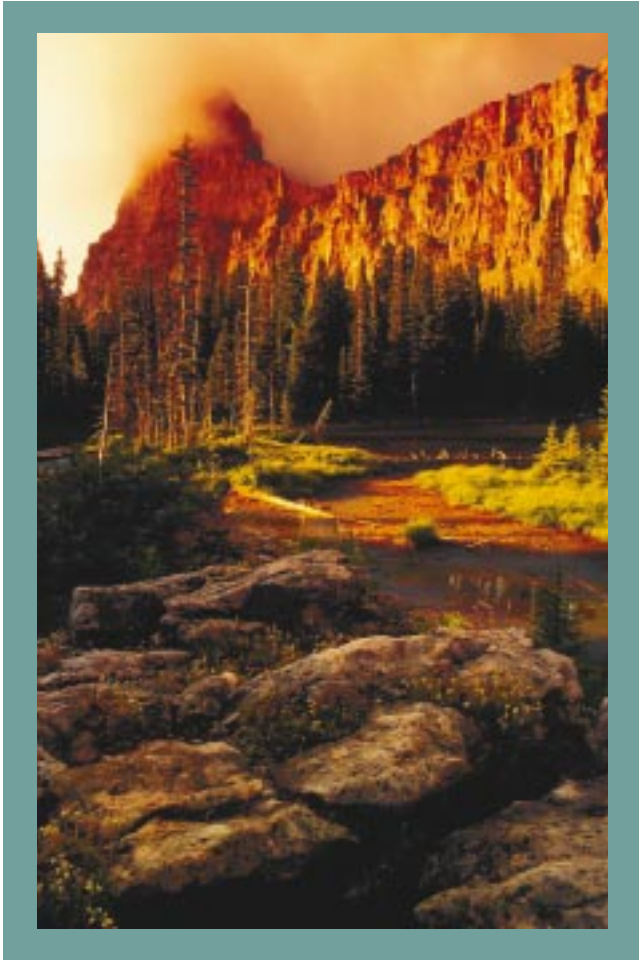


# THE CASTLE WILDERNESS



*A world without wilderness is a cage.*

*....David Brower.*

## Where is it?

The Castle Wilderness is located in the Bow-Crow Forest Reserve north of Waterton Lakes National Park. It has been proposed for protection by the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition.

*“The wild things of the Earth are not ours to do with as we please. They have been given to us in trust, and we must account for them to the generations which will come after us to audit our accounts.”*

...William Hornaday (Our Vanishing Wildlife).

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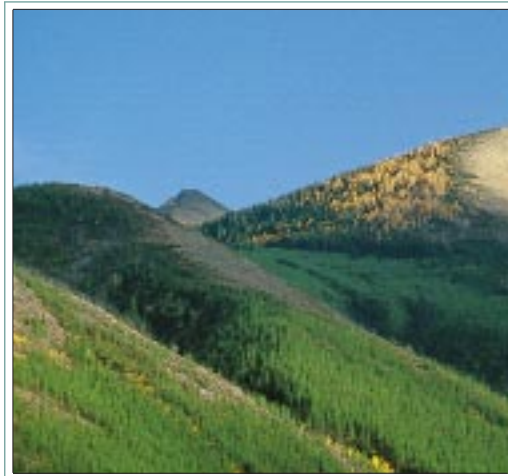
## What is it?

The Castle Wilderness is an area of outstanding natural features and remarkable scenic vistas. It includes 1,004 sq. km (388 sq. mi) of mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, forests, and grasslands.

The Front Range Canyons on the east side of the area represent a type of open mountain landscape unique in Canada. The funnelling of southwesterly, gale-force Chinook winds down these narrow canyons results in an unusual set of ecological conditions. Sparse and stunted tree cover, grassland at elevations which normally support forest, and a remarkable diversity of native plants are the result.



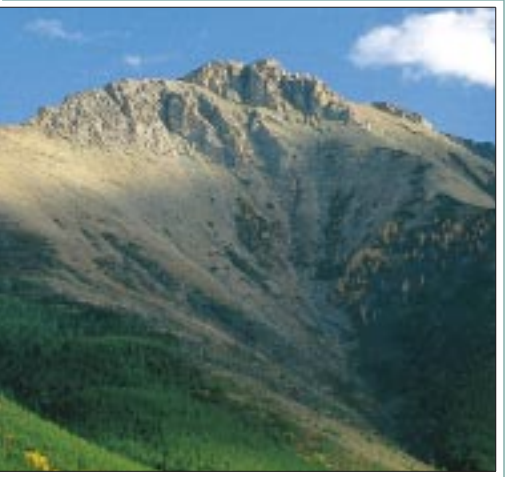
The South and West Castle Valleys of the Castle Wilderness receive unusually high precipitation and play a key role in watershed protection. Many small streams drain the area, their flows regulated by forest cover and the storage capacities of spongy old-growth soils and numerous alpine and subalpine wetlands, including 33 high elevation lakes.



