

Canadian

WILDERNESS

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What are
parks for?

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Simple Station owner Stuart Bowness writes, "Over the past 10 years, I have traveled extensively throughout North, Central, and South America. From clearcutting near my favourite surfing spots to diminishing sea life at my favourite dive sites, it seems nothing has escaped the impact of man.

CPAWS' vision to protect at least half of Canada's public land is definitely the most ambitious goal we've seen from a Canadian wilderness protection non-profit group.

Simple Station aims to give 5% of its profits each year to CPAWS. I am confident that if every small business in Canada gave a small percentage of profit to protect the environment we would see a huge increase in protected areas. I'm so impressed with what CPAWS has done this past year expanding the Nahanni and I can't wait to see what happens this year! "

www.simplestation.com

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COVER: Young moose crossing the road in Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Nova Scotia. Photo: Jeremy Hockin

*ABOVE: Nahanni National Park Reserve
Photo: Mike Beedell*

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Nous sommes heureux de vous offrir notre magazine en français. Pour recevoir une copie, s'il vous plaît, contactez-nous.

info@cpaws.org ou 1-800-333-WILD



CPAWS is Canada's voice for wilderness. For over 45 years, we've played a lead role in creating over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas.

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PRESIDENT'S DESK ●

Spreading the love for wild places

OLIVER KENT

If we are yet to meet, hello. I've been a member of CPAWS since the mid-80s, and in recent years the volunteer treasurer first of my local chapter in Ottawa and then of CPAWS nationally. Last October, I had the honour of becoming your President.

Like many of you, I was drawn to CPAWS because I enjoy outdoor activity and the connection to nature it provides. As a teenager, I canoed the lakes and rivers of Algonquin and the Mauricie. With my wife, I hiked the Rockies and paddled the Dumoine. When my daughter reached her teens, we canoed the Nahanni and the Snake, backpacked in Kluane, and cycled the Cabot and Viking trails. She's now a nurse in Calgary, but last year we climbed Mount Kilimanjaro together—longer but no less painful than being beaten up the Grouse Grind by one of our sons, who teaches in Vancouver.

I haven't spent my whole life outdoors, however. I have an MBA and an MA in Economics, focusing on resource and environmental economics. My professional career was in management consulting with Price Waterhouse and IBM, advising governments and Crown corporations on strategy, organization and change management.

What perspective does this give me as President? The economist in me sees growing global demand for our energy and mineral resources—demand we should meet only on terms which safeguard Canada's wild places as a bulwark against climate change, where our fellow creatures can thrive, and where both Canadians and visitors can reconnect with nature. The exceptional progress CPAWS has helped to achieve in the last year in protecting more of our wilderness, whether in Nahanni, in the area east of Lake Winnipeg, in British Columbia's Flathead Valley, or the Mealy Mountains of Labrador, shows that many governments are listening. To keep them listening, however, we need to convince them that younger and newer Canadians are also learning to value the wild places we love. That is just one of the challenges I look forward to undertaking during my term as president. ●



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CPAWS' 2010 Annual General Meeting will be held at 5PM, November 13 at the Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta.

For more information, please visit

www.cpaws.org/aggm

Correction:

Wilburforce Foundation was inadvertently omitted from the list of supporters of CPAWS' work on the Nahanni National Park Reserve campaign in the last issue.

In 2000, the federal government revised Canada's National Parks Act, confirming a new way for thinking about parks. While emphasizing that our national parks are "for the benefit, education and enjoyment of Canadians", the new Act also made it clear that Parks Canada must place primary importance on maintaining and restoring our parks' ecological integrity (EI). So what happens when the pressures of park users conflict with preserving the ecosystems the park is meant to protect? In this issue, we present the perspectives of two distinguished conservationists.

Alan Latourelle, CEO of Parks Canada, argues that enjoyment and protection of parks go hand-in-hand.

In a recent interview, you said "Our job at Parks Canada is to protect our national parks for Canadians, not from Canadians."

