

2010 Castle Hiking Schedule

These hikes are free. Let your friends know, and bring them along to introduce them to the area. Be prepared for mountain conditions, and to be flexible due to bear encounters, trail closures, or poor weather. Leave your pets at home. Please confirm the hike meeting time and place with the hike coordinator directly prior to the weekend. Some hikes require bikes for easy access at lower elevations. All hikers should be prepared to take full responsibility for their own health and safety. The full hiking schedule will be posted on the CCWC website.

May 15 CCWC's Annual General Meeting

10am Lebel Mansion, Pincher Creek. Guest Speaker: Casey Brennan, from Wildsight, Fernie, B.C. Hike along the Castle River to Castle Falls in the afternoon.

May 22 Bellevue Ridge

Jay Allen 628-3048
This hike explores the historic coal trails above Bellevue, including a well-preserved fan house. Timing can be right to find fairy-slipper orchids (*Calypso bulbosa*) blooming nearby. Climbing old trails, we'll visit the ancient chert quarry, and then along the ridge to Peter Sherrington's eagle-counting perch. A good spot for viewing elk below, and bighorn sheep across on the main Livingstone Range. The route down follows a long area of slumpage, punctuated with some interesting coal mining "debris".

Elevation gain: 500 m **Distance:** 7 km

Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Moderate

May 29 Antelope Butte

Patricia Wagenaar 627-2095
Find early spring flowers while ambling through a remnant of native montane grassland. Look out for

blue grouse, prairie falcons and other migrant songbirds and raptors. Enjoy a lunch break in the hoodoos with stunning panoramic views of the Whaleback, the Livingstone Range, the Oldman, the Porcupine Hills and the Castle. Thanks to the Lynch-Staunton family for allowing access to this beautiful landmark.

Elevation gain: 600 ft

Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Easy

June 5 Screwdriver Ck/Castle River

Dave Sheppard 627-4914
Mainly on old logging roads and open slopes, this hike traverses some nice foothills country which usually has abundant wildflowers in early June. We will ramble over some low hills for a view of the Carbondale and Castle Rivers, then drop down to a pond near the Castle River, returning by a different route. This is a moderate hike with a little steep uphill on the return so reasonable fitness is required.

Elevation gain/loss: 800 ft

Time: 4-5 hrs **Rating:** Moderate

June 12 Syncline Trails

Dave McNeill 627-3476
Following the perimeter of the cross-country ski trail system, this hike will veer away from the South Castle on an old logging road to cross over into the West Castle River drainage. Enjoy lunch at a productive seasonal lake where we've seen a cougar, beavers, a variety of duck, geese and songbirds. The return trail meanders through rich young forest areas along the West Castle River. Despite the proximity of the highway corridor the area remains a significant and secluded stretch of productive wilderness, and a haven for shade tolerant wildflowers.

Elevation gain: 600 ft

Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Easy

June 19 Big Sage Natural Area

Reg Ernst 381-0528

The Big Sage Natural Area is noted for the variety of plants growing on the south facing slopes of the South Castle Valley. Join professional ecologist, Reg Ernst, to explore the area's rare species—including its signature species: the largest Alberta population of Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). Come prepared to tread carefully and observantly and treat yourself to a botanical field trip.

Elevation Gain: Optional

Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Easy

June 26 Spionkop Canyon

James Tweedie 628-2422

At the eastern edge of the Castle Special Place, this is a typical Front Range Canyon, allowing the transition from prairie grass to mountain pass in an easy day's hike, with the opportunity to see a great array of wildflowers at all stages of bloom. This is also favoured spring foraging range for grizzly bears, so hikers should be prepared for the possibility of aborting our schedule, should a bear be seen. Bighorn sheep can usually be spotted on the slopes or ridges.

Elevation gain: 1,800 ft

Time: 8 hrs **Rating:** Moderately strenuous

July 3 Victoria Peak

Kevin Kelly 627-5128

Celebrate Canada Day weekend with that trip to the peak of Victoria Mountain that you have always wanted to make. This will be a strenuous day's hike through a rich variety of habitats, from the lush valley floor of Pincher Canyon to alpine tundra, with the magnificent panorama from the peak. Good physical shape required for this hike.

Elevation gain: 3,500 ft

Time: 8 hrs **Rating:** Seriously strenuous

July 10/11 Mill Ck/Castle Tarn

Wendy Ryan 627-4106

July 17 South Drywood Ck (Bovin/"Blue" Lake)

Jeff Emmett 678-2633

Avoiding the overused 4wd trail and the industrial footprint of Shell's gas wells, the hiking trail to Blue Lake follows an old outfitters trail on the south side of the valley to beyond the last well site. Admire a dramatic outcropping of stromatolites where the trail merges back onto the north side for the last kilometers to the lake. An additional hour takes us to the ridgeline overlooking the main Castle drainage.

