

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA)
NEWSLETTER NO. 35, JUNE 2017

**Project 85 - A Digital Catalog of
85 Alberta Protected Areas**

2017 marks the 150th anniversary of Canada as a nation and also 85 years of Alberta's Provincial Parks. To mark the alignment of these significant events, SAPAA is working with Alberta Parks and other nature organizations to create digital profiles of 85 Alberta Protected Areas (PAs - Natural Areas, Ecological Reserves, Wilderness Areas, Provincial Parks and Wildland Parks). Our aim is to increase visitation to and appreciation of these areas, and to foster interest and common cause among stewards and the Alberta public.

All contributions are welcome. SAPAA is particularly interested in some of the less-known natural areas in order to increase the recognition and appreciation of these sites. See the last page of this newsletter for a list of high priority sites.

For each protected area we would like to see a 1-page description with the following information:

- Name of PA
- Distance to nearest population centre
- Access directions - road, walking
- Plant communities/special features
- Steward(s) and stewardship concerns, if any
- 2-4 representative photographs

Please keep your comments to 250-300 words or less and provide captions for your photos, including the subject, location and photographer. Digital photographs should be 300-700 KB (100-150 dpi for a 4x6 image).

A complete list of Alberta Provincial Protected Areas is posted on the Alberta Parks website <http://www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/library/1-and-reference-manual> and the SAPAA website (including PNT & CNT plus OC Natural Areas) at <http://sapaastewards.com/PAInfo.html>. To search for nearby protected areas, go to the map at http://sapaastewards.com/PAInfo/pasites_2011sept.pdf and zoom in to your area.

If you're interested, please contact Hubert Taube at hubtaube@gmail.com. Let us know which site(s) you plan to visit, so that we can avoid duplication. You don't have to be a steward of a site to send us a report. Once you've visited a site, please send in your submissions as soon as you

can. We will keep everyone updated on our progress. Reaching 85 will demonstrate our passion for parks and protected areas in Alberta. Maybe we can even shoot for 150! **Hubert Taube**

Tree Cutting in NW Bruderheim NA

In December 2016, several spruce trees were cut in the northern part of SW 22 Twp 56 Rge 21, presumably with the intent to use the top few feet of each as a Christmas decoration. People also continue to harvest dead timber, presumably for firewood. It is unclear if there are any regulations to prevent these activities. **Hubert Taube**



**Lesser Slave Lk. Stewards' Conference,
9-11 September 2016**

In 2016, the annual Volunteer Stewards Conference was held at Lesser Slave Lake. Its theme was Beaches, Birds and the Boreal. The Whispering Sand Dunes provided the Beach experience on a fine but very blustery day. No visit to this area is complete without a visit to the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory. Alas, the birders got the short end of the stick. Friday

evening was too windy for owl banding and the Sunday morning bird walk was too wet. The Boreal aspects were covered by views from Marten Mountain on this field trip, and talks on lichens and rare plants such as Sitka willow. Some groups visited the North Shore Homestead bison ranch, complete with its small museum of skulls of local boreal animals. There was also an opportunity to see their FireSmart Program, developed after the Slave Lake fire of 2011, including some of the airplanes and equipment used in fire-fighting. This was especially relevant after the recent Fort McMurray fire.

After the Saturday evening banquet, Cory Olson gave an interesting talk on the biology and conservation of bats.

The Outstanding Individual Steward award went to Cecil Knuttila, a 26-year steward of Whitecourt Candidate Natural Area. The Kimiwan Lake Naturalists from Winagami Lake Provincial Park won the Outstanding Group Steward award. Congratulations to these dedicated stewards!

Alison Dinwoodie



Green alder in blooms and OHV damage at Halfmoon Lake NA, Spring 2017

Halfmoon Lake NA Report

SAPAA representatives recently met with Richard and Vera deSmet, stewards of Halfmoon Lake Natural Area in Westlock and Thorhild Counties, prior to providing a letter of support from SAPAA to Alberta Environment and Parks regarding a land exchange application. The nearby landowner has proposed the exchange of a quarter-section of pristine forest for a piece of developable government land elsewhere. Bringing the forested land within the boundaries of the Natural Area

would buffer the existing core area to the east and provide for greater ecological connectivity to the portion of the Natural Area to the west.