That is correct. For three quarters of a century, successive Parliaments and governments have determined that Parks Canada's role is to protect and present these places for the benefit, use and enjoyment of all Canadians and to ensure that they are used in ways that leave them unimpaired for future generations. To the extent that we include Canadians in our park planning processes and make them welcome in these parks, we are building the understanding, appreciation and support that underpin the collective motivation of Canadians to protect them for the long term.



"Ecological Integrity" is Parks Canada's primary mandate for parks. How does Parks Canada balance the need to protect ecosystems with the interests of visitors?

I don't see it as a balancing act. I see the interests of visitors and the objective of maintaining EI as absolutely connected. EI is the primary consideration in decision making, that's true, but it is not the only one and it should not be interpreted as precluding visitors or new activities. We work to ensure that visitors enjoy parks in ways that leave them unimpaired for future generations, of course. But we also need to engage visitors on their terms if we expect parks to be relevant to them in the long term.

If you ask most of our Parks Canada staff, you will likely learn that their passion and dedication to protecting our national parks is nurtured and fed by the opportunities they have had to experience and connect with nature over their lifetimes. I suspect the same is probably true of most members of CPAWS and other environmental NGOs who have experienced national parks.

It is that same connection to the land, that we all identify with, that Parks Canada seeks to inspire among all Canadians and, in particular, among youth. When we



A sign in Gros Morne National Park reminds motorists to share the road. Photo: Gudrun Reicheneder

What are parks for?



are relevant to Canadians, when they can visit their parks and enjoy them, when they can build their own personal connections and memories, then, and only then, can we feel assured that our nation's efforts to conserve these special places will be sustained seven generations from now. Because it is the young visitors of today that will be deciding the fate of our parks in the years ahead.

CPAWS is concerned that Parks Canada at times gives the green light to events that have little to do with nature, such as dragon boat races and a Skins golf tournament in Banff. How does Parks Canada decide what events are appropriate?

The question of what is or what is not an appropriate activity in a national park can be a highly subjective one. For instance when Canadian Pacific brought Swiss mountain guides, complete with lederhosen and feathered hats, to the wild Canadian west a century ago there could have been questions raised about their authenticity and appropriateness. Today, those Swiss guides are deeply a

part of a uniquely Canadian alpinism and alpine hiking tradition.

We do not approve events that will harm the ecological integrity of a national park —that's a given. It's one reason we have an environmental assessment process. But the other questions, the more subjective ones, require that a public agency engage the public. That's why we have a national consultative process before deciding whether to introduce new special events or recreational activities. It's also why at the more local level national parks like Banff have introduced open public review processes. Unfortunately, in Banff to date environmental groups have chosen not to participate in these public review discussions and that limits their ability to influence the thinking of event proponents and the outcomes of the decisions.

Having said that, a Skins golf tournament on a heritage golf course that golfers have been competing on for more than a century, or a dragon boat race on a hydroelectric reservoir already being used for power boating and scuba are not likely to impair a national park nor the idea of national parks. The environmental assessments and public review of those and other events ensure they

are responsibly planned and carefully delivered. And these events enable participants and spectators not just to enjoy exciting moments in spectacular settings, but to discover and connect to Canada's protected heritage. There are many ways to discover a national park and these events are among them. We very much want Canadians to discover and connect to these places.

We've heard from local people that there's been concern over mountain biking in parks like Jasper for many years — for example on trails in the valley that go through important black bear and wolf habitat. It's been 8 years since the Jasper Park Management Plan indicated that the agency would designate bike trails. Does Parks Canada find this a difficult issue to manage?

There is no inherent conflict between trail use - be it for hiking, mountain biking or horse riding - and the ecological integrity of national parks. What we find when we look into these questions more closely is usually a problem with the trails themselves. Many park trails originated in different times, as logging trails, park roads and game trails. They were not built in the best places for the kinds of use they get today.

This creates a great opportunity for true win-win solutions in the tradition of Canada's great national park idea - the idea that ecosystem protection and meaningful visitor experiences can be built on one another and delivered in an integrated way. In Jasper around Lake Louise and Banff and in national parks across Canada, park biologists and visitor experience staff are working with mountain bikers, naturalist groups and others to re-think trails.



How do you see visitor expectations/use of parks changing in the next few decades?

