

CANADIAN WILDERNESS

A publication of  CPAWS • Spring 2006

A Park for South Okanagan?


Canada's only true desert needs true protection

Inside:

..... North American Bird Ambassadors

..... Great Canadian Canoe Quest

..... Capture the Wild Photo Contest

 **CPAWS**
CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY



SNAP

SOCIÉTÉ POUR LA NATURE ET LES PARCS DU CANADA



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Notre organisation nationale désire mieux répondre à vos besoins, en particulier en ce qui concerne la langue de publication de l'information.

Si vous désirez recevoir le prochain numéro du *Canadian Wilderness* avec l'encart francophone *SNAP : toute Nature*, contactez nous.

Merci de votre appui!

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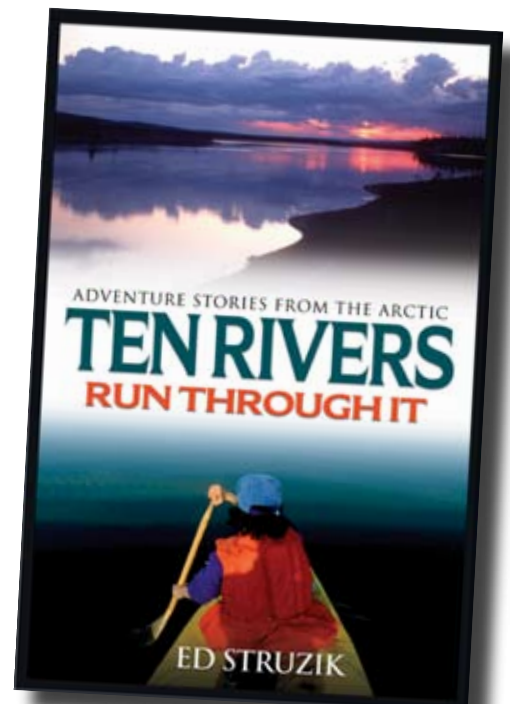
NEW IN THE CPAWS HENDERSON BOOK SERIES

For over 30 years, CPAWS has partnered with authors writing about parks and wilderness to bring readers the CPAWS Henderson Book Series. We're pleased to announce the newest book in the series: *Ten Rivers: Adventure Stories From the Arctic*.

Award-winning writer Ed Struzik takes the reader on a journey down 10 rivers in the Canadian North. Along the way, he describes the people, the landscapes, the wildlife and the history that continues

to make this part of the world such an inspiration to countless artists, writers, poets and adventurers. The North, Struzik reminds the reader, is not so much a place as it is a state of mind—a landscape that is an intriguing mix of myth and reality, science and neo-science, truth and error.

Ten Rivers Run Through It is published by Canwest books (www.canada.com/cwb/), and is available from booksellers across Canada.



**Canadian Wilderness
Spring 2006**

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In this issue:

Letter from the President	3
CPAWS at work across Canada	5
Postcards from Jay's Great Canadian Canoe Quest	8
Nahanni update	9
Capture the Wild photo contest	10
Boreal birds	12
Banff: 10 years of success and frustration	14
BC's Okanagan: Canada's living desert	16
Saving a Canadian icon from extinction	18
The Ontario Parks Act of our dreams?	19

On the cover: The burrowing owl has nearly disappeared from BC's Okanagan Valley. A national park protecting its unusual habitat could bring the owl back from the brink of local extinction. Find out what CPAWS is doing on page 16. Photo by Wilf Schurig.

Above: "Dawn at Bow Lake", Banff National Park, AB. This photo by Peter Dettling is a past winner in CPAWS Calgary's Capture the Wild photo contest. For a sample of this year's winners, see pages 10 and 11.

CPAWS welcomes major partner



Canada's largest retail co-operative, and premier provider of quality products and services for self-propelled outdoor recreation, is now a more important CPAWS' partner than ever.

Building on our recent joint efforts to promote wilderness conservation through events including the 2003 *Boreal Rendezvous* canoe trips, the 2004 *True North Wild and Free* speaking tour, and 2005-06's *Nahanni Forever* tour, CPAWS and

Mountain Equipment Co-op will be working together even more in coming years to advance conservation of Canada's publicly-owned wilderness lands and waters.

Both MEC and CPAWS are dedicated to a vision for the protection of Canada's public wilderness lands and waters that can serve as a model for the world, and set a new and inspiring standard for some of the last remaining wilderness landscapes on the planet.

Stay tuned for details about our partnership work in coming issues of *Canadian Wilderness*.

Notice of CPAWS' 2006 AGM

October 21, 3:30 PM
Delta Bow Valley
Calgary, Alberta

You are invited to attend CPAWS' 2006 Annual General Meeting. Meet CPAWS staff and board, including the nominees for the National Board of Trustees.

Trustee nominees include:

Peter Zimmerman
Sherri Watson
Mary Granskou

Please visit www.cpaws.org/agm/ for further meeting details, future nominees, and nominee biographies.

