

WHAT'S NEW AND EXCITING!

Parks volunteers are truly inspirational. Each year I learn about new volunteer initiatives and have the opportunity to meet some of the incredible people who give so freely of their time and talents. It is a privilege to lead the division's volunteer support services, knowing that you share our passion for preserving and presenting Alberta's rich natural and cultural heritage.

We have much to celebrate this year. Most recently, the Premier announced that the government will invest \$21 million over the next three years in upgrading our water and sewer systems and addressing other health and safety issues like park docks, boardwalks and washroom buildings. These improvements will help improve public services throughout the network. Our Minister, the Honorable Gene Zwozdesky was instrumental in obtaining this funding.

In addition to this, plans are progressing well on our Centennial Legacy projects; a new Boreal Center for Bird Conservation in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, an expansion to the field station in Dinosaur Provincial Park and new visitor centers in Cypress Hills Interprovincial and Writing-On-Stone Provincial Parks. A total of \$4.8 million dollars is being invested in these initiatives to improve public access to information and educational services. The boreal center also enhances the work that the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Society



June at the campground host site in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park.

and our department have done to further scientific knowledge about boreal songbirds and other species by providing laboratory, office and accommodations for researchers and volunteers from all over the world. Next year, in addition to the annual bird monitoring program, ten research students from Penn State University in Pittsburgh will spend over two weeks studying boreal ecology. Through these efforts, and eventually this center, we can help position Alberta as a leader in boreal and avian research. (In 2002, the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Society was awarded the Parks and Protected Areas Partnership Award in recognition of the impressive work they have done).

Over the past winter we have been busy implementing our reorganization plan. This re-aligns staff resources and improves our ability to do park land use and tourism planning, as well as marketing and public education, in addition to our regular operations. My branch, the Visitor Services Branch, will continue to provide volunteer management support to you and our staff. In the field, you'll notice many positive changes; some staff have moved to new locations to pursue new career opportunities and new staff have joined our team. Look for new faces, in new places as you embark on your volunteer experience this summer. Take the time to get to know these people; they share your passion for Alberta's great outdoors.



June Markwart
Director, Visitor Services Branch

In this issue ...

- **History of Miquelon Lake Provincial Park**
- **Steward Program Update**
- **Spread Your Wings ... and Take Flight**
- **Hosting at Dillberry Lake Provincial Park**
- **Trail Care Program**
- **Dinosaur Provincial Park Hosting**

THE HISTORY OF MIQUELON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

Submitted by: Lorne and Penny Whittaker, Campground Hosts

We had another wonderful summer hosting at Miquelon Lake this year. In June and September, we had the opportunity to man the visitor centre. During this time, several campers asked us why this park offered an interpretive program and visitor centre when some other provincial parks did not.

We were really not able to answer that question, so we decided to check into it. First of all we found out that Miquelon Lake Provincial Park is classified as a heritage site. So what does this mean? We looked up the history of the area and found out that this over eight hundred hectares of forested hills, ponds and marshes is part of a geographical region known as the Cooking Lake Moraine and it has quite a story to tell.

There are actually three Miquelon Lakes, which were formed from a glacial deposit approximately 12,500 years ago when a large block of ice broke off from the retreating continental glacier. With gradual melting of the ice, mounds, ridges and hollows were formed creating a hummocky landscape called “knob and kettle”. This makes the park’s topography very unique in Alberta.

In 1884 the area was surveyed, and one of the surveyors named it “Miquelon” after himself. In 1909 the Camrose Sportsmans Club built a hunting lodge on the south shore of Miquelon “1”. Summer cottages were built and the area became a popular resort. Kingman, to the east of Miquelon became known as “The Gateway to the Miquelons”. People from Edmonton would take the train to Kingman and from there a horse and wagon to the cottages and white sandy beaches. This continued until 1927 when water from the



Visitors to Miquelon Provincial Park enjoy programs at the amphitheatre.

lake was diverted to the Camrose reservoir because of a severe drought. Consequently the water levels dropped too low on Miquelon “1” but exposed good sandy beaches on Miquelon “3” where the recreational use of the area shifted.

