

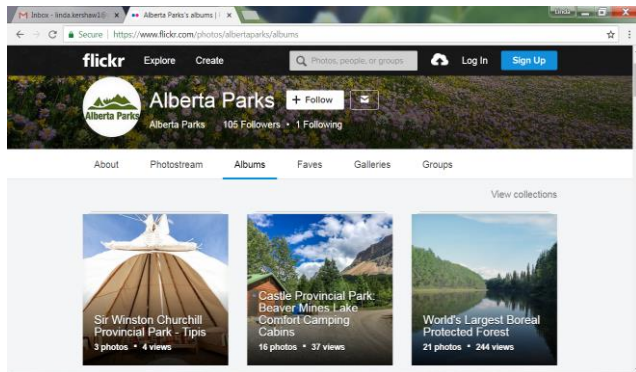
Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association (SAPAA) NEWSLETTER NO. 37, JULY 2018

Mark Your Calendar!

Join us for the **SAPAA Annual Workshop and AGM** on **Oct 20th** at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre in Red Deer. (See more info below.) We look forward to sharing important updates and information as well as discussions with fellow stewards. Our guest speakers will be Dr. Charles Bird with a talk about “Why We Preserve Locations like the J.J. Collett Natural Area” and Nissa Petterson and Grace Wark with a talk about the AWA Wild Spaces 2020 Campaign.

Update on Project 85

After several delays a number of pictures of Protected Areas are now available on the Alberta Parks Flickr site. The Project 85 collection can be accessed at:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/albertaparks/album>s. The Project 85 album is currently the sixth entry. The pictures were submitted by SAPAA and posted by Alberta Parks Volunteer Program staff. Progress in posting pictures is slow, due in part, to limited staff at Alberta Parks. Only sites with Order-in-Council approval are covered on the Parks web site.



Alberta Parks Flickr web page

The following 11 sites have been covered by Project 85: Beaverhill Lake HR NA; Beaverhill NA; Bellis Lake NA; Bellis North NA; Edgar T Jones NA; Hastings Lake Islands NA; North Cooking Lake NA; Northwest Bruderheim NA; Sherwood Park NA; Wagner NA; White Earth Valley NA.

There are about 5 pictures for each site. Altogether there are 54 photos and the album has been

accessed 130 times. We realize that much more work needs to be done to develop a comprehensive record of our sites; perhaps by 2020 we can reach a reasonably complete state of completion.

Hubert Taube

Alberta's Conservation Data Centre (ACIMS) Needs Help

Most Canadians aren't aware of the national network of Conservation Data Centres (CDCs) that operate across our vast country under the umbrella of NatureServe Canada. Each province or territory has its own CDC, with the exception of Atlantic Canada which encompasses New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland/Labrador. Most CDCs (i.e. Atlantic Canada, British Columbia, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, and Yukon) go by the title Conservation Data Centre, but Ontario's is the Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre (ONHIC) and Alberta's is called the Alberta Conservation Information Management Centre (ACIMS).

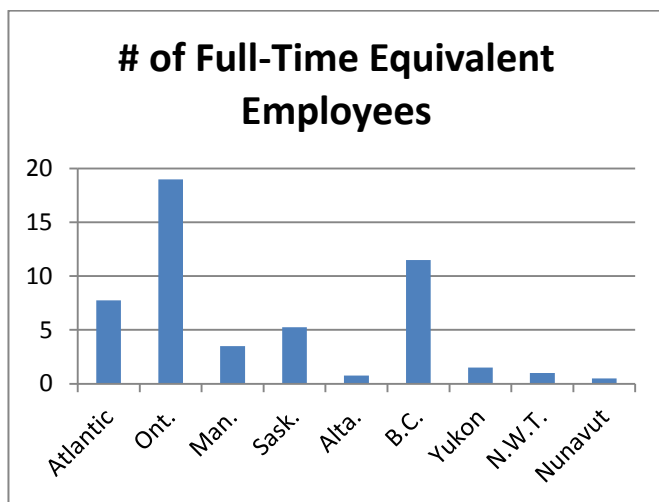


Dragon's-mouth orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*), a beautiful rare wildflower tracked by ACIMS