Elevation gain: 1500 ft to lake 2,300 ft to ridge

Time: 8 hrs **Rating:** Strenuous

July 24 Rainy Ridge Lakes

Rob Goasdoue 627-5773

Explore the far reaches of the West Castle Valley, with this hike up into the high alpine lakes nestled under Rainy Ridge. Stunning ridge top views across the Flathead into B.C. and the Akamina-Kishenina

Elevation gain: 3,500 ft

Time: 8 hrs **Rating:** Strenuous

July 31 TBA

August 7 TBA

August 14 Haig Lake

Kevin Kelly 627-5128

An easy hike to this secluded basin above the Castle Mountain Resort. A good chance for spotting bighorn sheep; checking out the huckleberries before the bears get them and figuring out where those squeaking pikas are. Keen hikers can make it up onto Haig Ridge. Return trail follows the lower ski runs back to CMR.

Elevation Gain: 1,500 ft to lake, 2,300 ft to ridge
Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Easy, but note elevation

August 21 Gladstone Mtn Ridge

Willem Langenberg 627-4781
Join noted geologist, Willem Langenberg, in a hike through his "local backyard" from the Gladstone Valley up the old horseback trails to the ridges of Gladstone Mountain. This is a great opportunity for an interpretive field trip through a dramatic landscape.

Elevation gain: 2,200 ft
Time: 7 hrs **Rating:** Moderate, but note elevation

August 28 "The Promised Land"

Jay Allen 628-3048
Outside the Castle watershed, the "Promised Land" is a large plateau of solid rock that sits high between three mountains - Andy Good, Coultard, and Ptolemy – and is a destination for caving enthusiasts with Cleft Cave, Ice Hall, Yorkshire Pot, and Gargantua caves close by. The trail follows Ptolemy Creek up from the Crowsnest River, crossing the creek eight times in about 5kms. After passing a tiny emerald lake there's a short bushwhack up between Andy Good and Coultard to the Promised Land. From the notch between Andy Good and Ptolemy a well-used trail leads back to Ptolemy Creek, with its many crossings.

Elevation gain: 1000 m **Distance:** 18-20 km
Rating: Difficult **Time:** One long day or two shorter ones. (Depending on registrants, this may be organized as an overnight trip.)

September 4 Prairie Bluff

Reg Ernst 381-0528
Join professional ecologist, Reg Ernst, in a field trip to monitor stands of whitebark pine on Prairie Bluff, the most easterly mountain in the front range. A chance to view bighorn sheep, late blooming

subalpine wildflowers, as well as a good variety of birds before their fall drift to the south.
Elevation Gain: 2,000 ft
Time: 6 hrs **Rating:** Easy, but note elevation

September 11 Goat Ck

James Tweedie 628-2422
A reality check hike. This hike to the headwaters of the Snowshoe Creek and Goat Creek drainages, below Mt. Darragh (the highest peak in the Castle Wilderness) takes in some of the landscape changes brought about by clear cut logging in the 1990's, followed by the Lost Creek fire in 2003. The area has been heavily abused by our human activities, including the recent proliferation of illegal ATV trails, but the natural regeneration can still inspire us to protect what we have.

Elevation Gain: 1600 ft
Time: 8 hr **Rating:** Strenuous

September 18 McCarty Lake

Wendy Ryan 627-410

September 25 TBA

October 2 Carbondale Lookout

James Tweedie 628-2422
The trail to the Carbondale Lookout provides easy access to a good viewing spot for migrating hawks and eagles, and assorted other late migrant songbirds. Doug Dolman, from Lethbridge, has offered to help in the identification of species for any keen birders on this hike.

Elevation Gain: 1,400 ft
Time: 5 hrs **Rating:** Moderate climb

October 9 TBA

Check the CCWC website for updates:
www.ccwc.ab.ca or call 403-627-5059

The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition would like to thank our funders for their continued support.

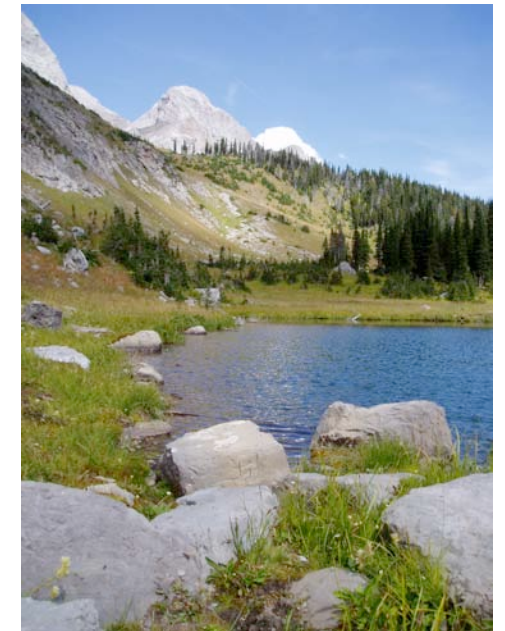


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*If you would like more information on the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition, to Become a Member, or make a Donation ask your hike leader or visit our web site at www.ccwc.ab.ca or contact us at PO Box 2621 Pincher Creek, AB, T0K 1W0
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HIKE THE CASTLE WILDERNESS

SUMMER 2010



CASTLE-CROWN WILDERNESS COALITION