In 1921 a bird sanctuary was established; one of the first in Alberta. Frank Farley, a noted amateur ornithologist, served as warden from 1921 to 1931. In 1958 Miquelon Lake Provincial Park was established on land donated by the Camrose Lions Club. The present buildings were not built until the park and campground were developed in 1972. Since then other lands have been donated.

The park is an ideal place to see wildlife such as beaver, white-tailed deer, moose, coyotes and this summer, even a bear. The park is centered on one of the major North American migratory bird flyways and is a major staging and moulting area. Also the park’s ponds are rich in invertebrate life.

So we discovered that the Miquelon Lakes area has a very interesting history and now if anyone asks us about this heritage site, we can answer all their questions and more.

For more information on the volunteer program or to view past issues of this newsletter, visit: www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer. You can also access our web site by visiting www.cd.gov.ab.ca then click on the “Getting Involved” link. You may also obtain more information about the volunteer program by contacting:

Brad Marshall, Volunteer Services Coordinator

Brad.Marshall@gov.ab.ca
(780) 427-9017

OR

Sandra Myers, Volunteer Steward Coordinator

Sandra.Myers@gov.ab.ca
(780) 427-1742

STEWARD PROGRAM UPDATE

Submitted by: Sandra Myers, Volunteer Steward Coordinator

It has been an exciting and busy year for the program. We have covered a lot of ground since our last newsletter.

We are pleased to announce that Elizabeth Driver, our program support staff, has accepted a new position as Research Analyst in our division. While we're sorry to lose her, we're happy that she is continuing her parks career.

Coral Grove is our new Steward Program Assistant. You may know her from her years of work with the Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre (ANHIC), her involvement in the Edmonton Natural History Club, or as newsletter editor for the Federation of Alberta Naturalists. Coral will be busy over the next couple of months helping us catch up on applications, kits and recognition awards, etc.

For the past year, Ted Ritzer, Outreach Services Coordinator has led a Volunteer Steward Program review, to determine how well we are meeting your needs and the program's original goals. A number of issues were identified during this review that need immediate attention. These include:

- Clarify or confirm program identity, goals and objectives
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Update and improve the efficiency of the selection criteria and process.

To review these issues and make recommendations, a core group was formed that included key field staff, branch staff and a number of volunteer stewards. This dedicated group of people met several times with the following impressive results:

- Confirmed use of the existing logo
- Developed new vision, mission, goal statements and objectives
- Revised draft of the 2001 Volunteer Steward Policy Paper
- Updated staff administrative procedures including criteria for selection of volunteer stewards

A special thank you to the core group:

- Jean Funk, Sherwood Park Natural Area
- John Woitenko, President of SAPAA
- Margot Hervieux, Kleskun Hill Natural Area/ Visitor Services Specialist Saskatoon Island
- Kyle Clifford, West Central Area Manager
- Wayne Holland, District Agrologist, (Sustainable Resource Development)
- Glen Naylor, Conservation Officer, Kananaskis Country
- Ted Ritzer, Sandra Myers and Elizabeth Driver, Visitor Services Branch

These recommendations are currently under review. A number of items, like the new vision, mission, goal and objectives are being submitted to the Parks Executive Committee for their approval. Once approved, we'll run them by Sustainable Resource Development. The logo and new criteria for selecting volunteers have been adopted for use and the procedures will be incorporated into our staff manual. Watch for this updated criteria on our web site.

In October, a rough draft of the new volunteer handbook was circulated to four stewards, including Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA) members. A number of

written responses were received and a meeting was held between branch staff and the SAPAA board to discuss concerns. The resulting major revision is being reviewed by SAPAA and staff from Sustainable Resource Development. We will release the handbook at the June orientation sessions for new stewards to pilot test. Later this summer we'll ask for feedback from these stewards and then finalize it this fall.

In the coming year, we hope to implement a lot of the good planning that was done last year. We are also preparing for our fall volunteer conference to be held Sept 24-26, 2004 at the Rocky Mountain YMCA near Canmore. We look forward to seeing you there!

WANTED

Your Inspection Reports!!! ... it's never too late!

Have you submitted your site inspection report, yet?

Even if no changes have occurred since your previous visit, please fill out your report and submit it by mail, phone, fax, or online at www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer. Select "Forms" and then "Steward Report Form".

We appreciate your assistance in preserving the province's unique natural heritage.

Sandra Myers
Volunteer Steward Coordinator

Spread Your Wings ...and take Flight!