As Canadians continue to move into and live in urban centres the experiences they are wanting are moving to single day or front country experiences. We are continuing to look at these experiences through learn to camp experiences, pre-set up campsites, events at nights and on weekends such as night birding in point pelee, northern lights viewing in our parks that are dark sky preserves as increasingly popular programs and activities.

What do you think the primary challenges are for Parks Canada in continuing to uphold the mandate of protecting our parks' ecological integrity?

I think our primary challenges will be to respond to changing demographics, patterns of development and societal trends that create competing demands for land, time and resources. I believe passionately that national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas reflect the very essence of what it is to be Canadian. Our challenge will be to connect the hearts and minds of Canadians to these national treasures - and we will do that by welcoming them to their parks and sites, providing learning opportunities facilitating memorable experiences. I believe that if we can achieve this in some small measure, we will be honouring the trust that has been bestowed upon us. ●

Since joining the federal government in 1983, Alan Latourelle has occupied positions of increasing responsibility in the fields of corporate services, strategic planning, portfolio affairs, policy and operational program delivery. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada in 2002.

A sign in Jasper National Park aims to curtail conflict on multi-use trails.

Photo: Jill Seaton

Protecting the web of life in parks

COMMENTARY BY BOB PEART

When I'm asked what CPAWS does, I say that it's all about "big green blobs on maps"! Our job is to help put big green blobs—parks and protected areas—on maps. We then ensure that those green blobs are managed well and help the public understand why big green blobs are necessary.

CPAWS has been very successful protecting big pieces of nature and we are a strong voice on park management. But it's important that we don't forget who these parks are for -- Canadians. Perhaps now is the time for CPAWS, along with Parks Canada, to reinforce why parks are so important, and how we can enjoy them without damaging the natural values we sought to protect in the first place.

This recent concern about 'use versus protection' in national park management plans is a reflection of a debate that has been going on for decades. Perhaps the point is not 'use versus protection'—but instead ensuring that as we protect the web of life and help the public enjoy nature, we do it with integrity. We don't want rafting trips on a sensitive river like the Maligne or the expansion of ski hills, as these activities do harm the environment. Neither do we want PGA golf tournaments nor dragon boat races within national park boundaries, as they simply aren't an appropriate use within national park boundaries.

What we do need are outdoor activities that foster awe and wonder about nature and explain the role of the national parks system. On this point I agree with CEO Alan Latourelle: "our job at Parks Canada is to protect our national parks for Canadians, not from Canadians."

In the past 20-30 years the majority of people's lifestyle and outdoor experiences have changed dramatically as screen time has replaced outdoor time and we have become more urban. The impacts of these changes on society have been powerful, pervasive and detrimental - particularly to young children who now spend an unbelievable seven to eight hours a day in front of some sort of screen. Now that we spend 90% of our time indoors, we are becoming less and less connected to the natural world. Research indicates that being active in nature results in people who are happier, smarter and more socially adept - with huge spin-off benefits to youth, the overall family, society and human health.

Two to three decades ago 70% of kids played in the outdoors. Now it's only about five percent! Just think of what this dramatic change in behaviour means for the future, as we will have fewer and fewer environmental advocates to join the fight with CPAWS to protect nature and preserve the national park system.

It's time for society to re-examine what we are doing to foster environmental values and our connections with nature. It seems to me that CPAWS and Parks Canada each have a critical role to ensure that future generations understand why big green blobs are necessary.

Bob Peart is a registered professional biologist, with a background in biology and education. He has worked for the past 35 years in parks planning and advocacy as well as public conservation education. His work with CPAWS has included service as national president, national board member, board member of the Saskatchewan and British Columbia chapters, and executive director of the British Columbia chapter. Bob is now a CPAWS Trustee Emeritus.



