



The Prairie Pitch

The Alpine Club of Canada

Saskatchewan Section Newsletter

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

June 21, 2003 - Mt Glasgow. Starting with a bike ride from the Little Elbow Recreation Area west of Bragg Creek, a scramble of Mt Glasgow. Contact Dave McCormick (davemcc@shaw.ca) for more information (384-3676)

July 2-5, 2003 - Backpacking to Mt Robson. Visit this spectacular area featuring great trails and fantastic scenery. Trip leader is Catherine McCormick. Contact her for more information at cgmccormick@shaw.ca (384-3676).

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The Alpine Club of Canada
Saskatchewan Section
Newsletter

The Prairie Pitch is the official regular publication of the Saskatchewan Section of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Submissions for publication are welcome at any time and will be published given sufficient space and interest. Generally, given the schedule of the editor, submission deadlines are the middle of

February
April
June
August
October
December

Publication dates are approximately the beginning of the month following.

While we make every attempt to ensure the accuracy of the material contained herein, neither the editor, the Sask Section nor the ACC can be held responsible for errors or omissions. Be aware that opinions or language contained in some articles may be viewed as offensive by some. Reader discretion is always advised !!

August 1-4, 2003 – Walk the Wapta with the SK Section. Last year's trip was a great success, so we're doing it one more time. Trip leader will be Dave McCormick. For more information, contact Dave or follow this link for pictures and a trip description. Sorry, this trip is already full. A waiting list will be maintained in case there are cancellations. (We will try to offer the trip again in the summer of 2004.)

September Long Weekend (Aug 30, 31, Sept 1) - Icefields Parkway Scrambling Weekend. Possible objectives include Sunwapta, Wilcox, Observation or Nigel, depending on conditions and the participants. Trip leader will be Jesse Invik. Contact her via e-mail (invik@softhome.net) or phone at 652-0016.

September 13, 2003 - Third Annual Prairie Pitch Adventure Race. The location is Buffalo Pound Provincial Park. More information concerning team registration and other "stuff" is available on the Section's website.

February 20-22, 2004 - Chopper's Weekend - the Saskatchewan Section's annual beginner's ice-climbing weekend. Mark those dates on your calendar. Trip leader will be Dave McCormick. More information about the trip and about ice-climbing in general can be found on the Section's website.



SCRAMBLED THRASHERS - MAY 2003

One of the formal events on the recent Thrasher's Weekend was scrambling. Considering the weather in that part of Alberta and the fact that there was more snow up high than there had been most of the winter, the scramblers had a good time and lots of exercise. In 3 days, various groups, led by Dave McCormick, did the circuit of Yamnuska, Heart Mountain and Baldy.



Linda negotiates the critical step on Baldy.



Summit group on Heart Mountain



Traversing a steep snow slope on the backside of Mt Yamnuska on Saturday, May 17th.

Right – moving around the ledge trail on Baldy.

All pictures by Claude Lapointe

WOLVERINE CONSERVATION: YOU CAN HELP

[This article was provided courtesy of Parks Canada]



The wolverine is an enduring symbol of deep wilderness, dogged determination and fierce independence. Yet in Canada's Rocky Mountains, their numbers are few and threats to their habitat are growing. Found throughout high elevation forests and into the harsh alpine, wolverines cover a phenomenal amount of territory. But increasing human use in their remaining habitat may leave this remarkable species at risk. Parks Canada has begun research in Banff and Yoho National Parks to learn more about local wolverine ecology. Wolverine observations from backcountry park visitors are important to this effort.

Wolverines seek the same solitude and wilderness so highly desired by those of us who visit the backcountry.

The largest terrestrial member of the weasel family, wolverines are found across the northern forests and tundra of North America, Scandinavia and Russia. They once ranged as far south as California, but now few persist in the contiguous United States and are confined to the rugged mountain backcountry southern Alberta and British Columbia.

Wolverines, particularly males that can be twice as big as females, are often mistaken as a small bear or confused with hoary marmots. Close in size to a medium dog, males can weigh up to 18 kg, while females are as heavy as 12 kg. They have a rich, chocolate brown coat with blonde stripes down the sides. Individuals have unique silvery markings on their face, which is broad and large for the body size.

In the far north, male wolverines may range over 3000 km², an area as large as Kootenay and Yoho National Parks combined. Here in the mountains, home ranges are smaller, typically 600 to 1000 km² for males, but no less impressive when you consider the rugged terrain they must cross. Females, especially those with young, maintain a much smaller home range, generally 300-400 km².

The wolverine appetite is legendary, but really they eat no more than any other animal their size. In winter, they subsist primarily on carrion, mostly mountain goats and moose previously killed by wolves or avalanches. In summer, they hunt marmots and small mammals.

Come late winter, pregnant females move to higher elevations to den among large, snow covered boulders or talus slopes, sub-alpine bowls, cirque basins, avalanche debris and wind throw. Here they raise a litter of 1 to 3 kits through the coming spring and summer. And it is here where this predator of renowned ferocity is most vulnerable.