That's exactly what two volunteers from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania did this past year, when they followed thousands of migratory birds headed north.

Danielle Skoncey and Moshe Marvit volunteered for four months at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, just north of the town of Slave Lake, Alberta. This fascinating bird monitoring facility, located in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, is Canada's northernmost bird observatory.

Alberta is located along a major North American bird migration route, making it a prime destination for birders. The abundance of wetlands, natural grasslands, parkland and boreal forest throughout the province, and unique habitats like the Alberta badlands, attracts an amazing variety of songbirds, waterfowl and birds of prey.

There are many great places in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park to observe migratory songbirds, many of which are rarely seen in other parts of Alberta. At the bird observatory, volunteers capture and band birds to track their migration trends, indices, patterns, routes and other details of bird life. Worldwide, there is a great deal of interest in determining the status of boreal migrants as indicators of the health of our planet.

by Cheryl Robb
Public Affairs Officer

At the observatory, the protocol for monitoring migration is to set out 12 nylon mist-nets for six hours, beginning half an hour before sunrise every day, seven days a week.

At peak migration, a given net can capture about 200 birds per net every 15 minutes. Each bird is individually removed from the nets and banded.

As new volunteers, Danielle and Moshe began by watching the observatory's Bander-In-Charge, Jul Wojnowski, and Field Assistant, Tyler Flockhart, capture and band birds. By the time they left the observatory, the Pittsburgh volunteers had helped set mist nets in the woods half-hour before sunrise every day, which meant most of their days began at 3:30 a.m. They coordinated and wrote articles for the Warbler newsletter, assisted with updates for the web site, helped to revamp the education display at the observatory's lab and learned how to capture and band birds themselves.



Neotropical songbirds arrive every year like clockwork.

A breeding bird program, called Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS), operates during the period following spring migration, from June 7 – July 17. The program, which monitors breeding success and survivorship, is conducted at preferred nesting grounds in the park. There are 10 mist nets set out at each of the four mature forest locations, totalling 40 nets.

Unlike the tropical songbirds that are internally programmed to start arriving at the observatory every year like clockwork on April 17, Danielle and Moshe found their way to the observatory through the Internet.

Even though the web site warned, "If you can't take isolation, bumping into bears, communal living, long hours, physical exertion, bugs, the heat, the cold, or primitive working conditions, then this is not the volunteer experience for you," they still decided to volunteer.



Volunteers migrate to Lesser Slave Provincial Park.

Danielle has a degree in behavioural studies and was working as Assistant Curator of Education at The National Aviary in Pittsburgh – America’s only independent indoor non-profit bird zoo. Moshe just completed a degree in philosophy.

As to what motivated them to head north, they say, “We wanted a broadening experience to enrich our lives.” They further explain that they are interested in science, seeking field experience and want to help where they are needed.

Established in 1994, and a full member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network since 1999, the observatory is beginning to garner international attention with offers from volunteers as far away as Australia, England, India, Japan and Scotland. In fact, more offers are received than the observatory can currently accommodate.

As for our Pittsburgh volunteers, they’ve migrated back to Pennsylvania, where Danielle is working toward becoming a licensed bander.

Hopefully, their time and volunteer experience at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory has helped to lay the groundwork for their future success. And while the birds continue to teach us about the health of our ecosystems, they also illustrate how to soar and to stretch our minds and skills to the limit.

More information on this research program can be found at www.lslbo.org. Information on volunteering in the province’s parks and protected areas can be found on the Volunteering in Alberta’s Great Outdoors web site at www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer

or

call:

Frank Fraser, Visitor Services
Officer, Parks and Protected Areas
(780) 849-7166

*Come soar with the eagles ...
in Canmore this fall.*



photo credit: Gordon Court

Alberta Parks and Protected Areas 2004 Volunteer Conference

Friday, September 24 to Sunday, September 26
at Bow Valley Provincial Park in Kananaskis Country.

Watch for your registration package in May.