These centres provide many important services for anyone interested in the environment, from avid naturalists to researchers, developers, land-use managers and environmental consultants. CDCs do biological inventories, keep track of our rare species and rare ecosystems and analyze/review environmental data and reports. However, their most important role is probably that of providing

reliable, up-to-date scientific information on the great number of plants, animals and ecological communities in their region. This includes sorting through the confusing collection of scientific and common names for 1000s of species (elements) so we can all apply the same name to the same thing. In addition to sorting out names (classification), CDCs also determine how rare or common each element is (this can change with each information update), and whether each is native or introduced. This information is invaluable, and it's also available to everyone (check out the lists at www.albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/management-land-use/alberta-conservation-information-management-system-acims/download-data/). The data provided by CDCs is essential for identifying, mapping and understanding the biodiversity of our vast and varied landscape. Without it, we can't evaluate environmental impact assessments or identify sensitive areas, rare species and unique ecosystems. The data in our CDC provides a common foundation on which all of these assessments can be based.

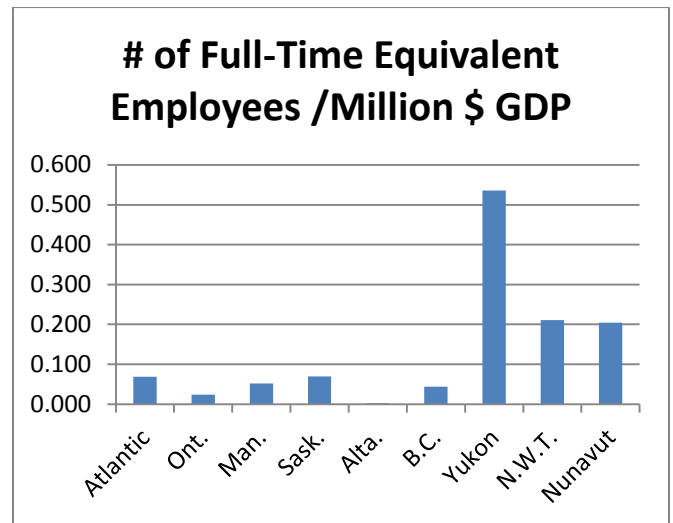
So, with 1000s of species to keep records for and 100s of environmental reports to review each year, you may wonder how many biologists, ecologists, taxonomists and other specialists are employed in Alberta to deal with the mountain of data that needs to be assessed and processed each year. The answer is embarrassing and alarming.



At present, there is less than one full-time position / full-time equivalent (FTE) allocated for this work in Alberta. Although several people are involved in ACIMS work, this is only a small part of their jobs, and the total time allocated for everyone adds

up to less than a single full-time position. Of all of Canada's CDCs, the only one with less support is that of Nunavut.

This looks pretty sad, but let's look at it another way. Alberta's population is about 100 times larger than that of Nunavut, and we are a relatively rich province. On a per capita basis, our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is quite a bit higher than that of other regions. So, let's think of it in terms of the dollars available. In 2016, GDP ranged from almost \$800 million for Ontario to less than \$2.5 million for Nunavut. How many FTEs does each region support for every \$1,000,000 GDP?