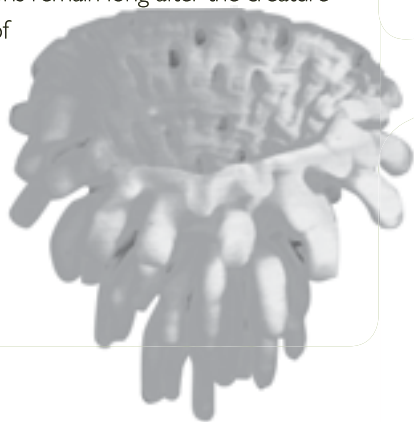
It's the International Year of Biodiversity

Meet some of the amazing species whose homes CPAWS is working to protect.

The United Nations have proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the whole spectrum of living things—not just species, but the genetic diversity that allows organisms to adapt to changing conditions, and the diverse and complex ecosystems that support them. Canada's vast wild areas are far from uniform. Here's just a sample of the diverse landscapes, plants and animals CPAWS is working to protect.

GLASS SPONGE REEFS

Glass sponge reefs were thought to be extinct, known only from fossils of the dinosaur era. But in 1989, a thriving, diverse reef was discovered in British Columbia's **Hecate Strait**. No other living glass sponge reef has been discovered. These sponges create skeletons from glass (silica), and the skeletons remain long after the creature is gone. 50% of the reefs have already been destroyed by trawlers.



DALL'S SHEEP

The **Nahanni karstlands** are one of the features that make the South Nahanni Watershed a globally significant natural area. These fascinating limestone formations are full of caves, sinkholes, alvars, underground rivers and streams, springs and sealed lakes. Dall's sheep have inhabited the Nahanni area for at least 2000 years and are the only documented population in North America that uses karst caves for shelter.



SANDHILL CRANE

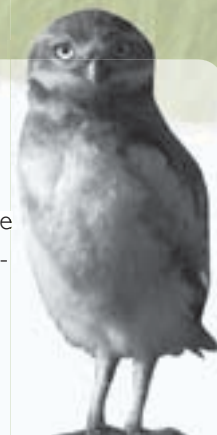
Strings and flarks? These odd terms describe the complex pattern of bog and trees found in Alberta's **McClelland wetland complex**, which contains one of the largest patterned fens in the world. The fen wetland serves as an important nesting area for bald eagles and sandhill cranes.



BURROWING OWL

Soggy British Columbia is jokingly referred to as the "Wet Coast". However, a parched world of dry steppe, sagebrush and desert snakes, lies in the province's **Okanagan Valley**. It's one of the three most endangered ecosystems in Canada. CPAWS supports the creation of a national park to protect this parched, precious world.

The tiny burrowing owl – the size of a pop can – might once again flourish in the Okanagan. Active during the day, it nests underground, hence the moniker "burrowing".



NARWHAL

In the harsh Nunavut winter, a polynya -- area of open water -- is an oasis for marine mammals and birds. The **Lancaster Sound** polynya is a vital winter feeding area for North America's narwhals, belugas, polar bears, and seabirds. CPAWS is supporting the creation of a National Marine Conservation Area in Lancaster Sound.



WOLVERINE

This powerful, mysterious relative of weasels and skunks needs room to roam in Canada's Boreal forest, and lots of it — an adult male's territory can cover 1,000 square kilometres! Wolverines are vanishingly rare in Quebec due to overhunting in the 1900s. CPAWS (SNAP) Quebec is working to create connected **parks and protected areas** where wolverines can thrive again.



HORSE MUSSEL REEFS

A storey high and the length of over 20 football fields—the horse mussel reefs in the **Bay of Fundy** are the largest in the world. These structures perform a number of crucial ecological roles, enhancing biodiversity and boosting biological productivity in the bay. No protection measures have been implemented to ensure their conservation. CPAWS Nova Scotia is raising awareness about the need to conserve the reefs.



WOODLAND CARIBOU

The vast **east side of Lake Winnipeg** is a spectacular Boreal wilderness area, rich with rushing rivers, aboriginal culture, and abundant wildlife. The area's intact Boreal forests and potential for sustainable local economies are home to the threatened woodland caribou, but the region is at risk from industrial developments.

