have found a supply of winter food at a home feeder. There were no count-week additions to this count.

Every count whether above or below average has highlights and this count was not different. The first Goshawk and Killdeer since 2011, the highest number of Bald Eagles (5 with three in one location) since 2001, the first Great Horned Owl since 2008, and our first Christmas count of the Cassin's Finch are our most notable highlights. Again our count includes a Steller's Jay, probably a refugee from one of last year's British Columbia forest fires. Lastly, and as in the past, several flocks of Snow Buntings provided entertainment for many observers.

THE MAGNIFICENT NOSE OF A DOG *Colleen Campbell*

Dogs have been long recognized for their keen sense of smell and many breeds are valued for their capacity to distinguish faint scent trails in difficult conditions. The list of their search targets is extensive: lost people, lost animals, lost belongings, cadavers and evidence at crime scenes, scenting for contraband, explosives, incendiaries and fire accelerants. Some dogs are trained to assist wildlife researchers, sniffing for scat, bat roosts or searching for quagga muscles on boats. Fortunately for dogs, African pouch rats and bees are replacing them to search for unexploded land mines. Dogs, able to smell subtle shifts in body chemistry that may indicate disease, are also employed in medical research.



Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*), Kevin Barker Photo

The key to all this canine cleverness is their complex nose; each nostril works independently and air is breathed into two chambers that contain moveable cartilage, tissues that support millions of scent-sensitive epithelial receptors. When a dog sniffs, incoming air is slowed in the nasal structures and about 15% of a dog's brain works to identify and interpret all that odiferous content. (Only about 1% of a human brain works to identify odours.) Breath is expelled through a separate path; the nares, slits on the sides of dogs' noses, and does not interfere with the recently absorbed odours.

Dogs truly experience the world through their noses. Though numbers vary breed by breed, the best sniffers have more than 300 million receptors in a surface area of 150 – 170 square centimetres. Even the shape of a good nose enables a dog to sniff around without bumping its chin.

In the mammalian class of animals there are two families of carnivora: feliformia and caniformia — cats and dogs. Here, we have only three members of the feliformia: cougars, lynx and bobcats. Caniformia, however, is well populated. Coyote, fox and wolf are obvious; black, bear, grizzly bear, skunks, raccoons, fisher, mink, short-tailed weasels, long-tailed weasels, pine marten, wolverine, otters and badgers are all regionally present. In the north Polar bear, true seals, eared seals and walrus are also present. All these species make use of their noses to find what they need. Each species has noses equipped to function with sensitivity similar to that of our domestic dogs. A grizzly bear is known to detect the smell of a carcass several kilometres upwind and to follow the airborne scent anticipating a food reward at the end of the journey.

So – what does this mean to us, other than that dogs are now working for us in a broad range of roles, all due to their super sensitive noses?

Our dog, on a walk familiar to us, will discover new information every time, “reading” all that is invisible to us: the trail of a coyote that trotted past during darkness, the hesitant explorations of a rabbit or a cat, other dogs and people — some friends, some not — whose scents are braided amongst all the other information or someone who stepped out of a truck wearing boots that recently tromped through a farmyard. Our dogs are constantly checking the “mail”. Every intake of breath offers a rich mix of new information and messages. We might become bored with the “same old walks” — our dogs do not.