The deSmets also plan to promote the Natural Area as an educational field site for a school in Legal, all part of a basic initiative to instill greater ecological literacy in young people and combat “nature deficit disorder.” **Patsy Cotterill**



Manna, Patsy, Richard & Hubert at Halfmoon Lake NA

Whitehorse Wildland Park Report

In 2016, I attended eight meetings re: issues relating to Whitehorse Wildland Park (WWP).

1. Early in the year, the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) requested our support in their campaign against OHV use in the new Castle Wildland Park, particularly with respect to damage to headwaters and effects on cutthroat trout, an endangered species. SAPAA supports the AWA in principle, but WWP does not have a comparable problem. Only a small portion of the Cardinal River Headwaters lies in WWP, and this section has low fish potential due to high altitude and low winter temperatures.

2. On April 19th, I attended a trails meeting of the mining company Teck. Members of the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) were debating an alternate trail to access one of their designated routes to the top of Cadomin Mountain, which is now inaccessible because of active mining. Teck is willing to let them have access along the Powerhouse Creek trail, below the northern boundary of the East Cardinal Divide ridge. This area is outside of WWP and has been recognized as a designated OHV route for a long time, so we couldn't object too much to this. Alpine vegetation on the long, high ridge on Cardinal Mountain could be rapidly destroyed by OHV activity. We need to keep an eye on what is going on outside our boundaries.

3. My position re: the reclamation of the Cheviot-Prospect mine has been that pre-mine trails should not be reopened. We need a sub-regional plan for trails in this area, considering the overall effect on vegetation, wildlife and terrain. When I met with Terry Krause (Land & Resource Manager for the Central Region) on June 9th, he noted the difficulty of changing existing plans when so many different leases and conditions are involved. He suggested we make our case at the Regional Land Use Plan discussions. A further complication is that WWP is in both the North Saskatchewan and Upper Athabasca Regions.

4. On June 11-12th, Elisabeth Beaubien and I met Wayne Campbell (Alpine Club of Canada), and seven other people from Hinton. Howard Anderson has been studying the phenology of alpine plants on the Cardinal Divide for several years, and there was considerable sharing of information. Co-steward Kristen Andersen and I plan to repeat this trip in 2017. We hope to recruit some of the local people as stewards of WWP.

5. On June 17th, I attended Teck's annual trails meeting with OHV and Fish & Game people. The OHV reps focused on re-opening old trails in the Cheviot -Prospect mined area, especially access to Drummond Ridge from Mountain Park. In the original Coal Branch Access Management Plan (before any Cheviot Mine permits), this was a designated trail into WWP, but OHVs were not allowed on the Ridge itself. Drummond Ridge is a beautiful alpine ridge rising to Prospect Mountain. It could allow OHV access to Drummond Creek and Whitehorse Creek, all within WWP. The Ridge still has eroded gullies and bare ground with little or no regeneration since access ended with the opening of the mine. I was not able to talk with the West Yellowhead MLA, Eric Rosendahl, but he invited me to visit him in Edmonton.

6. On July 14th, I attended a 'Meet-and-Greet' in Calgary with the new Minister for Environment and Parks, Hon. Shannon Phillips. During a short chat with her, I stressed that OHVs should not be permitted in any alpine Prime Protection Zone I or Critical Wildlife Zone 2 sites, because of the permanent damage they can cause. This is a concern echoed by most back-country users.

7. On August 23th, Kristen and I toured some of the reclamation work in Cheviot and Prospect

mine areas, courtesy of Larry Matwie, a Teck Coal Ltd. Permitting Officer. It was interesting to see how careful topsoil replacement, rough mounding and contouring had helped native species to re-establish even better than careful re-seeding. There is a long way to go before any trails should be re-opened. Unfortunately, because the Drummond Ridge was a designated trail before the mine plans were finalized, it has been 'grandfathered' in. I don't remember any public discussion about that during the environmental hearings in 1996.