Photos: Keith Hiscock (horse mussels); Ashley Hockenberry (wolverine); Manfred Krautter (glass sponge); Wilf Schurig (burrowing owl); Alan Vernon (Dall's sheep); Glenn Williams (narwhal); szatmar666/flickr (sandhill crane); CPAWS (woodland caribou)

Two major NWT conservation initiatives move forward

CPAWS NWT continues to support the Sahtu Dene and Métis of Tulita and Norman Wells, Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife service (CWS) in working towards protection of two proposed protected areas: Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve (NPR) and Shúhtagot'ine Néné National Wildlife Area (NWA). These areas will extend protection in the Yellowstone to Yukon corridor north of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

Nááts'ihch'oh encompasses the headwaters of the South Nahanni watershed. The

area includes key calving grounds for mountain woodland caribou and important habitat for grizzly bears – both of which need large areas to survive. Parks Canada has proposed park boundary options but none would protect the full watershed. CPAWS NWT supports a proposed Nááts'ihch'oh boundary that affords the greatest level of protection to the cultural and ecological values in this region.

Shúhtagot'ine Néné encompasses 11 watersheds, and three main rivers. It links valuable wildlife habitats on a continental

scale, providing key habitat for woodland caribou and boasts the highest grizzly bear density in the NWT. The local Mackenzie Mountains are considered to be one of the most expansive and pristine wilderness areas left in North America.

Visitors are able to enjoy the rich geography of this area by canoe or foot. CPAWS NWT will be a member of the working group that will collaborate towards a protected Shúhtagot'ine Néné.

–Kris Brekke



New parks welcomed in Newfoundland and Labrador

CPAWS Newfoundland and Labrador's Suzanne Dooley was pleased to attend the announcement of the new Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve and the proposed Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park in Labrador earlier this year in Happy Valley - Goose Bay. CPAWS looks forward to working with all levels of government to ensure that these areas are protected for generations to come.

This summer, chapter staff will be traveling throughout the province promoting its "Ocean Champions" project, which involves interviewing past and present fish harvesters in rural communities on marine related issues and conditions past and present.

The ark in northern BC:

Nature's haven in a brave new world

The Atlin-Taku is the last wilderness in B.C. without a government land-use plan, but that's about to change. The B.C. government will soon decide how much to protect and how much to earmark for industry.

These are tense times. The Atlin-Taku is a vast northern landscape, about the size of Vancouver Island. CPAWS BC and the Taku River Tlingit want a substantive amount protected.

Why? The Atlin-Taku has a job to do. It needs to help shepherd some of B.C.'s most intact ecosystems through climate change. CPAWS-BC looks to the Atlin-Taku to create an "ark" for important predator-prey systems and healthy salmon runs, by providing natural havens for species to flourish.

The Atlin-Taku can't save every species through climate change – not even close. But its size and assortment of landscapes means it can shelter new, rich assortments of plants and animals in this brave new world of climate change. There are few areas in British Columbia large and intact enough to still protect the "ark". The Atlin-Taku is one of them.

Take action at www.takulegacy.org

This campaign is funded in part by Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program.

– *Chloe O'Loughlin*

CPAWS to host marine protected areas symposium in Quebec

In honour of the International Year of Biodiversity and World Oceans Day, on June 10th and 11th CPAWS will host the first symposium on marine protected areas in Quebec in Rimouski --the heart of marine research in the province. Members of conservation groups, First Nations, various government bodies, the scientific community, the fishing industry and others will attend this symposium to discuss ways they can collaborate in advancing the creation of a network of marine areas.

Quebec was an early leader in this area, partnering with the federal government in 1998 to create the first national marine conservation area at the mouth of the Saguenay River. Covering 1,246 km², Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park is jointly managed by the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SEPAQ) and Parks Canada. However, no other protected marine area in the province has been announced since. For more information about the symposium, please visit www.snapqc.org.

– Sophie Paradis



CPAWS People

Telling Nova Scotia's coastal stories

As a trained diver, Ashley Sprague has been busy documenting underwater life off Nova Scotia's coast, identifying sites in need of stronger protection. Always the first to take on new challenges, travel to remote fishing villages, or take the plunge in the icy waters of the North Atlantic in the name of science, CPAWS is very pleased to have Ashley on the case, leading the charge for stronger marine protection in Nova Scotia.



