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The Andy Russell – I'tai sah kòp Park: Overwhelming Support at the Folk Festivals

by Corin Lohmann

I must admit that I was feeling the squeeze the week before I was supposed to attend the first folk festival in Fort Macleod on July 21, 2006. The new computer with the publishing program I had ordered was in shipment and I had not started working on the new Andy Russell Wildland displays I was supposed to present at the festivals. To my relief the shiny new computer arrived six days before the start of the first festival meaning I could begin creating the display. It took some long hours and some editing help from James Tweedie, to get the text just right and to finish the display.

The three festivals were all quite different from one another and I was not quite sure what to expect since I had not previously attended a folk festival. Well, The South Country Fair in Fort Macleod was the perfect place to get acquainted to the whole music fest scene. For three days in the scorching heat the festivalgoers danced, camped, cooled off in the river, and, yes, paid a visit to the CCWC display booth. This was in part due to the little water stand that I erected so that people could rehydrate and find refuge from the heat in the booth while looking at the Andy Russell display. The South Country Fair did not boast the number of people of the other festivals but everyone who visited the booth was very interested in the topic and a good number of people said that they would write letters in support of the new park. Come Sunday when the last band finished playing I was sad to see the weekend end so soon but the support from the fairgoers and the positive energy I felt had me ready to take on the Calgary Folk Festival the following weekend.

The Calgary Folk Fest was the biggest festival I attended, with more than 15,000 people. The Sierra Club of Canada had generously donated a portion of their booth so that Castle-Crown could attend the festival (the community booths in the Calgary Folk Fest were booked as early as April, long before I was hired for the summer). Sharing the booth with The Sierra Club seemed to work well for both organizations because together the two seemed to attract quite a bit of attention. It was also a chance to meet many energetic young environmentalists and share information about our causes as well as our ideas about the future. The

membership booklets and the free hiking schedules seemed to be the most popular brochures, so hopefully we will see our membership number and donations rise as a result

The Canmore Folk Music Festival was the most beautiful setting and it was the culmination of all the festivals I had attended in the summer. Canmore had the most responsive group of people I had encountered; they know first hand what development and industry can do to wilderness. The idea of protecting the Castle Wilderness generated quite a lot of interest and most of the people I talked to said they would write a letter to their MLA in support of the park. When the weekend came to an end I was quite sure that the message of the Andy Russell Park had been well received in that part of the province.

The support that I received while visiting the three folk festivals was outstanding and the message to be taken away is quite clear: the people of Alberta are ready for the new park and come the fall it is up to the politicians to listen and act accordingly. •

CPAWS Castle Wilderness Action Alert

At www.cpaws.org please check out and add your letter to:
Help us create a park in Alberta's Castle wilderness!

White Bark Pine in the Castle Wilderness

by Peter McTaggart

White bark pine is recognized as a keystone species in upper subalpine ecosystems. There is little information on the status of white bark within the Castle Wilderness, although casual observations indicate that most stands are in poor condition. This summer Reg Ernst and I initiated a study to determine the distribution, abundance and health of white bark pine stands in the Castle area. Results of the study will be used to try to generate interest in a regeneration program.

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

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Staff

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

James Tweedie, Conservation Director
 403 628 2422
 e-mail: tweedie@telusplanet.net

Corin Lohmann, Outreach, IT Specialist
 403 627 5059
 e-mail: corin.lohmann@gmail.com

Upcoming Meeting

Members are welcome to attend board meetings.
 Next meeting September 17, 10:30 AM-4 PM. Please
 contact the office if you wish to be notified.

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-
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 articles, notices, etc., for which an author is not identified.

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 who addresses, stamps, stuffs and mails the newsletter to you.

**Donations to CCWC are tax creditable
 and greatly appreciated.**

Why I Took the Job — A Perfect Fit

by Corin Lohmann

I was nearing the end of an amazing school year which I had just spent learning rock climbing, avalanche safety, ice climbing and mountaineering with the College of the Rockies in Fernie, BC. It seemed the fun I had over the last year had dwindled my bank account into the negatives and I was facing the reality of getting a job.

Well this is never a happy time in anyone's life, especially mine since it meant that my time of playing in the mountains was over and I had to start paying for the fun that I had in the last year. I was half-heartedly applying to jobs when, to my luck, one of my classmates sent me a job description from the CCWC. Upon researching the job, I found the description did not seem like a job at all, rather it seemed like a recipe for an amazing summer. First of all they needed someone to help out with their hikes and the stewardship of the Castle Wilderness. They also needed someone to go to various folk festivals and functions in Alberta to raise awareness for the Andy Russell – Itai sah kòp Park. Now this I could not believe; the job description was pretty much an extension of the amazing school year I had just completed. It combined my love for the outdoors with my passion for saving the environment. I could not believe that they would pay someone to do this. It was a natural fit and my worries about the dreaded summer job were over. I not only found a way to pay off my debt but I also ended up with a job that introduced me to so many new ideas and amazing people. I truly found my dream job! •

Thanks!