8. On September 9th, Kristen and I met with Eric Rosendhal, MLA. We proposed that the Cheviot-Prospect Mine area, WWP and Cardinal Headwaters be part of a sub-regional plan, keeping OHVs on the east side of the Grave Flats Road and non-motorized recreation on the west side. Our suggestions were not met with enthusiasm. Mr. Rosendhal felt strongly that OHVs were being "shut out of too many areas." **Alison Dinwoodie**

A Visit to Kilini Creek NA

A visit to Kilini Creek Natural Area on May 19th with local resident Mike Northcutt provided a pleasant walk through upland aspen and beaked hazelnut forest, moister lowlands with Alaskan birch, white spruce and northern gooseberry, along with impressive numbers of false morels (*Verpa* species). We also visited some peaty areas with black spruce and Labrador tea and even a large marl pond which we christened "Golden Pond" from the amber color imparted to the water by the marl. The trip included some interesting bird sightings as well as of red-sided garter snakes, emerging from a nearby hibernaculum.



Golden Pond and OHV damage at Kilini Creek NA

We accessed the Natural Area along the western boundary, where a road allowance has provided easy access to the creek for OHVs and probably snowmobiles. Their impacts have made hiking difficult. More extensive tracts of marl ponds and fen areas exist on the east side of the Natural Area, extending into Heatherdown fen. **Patsy Cotterill**



A hopeful “Natural Area” sign at Kilini Creek NA

A Visit of Genesee NA

On July 31, 2016, **Hubert Taube** visited the Genesee Natural Area, southwest of the Genesee Power Plant, 85 km southwest of Edmonton. The Natural Area occupies about 2 quarter sections, bounded by Township Road 504 on the south, Range Road 35 on the west, Range Road 34 on the east and the North Saskatchewan River on the north. The easiest road access is via Highway 770, driving south from the Yellowhead Highway, then west on Township Road 502, north on Range Road 33 and west on Township Road 504.



Following the eastern trail in Genesee NA

The site lies within the dry mixedwood boreal forest ecoregion with mature aspen dominant and occasional white spruce, balsam poplar and white paper birch (Alberta Parks Land Reference

Manual). Two small creeks run through the natural area, both in a northerly direction, one on the west and one on the east side.

There are no developed foot trails to reach the banks of a branch of the North Saskatchewan River, but the forest is open enough to allow for relatively easy bushwhacking on the west and east sides of the site.



OHV damage near the centre Signage on the NW corner

There was evidence of past attempts to construct an illegal OHV trail in the central portion of the NA; however, this activity has been halted by Conservation Officers by creating barrier posts and posting warning signs. This could serve as an example of how to combat illegal OHV traffic in other Protected Areas.

The visit was made during a very wet summer, and mushrooms were abundant, as was Indian pipe, *Monotropa uniflora*, a vascular plant that lacks chlorophyll and relies on fungi in the soil for its nutrition.



Multitudes of mushrooms Indian pipe flowers & fruit

Recent Alberta Environmental Network (AEN) and Ecotrust Meetings

I attended the AEN meeting in Calgary, on 19- 20 November 2016 and the Ecotrust meeting in Edmonton, on 23- 25 February 2017 as SAPAA representative. Here are some highlights from these meetings.

The AEN is made up by a number of caucuses (e.g. Clean Air & Energy, Toxics & Waste Avoidance, and Water) which are the action arms of the Network. A new caucus (“Protected Areas”) was proposed to deal with the conservation of landscapes and representative ecosystems. Potential members for this caucus would be CPAWS, AWA, Nature Alberta, the Land Stewardship Centre, and SAPAA. Contacts to establish this caucus are in progress.

At the meeting, presentations were made by the new Alberta Chief Scientist (Dr. Fred Wrona), by the Alberta Energy Regulator and by Ecotrust. Details of these presentations are available from SAPAA upon request.

The opening keynote speaker at the Ecotrust meeting “2017 Environmental Gathering, Breaking Through” was Shannon Phillips, Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks. The emphasis of this year’s meeting was on energy conservation and climate change. The Minister announced project support for residential solar installations (announced to the public on 27 February 2017), continuing (3-year) funding of non-profit watershed councils, support for Parks to achieve the 17% Protection Goal by 2020 and commitment to coal elimination as a fuel source by 2030. She also requested that the audience participate in the Government’s Castle Parks Survey.

While the emphasis was on energy conservation, a number of speakers dealt with landscape and biodiversity conservation. For example, Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping at Lac La Biche, the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Engaging Recreationists in Oldman Watershed, and a CPAWS South Blueprint for Conservation of Alberta’s Southern Eastern Slopes.

As SAPAA rep, I hosted a breakfast round table discussion on “Building a Network of Stewarding Groups for Protected Areas in Alberta”. Contacts were made with representatives from the Bellis

Natural Area (near Lac La Biche), CPAWS, the North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. These contacts will be pursued with the intent of future collaboration.