Despite their fearsome reputation, wolverines are susceptible to a number of disturbances due to their wide-ranging nature and low reproductive potential. Secure dens are paramount for females, who must leave their young alone for several days while they search for food during the

late winter. Winter recreationalists may unwittingly disturb a female with young kits, forcing her to move, putting young at risk.

Canada's mountain national parks play an important role in providing secure habitat for the wolverine. However, parks alone cannot sustain a larger regional population – they are one part of the total effort to conserve this remarkable predator. Because of their large home range, most wolverines found in national parks spend a portion of their lives beyond park boundaries. Here they are susceptible to various other threats, including trapping and disturbance from motorized recreation. A co-operative regional management approach is needed to ensure conservation of the wolverine and the wilderness it thrives in.

Little is known about critical movement corridors and denning sites for wolverine in the Rocky Mountain national parks. Yet conservation decisions for both the park and surrounding region need to be based on such scientific information. Consequently Parks Canada is monitoring wolverine activity through snow tracks in the Lake Louise and Great Divide areas of Banff and Yoho National Parks. You can help. Please look for posters and track cards at winter trailheads in the parks and pass on any observations you may have to park staff.

For more info:

www.parkscanada.gc.ca/yoho or www.wolverinefoundation.org

EPITAPH OF AN AMATEUR GUIDE

Here lies an Alpinist. He lately expired,
From hauling up climbers who easily tired.
He's gone where the mountains no longer exist,
His ice axe and crampons will scarcely be missed.

No more need he stagger 'neath sixty-pound packs,
Not cut endless ladders up ice with his axe.
No dudes need he haul from the yawning crevasse,
No more will he climb from the camp to the pass.

No paper bag lunches will satisfy hunger,
Nor slippery scree make him wish he were younger.
No bothersome bowlines which always get tight,
Nor sabre-toothed 'skeeters to worry at night.

Don't weep for him now, don't weep for him never;
He's going to climb NOTHING for EVER and EVER!

credited to E.R.G in the November 1938 ACC Gazette.

WINTER CLIMBING DESTINATION? TRY RED ROCKS, NEVADA

by Joe Turnham

On March 31st, with the snow melting but no real sign of spring in sight yet, spouse Pat and I decided we could wait no longer and took off, heading south. Two days later, after being chased all the way down by a nasty spring storm, we arrived at Las Vegas and Red Rocks Canyon.

I had heard of the climbing there from Bruce DeAeth, so had in the back of my mind that we could eventually end up there, but to be there two days after Red Deer surprised even me. The fact that we ended up staying there for a week, well, there were reasons for this, mainly the warm weather (27-29oC most of the week) and the fine climbing and hiking. In fact, we thought that it was so nice that we just had to pass the word on to others out there.

Firstly, to get there. Just hit Interstate # 15 south of Lethbridge and go, go, go. On arriving at LV (at present, the interstate goes right through, but a bypass is being build as I write this), turn west off the Interstate to Charleston Blvd. This is the main E-W drag in the city and will lead you directly to highway # 159 and Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The campsite is first on the left after entering the area.

The campsites are \$10/day and are quite nice, each site having a water tap (tested, drinkable water) and tent platform. Although the overall campsite looks a little barren, there are Joshua Trees and Mojave Yucca plants growing everywhere, which we thought added some beauty to the place. The campground is windy on many days, and the blowing sand can make one feel quite grubby after a day or two. If that bothers you then there are showers at Desert Rock Sports climbing wall about 15 minutes back down Charleston Blvd. There is also a great coffee place, the Atlanta Bakery, near there as well. The campsite closes on June 30th and re-opens August 25th because of the summer heat.

Red Rocks Canyon is a large, roughly circular bowl surrounded by steep rock walls which, every mile or two, are broken by narrow side canyons leading off. There is a 13 mile scenic car loop drive within the main bowl with pullouts for parking near every side canyon. So, if you have a route in mind at a particular side canyon, you will have to drive the loop (\$5/day), park at the correct pullout and hike in.

As my partner was a non-climber (but a great belayer), I had to stick to one-pitch routes and, in addition, the very moderate ones (5.6-5.9). There were a fair number of these located on a crag aptly named "Moderate Mecca", which was located at the mouth of the

main bowl canyon and literally minutes from the campsite. If one climbed there, you could avoid paying the driving fee, but to really enjoy what is there for climbing, driving in to access some of the side canyons is a must. From what I did and in speaking to others, it appears that the type of climbing is not the usual desert vertical cracks and nothing else. Rather it has some cracks but they are mixed in with face/slab climbing on small but surprisingly firm holds on “varnished” areas of rock. In fact the climbing isn’t all that different from Rockies limestone. I found that I did use more small wires than usual, though. There are a number of guide books on RRC, but if you are only down there for a short stay, I would recommend an abbreviated version, containing all the “classics” by Todd Swain. It is soft cover and retails for about \$10 US.

So, that’s the “beta” on the place and you might want to stick it away somewhere as you never know when you might get the chance to visit. You might spot one of those cheap “gambler’s special” flights down to Vegas one winter week, or maybe you do somehow get a mid-winter break and see the chance to get in some winter climbing. It is cheaper to go by car and can be done in under 2 days even if you stay under the speed limit (125 kph). Then again, you could win the lotto and then you could stay at the MGM Grand in Vegas and go climbing every day in a stretch limo.