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Nahanni National Park Reserve, photo by Harvey Locke

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring marks a time of growth and renewal in nature, and within CPAWS too. In keeping with this spirit, and after extensive internal review, we've adopted a bold conservation vision to guide our next decade of work. Our goal is that Canada will set a new global standard for the health of the planet by protecting at least half of our remaining wilderness, and managing development for the highest level of sustainability in remaining areas.

Building on our 45 years of experience, our priorities are:

- Ensuring that all of Canada's **parks and protected area** networks are well managed for future generations.
- Protecting at least 50% of the **Boreal** region, home to some of the largest remaining forests on earth.

- Creating a network of protected mountain ecosystems from the **Yukon down to Yellowstone Park.**
- Creating wilderness corridors from Ontario's **Algonquin Park to New York State's Adirondacks and within the eastern Appalachians.**
- Protecting Canada's coastal **marine ecosystems and large freshwater lakes.**

The CPAWS staff family is also renewing itself. This spring we were delighted to welcome **Jacques Gérin** as Interim Executive Director. Jacques is one of Canada's most respected environmental leaders and has worked closely with CPAWS in the past as Chair of the Panel on Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks.

Jacques replaces **Timothy Feher**, whom we thank for his hard work during his two year tenure. In collaboration with our national trustees and chapters, Timothy developed a growth strategy that has created genuine excitement in CPAWS and with our conservation partners.

Several other talented staff have recently joined the CPAWS team. **Gillian McEachern** became National Conservation Manager in November, focusing on our Boreal Program. **Donna Baxter** has more recently joined as Director of Finance and Administration, and **Emily Smith** as Interim Office Manager.

Last November, we bid farewell to **Tim Gray** who left CPAWS after 15 years of service, most recently as our National Conservation Director. Tim made an invaluable contribution to CPAWS, in recent years leading the development of our Boreal program and new conservation vision.

Finally, Finance Manager **Don Davidson** has departed, leaving behind a tremendously improved accounting and financial management infrastructure.

On behalf of the Board, my sincere thank you to departed staff, and welcome to new!

Stephanie Cairns



*“Ode to the World” by Joyce Majiski,
from Yukon’s Three Rivers art exhibit.
Photo by Cathy Archbould/CPAWS*



CPAWS AT WORK ACROSS CANADA

YUKON

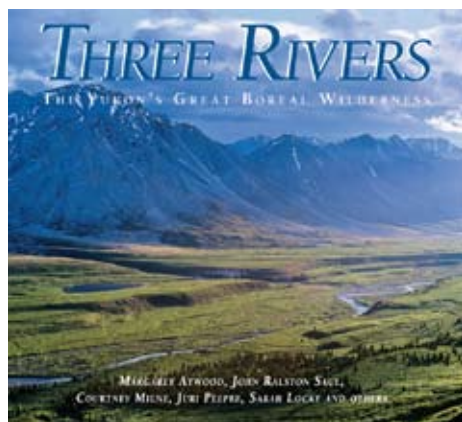
CPAWS-Yukon’s Juri Peepre is touring with the Three Rivers multimedia show, book and art exhibit. The show visited eight communities in British Columbia’s interior this winter.

The *Three Rivers: wild waters, sacred places* art exhibition was at the Kelowna Art Gallery until early April, and re-opens at the Art Gallery of Peterborough, Ontario, on May 26th, with a multi-media presentation scheduled at the gallery for May 24th. The book, *Three Rivers: the Yukon’s Great Boreal Wilderness* (Harbour Publishing, 2005) will be available at the Three Rivers show. You can also purchase it online at cpawsyukon.org/store.

More than 300 participants at the Kelowna show responded enthusiastically to the Three Rivers story, commenting on the stunning landscape and wildlife imagery, com-

bined with video clips featuring the people and music of the journeys. Public comments focused on the emotional impact, beauty, diversity and symbolism of the exhibition.

CPAWS-Yukon thanks the Kelowna Art Gallery, CPAWS-BC, Kamloops Naturalists, North, Central and



South Okanagan Naturalists, Wildsight, and Bulkley Valley Naturalists for co-hosting the BC interior events.

Watch for a national roll-out of the Three Rivers tour later this year.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

CPAWS-BC has long supported the 1972 moratorium on north-south oil tanker traffic through the fragile coastal waters of BC. The coastal waters are again at risk due to a **proposed crude-oil pipeline** from Alberta to B.C.’s northern coast. Besides cutting a 40-metre wide swath through 1150 kilometres of northern ecosystems, causing habitat loss, disrupting wildlife movement, and fragmenting protected areas, the Enbridge Inc. project would involve construction of a marine terminal for huge oil tankers in Kitimat.

If the moratorium is lifted, Enbridge plans to send six or seven tankers of oil from Kitimat each month. Three quarters of British Columbians support the moratorium. Find out how you can help keep our straits oil-free at www.cpawsbc.org.

NEWFOUNDLAND

CPAWS Newfoundland has recently initiated three conservation projects: the **Protected Areas Steward Program**, an Economic Impact Study of **Butter Pot Provincial Park** and the **Marine Protected Areas Education Campaign**.

The Chapter is also very active as an advocate, as recently demonstrated in the NAP “Wake Up” Letter Campaign to convince the Provincial Government to release the long-awaited natural areas plan (provincial protected areas strategy).

