

# Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA)

## NEWSLETTER NO. 33, MAY 2016

### SAPAA AGM, 17 Oct 2015

This year SAPAA met at Miquelon Provincial Park in the Visitor Centre. Guest speaker Dr. Guy Swinerton gave two excellent talks, one about the UNESCO classification system of parks and protected areas (which may be adopted in Alberta's new *Parks Act*), and one about the ongoing drive to have the Beaver Hills declared a Biosphere Reserve. Both of Guy's PowerPoint presentations can be accessed on the SAPAA website. This spring, we were happy to hear that the Beaver Hills became a UNESCO Biosphere on 19 March 2016. Congratulations to Guy and the many other participants who worked so hard on this project over the past years.

The main item of the AGM's business meeting was the election of the Board:

President: Hubert Taube  
Vice President: vacant  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Peter Kershaw  
Recording Secretary: Patsy Cotterill  
Directors: John Woitenko, Alison Dinwoodie  
Newsltr. Editors: Linda Kershaw, Patsy Cotterill  
Webmaster: Linda Kershaw



Winter preparations in the Beaver Hills - not much water left!

### Meeting with Alberta Parks, 19 Jan 2016

Six Alberta Parks representatives (Scott Jones, John Findlay, Nancy Macdonald, Kevin Wirtanen, Rob Hugill, and Terry Krause) met with six SAPAA members (Hubert Taube, Patsy Cotterill, Peter Kershaw, Linda Kershaw, Alison Dinwoodie, John Woitenko, and Richard DeSmet). The following new organization chart of Parks (12 Jan 2016) was discussed. This chart is helpful for facilitating interactions with Alberta Parks. Contact info for all employees is available at <http://alberta.ca/contact.cfm> or 310-0000

### AB Environment & Parks, Parks Division

Minister: Hon. Shannon Phillips  
Deputy Minister: Bill Wherry  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Parks: Steve Donelon

### Program Coordination (Edmonton) Directors

Executive: Scott Jones (Acting)  
Finance: Neenu Walia  
Land Management: Tracy Draper (Acting)  
Operations, Learning & Stewardship: John Findlay  
Policy & Strategic Support: Nancy MacDonald

### Regional Operations Directors

Executive: Rob Hugill  
Central Region: Philipp Hofer  
Kananaskis Region: Mark Storie  
Northeast Region: Luc Nowicki  
Northwest Region: Calvin McLeod  
South Region: Peter Swain

### Parks Division Volunteer Coordinating Committee

Manager, Learning & Stewardship: Kevin Wirtanen  
Prov. Volunteer Services Coordinator: Brad Marshall  
Volunteer Steward Coordinator: Coral Grove  
Northeast Region Representative: Dixie Colter  
Northwest Region Representative: Calvin McLeod  
Central Region Representative: Alison Cole  
South Region Representative: Paul Avery  
Kananaskis Region representative: Jennell Rempel

### A Few Highlights From the AB Parks Meeting

Parks, including the Volunteer Steward Program, is now a division of Alberta Environment and Parks and has taken on many of the functions of the former Public Lands Division. Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) no longer exists.

Scott Jones assured us that Parks is involved in the management of recreation in all public lands, not just those designated as "parks and protected areas".

SAPAA is a recognized stakeholder in the development of the North Saskatchewan River Regional Plan under the Land Use Framework (LUF), and will be notified once the Regional Advisory Committee goes online. Development of the new Parks Act is difficult because of the existence of several overlapping Acts.

John Findlay described the Public Lands Enforcement Program, a drive to employ more rangers, "get more boots on the ground" and get the program to grow. This also involves public education to help change attitudes.

Communications with members of the new NDP government, providing a "consistent approach", are considered beneficial for the Stewards program.

Regional Parks directors are working to establish a contact information system for stewards; discussions about strengthening the stewards program continue.