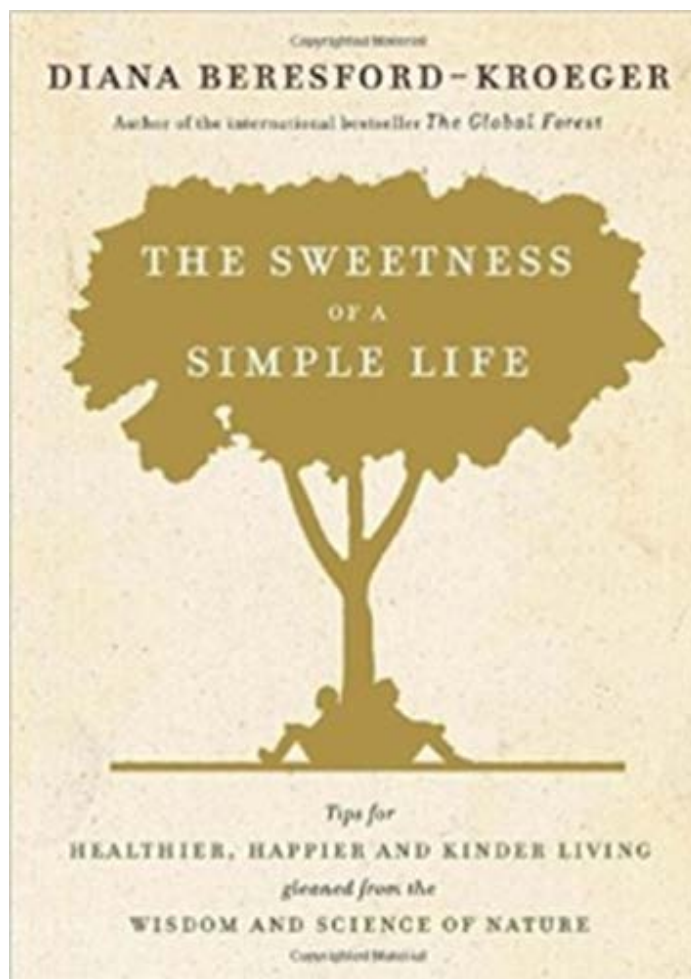
This information also gives us something to consider when we plan a hike — to take or not take out dog and under what conditions. Presence of a dog may attract a bear or a coyote. And all those “wild noses” will easily discern presence of hikers and any dog along for the trip. Some wild “cousin species” are territorial and may interpret a domestic dog as an interloper. For safety of everyone — human, pet dog, wild animals — we ought to keep “the pup” on a leash, keeping its scent along the trail mixed with our own. And leashed, your “pup” will neither sprint off to terrify or taunt a rightful resident nor run away in an anxious state of confusion and fear.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SWEETNESS OF A SIMPLE LIFE by Diana Beresford-Kroeger *Heather Dempsey*

Actually the full title of this book includes “Tips for HEALTHIER, HAPPIER AND KINDER LIVING gleaned from the WISDOM AND SCIENCE OF NATURE” This gives the reader a hint of what's in store for the next +300 pages. Divided into three parts: Health and Food, Home and Garden The Larger World, Beresford-Kroeger has penned over sixty short essays ranging from what chocolate and blood have in common, why dogs self-medicate by eating grass and learning to respect your local trees. These essays are chockfull of understandable scientific detail mixed with traditional lore and a pinch of storytelling, so that each one is a gem to treasure and chew on. I liken it to spending time with a remarkable family elder or neighbour who regales you with story after story full of fascinating detail, sometimes with a dash of drama and always with a moral to the story or piece of advice to follow at the end. And advice we should well follow to live well, simply and wisely.

Diana Beresford-Kroeger is well-known in Canada as a scientist, especially as a botanist and medical biochemist, especially regarding the healing properties of trees. But in her own words, she is a self-defined “renegade scientist” and is determined to reach over a billion people with her message that trees are critical for the planet’s survival as well as our own. To this end she’s also written *The Global Forest*, *Arboretum Borealis: A Lifeline of the Planet* and many related articles. Last year she was featured in a one-hour television documentary *Call of the Forest - The Forgotten Wisdom of Trees*. As a millennial project on the eve of the year 2000, she and her husband Christian Kroeger, totally on their own, propagated and distributed three quarters of a million seedlings of twenty-two species of trees whose genetics are in decline in Canada to reforest southern Ontario and beyond. Even the Hell’s Angels showed up for some free seedlings, understanding everyone needs to do their part and demonstrating how far and wide Beresford-Kroeger has reached with her messages. *The Sweetness of a Simple Life* is full of wisdom and fun. Enjoy.



CONTACTS

(Please let us know if you find any of these contacts need to be updated)

CANADA

Environment Minister
Catherine McKenna
Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

NDP Environment Critic
Linda Duncan
Linda.Duncan.c1@parl.gc.ca
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Opposition Environment Critic
Ed Fast
Ed.Fast@parl.gc.ca
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, LLYK Field Unit
llyk.superintendent@pc.gc.ca

Alan Fehr
Superintendent, Jasper National Park
Alan.Fehr@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
Dominic LeBlanc
Dominic.LeBlanc@parl.gc.ca
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