In her two years as Marine Conservation Coordinator for CPAWS Nova Scotia, she's been reaching out to coastal communities all over Nova Scotia, listening to the concerns of local fishermen and hearing first-hand how the marine environment is in decline. From Canso to Port Joli to Digby Neck and Islands, Ashley has been talking to Nova Scotians about the crisis in the fishing industry. She's been gathering many of these first-hand stories into a video, released by CPAWS in February, that tells the plight of Nova Scotia's fishery through the eyes of local fishermen.

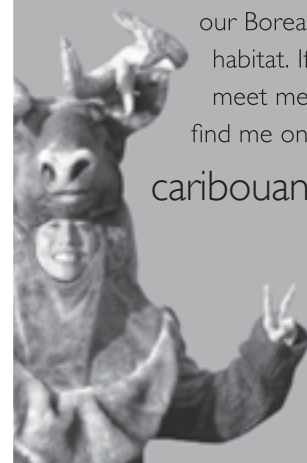
Ashley's tireless work at CPAWS Nova Scotia is also starting to make inroads in advancing marine conservation projects that have been stalled for years. A proposal for a new marine protected area on the Eastern Scotian Shelf is closer to reality and Parks Canada has launched a new study of the Bay of Fundy to identify high priority sites for a future National Marine Conservation Area. Now a new mom, CPAWS looks forward to welcoming Ashley back to work after her maternity leave.

See the videos at <http://bit.ly/marinevideo>

In case we haven't met, let me introduce myself. I'm Bou, CPAWS' caribou ambassador. Along with the Bou Crew, an amazing team of CPAWS volunteers, you can find me out and about talking with people about the importance of my threatened species, Canada's

woodland caribou – and our Boreal forest habitat. If you can't meet me in person, find me online!

caribouandyou.ca





Apple Head, Nova Scotia. This large stretch of wilderness coastline, along the shores of the Bay of Fundy, has been acquired by the Nova Scotia government for conservation.

Planning Connections Report Recommends More Protected Areas in Alberta

The CPAWS Southern Alberta chapter released a comprehensive report in March 2010 in response to Alberta's new Land-use Framework, providing recommendations to help protect and restore the ecological integrity of the southern third of the province, which is called the "South Saskatchewan Region" under the framework. The report called Planning Connections, is accompanied by an interactive web-based map detailing areas of environmental significance, and is available online:

<http://bit.ly/ab-legislation>

According to the report, land use planning issues in Alberta are complex, involving the need to integrate economy, environment and social components, but they lend themselves to one simple solution: increasing the extent of our protected areas. The authors note that this will address environmental issues associated with a changing climate, biodiversity, and connectivity, and will economically benefit communities through increased revenue associated with tourism. This solution will also address our water quality and quantity issues by retaining natural structures which filter and store water. And protected areas allow for ample recreational opportunities, helping Albertans reconnect to our fantastic wilderness.

— *Julia Millen*

Nova Scotia makes historic land purchases for conservation

The Nova Scotia government earlier this year completed a number of historic land purchases to support conservation. The government has acquired 56,000 hectares from four forestry companies, largely to create new parks and protected areas. CPAWS Nova Scotia is proud of its role working with government and forest companies to achieve this breakthrough for conservation in Nova Scotia, where only about 30% of land is still publicly-owned—one of the lowest percentages among provinces in Canada.

In total, the government spent \$75 million acquiring these lands for conservation, the largest investment of its kind in Nova Scotia's history. The properties purchased are of prime ecological importance, including 40km of wilderness coastline along the Bay of Fundy, large tracts of intact forests, important

species-at-risk habitat, and frontage on several significant waterways, including the St. Mary's River.

There is also significant progress in marine conservation in Nova Scotia. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced three "areas of interest" this winter for the creation of a new marine protected area on the Eastern Scotian Shelf. The federal government is conducting a public consultation process to gather opinions on these potential protected areas which will conclude in mid-May. CPAWS Nova Scotia is an active participant in the process. Our goal is to ensure that the new marine protected area is established quickly and that a network of marine protected areas are created in the waters off Nova Scotia.