Alberta's bar is even harder to see in this graph, because it represents only 0.002 FTEs. The next lowest is Ontario with 0.024 FTEs, ten times as many as Alberta. Over the past 10-15 years Alberta's CDC (previously called ANHIC, and now ACIMS) has gradually faded away and almost disappeared. How can the equivalent of one part-time person be expected to accomplish the work of 5-10 full-time employees? The fact that we have any current information available at all is amazing, and speaks volumes for the hard work and dedication of the few remaining staff. Let's give them all the support we can, and let the government know that we have to reverse this trend! A good start would be a letter to Minister of Environment and Parks (the department that currently houses ACIMS) at:

Honorable Shannon Phillips,
 Office of the Minister, Environment and Parks
 208 Legislature Building
 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Conservation and environmental protection depend on reliable, up-to-date ecological data which is available to everyone. This requires an adequate number of qualified people working on our behalf in the public service. We no longer have this. Perhaps the current government can get things back on track. **Linda Kershaw**



This tiny white waterlily, *Nymphaea tetragona*, is another rare species tracked by ACIMS and in need of protection.

New Public Lands Administration Regulations (PLAR)

As of May 31, 2018 new regulations are in effect which supersede those of August 2016. The regulations can be seen at:

<http://aep.alberta.ca/about-us/compliance-assurance-program/public-land-compliance-program/public-land-access/default.aspx>.

The regulations permit Conservation Officers to issue on-the-spot tickets and also include the ticket amounts. About 50 different offences are listed. The regulations apply only to Public Land Use Zones, but it could be argued that lands governed by the WAERNAHR Act are public lands, and the same regulations should apply to them.

The following two ticket items are of particular interest to many Protected Area stewards:

Item 185(3): Operating a motor vehicle in an area/trail not designated for that use - \$402 fine

Item 198: Interfering with the quiet enjoyment of others of public lands - \$287 fine.

Hubert Taube

Exploring Alberta's East Central Sand Dunes Areas

For years I have been fascinated by the term "Wainwright Sand Dunes" and I had images of a landscape with shifting windblown sand dunes similar to what one might expect in the Sahara Desert. Much of the area is actually covered by vegetation and there are only a few spots with "30 m high active sand dunes," described as aeolian due to their geological origin. These active dunes are in a state of continuous disturbance, so no permanent vegetation can be established. Only after visiting the area did I do a more in-depth review of the area's background, and came across extensive documentation of its natural and management history.



Examining rare plants in active dunes

A good general summary of the Parkland Dunes area (of which the Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve [ER] is part) by the Alberta Wilderness Association [AWA] is accessible at <https://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlands/areas-of-concern/parkland-dunes>. A Google search also revealed a Wainwright Ecological Reserve Management Plan (1998) plus reports on classification of plant communities (2003), a rare plant survey (2003) and a lepidoptera survey (2004). Surprisingly, one of the land uses is cattle grazing, with the grazing rights being held by the Buffalo Park Grazing Association. This Association also leases extensive land for grazing on the perimeter of the Wainwright ER.

While in the vicinity of the Wainwright ER, I also visited 2 nearby Protected Areas: Ribstone Creek Heritage Rangeland Natural Area [NA] and Edgerton NA (PNT). The plant communities are

similar to those of the Wainwright ER, and cattle grazing is also permitted on these sites. Patrick Porter, a Land Management Specialist with Alberta Environment and Parks in Wainwright, acts as unofficial steward for all of these sites.



Sand rocket



Scarred, twisted aspen trees

The hike through the Wainwright ER was actually organized by AWA, with Cliff Wallis as leader. Cliff is a person with extraordinary knowledge of plant and bird life, geology and management planning of the site. Starting from north of the intersection of RR 50/TWP 420 the hike was about 14 km long and took us around the central, northwesterly oriented wetland depression in a clockwise direction. The highlight of the trip was the “active dunes” area in the northwestern part of the circuit.



Crossing a beaver dam

For me, this was an inspirational trip, encountering a great variety of land types and plant communities, with very little human footprint apparent and a nearly total absence of the background noise of modern civilization.