A new chapter Board of Directors was elected in January 2006 and it consists of an exciting mix of youth and experience. In 2006, the Chapter will be working with local residents and marine experts to identify special coastal and marine areas.



QUEBEC

Over 12,000 people marched in the streets of Montreal on Earth Day in April for the largest environmental protest in Québec’s history. This massive demonstration was sparked by a government plan to sell 11 % of **Mont Orford Park** to private interests.

The land to be sold is currently under lease as a ski centre and a golf club. In addition, developers would like to build over 1,000 housing units at the base of the mountain.

Mont Orford Park was created in 1938 with land donated to the Québec government under the condition that it be protected forever. The Québec Parks Act’s primary objective is permanent protection of land, prohibiting any sale. The Québec government has introduced special legislation to override the Act. CPAWS fears that this breach in the Parks Act could set a dangerous precedent, jeopardizing the integrity of Québec’s parks network.

SNAP (CPAWS) Montreal has joined with other groups in Québec to form SOS Orford, a mass coalition fighting to safeguard the park.

Over 12,000 people joined SNAP (CPAWS) Montreal in protesting the sale of a portion of Mont Orford Park. Image: SOSparcorford.org

NEW BRUNSWICK

CPAWS-NB is hosting free “**Protected Area Day**” events in several New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas this spring to help spread an environmentally-respectful recreation message. At each event there will be a chance to meet local advisory committee members and CPAWS staff, view displays, participate in guided hikes, prize draws and picnics. CPAWS is partnering with the NB Department of Natural Resources and three protected area local advisory committees for the following events:

Saturday, June 3
Jacquet River Gorge
Protected Area Day

Saturday, June 17
Grand Lake
Protected Area Day

These events are part of CPAWS-NB’s Parkwatch program, aimed at encouraging responsible use of the province’s parks and protected areas.

For more information, or to sign up to attend, please contact CPAWS NB at 506-452-9902, or visit our site at **www.cpawsnb.org**.



SASKATCHEWAN

The North Central region of Northern Saskatchewan, encompassing the majestic **Churchill River**, has been the focus of a land use planning process for about five years. CPAWS SK has participated in this land use planning process since the beginning.

Today, the process is almost complete and the government is preparing to approve the plan. However, CPAWS, along with many other participants in the planning process, are trying to convince the province to improve the plan because they fear it fails to provide the protection for the long-term health of the region.

Research shows that the Churchill River is ecologically sensitive and easily damaged, yet the land use plan does not provide for its protection. Instead, the Churchill has been zoned for “sensitive management” - leaving this watershed wide open to industrial logging and mining.

The chapter has commissioned an expert review of the government plan and will be releasing research it completed with the local community. Please visit www.cpaws.org/action/churchill.php to learn more and send a letter in support of Churchill protection!

MANITOBA

CPAWS Manitoba has hired **Ron Thiessen** as its **new Executive Director**. Formerly director of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee’s Manitoba office, Ron has extensive experience working with Aboriginal communities, industry, government and the public to protect wilderness areas.

Hot off the presses, the chapter has just released the *Big Wild – East Side Lake Winnipeg* educational report and postcard. The materials make the case for creating a large, interconnected protected areas network and economically sustainable communities in the over 8 million hectares of intact boreal forest on Manitoba’s east side.

In addition, CPAWS Manitoba is ramping up efforts to work with First Nations and governments to establish the **Manitoba Lowlands National Park**.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

CPAWS-NWT continues to work towards a “conservation-first” vision for the North by moving a network of sites towards permanent protection in the **Mackenzie Valley and Mackenzie Mountains**. This balanced approach to land use calls for the protection of culturally and ecologically important sites ahead of large scale industrial development.

Activities for this summer and fall include: making the case for full watershed protection at the public consultations on the final boundaries for the **Nahanni National Park Reserve** expansion; emphasizing the importance of a network of interconnected protected areas at the Joint Review Panel hearings for the Mackenzie Gas Project; and celebrating the **10th anniversary of the NWT chapter**. There will be opportunities for members and supporters to get involved in our work and celebrations. Check our website for updates: www.cpawsnwt.org .