### 2015 Volunteer Conference in Wetaskiwin

Alberta Parks held another excellent volunteer conference 25-27 September 2015 in Wetaskiwin, hosted by Parks staff from the Central Region. The weekend kicked off with a Meet-and-Greet event on Friday evening at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum, and an opportunity to tour the museum and see many machines and tools historically used in the area. The daylight hours of Saturday were devoted to field trips. One tour was to the Lodge in Peaceful Valley Provincial Recreation Area. Situated on a high bench overlooking the Battle River and a landscape currently resplendent in fall colors, Peaceful Valley Lodge caters for day use by seniors and the disabled. Administered by Parks, it was the initiative of siblings Kay and Robert Wark who donated land and acquired funding. The visit included a side tour to the nearby banks of the Battle River (not much more than a creek here) to solicit volunteers' suggestions on how to better develop this portion of the PRA for recreation. After lunch participants were driven to Pigeon Lake, where they were entertained/educated by three excellent speakers. Jason Cooper (senior fisheries biologist, Environment and Parks, Red Deer) explained how Alberta's lake fisheries are managed. Melissa-Jo Belcourt Moses (a cultural art instructor) exhibited several different types of aboriginal artifacts and crafts and demonstrated how they are created. Then, in the bus, as we sheltered from a sudden thunderstorm, Susan Ellis (past president of the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association) talked about the challenges of managing Pigeon Lake, essentially a large slough with much residential development and recreational use. The afternoon ended with a tour of the newly installed yurts in the "comfort camping" zone of the campground, a proud initiative of Parks staff to get more people out camping.



**Peaceful Valley resplendent in its fall colors (P.Cotterill)**

The alternative field trip on Saturday was to Calhoun Bay Provincial Recreation Area. Wendy Unfreed and Caroline Hudecek-Cuffe led a walk through the woods by the lake, and shared a wealth of information about First-Nations history in the area and archeological finds

from this important area. Settlement by Europeans and their use of resources was also outlined. This was followed by demonstrations and experimentation with flint knapping and the use of bows and arrows and atlatls (spear/dart throwers) made from local materials - all under the guidance of Scott Sunderwald and with varying degrees of success. Targets were set up so that we could hone our hunting skills, but most time was spent searching for missiles that had missed.

Following the Saturday banquet at the Best Western Wayside Inn, exceptional stewards and hosts were recognized. Myrna Pearman and Nancy Boorman each received an Outstanding Individual Steward Award. Parks and Protected Areas Achievement Awards went to Jack and Marion Whitworth, Margaret and Menno Froese, Jim and Peggy Wiebe, and Charles Bird. The Volunteer Leadership Award was won by Frank Key, and the Host Hospitality Award went to Ron Brochu. The evening ended with a talk by Dr. Glen Hvenegaard (UofA, Augustana campus) about Frank Farley (1870-1949), a pioneering Alberta naturalist who influenced the work of many later conservationists in the province. Farley moved to Alberta from 1892, and settled in Camrose in 1907. He conducted studies on all aspects of Alberta's natural history (especially bird life) and published at least 36 papers. His major publications discussed studies in the Ft. McMurray-Lac La Biche area and birds of the Battle River. In 1925-1947 he organized the Camrose Christmas Bird Counts. It's amazing that such an influential naturalist spent half a century in this small Alberta town. Prof. Hvenegaard is writing an academic paper and preparing a book on the life of Frank Farley, accounts well worth waiting for.

On Sunday morning, conference participants were treated to a smorgasbord of presentations by Parks staff showcasing their experience and skills: Alison Cole (Visitor Experience Coordinator), Ksenija Vujnovic (Park Ecologist), Terry Krause (Regional Planner) and Marty Eberth (Travel Alberta). Of these, "Evolution of Alberta Parks in a Rapidly Changing World" by Terry Krause was especially significant for Volunteer Stewards, as he provided historical background from the First Provincial Parks Act in 1930 to the current development of Regional Park Plans within the Land Use Framework (LUF), and the recent announcements of the Castle Provincial Park and Castle Wildland Park. He identified 5 different phases:

- 1930-1970 - Initial Developments
- 1970-mid 1980s - Establishment of the Parks System
- Late 1980s-1995 - \$ Cuts, Decline of Park Programs
- 1995-2010 - Special Places 2000 program
- 2010-2015 - Development of Regional Park Plans

Terry highlighted the dual mandates of recreational/use versus conservation/protection, and the perpetual effort needed to harmonize these, ideally at a comprehensive systems level rather than at the individual park level. For more detailed information, see Terry's PowerPoint presentation on the SAPAA website.

After lunch, Kevin Wirtanen (Manager, Learning and Stewardship, Edmonton) closed the conference with an update on the Parks Division under the new NDP government, including current staff and planned program changes. Kevin assured us that Parks staff will continue to work on a new *Parks Act*. He also confided that the 2016 volunteer conference will be Sept 9-11 in Lesser Slave Lake. These conferences say "thank you" to stewards, but they also help to cement the bonds between government workers, stewards, and hosts!