Hubert Taube

Communications With the Alberta Government On Behalf of Stewards

SAPAA President, Hubert Taube, has been an active letter-writer on behalf of SAPAA this year. In June he wrote to Premier Notley and Minister of Environment and Parks Shannon Phillips, copied to Dana Mackie, AB Environment and Parks, thanking the government for creating 4 new wildland parks (Kazan, Richardson, Dillon River, Birch River) and expanding a fifth (Birch Mountain) - >13,600 sq. km. of newly protected land. The 2020 target for Canada as a whole is 17% protected land and freshwater, and this brings Alberta’s total to 14.5%. Hubert’s letter also expressed support for the land use and recreational plans for the Livingstone/Porcupine Hills, and congratulated the government for better enforcement penalties for persons contravening regulations.

Minister Shannon Phillips replied to SAPAA in August, noting that the new “...parks are the largest addition to the Alberta Parks system in its history.” Of the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills plan she stated: “The Land Footprint Management Plan ... includes regulatory limits on motorized access. ... To support the transition towards managed recreation in these areas, we will focus our efforts this summer on enhanced education and outreach. More information on the forthcoming 2018 projects is outlined in the news release, available at www.alberta.ca under “Balanced plans protect land, boost recreation.” **Patsy Cotterill**

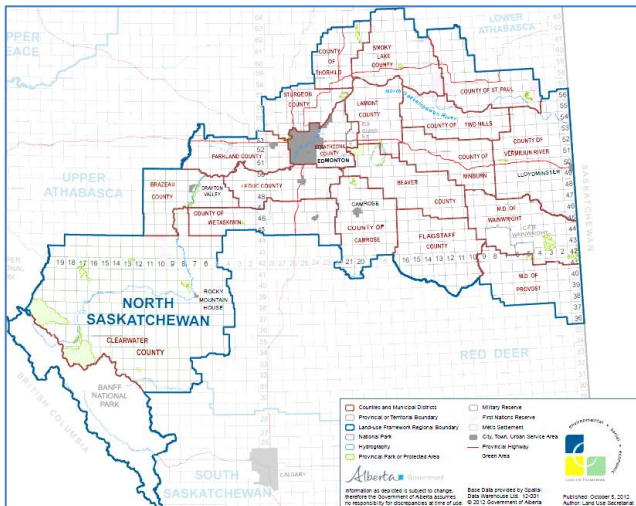


Approaching dunes in Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve

Response to the RAC Report Re: North Saskatchewan Regional Plan

Earlier this summer, SAPAA submitted feedback to the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) on their recommendations to the government for the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan. In addition, Hubert wrote to Minister Shannon Phillips in May. Here are some excerpts, with explanations of acronyms added in square brackets.

After describing the Stewards Program and its purpose, Hubert noted that “Among the seven LUF [Land Use Framework] planning regions, the NSRP [North Saskatchewan Regional Plan] LUF region stands out as containing the largest number of Alberta’s Protected Areas: two wilderness areas, two ecological reserves, 64 natural areas [NAs], including the Beaverhill Lake Heritage Rangeland NA (NSR Profile, May 2014, p.76).”



North Saskatchewan Region: Counties and Municipal Districts
(from www.landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/NorthSaskatchewanRegion)

“In the late 1990s the Stewards of Alberta’s Protected Areas Association (SAPAA), an Alberta registered organization, was formed to advocate for the intent of the WAERNAHR Act when government support for the Program was diminishing. ... We are concerned that the RAC RD [Regional Advisory Council Recommendation Document] makes few if any comments about the NAs in the NSR. We believe that our NAs deserve continuous protection in order to ‘maintain that land or those features in a natural state for use by the public for conservation, nature appreciation, low intensity outdoor recreation or education, or for any combination of those purposes’, as stated in the Act. Therefore, the following comments are

directed towards improving the management of our NAs and strengthening the Volunteer Stewardship Program with a view of contributing to the development of the Regional Plan. In general, NAs come with two levels of protection status: Order-in-Council (OC) or Protective Notation (PNT). The original intent was to ultimately convert PNT to OC areas. This process has stagnated over the years; now, with the development of the NSRP there is the opportunity to accelerate this process.”

