

### Celebrating 20 Years!

Spring 2007: Issue #14

Hello Stewards! I hope that everyone is enjoying this spring after what seemed like a very long winter. This year, 2007, is a year to celebrate for many reasons. Not only is it the 75th Anniversary for Alberta Parks, but it is the 20th Anniversary for the Volunteer Steward Program. A lot has changed since the program's humble beginnings in 1987. It started with only a handful of volunteers and has grown immensely since then. I think that it is amazing that we have still have some of the same stewards who began with the program in 1987 - What Dedication!

It has been just over 3 years since I started working with the Volunteer Steward Program. My how times flies. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with the volunteers. It is individuals like you who are able to make a difference because you are compassionate and dedicated to what you do. I would like to say a



*Spring has returned. The Earth is like a child that knows poems.  
~ Rainer Maria Rilke*



*Spring at Kakwa Wildland Park*

big THANK YOU to all of you for your hard work.

Later this spring or early this summer I will be offering some training courses for stewards. Some of these training courses will be geared to learning about orienteering and mapping. More information will be available soon.

I hope that everyone is able to visit their sites this year. I look forward to hearing from you and seeing your reports.

I also invite you to attend this year's Volunteer Conference at the Pioneer Ranch Camp and help us celebrate and enjoy the beauty in this part of the province. The camp is in Crimson Lake Provincial Park, near Rocky Mountain House.

If you have any questions or would just like to talk to me, please feel free to contact me. My phone number is (780) 427-8515, (you can use the RITE line for long distance by dialling 310-0000), then my number and my e-mail is Coral.Grove@gov.ab.ca

Take care and have a great summer ~ Coral Grove,  
Volunteer Steward Coordinator

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To call any Alberta government agency toll-free from anywhere in Alberta, dial 310-0000, then the 10-digit number, or hold for operator assistance.

## Parks' History Includes Volunteers Since the Beginning

Submitted by Mary Fitl, Parks Visitor Services Branch

Even before there was a provincial park network in Alberta, volunteers were stepping up and actively caring for the land. Park Lake, just north of Lethbridge is an artificial lake that resulted from an irrigation project of the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District during the late 1920's. Soon after, local volunteers planted hundreds of tree saplings and watched over their growth. In 1932, Park Lake was one of the first provincial parks established, along with Aspen Beach, Gooseberry Lake, Saskatoon Island and Sylvan Lake. The efforts of the volunteers were acknowledged through letters from the Premier to the many local citizens.

***"On behalf of my government and on behalf of the people of Alberta, I desire to express to you my sincere appreciation of the voluntary assistance which you have given toward the development of the Provincial Park at Park Lake."***

Today, this prairie provincial park can provide a cool and refreshing spot for visitors due to the hard

work and dedication of early park volunteers.

In fact, establishment of any parks during that era of the great depression was an accomplishment that shows the dedication and passion of Premier Brownlee, but also of the commitment and support he had from the public.

In the early days of parks, advisory committees were formed locally and their main purpose was to see that necessary maintenance was carried out - often with no budget. Through generous community donations of workers, money and supplies, facilities were not only maintained, but in some cases it was possible to improve them.

From planting trees to building docks and trails, hosting camp grounds and keeping a watchful eye over our many protected areas, our volunteers have contributed through their skills, their knowledge and their hearts. With your enthusiastic and passionate participation, together we have built a world renowned



Historic Photos from Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

## *Parks' History Includes Volunteers Since the Beginning*

network of protected areas from the humble beginnings of five small parks established in 1932.

To celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Provincial Parks, there are many events planned in the coming months! Our first event of the year, appropriately, was one that would not take place if not for the huge efforts of hundreds of volunteers from the Birkebeiner Society, Friends of Blackfoot, park staff and many others. The 800th Anniversary of the Birkebeiner cross-country ski race was held at Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area in February with plenty of snow and a grand day for skiing!

More events through the year begin with the Swan Festival at Saskatoon Island Provincial Park in April and the Song Bird Festival at Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park in June. New Visitor Centres will be opening at Writing-on-Stone and William A. Switzer Provincial Parks and at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. Education and interpretive programs across the province will also incorporate themes of our

development over 75 years. On June 19th, we are hosting a 75th Anniversary picnic, at the Legislature Grounds in Edmonton from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. In addition to increasing awareness of the many aspects of our Parks and Protected Areas program, displays, demonstrations and park staff at this event will encourage people to attend Parks Day events that will be held at many parks around the province on July 21 or 22. Get in touch with Coral Grove if you are interested in participating.

This is our year to celebrate our magnificent parks network with visitors, other volunteers and staff. The party will continue into September, when we gather for our annual volunteer conference being held this year at Crimson Lake Provincial Park. We hope to see you there!

Happy 75th Anniversary, to All!  
Check our web site:  
[www.albertaparks.ca](http://www.albertaparks.ca) and click on the 75th Anniversary logo to find more history, coming events and historic photos.