For further details about the meeting, go to albertaecotrust.com/gathering2017 on the Ecotrust website. **Hubert Taube**

Thank-you to Alberta Environment

SAPAA recently sent a letter of appreciation to the Minister of Environment, Shannon Philips, congratulating the government on the creation of the Castle Provincial Park and Castle Wildland Park, and urging it to stand firm on its decision to phase out OHV use in these Parks. It is good to see our government taking such positive steps to protect and preserve this important wilderness area. **Hubert Taube**



Woodland trail at Castle River Bridge PRA



Blue camass at Beauvais Lake PP

SAPPA Project 85 High Profile Sites

#	PA Name	
1	Alexo	NA
2	Alsike Bat Lake	NA
3	Anderson Creek	NA
4	Antler Lake Island	NA
5	Battle Lake	NA
6	Battle Lake South	NA
7	Battle River	NA
8	Beaverhill	NA
9	Bellis Lake	NA
10	Bellis North	NA
11	Bilby	NA
12	Braithwaite	NA
13	Brazeau Tufa	NA
14	Bridge Lake	NA
15	Buck Lake Creek	NA
16	Burtonsville Island	NA
17	Butcher Creek	NA
18	Cardinal Divide	PP
19	Carnwood Modeste	NA
20	Clifford E Lee	NA
21	Clyde Fen	NA
22	Cossack	NA
23	Coyote Lake	NA
24	Crippsdale	NA
25	Crow Lake	ER
26	Dussault Lake	NA
27	Eagle Creek	NA
28	Eagle Point	PP
29	Edgar T Jones	NA
30	Gadsby Lake	NA
31	Garner Orchid Fen	NA
32	Halfmoon Lake	NA
33	Halfway Lake	NA
34	Hastings Lake	NA
35	Hastings Lake Islands	NA
36	Helina Area	NA
37	Hoadley	NA
38	Holmes Crossing Sandhills	ER
39	Hubert Lake	WPP
40	Innisfail	NA
41	Isle Lake	NA
42	J. J. Collett	NA
43	Kilini Creek	NA
44	Kimiwan Lake	NA
45	Kootenay Plains	ER
46	Lac La Biche	NA
47	Lac La Biche Islands	NA
48	Lac La Nonne	NA
49	Landslide Lake	NA
50	Lily Lake	NA
51	Lloyd Creek	NA
52	Lois Hole Centennial	PP
53	Magee Lake	NA
54	Markerville	NA
55	Matthews Crossing	NA

SAPPA Project 85 High Profile Sites

#	PA Name	
56	Medicine Lodge Hills	NA
57	Mill Island	NA
58	Modeste Creek	NA
59	Mount Butte	NA
60	Nestow	NA
61	Newton Lake	NA
62	North Cooking Lake	NA
63	North Ram-Nice Creek	NA
64	Northwest Bruderheim	NA
65	Opal	NA
66	Open Creek	NA
67	Park Court	NA
68	Parkland	NA
69	Perch Lake Lac Canard	NA
70	Pigeon Lake	NA
71	Plateau Mountain	ER
72	Poachers' Landing	PRA
73	Ponton River South	NA
74	Poplar Creek	NA
75	Prairie Creek Clearwater	NA
76	Prefontaine Brock Lakes	NA
77	Redwater	PRA
78	Redwater River	NA
79	Riverlot 56	NA
80	Rock Lake- Solomon Creek	WPP
81	Rocky Mountain House	NA
82	Roselea	NA
83	Saskatoon Mountain	NA
84	Schrader Creek-Red Deer River	NA
85	Sherwood Park	NA
86	Sir Winston Churchill	PP
87	Smithfield	NA
88	Strawberry Creek	NA
89	Sylvan Lake	NA
90	Tawatinaw	NA
91	Taylor Lake	NA
92	Telfordville	NA
93	Thorsby	NA
94	Tolman Badlands Heritage Rangeland	NA
95	Vega	NA
96	Wabamun Lake	PP
97	Wagner	NA
98	West Stony Creek	NA
99	Whitecourt	NA
100	Whitecourt Mountain	NA
101	Whitehorse Wildland	WPP
102	Wilson Creek	NA
103	Wiagami Wildland	WPP
104	Yates	NA