“The Act states that NAs are to provide for “low intensity outdoor recreation”. This intent is incompatible with the designing and managing of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails. The destructive impacts of OHVs can be found in most NAs, and these activities are clearly unsustainable. Permission to build motorized trails should be given only when sustainability can be demonstrated. There is also a great need for education and enforcement of regulations governing OHVs. In this context, we believe that various government departments should be encouraged to facilitate coordination of enforcement of regulations related to access to public lands. In particular, we recommend that a 2015 report by Adam Driedzic, Env. Law Centre, *Managing Recreation on Public Lands*, (elc.ab.ca/media/105057/Managing-recreation-on-public-land-Final-December-10-2015.pdf) be utilized to develop a policy for overall access to public lands, including natural areas.”

“In earlier years, the Government of Alberta provided strong support for the Volunteer Stewardship Program. For example, newsletters (*Partners in Conservation*) were issued, annual training workshops were conducted and coordination meetings were held with what is now Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP). These activities have largely stopped. We encourage reinstatement of these activities in order to strengthen stewardship of our protected areas. Also, the number of Volunteer Stewards is stagnant, if not decreasing. We encourage re-instating a program of steward recruitment. Increase of resources for the Parks Division would be required to provide training and supervision of existing and new Stewards. The RAC RD (p.40) states that ‘some areas are too small, disconnected and difficult to manage from a

public land conservation intent perspective.’ We believe that many of these ‘small areas’ can play an important role in biodiversity maintenance. ... In other cases we envisage that private landholders (individuals and organizations) could be involved in bringing about connectivity of small disjointed Protected Areas by utilizing the tools available under the Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA), such as conservation easements, conservation offsets, and the transfer of development credits.”



Hiking along sandy trails in NW Bruderheim NA

Two examples were given where this approach could be applied - 1. Poplar Creek, Modeste and St. Francis NAs and 2. The natural area, provincial recreation area, undeveloped private properties and farm lands in the sandy, jackpine ecosystem near Bruderheim (between Twp Rd 562, the North Saskatchewan R, Hwy 28, and Range Rd 203).

In summary, we need to:

- Re-evaluate conservation sites in light of government’s natural history themes (see literature developed by AEP staff), element conservation status, and public accessibility. Provide clarity to the public, including stewards enrolled in government programs, and accelerate development of its biodiversity policy.
- Provide adequate funding for monitoring and enforcement of regulations.
- Encourage recreation on private lands.
- Invest in ‘land ethic’ education both for the public and schoolchildren. (This would be done in school, in night courses, and in parks’ and protected areas’ interpretive programs.)
- Provide adequate funding for education including land management and restoration, monitoring and enforcement.
- Engage groups and organizations to assist in planning and stewardship and provide adequate support.”

The letter was copied to the Stewardship Commissioner of the Land Use Secretariat, Premier Notley and 29 MLAs in the North Saskatchewan Region. (Well done, Hubert!) In July, Minister Phillips responded, with specific reference to SAPAA’s criticism that NAs (and other Protected Areas under the WAERNAHR Act) were not mentioned in the RAC report. She noted that RAC was “instructed to avoid specific reference to land designations due to their complexity. Instead, they were to focus on

- identifying priority areas for wetland conservation and restoration
- identifying new conservation areas to support biodiversity, specifically those areas managed to protect sensitive habitats and maintain ecological systems and processes
- identifying opportunities to improve the way working landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity
- providing recommendations on what the government can do to recognize private landowners for their stewardship and conservation initiatives, and
- providing insight on the limitations facing the promotion of voluntary tools on private lands for conservation.”

The letter further noted that planning on private land is governed primarily by the Municipal Government Act, and municipal bylaws and regional plans do not alter private property rights. It concluded with a note of appreciation for SAPAA’s feedback on the NSRP, the draft plan of which is expected to be released later this summer. SAPAA executive finds this “appreciation” encouraging. Over the years we have spent some hours navel-gazing as to whether we should continue as an organization, given our low membership and the stagnation of the government’s Stewards Program. However, we believe we do have some political clout and this among other reasons is our *raison d’être*. So...the executive will continue to work hard to keep SAPAA alive. That said, we would welcome an infusion of fresh blood!