The Castle Wilderness is home to an exceptionally large number of species. Apart from Waterton Lakes National Park, the biodiversity of the Castle Wilderness is the highest in Alberta. Half of Alberta's vascular plant species can be found in the Castle Wilderness, including more than 120 rare species, three times as many as Banff National Park. The area also provides essential habitat for rare and endangered wildlife - grizzly bears, wolverines, cougars and wolves - as well as critical summer and



Nine alpine lakes and 23 headwater streams in the Castle Wilderness support various species of trout.



winter range for elk, moose, mule and white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats.

The Castle Wilderness is a vital connecting link between the populations of large carnivores in Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks and those further north. This connection allows for dispersal movements and genetic exchange between these remnant populations. Biologists predict that without this connecting corridor of intact habitat, the Waterton-Glacier populations of grizzly bears and some other large carnivores will eventually become extinct.

**THE CASTLE WILDERNESS,  
TRULY A SPECIAL PLACE.**



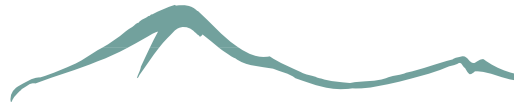
## Why Protect It?

For centuries, the Castle Wilderness has been valued as a special place - for spiritual renewal and vision questing; as surviving wild lands where wildlife populations, depleted by earlier overhunting, could be restored and preserved; and as a source of berries, pure water, recreation, and summer grazing for livestock.

Over the years, many local residents and other Albertans have done their best to protect the area and restore its wildlife. From 1914 to 1921, the Castle Wilderness was a part of Waterton Lakes National Park. After that, until 1954, it was a Game Preserve.

From 1958 to 1968, seeing the damage to the area caused by seismic exploration and motorized access, the Pincher Creek Fish and Game Association tried hard to have the South Castle returned to protected status as a Wilderness Area, as did the Alberta Wilderness Association, founded in Lundbreck, in more recent years.

With heavy use over the years by more and more people, the Castle Wilderness has been gradually losing ground, so that today it is a scarred wilderness. Most of this change has come about in the last four decades.



- surface disturbance by industrial machinery and increased human use has caused erosion, stream siltation, and the introduction of weeds.

### Since 1950:

- many old-growth forests in the Castle Wilderness headwaters have been logged.
- more than 50 natural gas wells have been drilled in the area, of which about 40 are in current production.
- over 700 km of roads have been constructed in the Castle Wilderness and left open to motorized access, the equivalent of a trip from Calgary to Fort McMurray.
- elk and grizzly bear habitat effectiveness in the Castle Wilderness has been reduced by about 45% due to these roads, and elk and grizzly bear populations have declined.
- mountain goats no longer reside on Table Mountain and Victoria Peak.
- native bull trout have disappeared from Pincher and Spionkop Creeks.
- native cutthroat trout no longer occupy Yarrow, Drywood, and Pincher Creeks.
- the number of recreational users has increased substantially.

While there are many important practical reasons to look after the Castle Wilderness - protecting the watershed, keeping hunted wildlife populations healthy, preserving plant species that may someday





prove to be medically or economically valuable - there are other, ultimately more compelling reasons to protect the area, which go beyond economic concerns. John Muir addressed one of these in 1901 when he wrote:

*“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”*

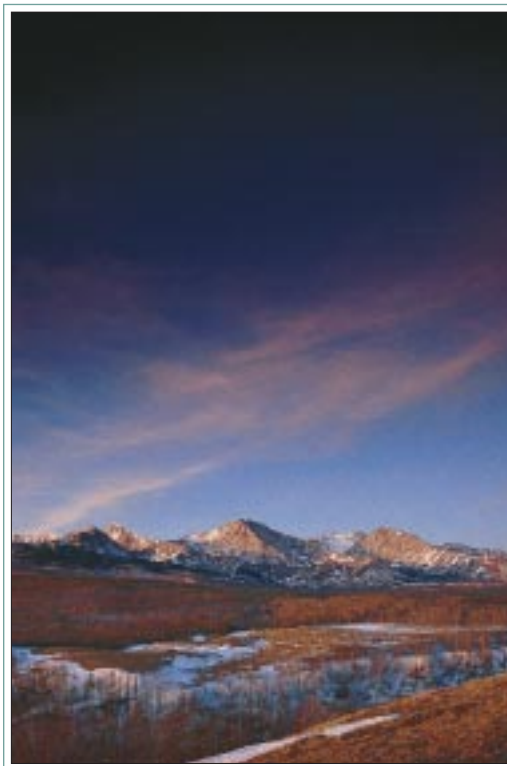
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## Who We Are