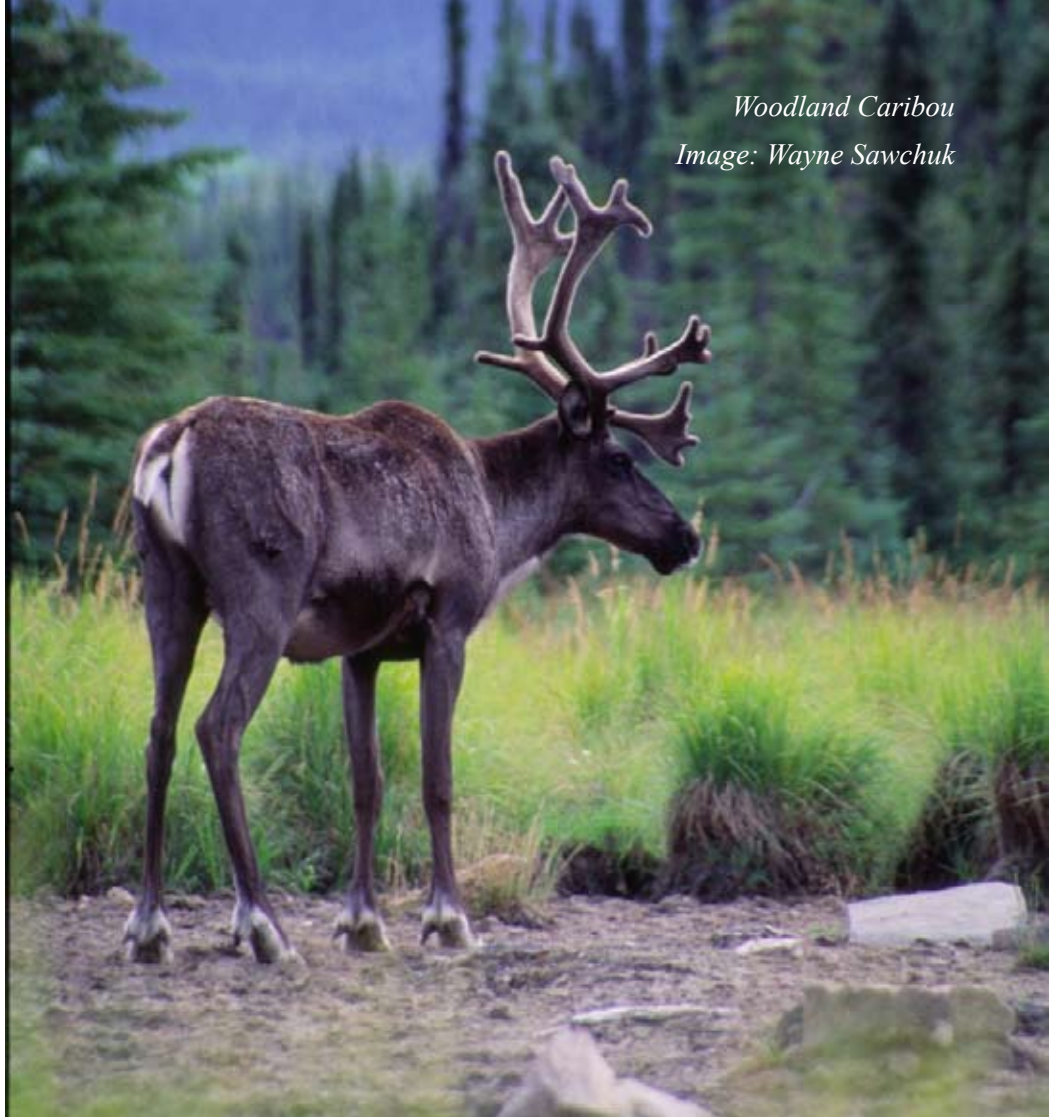
It's been nearly 40 years since CPAWS Ottawa Valley (OV) was founded out of concern for the future of **Gatineau Park**, the National Capital Region's largest and most popular nature retreat.

The chapter is pressing for strengthened regulation and management for the park, including greater investment in conservation science, monitoring and enforcement.

At over 350 km², Gatineau is one of the largest parks near a major city in Canada. While rich in biodiversity, the park is at a growing risk of ecological degradation from development pressure and the impact of 1.7 million visitors per year (expected to rise to two million by 2020). Gatineau Park's user density is about eight times that of Banff National Park, and about 20 times that of Algonquin Provincial Park.

CPAWS Ottawa Valley is working to ensure that Gatineau is permanently protected from incompatible development, and well-managed for nature and high quality nature experiences.

Look for a "state of the park" report from CPAWS-OV in late 2006!



Woodland Caribou
Image: Wayne Sawchuk

EDMONTON

The **Little Smoky woodland caribou herd** is one of the most endangered in Alberta. Industrial activities in their range have led to a serious loss of suitable habitat that is threatening the very existence of this herd.

The provincial government is moving very slowly on the caribou issue. The new Alberta Caribou Committee has had a few meetings, and finally is setting up a Range Team for West Central Alberta where the Little Smoky herd resides. However, more petroleum leases have been sold for this area, and West Fraser

continues to log in caribou range. Rather than dealing with the habitat issue, the government has decided to introduce a wolf kill. This is contrary to recovery team recommendations that such actions will only be effective if habitat needs are also being addressed.

CPAWS Edmonton is working to put pressure on government and industry by keeping the public informed, and helping them to communicate their opinions to Alberta's government. Over 2500 letters have been sent requesting habitat protection and planning for Alberta's caribou.

POSTCARDS FROM JAY'S

Great Canadian Canoe Quest

Follow CPAWS' Jay Morrison on his unprecedented quest to paddle and portage solo 8,000 km across Canada in one season as a personal challenge, and to support CPAWS' Boreal program.

Jay is blogging about his experiences daily as he travels from the Atlantic to Arctic oceans through Canada's majestic Boreal forest.

Read Jay's blog at cpaws.org!