— *Chris Miller*



New Manitoba park at Fisher Bay would provide huge economic benefits: Economic Impact Study

A new provincial park in Fisher Bay, Manitoba could provide an annual net gain of \$38 million to the province, according to an economic study released by CPAWS and Fisher River Cree Nation (FRCN) last December.

The independent study says that the park, if designed as proposed by FRCN and CPAWS, could provide economic benefits 18 times greater than if the area were used for logging, mining, and non-Aboriginal hunting. The park would also maintain traditional subsistence activities and provide more than 100 jobs through avenues such as park management and eco- and cultural tourism ventures.

The Manitoba government has committed to establishing the park by October, but its boundaries have yet to be determined.

Please go to www.cpawsemb.org to let the Manitoba government know how you feel about boundaries that are based on ecology and economic benefit, rather than political lines.

— Ron Thiessen



Fisher River Cree Nation has a vision to embrace eco and cultural tourism by protecting the region's ecological health with a Fisher Bay park
Photo: Ron Thiessen.

Law students go to work for New Brunswick parks

University of New Brunswick law students are helping CPAWS and the Friends of Mount Carleton Park explore ways to update New Brunswick's provincial Parks Act to better protect park natural areas. Several questionable developments in our parks have been approved within the last two years, despite the fact they degraded natural habitats. The Parks Act doesn't include any mandate to protect the ecological integrity of park natural areas, develop conservation management plans, or consult the public about potential uses of park lands. CPAWS is asking the New Brunswick government to fix the lack of natural areas protection in our provincial parks. New Brunswickers deserve to know that the fate of park habitats and wildlife will be more secure for now and into the future.

Join our New Brunswick Parks Facebook group at www.cpawsnb.org/facebook to keep updated or add your voice.

— Roberta Clowater

Gatineau Park Bill dies in prorogation

A new Bill that would have strengthened protection for Ottawa Valley's Gatineau Park died on the order paper when the House of Commons was prorogued earlier this year. A century ago, Gatineau Park was to be Canada's first national park east of the Rockies. Today, CPAWS Ottawa Valley is still urging the federal government to make greater protection of this unique wilderness, located only 15 minutes from Parliament Hill, a priority.

The June 2009 Bill to amend the National Capital Act only granted limited protection to Gatineau Park. CPAWS OV took part in Parliamentary Committee hearings and discussed with Members of Parliament and Senators the need to improve the legislation. We suggested that the Bill provide greater protection to ecosystems in and around the park, and prevent the construction of new roads and houses inside the park.

CPAWS is urging the federal government to re-introduce this critical piece of legislation with the amendments proposed by CPAWS Ottawa Valley.

— John McDonnell

Western wilderness gems win relief from mining pressures

The mountain chain stretching from the US into the Yukon is known to most Canadians as the Rockies, but to conservation biologists it's the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) corridor—a vital set of ecosystems that allows wolves, grizzlies and cougars that have long lost most of their native North American habitat, to roam. There are some large protected areas in the Y2Y, including Canada's Rocky Mountain parks and Nahanni, but many links in the chain remain unprotected. To mineral surveyors, some of the wildest parts of the Y2Y glint as valuable mining opportunities. CPAWS is involved in campaigns to protect the spectacular Canadian "book ends" of the Y2Y corridor against mining developments that would damage fragile ecosystems, and we have some exciting recent successes to report.

Mining banned in B.C.'s Flathead Valley

Following a campaign by CPAWS and other conservation groups, pressure from the United Nations World Heritage Committee, and support from Canadians, earlier this year the Province of British Columbia announced a ban on all mining, oil and gas development in the Flathead River Valley.

This wilderness gem beside Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in southeast B.C. has the highest density of grizzly bears in North America's interior and some of the purest water in the world. But until February of this year, it was open to mineral exploration. It has recently been featured in communications with members of Mountain Equipment Co-op through The Big Wild, a conservation partnership founded by CPAWS and MEC two years ago.

CPAWS and partners are now urging the B.C. government to permanently protect the Flathead by giving the green light to a national park in the southeastern third of the valley, and creating a nearby Wildlife Management Area that would connect to Banff.