HOSTING AT DILLBERRY LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

Submitted by: Valerie Madden, Campground Host

For the first time, this summer I volunteered to be a campground host at Dillberry Lake Provincial Park. This park is located 85 km south of Lloydminster on the Saskatchewan border. The terms were that I work a total of twenty-five hours a week, or five hours a day for five days. For this, I received a spacious free campsite with a fifteen amp power hookup. When I arrived at the park, waiting for me was a large carton containing identification badges, magnetic Campground Host signs for the sides of my truck, a red first aid fanny pack and some useful clothing items, each with a parks insignia. My duties as host were simply to greet the campers, make sure they self-registered and placed their receipt on their site post, answer questions and help to solve minor problems. There would be no collecting of fees or cleaning. Len Greer, the new conservation officer, added that I was another pair of eyes and ears to assist him in carrying out his duties.

The water tap on the road was adjacent to my site. So by attaching a splitter and enough hoses to reach my trailer, I had a continuous supply of well water, while still allowing other campers to use this same tap. I purchased a fifteen gallon waste disposal tote which when full, I strapped behind my diesel pickup truck and hauled to the sani-dump. It was rugged at first, with just fifteen amps, learning to remember to use only one major appliance at a time – the microwave, hot water heater, kettle, room heater and even the air conditioner. After tripping the breaker a few times, the system became workable. (Consultants met at Dillberry Lake in early September to consider the possibility of raising the power level in the campground next summer to thirty amps).



Dillberry Provincial Park - perfect place for cloud watching.

What a wonderful fun summer this turned out to be. Early in the season, Len and wife, Deena, hosted the annual Parks Day on the beach. Len barbecued the hot dogs while Deena coordinated the sand castle building contest. She later awarded nearly every participant with a prize, some of which were locally donated. All the one hundred people attending participated in devouring the two large decorated slab cakes.

It was definitely a stress-free summer for me as campground host. I met a lot of nice people, families and couples. Attendance at the park was up this year, according to Wayne Skinner, who looks after park maintenance. Wayne coordinated brush cutting in all sites making them accessible for the smallest tent to the largest Class A motor home. I heard the same thing over and over from the campers that the washrooms and showers were immaculate, the sites spacious and the beaches kept in great shape, thanks to Wayne and his crew.

This is my seventh summer in Canada as a work camper. A work camper is a person that lives in a recreational vehicle parked in a campground or RV resort and works on the premises. Previous summer experiences in Canada include

activity director or campground office registrar in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. My lifelong camping experiences began when I was twelve years old. I hooked two blankets on either side of a rope strung between two trees in our backyard. This makeshift “tent” covered my sleeping cot with room for my pet dogs and cats in the summer. When my late husband and I had a family of five children, we started with a tent, then a tent camper and eventually a small travel trailer. Since then, I am now on my second thirty-foot fifth-wheel trailer with a thirteen-foot slide. My travels have taken me to every province in Canada and every state in the USA including Alaska. This has also allowed me to become a travel consultant and a charter member of the annual three day RV Lifestyle Seminars in Kelowna, BC (my seminars include: “full timing as a single person” and “the joys of work camping”). I am also a writer of travel articles for many RV magazines, both in Canada and the USA. This winter will also be my fifth winter as a volunteer work camper in Texas.

TRAIL CARE PROGRAM

Submitted by: Kristin Dyer, Friends of Fish Creek

Thanks to the generous support of the EcoAction Community Funding Program, the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, in partnership with Alberta Community Development Parks and Protected Areas, is launching our new Trail Care program to help strike a balance between environmental concerns and recreational needs of people who use Fish Creek Provincial Park. Many users relish the opportunity to escape city life by exploring all corners of this beautiful park. However, this has led to the creation of random dirt trails throughout the park. Trail Care aims to reduce trail-use impact on the park environment through reclamation, rehabilitation, and education.

There is a pressing need for the Trail Care program in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Off-trail use can have devastating consequences on the landscape including: increased erosion, soil compaction, loss of natural vegetation, invasion of non-native plant species, and destruction of habitat. In some cases erosion from random trails causes soil to enter Fish Creek, and ultimately the Bow River, resulting in problems related to increased sediment levels. Not all random trails are a concern. In fact some of the small trail segments created by off-trail users have little impact on the surrounding area and serve to provide access to interesting parts of the park.

Venturing off maintained trails is also a key component in some of the most popular recreational pursuits in the park, including hiking and mountain biking. For many people this represents one of the few opportunities to get away from the

'paved' world and commune with nature. Consequently, we do not want to eliminate off-trail use through our new program, but hope to mitigate its effects by educating users about responsible off-trail use, protecting highly sensitive areas, and upgrading some trails in less sensitive areas that can sustain this type of use.

