



Exploring the 2003 Lost Creek Fire

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

When there was only one keen hiker registered for the Lost Creek Headwaters overnight hike scheduled for the last weekend in July, a local Crowsnest Pass resident and I took an extra day and made it two nights out to give us time to walk through some of the hardest hit areas of the 2003 fire in the Goat Creek and North Lost Creek headwaters.



Our camp in the basin under the ridges of Mt. Darrah, surrounded by an untouched old-growth forest, still remains an oasis of peace and serenity, despite the predictable profusion of mosquitoes at this time of year. Waking to the awareness of an elk browsing only metres away from my mosquito netting, and discovering that a bear had been digging in the alpine garden since we had crossed it the previous day, gives me all the solace I need to keep the commitment alive to see this wilderness protected. If you haven't written lately to the Premier, or your MLA or the Ministers responsible for the future of this area, please consider doing so soon before we lose these last treasures of the Castle "Special Place". •



Images of regeneration. Panorama from the head of Goat Creek, and new growth at North Lost Creek. Photos by James Tweedie.

Living up to my reputation in the CCWC for bushwhacking, I think Tim's comment (once safely back home) probably reflects the tenor of the hike: "he's a tough act to follow; has a great eye for sheep and elk trails (and no trail)". It's true we could have followed a few legal, or a proliferation of illegal, quad trails to access the headwaters, but they would have provided none of the close to the eye and foot realities of the awesome effects of the fire. The seeming small miracles and magic of the regeneration: the stunning beauty of a single dogwood flower in a "wasteland" of fire-shattered rocks, or the mule-deer buck in velvet finding shade and freedom from flies under a massive black snag laying in a bed of the finely crumbled—almost sand-like—residue; the dramatic contrast of an untouched alpine rock garden in the lee of a ridge only metres away from the burned-out skeletons of a hundreds-of-years-old krumholtz forest. A personal high point for me was viewing goats at a mineral lick that finally explained the sheep and goat highway that I have traveled on in past years, never realizing I had been so close to their destination.

Box 2621, Pincher Creek, Alberta T0K 1W0
 Telephone 403 627 5059
 e-mail: office@ccwc.ab.ca
 website: www.ccwc.ab.ca

CCWC Board of Directors

Gordon Petersen (Beaver Mines)	President
Mike Lynch (Calgary)	Vice President
Gordon Petersen (Beaver Mines)	Treasurer
Mari Decker (Calgary)	Secretary
Jim Cameron (Pincher Creek)	Director
Dianne Pachal (Calgary)	Director
Charlie Russell (Twin Butte)	Director
Nancy Tripp (Pincher Creek)	Director
Jeff Emmett (Calgary)	Director at large
David Keith (Calgary)	Director at large
Jillian Lynn Lawson (Cowley)	Director at large
Peter Lee (Edmonton)	Director at large
Michelle Spencer (Pincher Creek)	Director at large

Staff

Judy Huntley, Executive Director
 (address/phone/e-mail as above)

James Tweedie, Conservation Director
 james@ccwc.ab.ca 403 628 2422

Wendy Ryan, Stewardship & Outreach
 wendy@ccwc.ab.ca

Bree Stefanson-Korobanik,
 Stewardship, Outreach and Conservation Science
 bree@ccwc.ab.ca

Upcoming Meeting

Fall Celebration – contact the office for details.

Membership

Note the CanadaHelps button on the website for donations by credit card—and thanks to those who have used it already!

Newsletter

Editor: Judy Huntley.

This newsletter welcomes comments and/or submissions from members and others. Please send submissions by mail or e-mail to the office. Please check with the office for submission deadlines.

The opinions, evaluations, claims and assertions contained in articles appearing in the Castle Wilderness News are the responsibility of their authors, and may not reflect the policies of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. The office takes responsibility for articles, notices, etc., for which an author is not identified.

Production: Murray Coppold. Thanks to Rosemary Coppold, who addresses, stamps, stuffs and mails the newsletter to you.

***Donations to CCWC are tax creditable
 and greatly appreciated.
 Alberta's new Community Spirit Program
 means that both you and CCWC will benefit
 more from your contributions.***



Coalition News

Thanks

All of us at CCWC warmly thank our new and old volunteers, our contributors of time, gear, skills, and money, and our funders in the past year: **Fanwood and Wilburforce Foundations, The LaSalle Adams Fund, World Wildlife Fund, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Alberta Stewardship Network, Alberta Ecotrust Foundation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Alberta Conservation Association, and the Alpine Club of Canada.** Thanks! Together we're getting important work done.

We particularly thank Ian Dyson of Alberta Environment who gave a really spectacular presentation on the Cumulative Effects planning being done in his department, and how it will connect with the Land Use Framework.

This year has brought lots of new volunteers. We really appreciate your time and effort, and hope you had a great time!

Website up

It has taken a while, but the new website is up, at the usual address, www.ccwc.ab.ca. There will soon be a blog page where we will post notes and photos of interest. If you have potential postings, please email them to office@ccwc.ab.ca. We may edit them down but will try to include much of your information and thoughts.

As well, there will be a section for stewardship information, both this year's reporting and all the information from the last fifteen years and more.