Photo: Kelly Peskett

APRIL 9: LAUNCH DAY, LES ESCOUIMINS

"The coast is extremely rugged and pretty with pink granite outcroppings and the shallows are littered with boulders that were probably dropped by glaciers 10,000 years ago. I saw two seals and later, my first beluga... a good omen."

APRIL 13: NEWS CONFERENCE, QUEBEC CITY

"Things continue to go well. Today CPAWS Montreal held a press conference to promote the Dumoine River campaign. The timing could not have been better to take a day off the river as the forecast was rain with 70 - 90 km/hr wind gusts, in the face of course... So I was glad not to have to play the intrepid explorer today."



Photo: Derek Hill

P.S. - All contributions to honour Jay's voyage directly support CPAWS. You can contribute online at www.cpaws.org, or by phone at 1-800-333-WILD.

" The future of this country is going North, and it is time for a new Northern Vision, one of sustainable development that preserves the Arctic wilderness, protects wildlife and sustains a way of life for our indigenous peoples."

Right Honourable Brian Mulroney,
Former Prime Minister of Canada

True North Wild and Free?

By Alison Woodley

The next six months are critical to the future of wilderness and wildlife in a large part of Canada's North – the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories (NWT). With the biggest oil and gas and mineral exploration rush in Canadian history underway, community-based work to protect important ecological and cultural lands is at risk of being left in the dust by the economic boom.

Conflict over land use in the Territory is growing, as industrial exploration permits are issued in some of the same areas identified by northern communities for conservation. Without strong political and public support for conservation in the NWT, one of the world's greatest remaining opportunities to achieve a balance between conservation and development could be lost.

There is a common sense way to resolve the growing traffic jam of industrial allocations and conservation proposals in the NWT. To start, regional land use plans, whose very purpose is to guide what happens on the landscape, need to be completed before any more industrial permits are issued. Land use plans are being prepared in most of the Territory

and are close to completion in some areas, such as the Dehcho Region. Completing and approving these plans before making industry allocations, would help all sides avoid conflict and court battles in the future.

Second, areas that have been identified by communities for protection must be respected and set aside before industry allocations are made. The expansion of *Nahanni National Park Reserve* and the protection of *Sahoyúé-?ehdacho* on Great Bear Lake are just two examples of protected areas proposals where CPAWS is working with local First Nations communities to achieve common conservation goals.

CPAWS will be urging the new federal government, and in particular the new Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Jim Prentice, to seize this globally significant chance to do things right for wilderness, wildlife and people of the North while there's still time.

Alison Woodley is Northern Conservation Specialist for CPAWS.

Photo: Mike Beedell/CPAWS

Nahanni: Jewel of the North

Last fall, CPAWS and our special guests toured Canada with an 18 city *Nahanni Forever* tour, highlighting the conservation opportunity in the Nahanni, and the threats posed by mining proposals. Attended by over 3,500 people, the tour highlighted the incredible passion that this magnificent northern wilderness generates among Canadians from all across the country.

Starting this summer, Parks Canada will host public consultations on expanded boundaries for Nahanni National Park Reserve. To ensure full watershed protection, it is important that the federal government hears a strong chorus of support from Canadians, both in person at meetings, and through letters of support.

We will post information about how you can get involved at www.cpaws.org, or call Alison Woodley at 1-800-333-9453 ext.227.

CPAWS thanks our special guests and sponsors who supported the *Nahanni Forever* tour, including MEC, Nahanni River Adventures, and Delta Hotels.



Capture the **WILD**

Deadline for entries:
September 8, 2006

Learn more and read the full contest rules at www.cpawscalgary.org/capturewild/

CPAWS-Calgary/Banff's Photography Contest is now in its 8th year! Designed to raise awareness and funds in support of Alberta's wild spaces, CPAWS invites photographers of all ages and all parts of Canada, to capture the beauty of Alberta, and the world of nature beyond.

A few of 2005's winners

Above:
Bighorn Close-up
Jasper AB
Peter Dettling
Grand Prize winner

Upper Right
Karst Soaring Creek
Kananaskis AB
Peter Biro
Amateur, 2nd Place



inning photographs

Centre Right:
I See You (Grey Fox)
Cochrane AB
Robert Berdan
Alberta Wildlife, 2nd Place

Lower Right
Reflection
Mt. Assiniboine BC
David Wirzba
Amateur, 1st Place





BOREAL BIRDS

North America's conservation ambassadors

By Jeff Wells

The ruby-crowned kinglet (Regulus calendula) is one of hundreds of bird species that rely on the boreal.

Photo: Marty DeAngelo

It's a March morning in Florida. Palm tree fronds rustle gently in the breeze. Small lizards skitter across the dry leaves. Ruby-crowned Kinglets nervously flit through the Spanish moss-draped live oaks searching every nook and cranny for insects.

A Palm Warbler flies across a narrow canal where an alligator's eyes and narrow snout seem to float on the surface of the black water. High above, a flock of White Pelicans strokes northward across the powder-blue sky.

In the Athabasca of northern Saskatchewan the ground is still covered with snow. The rivers and streams of the Manitoba lowlands are frozen. The Boreal forests of northern Quebec and Ontario are quiet except for the wind buffeting the tall spruces.