**P. Cotterill, P. & L. Kershaw, H. Taube**

### **Paint Earth Coulee NA, Paintearth County**

This large badlands valley along Paint Earth Creek contains Paint Earth Coulee Natural Area, a Protected Notation site without a steward. Despite its size, there is no obvious public access to this beautiful area, as it is largely fenced off for cattle grazing. On the plus side, the current management regime does seem to be beneficial to the diverse and very natural badland flora. Nearby Big Knife Provincial Park no doubt offers similar botanical and wildlife experiences. **P. Cotterill**



**Paint Earth Coulee on  
April 29, 2016**

**Fennel-leaf desert-parsley  
(*Lomatium foeniculaceum*)**

### **Beaver Hills a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve!**

After 14 years of hard and dedicated work on the part of many local people, the Beaver Hills Initiative team was successful in their bid for the Beaver Hills to become a Biosphere Reserve. Recognized by UNESCO at the World Congress in Lima, Peru, 19 March 2016, the Beaver Hills Biosphere is the second Biosphere in Alberta and one of only 18 in Canada. Congratulations to all concerned! SAPAA, along with many other organizations, has supported the Beaver Hills Initiative applications, and was recently thanked for this support by Board Chair Glen Lawrence **Patsy Cotterill**

### **AB Parks Summer Workshops Update**

Five Regional Mini-Workshops (NE, NW, Central, Kananaskis, South) have been planned this summer. However due to the Ft. McMurray wildfire emergency, planning for these workshops has been put on hold.

### **Invitation to Join the Stewards of Alberta Protected Areas Association (SAPAA)**

You may be aware of the existence of SAPAA and know that it was founded in 1999 to complement the Alberta Government's Protected Area (PA) Volunteer program. Membership is open to all PA Stewards appointed by the Alberta Government. SAPAA's main purpose is to establish a network of stewards to assist each other in conservation efforts and interact with government officials to promote the integrity and values of protected areas.

Some recent activities have included:

- representing stewards at stakeholder meetings for the Land Use Framework
- meeting with Alberta Parks officials to discuss the future of the Parks and Protected Areas Program
- supporting the Beaver Hills Initiative to become a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
- sponsoring presentations on the United Nations IUCN classification system for Protected Areas
- organizing summer field trips (e.g., to Halfmoon Lake in July and to Mt. Butte in August, 2015).

Look us up at [www.sapaastewards.com](http://www.sapaastewards.com) to access our newsletters, copies of SAPAA presentations and a listing of all Alberta Protected Areas, many with geographic and ecological information not found elsewhere. Please consider submitting pictures and short description of your Protected Area to supplement the information on our website, and make it an even greater success.

We look forward to collaborating with fellow stewards in the coming years, and would appreciate your participation in SAPAA's activities. If you'd like to join us, please send us your contact information (email preferred) so that we can let you know about upcoming field trips and keep you informed about changes that may affect your area. You can contact us at [taubeha@shaw.ca](mailto:taubeha@shaw.ca) or [postmaster@sapaastewards.com](mailto:postmaster@sapaastewards.com).

**Hubert Taube, President, SAPAA**

## In Memory of Gail

Gail Hughes passed away 4 September 2015 after a valiant fight with cancer. A great nature lover, she volunteered with several naturalist groups, including the J.J. Collett NA and the Red Deer River Naturalists. Gail became a director of the J.J. Collett Foundation in 2005, and served as Secretary of the Board for 5 years. Her immense contributions included compiling inventories of all species; leading and educating all ages throughout the year; participating in species counts; helping organize the Big Tansy Pull; contributing well-reasoned objections or endorsements to any proposed changes to the area; and inspiring the preservation and utilization of the Natural Area for educational and environmental purposes.



Gail in action (photo C.Bird)

Dr. Charley Bird recalls, "As far back as 2004, Gail and I were joint leaders of the annual Spring and Fall Hikes. Typically, Gail would be at the head of the group talking history and I would bring up the rear, filling in details about ecology and identification. We worked well together as a team." Gail showed her green thumb in the Garden of Eden that she created around her home in Lacombe. A talented photographer, especially of her beloved Crowfoot Violet, her legacy lives on in her many photos, in her many crafty depictions of nature, and in the hearts of those who were inspired by her talents and her grit. She is sadly missed.