Patsy Cotterill

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, October 20, 2018

at 9:00 a.m.

Kerry Wood Nature Centre, Red Deer, AB

PROGRAM

- 9:00 a.m. Registration and coffee
- 9:30 a.m. Speaker: **Dr. Charles Bird**
Professor Emeritus of Botany, University of Calgary
Title: **Why We Preserve Locations Like the J.J.Collett Natural Area**
- 10:15 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break (coffee, etc. provided but bring your own mug if you can)
- 11:00 a.m. Speaker: **Nissa Petterson & Grace Wark**
Conservation Specialists, Alberta Wilderness Association
Title: **The Wild Spaces 2020 Campaign**
- 11:45 a.m. Questions and discussion
- 12:00 noon **Lunch** (Please bring your own lunch, as kitchen facilities are limited)
- 12:30 p.m. **SAPAA Annual General Meeting** (see agenda on reverse)
- 2:00 p.m. **Walk in the Park** – Enjoy some fresh air and exercise before heading home.
Join us for a tour of the J.J. Collett Natural Area, led by Charley Bird.



**STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Saturday, 20 October 2018, 12:30 p.m.**

AGENDA

1. Acceptance of Minutes of previous AGM, 28 October 2017
2. Business arising from the minutes
3. Treasurer's report
4. SAPAA web site update
5. Election of the Board

Current board members are:

President – Hubert Taube

Vice President –vacant

Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Peter Kershaw

Recording Secretary – Patsy Cotterill

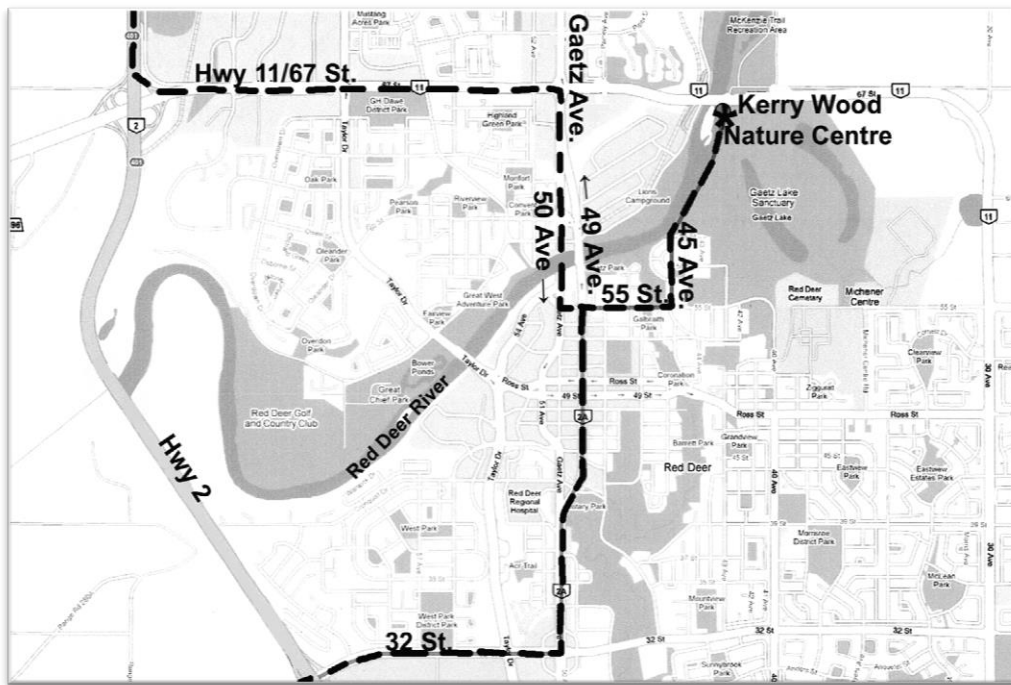
Directors – John Woitenko (FAN Representative); Alison Dinwoodie

Newsletter Editors – Linda Kershaw, Patsy Cotterill

Webmaster – Linda Kershaw

Please consider helping out on the executive. Some members are willing to stand for another year, but some are stepping down. New people would be welcomed!