The warm, sunny South. The thawing North. What they have in common are birds. And lots of them. Three billion birds of over 300 species to be specific. That's how many birds begin streaming north each spring on their way back to the Boreal, some from winter locales as far south as Chile and Argentina.

The Boreal forest region stretching from Alaska and Yukon east across Canada to Newfoundland and Labrador is settled by massive numbers

of birds come June. When the snow is gone and insects have begun hatching in dizzying abundance in the Boreal's forests, wetlands, bogs, alder swales, aspen parklands, and other habitat, these creatures are the food source that allows billions of birds to raise their young.

The tiny green Ruby-crowned Kinglets that seem to be in every live oak and shrubby backyard of Florida and the rest of the southeastern U.S. all winter will arrive in the edges of bogs and river in northern Quebec and Ontario in late May and early

Canada has the awesome responsibility of ensuring the well-being of the abundance of North America's migrant and wintering birds that generations of people have grown up assuming would always be there.

June. As many as 60 to 70 million Ruby-crowned Kinglets are estimated to breed in Canada's Boreal every year—over 75 percent of their total population!

The yellow-breasted Palm Warblers that spend the winter in south Florida and the Caribbean (millions of them) will soon fill the countless boggy wetlands of the Manitoba Lowlands, Athabasca and Churchill watersheds, and other parts of the Boreal with their sweet trills. Over 90 percent of the world's Palm Warblers breed in the Boreal.

Even many of the White Pelicans that grace the winter freshwater

wetlands of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and Mexico need the Boreal's lakes and ponds to nest and raise their young. Over 20 percent of North America's White Pelicans are estimated to breed in the wetlands of the Boreal. Over 80 percent of North America's Buffleheads and Common Goldeneyes—two duck species that rely on mature forest to provide the tree cavities they require for nesting—breed in the Boreal. Both winter largely within the U.S.

Many of the most familiar wintering

birds of the Americas are abundant because more than 70 percent of the Boreal forest is still ecologically intact. But even as kinglets and warblers and pelicans and ducks are winging their way north, many parts of the Boreal will no longer provide the habitat they need. Millions of hectares of Boreal forest are logged every year while industrial development from oil, gas, and mining is estimated to have already impacted over 45 million hectares of Boreal habitat. The impacts will only grow larger. Most of Canada's southern Boreal has already been allocated for forestry, development of the massive oil sands deposits of northern Alberta is increasing, and

hearings are underway on the proposed, 1,000-km pipeline through the Northwest Territories' Mackenzie Valley.

Many Boreal-breeding species arrive each spring from far beyond even the U.S. An estimated one billion Boreal breeders winter in the U.S. but two billion more winter in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Take the Cape May Warbler, for example. More than 90 percent of its population—an estimated three million—breeds in the Boreal but virtually all of these birds winter in the Greater Antilles of the Caribbean. The Blackpoll Warblers that sometimes fill the spruces of the Mackenzie Valley with their high-pitched songs, winter in the Amazon Basin of South America. Canada Warblers take up winter residence in the foothill forests of the northern Andes from Colombia south to Peru. Mexico's pine forests fill with millions of Yellow-rumped Warblers. The Boreal is thought to support between 80 and 180 million of the species.

Canada has the awesome responsibility of ensuring the well-being of the abundance of North America's migrant and wintering birds that generations of people have grown up assuming would always be there.

In response to the mounting industrial pressures on the Boreal, a coalition of First Nations, industry, and

Continued on page 20



10 YEARS IN BANFF

It was our first park, and continues to be the icon of the system for the millions of Canadians who have visited it.

By Dave Poulton

Banff National Park holds a unique position in Canada's national park system. It was our first park, and continues to be the icon of the system for the millions of Canadians who have visited it. For many Canadians their impression of what a national park is or should be has been forged in Banff.

While cherished, Banff is also the most examined, debated, mocked and praised of our national parks. Because of its key role in attracting tourists and their money to Canada and Alberta, it has long been at the forefront of the Canadian debate about when use and enjoyment of parks become abuse and degradation. As such, Banff has been a place where CPAWS has played a valued role in speaking for conservation interests. Working with other groups and conservation-minded Canadians, we have seen some solid

results in Banff in the past decade. The landmark Banff-Bow Valley study of the mid-1990's confirmed, after consulting with dozens of scientists and stakeholders, including CPAWS, that the ecological functions of the park were significantly impaired by the level and pattern of human development and use. It set the agenda for remedial measures, which CPAWS has worked to see implemented since.

One of the major challenges facing Banff wildlife is the ability to move through the lands of the Bow Valley in the vicinity of the Town of Banff. In part, this requires limits to the growth of the town. That was accomplished when the Banff Community Plan was finalized in 1998 after a very vigorous debate. That plan, which sets town boundaries and caps both the population and



commercial space, is currently open for public review. It is a great sign of forward movement that the vast majority of town residents now see the cap on growth as a positive feature of the community. (For more on this review process see <http://www.communityplan.banff.ca>.)