Ken Sloman at 2007 Birkebeiner



# Alberta Stewardship Network Offers Support to Stewards

**By Sarah Primeau, Alberta Stewardship Network Secretariat**

Across Alberta there is a tremendous effort by citizens to come together to care for the air, land, water, and biodiversity at a local community level. The Alberta Stewardship Network (ASN) was established in 2004 to celebrate and support this effort, with the mission:

to provide Alberta's stewards with a network that facilitates information exchange, provides support, and recognizes the contribution of individuals, communities and organizations in advancing environmental stewardship on a watershed basis.

The tagline of the ASN is *"stewards helping stewards care for the environment"*

This highlights the fact that the ASN is primarily governed by volunteer stewards and stewardship group representatives. The Chair of the ASN and over half of the board members represent volunteer stewards or stewardship groups, and the remaining directors represent government and non-government organizations that have resources available to support stewardship in Alberta.

In a short period of time, the ASN has begun accomplishing its mission through several initiatives. One that may be of interest to the stewards of protected areas is the Watershed Stewardship Grant Program, made possible by funding through the Government of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy. This grant program

is targeted to stewardship groups, often termed Watershed Stewardship Groups (WSGs). These groups are volunteer-driven and are actively engaged in environmental stewardship of local watersheds. A watershed is an area of land, bounded by topographic features, that drains water to a shared destination such as a lake, river or wetland.

Thirty ASN-funded stewardship projects went ahead in 2006, including an exciting two-day bioengineering workshop hosted by the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society. The ASN hopes to receive further funds to make additional grants rounds possible for 2007-2008. Details will be available by phoning the ASN or by visiting their website (contact details below).

Other ways that the Alberta Stewardship Network is helping to support stewardship include the Directory of Watershed Stewardship, Stewards in Motion workshops, and the new Stewardship Showcase project, which is compiling profiles of successful stewardship projects into a handy reference guide for other groups. The ASN keeps its members up-to-date on stewardship events, resources,

and funding opportunities through monthly "ASN Stewardship E-News" emails and quarterly hardcopy "ASN Grassroots News" newsletters. The ASN's toll-free information line (see below) is an invaluable "one-stop shop" for those with any stewardship questions, and is especially valuable for those without internet access. People can phone for information on starting a stewardship group, funding resources, joining existing stewardship groups, and for referrals to other organizations or agencies that specialize in particular environmental issues, among other things. The website is also a helpful resource for accessing this same information, with the additional capabilities of chatting with other stewards on the stewards forum, searching the various databases (organizations, publications, web links, funders), and using the interactive mapping tools.

For more information about the ASN, membership, newsletter subscriptions, or any other services, please phone their toll-free line at: 1-877-7-ASK-ASN (1-877-727-5276) or visit their website at:

[www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca](http://www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca)