Staking halted in Yukon's Peel watershed

In January, after a call by affected First Nations, CPAWS Yukon and the Yukon Conservation Society, the government announced that all lands in the Peel Watershed Region will be off limits to mineral staking for 12 months as land use plans move towards completion. Home to the Three Rivers and a spectacular wilderness area, CPAWS has been campaigning to protect the Peel watershed for a decade.

The Peel watershed was the subject of intense debate over the past year, as the Territory consulted with stakeholders on the balance of mining, protection, and other uses for the region. A public opinion poll commissioned last fall by CPAWS Yukon, Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon and Yukon Conservation Society showed that 78% of Yukoners want more than half of the Peel watershed permanently protected from roads and all industrial activities.

CPAWS Yukon is continuing its campaign to protect the Peel by participating in land use planning discussions alongside First Nations, industry and many Yukoners, in support of protecting at least 80% of the watershed.

Visit the new campaign website at www.protectpeel.ca.

Members of the International League of Conservation Photographers descended on the Flathead Valley in Summer 2009 in support of greater protection for this important link in the Yellowstone to Yukon corridor.

Photo: Garth Lenz



Banff 125 – Celebrating history, nature, culture and conservation



Mountains reflected on Moraine Lake and Valley of Ten Peaks in Banff National Park, Alberta. Photo: Frank Kovalchek

In the wake of the success of the Vancouver Olympic Games, Canadians have even more reason to celebrate—2010 marks the 125th birthday of our first national park.

In 1885, Canada's Prime Minister John A. Macdonald established a small protected area known as the Banff Hot Springs Reserve. Over the years this area has grown into what we know today as Banff National Park, a majestic symbol of our great Canadian landscape.

To showcase this celebration, Parks Canada along with partners and stakeholders is creating monthly themes with corresponding activities and events in Banff starting in May. The Banff 125th is designed to increase awareness, connection, visitation and support for Banff and all National Parks across Canada.

Since its inception, Banff has been shaped by a diverse natural and cultural history and a continuing controversy between development and conservation. CPAWS has and will continue to play an important role in Banff and in all of our national parks and their management. We will continue to speak on behalf of wilderness and engage the public in conservation issues to protect the ecological integrity of these significant areas. We want to ensure that our national parks remain as treasures for Canadians to celebrate for all time. Happy Birthday, Banff. ●

Learn more: www.pc.gc.ca/celebrations

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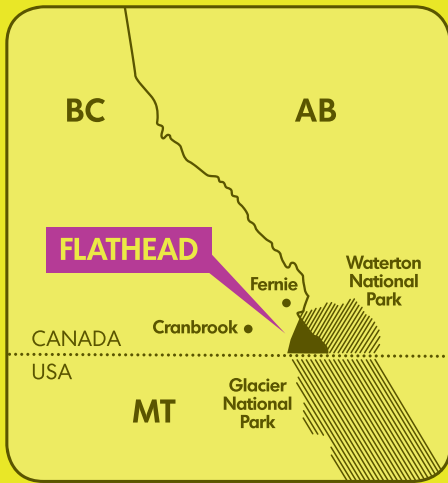
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ONE SIMPLE ACT CAN KEEP THE FLATHEAD WILD



 **Insets** Joe Riis, ILCP
Main Garth Lenz, ILCP

Act now. Go to thebigwild.org and send an email to BC Premier Gordon Campbell asking for permanent protection of the Flathead River Valley – one of the last wild river valleys in Canada’s southern Rockies.

An abundant ecosystem, rich with carnivore species, wildflowers, pristine water, and native trout, the Flathead Valley recently won protection from mining exploration, thanks to voices of people like you. Until it is permanently protected, the Flathead is not safe.

The Flathead Valley sits beside Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Flathead, in combination with Waterton-Glacier, will form a permanently protected, globally significant ecosystem. By acting on this campaign, you not only secure protection of a unique wildlife corridor, you ensure inspiring recreational opportunities for future generations.

Go to thebigwild.org to learn more about this and other current Big Wild campaigns. Together we can protect at least half of our wild land and water across Canada.



The Big Wild was founded by Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS).

thebigwild.org