This exciting program will be launched in the fall with work starting mid-September. If you belong to a group interested in hands-on reclamation work in Fish Creek Provincial Park, please give us a call. In the meantime, park users can do their part to protect the park by following these simple tips:

- stay on paved and shale pathways as much as possible
- do not create new trails
- avoid trails on steep slopes with visible soil loss, exposed roots, or muddy sections, especially when dirt is washing into the creek
- keep trails from getting wider by staying on the trail, not beside it

- join the Friends of Fish Creek or participate in the park's programs and services to learn more about the park, the trails, and its rich cultural and natural resources
- be mindful of other users, all trails and pathways are designated for multi-use, so please;
 - stay to the right and leave room for people to pass on the left
 - slow down as you approach pedestrians or blind corners on your bike
 - consider wearing bright coloured clothing and installing a bell to make others aware of your presence
 - keep pet leashes from crossing the entire path and creating a tripping hazard - short leashes are safer for others and for your pet.

Please contact the Friends at 238-3841 or email ffcppsoc@iul.net if you would like more information on our Trail Care program.

New Agreement Celebrated



Canadian Birkebeiner Society President John Cushing (L) and Parks and Protected Areas Representative Brad Marshall (R) announced at this year's award ceremonies, a new 10-year agreement to continue hosting the annual event at Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Grazing, Wildlife and Provincial Recreation Area.

DINOSAUR PROVINCIAL PARK HOSTING

Submitted by: Phil Hofer, Seasonal Conservation Officer

Every summer, dozens of protected areas in Alberta become home to a very special group of volunteers. The Campground Host Program provides interested volunteers with an opportunity to spend the summer in Alberta's provincial parks and recreation areas.

Dinosaur Provincial Park is located 50km from Brooks, in southeastern Alberta. Over the past several years we had the good fortune of attracting campground hosts for most of the summer. Traditionally, the hosts spent between three and four weeks at the park before moving on to another location. In 2003, the campground hosts were different. As the park's volunteer coordinator I was surprised to find out that Ross and Davida Upton would be staying with us from the end of April right into September. Would they get bored of the park? How can we keep them busy? As it turned out, I needn't have worried about any of that.

The reasons for the program being so successful were manifold. But a few should be elaborated on. Arriving before the bulk of the 25 or so seasonal staff employed by the park, the campground hosts had a chance to settle in and get acquainted with the park before things got crazy busy. At the beginning of May, the hosts participated in the park's two-day staff orientation, which provides a good overview of how the park operates in the summer months. On top of the standard campground host duties, Davida Upton volunteered several days a week at John Ware's cabin. She provided visitors to the cabin with information while spinning wool on her spinning wheel. The response from cabin



Historic John Ware cabin at Dinosaur Provincial Park.

visitors was overwhelmingly positive and the number of park visitors who took the time to check out the John Ware cabin was way above our expectations.

His first day at the park, Ross Upton expressed interest in helping out the park maintenance crew. Not one to turn down free help, the maintenance foreman took Ross on as a volunteer. As it turned out, a seasonal maintenance position became available in June and Ross, being a natural fit, was hired for the summer. Despite being employed by the park, Ross continued to carry out his campground host duties.

Overall, the 2003 Campground Host Program at Dinosaur Provincial Park was a huge success. I would like to thank both Davida and Ross Upton for their dedication and hard work. Dedicated volunteers throughout the province make the Campground Host Program possible and add quality and enjoyment to visitors' experiences in our provincial parks.

Calling All Submissions!

To submit an article, to contact us regarding changes to the mailing list, or to receive a free subscription please contact:

Lori at (780) 427-3805 or e-mail at Lori.Ruzycki@gov.ab.ca

or write to:

Partners in Preservation
Visitor Services Branch
Parks & Protected Areas Division
2nd Floor, Oxbridge Place
9820 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J6

Deadline for submissions for the next issue is September 30, 2004.

Articles should be no longer than 500 words in length and photos should be at least 300 dpi and sent as JPG's or TIF's.

For further information on guidelines for article submissions, visit www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/volunteer and click on "What's New".