Across the Trans-Canada Highway from the Town of Banff lies a stretch of prime montane habitat which has been labelled the Cascade wildlife corridor. A decade ago the corridor was blocked by a fenced bison paddock, a cadet camp and an airstrip. The intervening years have seen the removal of the paddock and cadet camp, steps which CPAWS vocally promoted. Studies have shown that wildlife use of the corridor has increased dramatically. If the new federal government maintains resolve on this project, the decommissioning of the airstrip is expected in

the coming year, which will make the wildlife corridor even more functional. This project has set an important policy precedent for how we can learn from and remedy our past mistakes.

CPAWS has also worked with Parks Canada to develop innovative mitigation measures to address the cleaving of the Bow Valley by the Trans-Canada Highway. As the work of twinning the highway has proceeded, a more extensive system of larger wildlife crossing structures is planned for the highway in the Lake Louise region.

Buildings and vehicles are not the only issues in the park where we have seen some success in our conservation efforts. Slow but promising first steps have been taken in “human use management”, encouraging visitors to concentrate their

recreational activities in areas that can withstand them, and avoiding areas of greater sensitivity.

But, there are other areas where efforts to control development in the name of preserving nature in Banff park have been more frustrating. Ski areas in the national parks have defied a federal policy aimed at limiting their growth, and the annual toll of dead grizzly bears continues to dismay us all.

We have seen that CPAWS’ work can yield great benefits to our parks. But we also know that more efforts are needed, and we’re committed to making them for the sake of this historic park’s long-term future.

Dave Poulton is Executive Director of CPAWS Calgary/Banff.



Canada's Living Desert

by Karen Blinkhorn

Canada's only true desert deserves to be a one-of-a-kind national park.

The South Okanagan is one of the most ecologically diverse areas of Canada. The time is now to create a national park there, before it's too late to save threatened species. Located at the extreme south of the Interior Dry Plateau, characterized by rolling plains, deep narrow valleys, gorges, and long narrow lakes, this is Canada's only true desert ecosystem and home to over 30 per cent of BC's threatened and endangered species.

The diversity of the SOS region is incredible. Desert-like ecosystems

with sagebrush and cactus are found on valley bottoms, but as you climb up the valley walls you encounter dry forests of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir, and at higher elevations, sub-alpine forest and alpine tundra. Many native plants, animals and natural communities here are found nowhere else in Canada.

Humans have also lived here for thousands of years, and the cultures and histories of First Nations, early settlers, fur traders, ranchers, miners, and railway builders provide an important cultural aspect to the proposed park.

The South Okanagan has suffered many ecological losses already. The

burrowing owl is nearly extinct in BC, and the sharp-tailed grouse and white-tailed jackrabbit are extirpated from the province. More than half of the antelope brush ecosystems have been lost. Less than 10 per cent of historic grassland and rockface-grassland habitats for California bighorn sheep, pallid bats and prairie falcons remain.

Threatened and endangered species here include the American badger, the sage thrasher, the Western rattlesnake, and those found nowhere else in Canada, such as the flammulated owl, Lyall's mariposa lily and the Great Basin spadefoot toad.

The Interior Dry Plateau is one of the 12 natural regions in Canada not yet represented by a national park. In 2002, the federal government began looking for a candidate site to represent the region. One year later, Canada and British Columbia agreed to assess the feasibility of a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen (SOS). Since then, Parks Canada has been holding open houses, meeting with community groups, and collecting scientific and socio-economic data. The feasibility study is due in late 2007.

The SOS park proposal faces opposition from some groups, including hunters and ranchers, concerned that their traditional use of the land will have to be altered to accommodate a national park.

“These park opponents appear to believe blocking a national park will ensure their traditional uses of the land remain unchanged,” says wildlife biologist Bob Lincoln. “But this area is already facing unprecedented change and pressures for development. Our opportunities to protect natural areas are diminishing rapidly.”

“Social, economic, and environmental assessments will be critical

in showing both the trade-offs and benefits of establishing a national park reserve in the SOS region,” says Chloë O’Loughlin, Executive Director of CPAWS-BC. CPAWS will be producing an independent report on the economic implications of a national park in the South Okanagan later this year.

Benefits would include: enhanced environmental protection, benchmarks to help assess changes to natural environments, and increased economic opportunities, like nature-based tourism, to help diversify the economic base of small communities. Crown land tenure holders who are adversely impacted by the park could receive financial compensation. Any private land sales would take place on a ‘willing seller-willing buyer’ basis.

The time is now. CPAWS and its partners in the Okanagan – 11 local groups – believe a national park in the South Okanagan-Similkameen will protect natural environments, sustain the local economy, leave a lasting legacy for the future and protect many species at risk.

Karen Blinkhorn is the Communications Coordinator for CPAWS BC.

Landscapes Alive!

CPAWS-BC is joining with supporters and community groups this June to celebrate the unique landscapes of the South Okanagan and to explore the possibility of a new national park in this region.

The *Landscapes Alive* festival will be held June 16-17 in Osoyoos, with field trips and events held throughout the SOS feasibility study area. It will promote BC’s interior grasslands and the benefits SOS National Park Reserve would bring to surrounding communities.