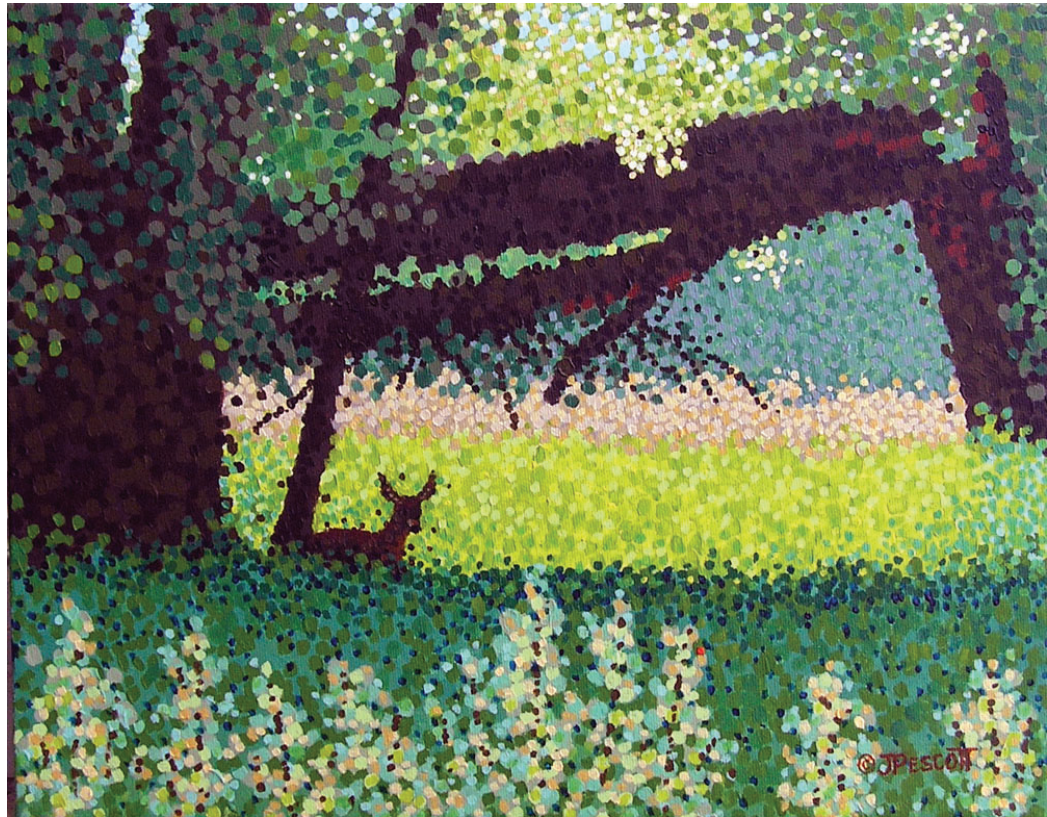
## Quietly Watching

### Jim Pescott, Friends of Fish

"Breathe easy," I told myself, "Just watch, and be still." After walking for a time near the Bow River I stopped to sit by the edge of a spacious path for a brief rest as I'm wont to do when I find a peaceful place. But then, as I noticed a silhouette in the shadows, I knew I would be sitting here a while longer than I thought. Silhouettes like this one have surprised me before and every time the thrill is the same.

There was nothing except twigs and leaves under those trees when I arrived. The bright sun was warm and this spot looked comfortable as I decided to sit to watch some leaves flutter with the breeze. But now there is more going on: someone is watching me. The ears, of course, tell me this someone in the shadows is a deer. And I know it observed me first, which is why I saw nothing when I scanned through the darkness under the trees before sitting. The deer waited for me to settle into my position on the landscape. It waited for me to be quiet before quietly allowing itself to be seen in the shadows.

Painting a moment like this is a privilege: I'm even allowed to touch the deer but only with my brush on the canvas. While painting I'm reminded of Ansel Adams whose photographs share so much about the range of light and shadows in the natural world. I've never consciously sourced Adams in my art but this time he is on my mind and I wonder about this. The afternoon shadows are strong along the pathway and I soon realize the contrast of these



Quietly Watching by Jim Pescott

shadows with the background light is what actually allows me to see the deer: for this I'm thankful.

Suspended overhead and above the deer, a large, dark shape evolves into a craggy broken log that toppled during a forgotten storm. The sudden sound of smashing and splintering this huge mass of thunder would have made when it lost the battle to the wind would have been dire. And who was living in this old upright when it fell? I wonder how they fared. Leaning as it does, the log naturally adds to the contrast I'm enjoying amidst all the little details. The word "peace" now comes to mind as I paint.

Everything feels so quiet.

Jim Pescott is a Calgary artist and a member of the Friends of Fish Creek. Much of Jim's art is sourced from his observations in Fish Creek Park.

For additional information on Jim's art view:  
[www.jimpescott.com](http://www.jimpescott.com)  
or phone Jim at (403) 201-2263

*"Nothing on this earth is solitary, everything is connected. Pointillism allows me this exploration"*  
- Jim Pescott

# Summer at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

Submitted by Erica Forrester, Volunteer

Summer 2006 is over and it has been the highlight of my time in Canada. I have been working as a volunteer at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory since April and have enjoyed every moment of the time spent here. Since I am South African and was not yet familiar with the Canadian bird life I have had a lot to learn. Working in the banding lab every day has greatly added to my knowledge of the local conditions and the migratory bird population.

On our first day, April 24th Richard and I were up and off to the banding lab before sunrise on a cold frosty morning. The lake was still frozen and great heaps of wind blown ice littered the shore giving the whole scene a truly arctic appearance. We set up the nets and before long we had caught our first bird. During the next few days we caught and banded, among others, a northern flicker and a yellow bellied sap sucker. I was hooked.



Richard is removing a songbird from the almost invisible mist nets used to capture and band at the BCBC.

It didn't take me long to find that I did not have the correct clothing for the early mornings and had to go hunting for gloves to keep my fingers supple enough to extract the tiny birds from the nets.

As spring advanced we had to get up earlier and earlier to be ready to start half an hour before sunrise each day. This of course had an up side in that our day ended by midday and it was time for a welcome afternoon nap. The best time of the day is the early morning and I loved watching the frost form on the vegetation and the picnic table just before dawn on the clear cold days. I felt exhilarated and brimming with excitement at the prospect of every new day and all the possibilities it held.

As spring continued, new species of birds arrived. Some passing through on their way north and others to take up residence around us and set up their territories. Bird song filled the air and soon the building of nests began. I found it quite a challenge identifying the different species by their songs. As the forest leafed out and the birds became secretive around the nest sites, we would depend on their voices to locate and identify them. For me the most exciting task of all was to find the nests and monitor the incubation, hatching, frantic feeding and fledging. Insects were plentiful this year and a few of the birds had the energy to bring off two clutches.

Mid summer brought new tasks such as the MAPS project



Songbird Festival Volunteer

which required the setting up and monitoring of nets on the breeding grounds to determine the Productivity and Survival of the birds. This involved long and arduous days tramping the forest paths to set up and check nets. We were continually harassed by swarms of mosquitoes and other biting, stinging denizens of the forests, making concentration really difficult at times.



Erica Forrester, Volunteer