The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition was started in 1990 by a small group of southern Albertans who were concerned about the future of the Castle Region. Since that time, the organization has grown to about 300 members, including some two dozen member groups (2001 figures).

The ‘Crown’ in our name recognizes that the Castle Wilderness is an important part of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem which extends from the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta and B.C. to the Bob Marshall Wilderness south of Glacier National Park in Montana.

The Coalition sponsors a stewardship program to monitor the Castle Wilderness. Volunteer stewards report wildlife sightings and the activities of other users, and pick up litter. Their observations form the basis of an annual report, the *State of the Castle Wilderness*.



The Coalition holds regular meetings, publishes a newsletter and occasional information reports, and conducts hikes to acquaint people with the area. *The Castle Wilderness Environmental Inventory*, published in 1992, provides an information base.



# The Castle Wilderness, Truly a Special Place.





*Something hidden, go and find it  
 Go and look behind the Ranges  
 Something lost behind the Ranges  
 Lost and waiting for you ...go!  
 ...Rudyard Kipling*



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## Our Vision

“A world in which wilderness survives so that wild lands and wildlife may thrive, and future generations can know their natural beauty and diversity.”

## Our Goal

“The establishment, restoration, maintenance and environmental protection of the Castle Wilderness as a viable wilderness within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem”

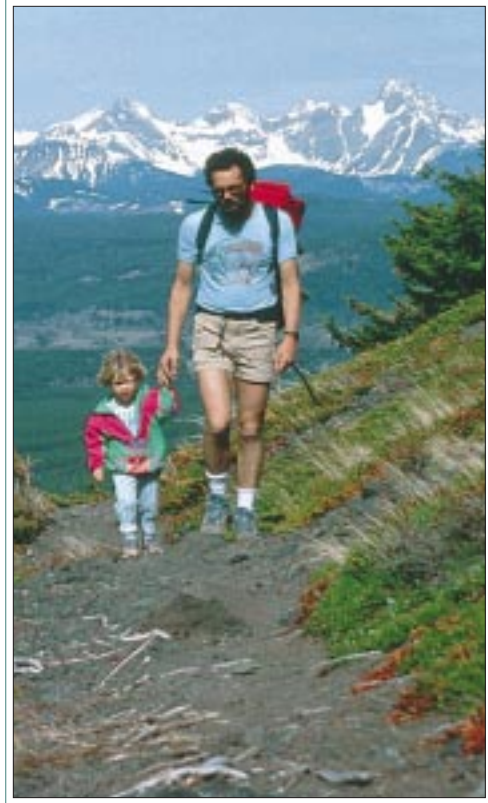
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**T**he Castle Wilderness is a damaged wilderness, but it can restore itself if given a chance. Freed from damaging influences, time will heal it. And while it is healing we can continue to use and enjoy it.

The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition believes that only legislated protection can assure the future of the Castle Wilderness. Formal designation as a Wilderness Area or Wilderness Park would seem most appropriate. This would provide for a broad range of uses and at the same time give the protection necessary for recovery.

Others agree. In their 1993

Decision Report on a four-season resort application, the Alberta Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) recommended that the area south of the Carbondale



River be protected as a Wildland Recreation Area *whether or not* the development proceeded (it didn't).

**W**e really don't know what all the needs are for the survival of our species. But in providing for the continued existence of the rest of

*this living family, we may very well be saving some nutrient essential to the human spirit, some antidote for the life-destroying behaviors that plague us.*

....Joan Bird with the Nature Conservancy, Helena, Montana



The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition spent three years debating the merits of various land uses in a future Castle Wilderness. This is how we see it.