People who come to *Landscapes Alive* will learn about these endangered species and much more. They’ll be able to explore the grasslands and ponderosa pine ecosystems with naturalists and biologists, try non-motorized watersports, attend talks, sleep in teepees, sing campfire songs, go on owl prowls, picnic, learn about the economics of gateway communities and hopefully, leave with a profound appreciation of the surrounding landscape and the potential for positive change with the establishment of South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve.

Visit cpawsbc.org for details.



Nova Scotia's mainland moose racing towards extinction

Without action from the Nova Scotia government, the province's only native moose are facing extinction.

By Scott Brown

With the proliferation of forestry roads and large-scale clearcutting in Nova Scotia's forests, the endangered mainland moose is at increasing risk of extinction. About 1,000 moose remain, but they are largely isolated from one another in pock-

ets of the remaining remote and unroaded habitat left on the mainland, and can no longer adequately interbreed.

Moose on mainland Nova Scotia are the province's only native moose. Cape Breton's current moose population are descendents of 18 moose imported from Alberta in the 1940s, because the island's native moose were completely extirpated by the early 20th century.

A team led by the N.S. Department of Natural Resources is now

developing a recovery plan, but no conservation groups have been invited to participate. Although addressing habitat can be politically controversial, CPAWS NS believes it is fundamental to recovery of the species. The chapter is organizing people and presenting information in a non-confrontational way to the Moose Recovery Team. Local media have reported extensively on our work on the plight of moose, helping to raise awareness further.

Our project focuses on the need for habitat connectivity, and documents the adverse impacts to wildlife caused by roads, including logging roads. This is the first campaign in Nova Scotia to emphasize the disturbance and damage to wildlife posed by forestry roads and their use.

We are anxiously waiting to see if the soon-to-be released recovery plan seriously addresses habitat issues. We believe that moose recovery will be a standard feature of the land management debate in Nova Scotia for a long time to come, and we intend to keep speaking out for this Canadian icon's protection.

Learn more and find out how you can help at www.cpawsns.org/moose.

Scott Brown is a conservation consultant for CPAWS Nova Scotia.



Will Ontarians get the Parks Act of their dreams?

by Janet Sumner

Sand River, Lake Superior Provincial Park. Photo: E. Ferrari/CPAWS

After 50 years of being one of the worst in the country, a new, improved Ontario Parks Act is close to becoming law.

CPAWS Wildlands League is leading the effort to convince Ontario to become a leader in legislation that protects parks' ecological integrity.

Last fall we saw the long-awaited introduction of *Bill 11—The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*. While the new legislation meets some of our expectations for a parks act that puts nature first by requiring that parks are managed to protect their ecological integrity, in our view it still leaves too many doors open to environmental harm.

For example, one of the greatest threats to a park is what happens outside its boundaries. Mines, forestry operations, farms and facto-

ries all affect the balance of nature for miles in any direction. Bill 11 is completely silent on how to ensure we have good neighbours surrounding our parks. We're looking for an Act that will regulate good management of greater park ecosystems both within and outside of the actual park boundaries.

Logging, mining and hydroelectric development have no place in protected areas if the intent is to protect their ecological integrity. With over 90% of crown land available for industrial uses, some places need to be free of these types of harmful activities—parks are those places.

Under the new bill, we're pleased that industrial development will generally be prohibited in parks and conservation reserves. However, there are several exceptions, most troublesome being the one that allows logging in Algonquin Provin-

cial Park to continue. Needless to say, logging is a threat to the ecological integrity of Algonquin. We are recommending that the government legislate the phasing out of industrial logging in the park to protect Algonquin forever.

The next few months are crucial in making Bill 11 the "Parks Act of our dreams". We need your help to make this happen. Please add your voice to ours and speak with your MPP, make a phone call or send a letter, so the premier knows how much you care about Ontario's parks. Visit our web site at www.wildlandleague.org for more information. Make this the year that Ontario gets parks legislation that truly protects the ecosystems of our province for generations to come.

Janet Sumner is executive director of CPAWS-Wildlands League.

Continued from page 13

non-profit organizations (including CPAWS) has developed the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework that lays out recommendations for ensuring the ecological integrity of this globally important ecosystem. One of the key recommendations of the Framework is to increase the protected areas of the Boreal from their current level of less than 10 percent to at least 50 percent—a level that scientists suggest is necessary for maintaining ecological functions and self-sustaining populations of all wildlife. CPAWS' work in the Boreal to increase the amount of land in protected areas and convince forestry companies to alter their practices is vital to North American bird conservation.

The billions of migrant birds that flock north every spring to nest in Canada's Boreal are a reminder that we are part of an ecosystem

that spans the globe. Protecting the Athabasca helps maintain components of ecosystems in Florida and Brazil. Establishing protected areas in Quebec will nourish the birds that winter in Maine and Colombia.

The birds make the connection every spring and fall. Let's hope we humans can work across nations too, to help protect the Boreal—North America's last great wilderness.

Dr. Jeff Wells is Senior Scientist for the Boreal Songbird Initiative (www.bsi.org), and one of America's leading bird experts and conservation biologists.

Below: Over 90% of the world's palm warblers breed in Canada's boreal forest. Photo: Laura Erickson, www.binoculars.com



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