**Eileen Ford**

## Managing Recreation on Public Land: How Does Alberta Compare?

Motorized recreation has increased enormously in recent decades as a result of societal affluence, and much of it occurs on public lands. As members of the public and stewards of protected areas (especially areas on sand dunes or in the mountains), we can't fail to be aware of this fact, and many of us have negative associations with it. In SAPAA, we know from talking with staff at Environment and Parks that managing

recreation is a major preoccupation, often pre-empting other public land needs such as preservation, conservation, restoration and wildlife management. Adam Driedzic (legal counsel with the Environmental Law Centre), has produced a comprehensive review that compares recreation management in Alberta with that of other jurisdictions, including British Columbia, Ontario, and Nova Scotia in Canada and federal and various state systems in the U.S. Driedzic compares the various systems with respect to mandates to manage recreation on public lands; funding for recreation management programs; and liabilities on recreational trails. He concludes that Alberta measures up poorly. In Alberta, the mandate for management is fragmented among different pieces of legislation (e.g., the Acts governing the various types of protected areas, the *Public Lands Act*, the *Traffic Safety Act*) and among separate agencies. It often lacks strong direction and authority and may require decision-making that involves Ministers or Cabinet members. This results in unclear rules, lack of developed recreational amenities and difficulty in mitigating the negative impacts. It also politicizes many recreation management decisions. Funding is chiefly from departmental budgets and general revenue, so there is competition for money and little funding for recreation management programs. Regarding liability, Driedzic states that legal protection against lawsuits from trail-related injuries increased under the provincial *Occupiers' Liability Act*, but the system remains "a deterrent to 'proactive' management actions such as developing trail infrastructure or charging user payments." He is highly critical of the government's proposed Trails Act, which (fortunately) was not introduced to the legislature. This would have allowed for the creation of a controversial delegated administrative organization (DAO) to be responsible for trails infrastructure. Driedzic rejects the bill, saying it was developed without public consultation and would leave many gaps in the management process. No such model as a DAO exists in any of the jurisdictions examined. He also criticizes the recreation trails partnership (est. 2014, involving off-highway-vehicle associations, Alberta Trailnet, municipal associations and others, but with no representation from non-motorized groups, even though it was said to cover non-motorized and mixed-use trails), as lacking any legislative backing and vulnerable to governance issues, stakeholder conflicts and lack of public trust. Throughout the review, Driedzic cites best practices in other jurisdictions and makes recommendations for changes to Alberta's system. Some options use existing regulations (e.g., the *Public Lands Administration Regulation*, which has "promising" tools but is difficult to deploy) and legislation (e.g., the *Forest Reserves*

Act, the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*), but others would involve new legislation. He is heavily in favor of the latter as the way forward with respect to mandate, funding and liability issues. He believes that legislative reform should begin with a public panel or inquiry, which would “allow for experts in the field to hear evidence, review proposals, and assess options with a level of detail, transparency and structure that has been lacking from existing provincial initiatives such as the trails bill, the trails partnership pilot and the regional planning consultations.” Such legislation would, as in other jurisdictions, deal with matters of vehicle definitions and standards, access to land, user rules, enforcement and penalties, commercial activities, trails and facilities, program funding and liability. Whether new legislation would apply to parks and protected areas, or whether recreation would need to be dealt with under a separate *Parks Act* is not stated in the review. If a panel or public enquiry is convened, SAPAA representatives would definitely like to be involved. Stay tuned!

**Patsy Cotterill**

(Disclaimer: this review is my personal understanding of Adam Driedzic’s Review; it may be imperfect as I have no legal background.) The full article is available for download from the ELC website ([www.elc.ab.ca](http://www.elc.ab.ca)) along with other relevant reports.

## 2016 Field Trip Schedule

Mark your calendar! Two SAPAA field trips are planned for June and July. Check out the Protected Areas section of our website ([sapaastowards.com](http://sapaastowards.com)) for more information about the NAs we plan to visit.

### Sat., June 4<sup>th</sup>

Pete & Linda Kershaw & Helen Trefry will visit at least two natural areas east of Edmonton. First will be **Parkland NA** (Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society steward). This is classic Cooking Lake Moraine (Beaver Hills) upland aspen forest site, dotted with potholes containing ponds and marshes. We will walk around the NA and then return to Phil and Helen’s (Ups And Downs) to eat lunch (BYO) and hear about their falcon and hawk breeding facility.