### **Compatible Uses**

nature study  
wildlife viewing  
grazing<sup>2</sup>  
hunting  
fishing  
horseback riding  
hiking and backpacking  
primitive camping  
guiding and outfitting  
berry picking  
snowshoeing  
cross-country skiing

### **Incompatible Uses**

oil and gas exploration and development<sup>1</sup>  
logging  
mining  
mineral exploration and development  
industrial and commercial development  
intensive recreation development  
trapping<sup>3</sup>  
motorized vehicles

1. Shell Canada's Waterton Natural Gas Field includes part of the proposed Castle Wilderness. Our position is that Shell should continue to produce the existing wells until the natural gas has been exhausted. At that time, the roads and wells should be restored as nearly as possible to a wilderness state. No new development should be permitted elsewhere.
2. In the absence of native bison, cattle grazing is important in maintaining the biodiversity of grasslands in the Castle Wilderness. Long-term monitoring is needed to assess the effects of grazing on forest and riparian habitats, however, and to ensure that grazing is managed to the best advantage of the environment.  
**(Under review)**
3. Trapping should be phased out over a five-year period following establishment of the Castle Wilderness.

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## A View of the Future

Southwestern Alberta's proximity to wilderness is one of the main reasons why it remains an outstanding place to live. If used wisely, this proximity to wilderness can contribute to a bright and sustainable economic future. In such a "wilderness-based"

economy, economic opportunities relate primarily to attracting and retaining people and industries that could, through the use of modern communications technology, be located anywhere, but which choose a particular area because of lifestyle and physical (wilderness) amenities such as opportunities to fish, hike, view wildlife, etc.

While liquidating our natural resources may produce a greater short-term cash flow, a wilderness-based economy would be more stable in the long term, and would maintain future options and choices. Further, an economy based on the advantages provided by the proximity to wilderness will provide powerful incentives to protect the wilderness itself. Developing a wilderness-based economy will take creativity and foresight, as well as a little courage, but the rewards are great and will last for many generations.

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## Why Wilderness?

*F*or 95% of its 10,000 years, human civilization existed as

*isolated islands in a vast sea of wilderness. That wilderness was viewed as hostile, something to be exploited, “pushed back”, “tamed”. The astounding pace of human expansion during the last five*



*centuries has doubled and re-doubled, and has turned the world upside down. Now it is wilderness that exists only as remnant islands, awash in a hostile sea of encroaching civilization.*

*Why should we care, why should we protect these last vestiges of what the world was like long before the dawn of civilization? Practical reasons such as biodiversity, genetic stocks for food and medicine, air quality,*



*and watershed protection are often cited, and they are important. But equally important is the opportunity wilderness affords for people to maintain contact with the natural world, to be aware that there are yet places where the world can be*

*seen as it used to be.*

*The dizzying pace of change in the human world leaves people dazed and confused, but the wilderness changes hardly at all over a human lifetime, or many lifetimes. There one can find the world as it was at the time of our great-great-grandparents, and as it can be at the time of our great-great-grandchildren, if we will only allow it to survive.*

.... Cardston naturalist  
Howard Snyder.

## Credits

- Design: Bob Grier
- Photography: Murray Anderson  
Gordon Petersen  
Dave Sheppard  
Charles Truscott
- Maps: Gordon Petersen  
Kathy Sheppard  
Hilah Simmons  
Base Map courtesy of Z-Point Graphics

*Wilderness settles  
peace on the soul.*

....Biologist E.O.  
Wilson



This booklet would not have  
been possible without the  
generous assistance of



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**CANADA'S GRASSROOTS VOICE FOR WILDERNESS**

The Calgary/Banff Chapter serves over 1,200 members in southern Alberta and is dedicated, in cooperation with the Edmonton Chapter, to preserving the integrity of Alberta's parks and wilderness.



Box 2621, Pincher Creek, AB., T0K 1W0 (403) 627-5059

Website: [www.cwc.ab.ca](http://www.cwc.ab.ca) Email: [office@ccwc.ab.ca](mailto:office@ccwc.ab.ca)



## What Do You Think?

The future of the Castle Wilderness concerns us. The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition would like to meet with as many groups and individuals as possible. We have a slide show and an extensive library of information on which to draw. We would welcome an opportunity to explain our position and listen to yours.

*To live is not enough, we must take part.* ....Pablo Casals.

## How You Can Help

If you are concerned about the future of the Castle Wilderness: Write the Premier or your MLA.... Discuss the Castle Wilderness with your friends.... Pass this booklet on....Write us for more information .... And we can always use donations and new members.

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## CCWC Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Types of membership:      Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_      Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$10

(Tax receipt will be sent)

Family/Joint \$15

Cheque or Money Order

Group \$25

Visa     Mastercard

Supporting \$110

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Life \$250

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition  
Box 2621  
Pincher Creek, AB, T0K 1W0