Thanks go out continually to our funders: to Fanwood, CSSF, LaSalle Adams, and Wilburforce Foundations and to NRDC, for continuing and current support; to many funders over many years that have supported CCWC in gathering and sharing knowledge; and to new supporters, the Alberta Stewardship Network, The Lethbridge Community Foundation, and the Y2Y Partnership program, all of whom have supported the current outreach initiative. •



YELLOWSTONE TO YUKON
 CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Thanks to all of you who renewed your membership in May. Your donations are hugely appreciated. If you forgot to renew then, we look forward to hearing from you!

Do you have email? Please let us know your current address.

Cross country ski trips are being organized. Are you interested? Contact the office.



Great Hiking in the Castle

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

The summer's hiking program has again received some great reviews from many of the participants. We will add some colour to our website by including some of the many pictures that people have sent us from their days in the Castle.

My own opportunities for hiking have been limited to the July hikes, starting with joining Klaus Jericho on his Canada Day celebration on Victoria Ridge: a perfect time for the bountiful profusion of colours on the high slopes. The following weekend I joined Dave Sheppard into the Suicide Creek drainage where Dave was able to point out a number of our less common plants along the trail (snowbush, purple sweet cicely, and foam flower come to mind) and our education was enriched by having Carita Bergman with us.

Carita is our local Area Wildlife Biologist with Alberta's Fish and Wildlife Division, and has been able to share some good news with us these days about the healthy state of most of the Castle's wildlife populations that she has responsibility for "managing". Particularly encouraging have been the population trends for elk, bighorn sheep and mountain goats and she was reassured to see some wolf scat on the trail. Sadly, the end of our hike at the waterfall below the high basin was marred by the discovery of several hundred metres of a newly cleared OHV trail, extending an already kilometre-long illegal trail from the valley below.

On July 15, David McNeill shared his enthusiasm for the valley floor of the Westcastle, where he helps maintain the Syncline cross-country ski trail. Our notable plant sighting this time was of several occurrences of that weird-looking ghost plant, "pine drops" at several stages of maturity. We were also encouraged to see plenty of current beaver activity, some bear signs and a chance encounter with a toad (boreal, I think).

... *White Bark*, continued from page 1

Surveying started on June 29 where I joined Reg along with Dave Sheppard, Bob Blaxley and Cyndi Smith, the ecologist for Waterton National Park. Cyndi has already carried out extensive research into white bark and is one of the co-authors of the of the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation's surveying methodology for white bark, which we used. So far surveying has taken place between South Drywood Creek and Syncline Mountain, with twelve stands being found and surveyed. We will try and survey a minimum of 20 plots. This will give a good reflection of the spatial representation and status of white bark within the Castle Wilderness.

We either find white bark pine embedded in mixed fir and spruce stands, where it suffers from competition, or in pure stands where it mostly consists of old, dead trees. From the information that we have gathered so far most of the stands would be assessed as unhealthy. An initial look at the white bark pine data (from a total of 688 trees, in 12 survey plots) indicates 21% healthy, 48% infected with blister rust and 29% dead. Perhaps the most limiting factor for white bark pine

Again, the end of the hike was somewhat marred by the appearance of a full-sized jeep driving on the dry creekbed of the Westcastle River, directly adjacent to Castle Mountain Resort at the south end of the Wetlands Ecological Reserve. I noted that almost all the boundary signs erected a couple of years ago along the road through the Castle Mountain Resort townsite have now disappeared. The jeep driver would no doubt claim a defence of ignorance of such niceties. Why he should choose to drive, rather than walk, in such a place remains beyond me.

My annual trek up the North Lost Creek valley, now 3 years after the dramatic fire that raged through in July 2003, had to have been on one of the hottest and driest days of the summer. Despite the grueling conditions, it was a delight to experience the dramatic resurgence of post-fire vegetation everywhere: from the acres of exuberant fireweed throughout the valley, to the isolated 3-inch tall huckleberry bush offering its single berry to the world around it, or the dense and brilliant patch of yellow *Sedum* flowering through the scorched rocks in the shelter of a charred stump. In the seeps that occur in the old cutblock areas on the south-facing slope our timing was just right to find a profusion of Red Monkey-flowers, sometimes interspersed with Grass of Parnassus. Beautiful!