Hiking schedule

The hiking program has been so popular this year, the weather is so great, and Bree and Wendy are so keen, that the hiking season has been seriously extended. Check it out at www.ccwc.ab.ca/files/FallHikingBrochure2008.pdf, or phone us if you need a printed copy. •



Concerns at CMR

CCWC continues to be concerned that Castle Mountain Resort, in the heart of the Castle Wilderness, does not pay enough attention to the impacts it has on the local environment. Significant erosion has resulted from recent expansions. Weeds are not adequately controlled. A reservoir site is being requested. And the lifts were run again during the Huckleberry Festival, despite bears being recently sighted and berries not ripe. We hope these problems will be solved before the impacts spread. •



Stewarding the Castle by Horseback

by Wendy Ryan, Stewardship and Outreach

Packing up six packhorses and traveling up to the head of Yarrow Canyon then onto Avion Ridge was the start of a nine-day tour through the Castle, July 16-24. Exceptional weather, high vista views, along with many days without seeing anyone else out in the wilderness was a rare experience and one that I am truly thankful for.

Although the trail up to the head of Yarrow Canyon has many Shell fixtures along the bottom portion, we sashayed by them to remember them no longer as the beauty of the high meadow with the small lake and waterfalls hold to your mind.

The following day our troupe of five women and 11 horses rose above the valley onto Avion Ridge, with high expanding views of the South Castle Valley, north to Victoria Ridge and Spionkop Valley and south into British Columbia. The trails have seen little use and are fairly wild. In places we had to clear deadfall to make the trail passable for the horses.

Weeds are a main concern. ORVs are another. We dug Blue Weed and bagged and packed it to our next camp to be burned. Oxeye daisies, mullein, buttercups, and goats beard were pulled at the next camp and also burned.

The Big Sage Flats are being damaged by ORVs on closed trails, a large permanent camp has been set up and heavy traffic in and out of the river into this once designated Natural Area. Anyone that has gone on the hillside Big Sage hike misses the damage going on below. Violations there and elsewhere have been reported to the enforcement people in SRD, and recommendations for appropriate actions.

High run off this spring has done a considerable damage along all watersheds as seen in Grizzly Creek, Gladstone Creek and along the South Castle road.

A great trip. A great place for a park! •



Moss campion above Yarrow Creek, and monkey flowers at Grizzly Lake. Wendy Ryan photos.



Andy Russell-I'tai Sah Kop Park

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Dianne Pachal and many others are working hard on the Park proposal. A large array of people with an interest in the Castle were invited to a meeting in June, and twenty or so of them will meet again in August. Gordon Petersen, James Tweedie, and Dianne met recently with the new Deputy Minister of Energy, Peter Watson.

A group including the Sierra Club, the Alberta Wilderness Association, The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, CCWC, and others, continue to meet regularly by phone to discuss how best to keep this issue before government, and to share information on our various projects. Keep your eye on the new website for more information soon. •



Executive Director's Report

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

The CCWC AGM on May 31, was compact and efficient, with most of the meeting focused on Ian Dyson's excellent Cumulative Effects presentation and on getting the business done so the hikers could head for Mount Backus. Thanks to everyone who came, and particularly to those who came forward to serve on the Board.

Summer 2008 has been an excellent time of collaboration. Wendy Ryan and Bree Stefanson-Korobanik have been really superb summer staff, and have added hugely to our list of volunteers—scouts, school groups, Castle Mountain community folks, and students. We have worked with Waterton weed staff, Alberta Parks weed and outreach folks, SRD weed and enforcement staff, and MD of Pincher Creek agricultural staff and weed crew. We have had very

good coverage from the local newspaper and the regional Boundary, as well as the Southern Alberta paper the Prairie Post. Thanks to you all!

Shell has now submitted to the EUB/ERCB the results of their study of the pipeline break in Screwdriver Creek last November. Their entire north field, half of their production, has been shut down for about eight months. We do not know what public input options will be available, but we will take part.

CCWC has been working toward keeping the Castle wild and protected for very nearly twenty years. We hope to have a celebration of this great year, and everyone's good work, sometime in September. Let us know if you'd like to come. •



Fairs, Festivals, Volunteers and Stewardship

by Bree Stefanson-Korobanik, Stewardship, Outreach and Conservation Science

This summer I have attended The Pincher Creek Cowboy Poetry Gathering, The South Country Fair, The Canmore Folk Festival and the Huckleberry Festival at Castle Mountain Resort. The South Country Fair and the Canmore Folk Festival were great successes! There were many people who stopped by to read our displays, ask questions and take brochures home with them. I believe that next year we could attend The Calgary Folk Festival and maybe even an event in Fernie and draw further attention to what we do.

I have been inviting interested people to join me in the field this summer in hopes that they may become future volunteers/stewards for the CCWC. I have taken a handful of the youth at CMR out to sample water and explained to them what we at the CCWC monitor and why. A Pincher Creek local who will be attending college in Lethbridge this fall contacted me and was interested in spending a day in the field. She joined me for a reconnaissance mission in the Carbondale. We drove the roads to inspect, photograph and GPS new bridges, old culverts, invasive species and random campers. She was amazed to learn how much the area has been modified by industry and ORVs and to learn of the effects they have on the ecosystem.

I have taken over the role of the CCWC Steward for the West Castle Wetland Ecological Reservation. I have been fortunate this summer to spend quite a few hours in the beautiful place! I have observed moose, white-tailed deer, big horn sheep, geese, ducks, numerous songbirds, amphibians and fish. I have done some water sampling, garbage removal and helped to organize an invasive species pull for the wetland. Unfortunately, the garbage keeps returning and the invasive species were more numerous than anticipated but, that just reminds me that the work we do is important. •



A great day in the mountains! Students and teachers from the Kainai High School in Stand-Off joined the CCWC summer staff on June 24, 2008 for a day of hiking and learning. The group hiked part way up Table Mountain, celebrated the beauty of the country, and learnt about the negative effects that humans can have on the land and water when they do not respect them. Photo by by Bree Stefanson Korobanik



Wendy Ryan doing trail work for Ed Gregor Day. Photo by Tim Grier.