Helen and Pete survey a wetland in Parkland NA (L.Kershaw)

After lunch, we’ll drive to **Hastings Lake NA** (PNT) on the north shore of Hastings Lake, to explore upland aspen forest and a small spruce bog, check out the lakeshore and do some bird watching. Access is from Wye Road/Hwy 630 north of the Lake, then south on Range Road 204 which dead-ends beside the NA at Hastings Lake (GPS 53.425221 -112.901995). **Edgar T. Jones NA** and **Hastings Lake Islands NA** are also nearby, but these are accessible only by boat.



Pete at the trail entrance, Hastings Lake NA (L.Kershaw)

**When and Where to Meet:** We’ll meet at 10:00 a.m. at Helen and Phil Trefry’s place (GPS 53.396276 - 112.829725) on Township Road 512 just west of the Range Road 201 intersection. From Edmonton, take Hwy 14 east to Range Road 201 and turn left (north). At the first intersection (paved road), turn left (west), and their place is the first lane on the right (north). If you want to make a full day of it, join us early (7:00-9:00 a.m.) at the **Beaverhill Lake NA** for the BIG Birding Breakfast. Enjoy a delicious breakfast, observe mist netting and bird banding, and support the BBO. You need to register for breakfast in advance; see <http://beaverhillbirds.com> for details.

For more information about the day, contact Pete and Linda at 780-662-3626 or [linda.kershaw1@gmail.com](mailto:linda.kershaw1@gmail.com).



### Sat., July 16<sup>th</sup>

SAPAA and the Alberta Mycological Society (the Volunteer Steward for this NA) will jointly lead a trip to **Poplar Creek NA**, near Breton.

As more details become available, we will send out notices by email and post them on our website.

**Honey mushrooms**  
(*Armillaria mellea*) (P.Cotterill)

## OHV Damage in Cardinal R. Headwaters

These photos, taken over a 22-year period, show the progressive development of trails in the alpine tundra in the Cardinal River Headwaters (CHW), and how the damage spreads. The damage may not look as spectacular as that in some of the boggy areas in the Eastern Slopes, but this is rocky, alpine tundra, with very little soil. The loss of this thin veneer of soil will prevent the spectacular alpine vegetation from regenerating for many years to come, if ever. More and more trails are appearing away from the 'Designated Trail'. What will it be like in another 20 years?



**Fig. 1: Oct., 1993.** Two trails crossing a small side creek looking west up the Cardinal Headwaters valley. Significant use by OHVs was already showing bare soil with no vegetation left. Note the white rock several feet left of main trail (indicated with an arrow). This photo pre-dates the site's Cardinal Divide Natural Area designation. (photo - A.Dinwoodie)



**Fig. 2: Aug., 2000.** The trail doubled in size; the rocky surface has little soil left. A third trail has started on the left; vegetation is gone. Note the white rock, now at the centre of a double trail. Whitehorse Wildland Park was designated two years earlier, with more traffic directed to the CHW. (photo - A.Dinwoodie)



**Fig. 3: Aug., 2009.** The original trail, mainly rock, has been widened on both sides. On the far left, lower vegetation has been impacted, and there is an upper extension around the corner. Note the white rock, now at the centre of multi-trails. This is five years after the Cheviot Mine started, and there is now more OHV traffic to CHW. (photo - V.Chrisfield)



**Fig. 4: Jul., 2015.** The first trail, now doubled on the right, is very rocky. The third trail on the left is now completely developed. There's also a new (fourth) trail on the far right, in previously undisturbed vegetation. Note the white rock to the right of the third trail. The Cheviot-Prospect mines have finished active mining. What next? (photo - K.Andersen)

Please write to your MLA and to Minister Shannon Phillips (Environment and Parks). Ask them to see that OHVs are immediately excluded from the whole Cardinal Headwaters valley. Designated trails for OHVs are not the answer. OHVs cause permanent destruction and loss of slow growing vegetation in this environment, and they do not belong in the Prime Protection Zone 1. Their activities are unsustainable, and their cumulative impact is permanent. This area is supposed to be protected for future generations!

**Alison Dinwoodie**