6. Other business



DIRECTIONS: To reach the Kerry Wood Nature Centre from **Highway 2**, take the **67 St.** exit in Red Deer and then turn **right (south) onto Gaetz Ave. (50 Ave.)**. Turn **left (east) on 55 St.**, then **left (north) on 45 Ave.** Follow this until you see the Kerry Wood Nature Centre on your right.

OR, Take the **32 Street** exit and then turn **left (north) on Gaetz Ave.** Go north, through the one-way system, and turn **right (east) onto 55 Street.** Turn **left (north) onto 45 Ave.** and proceed to the Nature Centre as before.

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association
Membership Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Natural Area: _____ Organization (if any) _____

Mailing Address: _____ City or Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

- **To save paper and reduce costs, may we email your newsletter to you?** ____ yes ____ no
- Would you be willing to have your name and phone number put on a list that would only be distributed to other SAPAA members? ____ Yes ____ No

Renewing membership ____; New member ____

Membership fee \$ 15 (Includes FAN insurance fee of \$5)

Donation (Optional)* _____
TOTAL _____

*SAPAA is not a registered Charitable Organization as yet, so receipts for income tax purposes cannot be issued.

Please return this form, with total listed above to:

Peter Kershaw, 51163 Range Road 204, Sherwood Park, AB T8G 1E5

(Make cheques payable to SAPAA)

For membership conditions, please see reverse side of this form.

Issues of importance (old or new – this info would help for future Stewards Conference discussions):

___ Oil / Gas ___ Off Highway Vehicles ___ Vandalism ___ Overuse/Abuse ___ Grazing
___ Other _____

Willing to help with: ___ Newsletter ___ Executive ___ Phoning ___ Speakers ___ Meetings ___ Field Trips ___ Other

If you are a new member, please provide the following details about your Stewardship Area:

Natural Area ID #: _____ Approximate size: _____

Location: _____

Brief description of significant natural features (please include a brochure if available): _____

If you require more information, please contact

Hubert Taube – (780) 483-7306; taubeha@shaw.ca
Patsy Cotterill – (780) 481-1525; nutmeg@planet.eon.net
Linda Kershaw – (780) 662-3626; linda.kershaw1@gmail.com

STEWARDS OF ALBERTA'S PROTECTED AREAS ASSOCIATION

Membership in SAPAA is open to anyone who

- **is a Steward who volunteers time assisting in the care and management of Alberta's Protected Areas (i.e., lands currently set aside under the Alberta Provincial Parks Act, the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas & Heritage Rangeland Act, and the Willmore Wilderness Act), and**
- **is in general agreement with the following Purposes of the Association.**

Purposes of the Association

1. To establish a network of Volunteer Stewards to exchange information and expertise and to provide mutual assistance and support.
2. To promote the preservation, protection and restoration of the ecological integrity of Alberta's Protected Areas.
3. To promote the use of Alberta's Protected Areas for educational and research purposes, and for non-intrusive, nature-oriented activities compatible with each individual site.
4. To identify common issues of concern in Alberta's Protected Areas for the purpose of dealing with them more effectively and comprehensively.
5. To work with appropriate government departments and with other groups and agencies to resolve issues regarding actions and activities that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
6. To represent members of the Association at meetings of stakeholders and in events, issues and situations that affect Alberta's Protected Areas.
7. To increase and enhance public awareness of the value of Protected Areas and of the Volunteer Stewards' role in preserving these areas.
8. To support knowledge and skill development for Stewards and supporters of the Association through conferences, workshops, seminars and publications.

Name (please print): _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____