And for this hike our return trip was briefly enlivened by the appearance of a big bull moose on the trail ahead, and my hope for the peaceful future for the upper valleys was enhanced by encountering the recently-installed gates that ASRD had been promising, in order to enforce the present access management plan in the area. As Conservation Director for the CCWC for the past couple of years, I have had to find solace and hope in all such smaller details. The big picture remains in serious jeopardy. •

is the presence of the fungal blister rust pathogen, which is present in every stand we have surveyed.

Results show the stands face a variety of threats including blister rust, pine beetle, competition, and perhaps drought. Some stands still have mature cone producing trees while others have none. At one location, we observed what we considered a young age class producing cones. One positive is that a number of the stands have a small number of mature cone producing trees. Thus regeneration is still occurring within the white bark population in the Castle wilderness. Near Mt. Jutland we located a large stand of white bark, which were not fully mature in size though were producing cones, plus the trees observed on this site looked free of any blister rust infection.

We have a couple of more weeks to try and locate further stands. What we hope to see is further cone producing trees, with the potential of being harvested to be grown on and planted back out in the Castle. •



EAB Rejects CCWC's Right to Intervene

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

In a Decision handed down on August 8, the Environmental Appeals Board (EAB) has ruled that the CCWC has no right to be heard in Alberta Environment's Water and Waste Water Approvals processes pertaining to developments at Castle Mountain Resort. The decision comes as no great surprise to those who have followed the EAB's narrow determination of "directly affected" status over the years. The Board has again trotted out its mantra that only individual persons can claim to be directly affected and that, in the case of an organization, over half the membership of the organization has to show that they are personally affected by a decision.

The Board rejected arguments that an organization like the CCWC, that has been recognized as a *bona fide* stakeholder by Castle Mountain Resort itself, and by Alberta Environment and Alberta Sustainable Resources Development in a number of initiatives and processes in the Castle, should be accorded the same right to standing in the matter of the Water and Waste Water Approvals processes. The CCWC's lawyer, Cam MacLennan, from Huckvale Wilde Harvie MacLennan LLP in Lethbridge, presented a strong case for the organization to be accorded the same rights as a legal person as CMR itself, or

any other corporation recognized under Alberta's Societies Act, particularly in a matter affecting public lands, where no individual person can meet the EAB's narrow interpretation of the provisions of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act for public involvement and consultation.

Rather than address the merits and substance of the CCWC's (and others') concerns with the approvals processes at Castle Mountain Resort, the EAB has chosen to drag the CCWC through nearly three years of legal wrangling about whether the organization should be allowed to raise its concerns at all.

Notwithstanding the decision by the Court of Appeal that an environmental impact assessment was not required at CMR because these "other approvals processes" would address the CCWC's concerns, it now appears that the EAB has chosen to deny the existence of any such concerns by denying the organization standing, thereby placing the decision of the Director of Approvals beyond any public scrutiny. Surely such was not the intent of either the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act or the purpose of the Alberta Environmental Appeals Board itself? •



Executive Director's Report

by Judy Huntley

During summer 2006, CCWC's staff people are working hard. The Executive Director and Conservation Director are looking after the usual tasks, and are delighted to be sharing the office and the field and outreach work with our new staff person, Corin Lohmann. We send heartfelt thanks to the Water Stewardship Network and the Y2Y Partnership grant program for grants that have covered his time, and to the Lethbridge Community Foundation for making it possible to acquire up-to-date communications equipment.

Corin has wonderfully appropriate skills to fill out the gaps that we have had in the past. He chose new computer equipment and put it to work updating our display materials and bringing them — and the message of supporting the Andy Russell – I'tai sah kòp Wilderness and Provincial Park — to the people at the South Country Fair, the Calgary Folk Festival, and the Canmore Folk Festival. The display is great. I hope you were there.

He has also spent enough time in the back country to have a sense of the Castle Wilderness. He did water sampling throughout the Castle Wilderness with James for the Alberta Water Stewardship Network, did a Steward's study and report on the Westcastle Wetlands (the only protected area in the whole Castle Wilderness, of which CCWC is the Volunteer Steward), and pulled blueweed with the Pincher Creek

Watershed group. In addition to his communication and backcountry skills he has done reclamation work in the arctic, and is entirely up to speed on industrial reclamation.



Thanks to our volunteers, and thanks to our donors and funders. You are terrific



Don't forget there are still some excellent hikes left. We're hoping for rain, but the Castle is still gorgeous.



Stewards, hikers, volunteers and members in general were given the opportunity on August 12th to learn skills useful in understanding ecological relationships in the Castle area. Thanks to Cows and Fish, presenter Michael Gerrand, and the Twin Butte Stock Association for providing the Riparian Health Assessment Workshop. Thanks also to University of Northumbria student Peter McTaggart for volunteering for CCWC while gathering information on whitebark pine (see article in this issue).program, all of whom have supported the current outreach initiative. •