Just a note here. If you are a hiker and are reading this, I don’t think the hiking is really that great and it’s along way to go. We found the hiking at Zion and Escalante, which we did on the way back, to be way better. If you every want information on those areas, just get in touch.

THRASHERS WEEKEND - MAY 2003

Despite the often crummy weather over the May long weekend, there was some climbing to be had. Pictures here and on page 11 will tell the story. In fact, the picture to the right (recognize that climber Byron?), shows you what can happen to a person after a day of hard climbing!



happen to a person after a day of hard climbing!

The group was forced to take over the cook shelter at Willow Rock Campground. Unlike many years, that campground was pretty much empty all weekend.

Pictures here and on page 11 are courtesy of Kim Hitchings.

..... continued on page 11

ACC NATIONAL BOARD MEETING & AGM MAY 10-11, 2003 - CANMORE

With snowy peaks displaying more white covering than there was most of the winter, ACC Board members from across Canada met over the weekend in Canmore. There are a few issues that came up over the weekend that will affect every ACC member, so read on.

Section Reports

Time is always set aside at each Board meeting to listen to reports from the various Sections. Some brief notes from what was said:

The Vancouver Section has an Executive handbook. The Thunder Bay Section's 3rd invitational ice-climbing festival was another great success. The Manitoba Section hosted their Film Festival in a larger theatre (1600 seats, up from 400) this past winter and had an attendance of about 900. In the Calgary Section, they are slowly moving to an e-newsletter. Their paper copies are consuming up to 50% of their annual budget. Currently, they are using an opt-out system to allow members the choice of paper or paperless newsletter. Both the Edmonton and Calgary Sections have tried publishing a calendar but advise that there are marketing issues that need to be thought out before such a project is attempted.

ACC Financial Matters

Treasurer Gord Currie announced that there is a projected loss of \$67,000 for this year. This has been caused by several factors including lower facilities revenue (poor snow, avalanche issues, war, SARS, etc). The designated funds have been doing better recently. Member fees aren't covering services provided (more on this later) and there is a concern that we're not investing enough in Facilities and leadership. Finally, the ACC is setting up a Fundraising Committee and is looking for experienced volunteers.

Membership Commission Report

Peter Muir discussed the findings of the Commission. These are important matters that need to be discussed at the Section level. In brief, the conclusions of the commission are:

- recommend that the Board structure remain as is
- although there is an interdependence between all the various activities of the ACC, there is a \$300,000 deficit that can be assigned to membership. What this means is that over \$200,000 generated by Facilities isn't being used for Facilities upkeep (this means huts, Clubhouse, etc). Fees will need to be increased.
- Liability insurance costs the ACC around \$35,000/year. A few years ago it was \$2000.
- New sections will need leadership development and will have insurance implications. There should be a certain physical size to make any new section viable.

- Should more things be bundled into the basic membership fee, such as CAJ, huts upgrade, etc.
- Should there be a minimum Section membership fee?
- If membership was to double to around 12,000, the deficit would be partially eliminated.
- What inhibits the growth of Sections? Lack of Leaders!!
- More need for Facilities-generated revenue to go into Facilities. Right now, around \$231,000 from Facilities is going to subsidize membership.

Committee Reports

Secretary (Rod Plasman) - current membership is 6471 (1683 unaffiliated). Secure on-line transactions over the ACC's website are coming. Note that there is a bulletin board section on the National Website.

Activities (Cam Roe) - activities continue to fill up well. A reminder to all Sections that the ACC does offer a custom portering service so if there are any Section camps that need some help.....

Facilities (Carl Hannigan) - the ACC has a contract to operate and manage the huts in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. This will allow Sections to get an advance chance to use these huts for winter camps. Contact Nancy Hansen by October 1/03. Parks Canada has decided to destroy the Bryant Creek hut (on the trail to Mt Assiniboine). The Bow Hut has mold issues in the sleeping section that are being looked into immediately. The proposed Centennial Hut is still being investigated. Four locations in BC show potential and proposals have been sent to BC Parks.

Services (David Zemrau) - see the UIAA website for information about leadership courses and associated standards.

External Relations (Mike Mortimer) - slogan "100 Years of Mountain Adventure". The Guide's Ball will be moved to Banff. Lake Louise has become too expensive.

Centennial Subcommittee - (Fern Heitcamp) - Sections need to start thinking about possible Centennial activities. There will be some funding available. For example, a Section history, mountain art, Section camps during 2006, etc.

Awards Committee (Paul Geddes) - note there will be a new protocol for all awards. See the National website.

Canadian Alpine Centre (Lake Louise) - revenue down; new management plan; increased fees.

Publications (Bob Sandford) - review of ACC publications - variety, number and quality. The ACC will be publishing a Lake O'Hara art book with about 120 pages in full color. Sections are invited to pre-purchase books at \$20 wholesale cost. Prior editions of the CAJ will be digitized. Volunteer editors will be needed. The 2006 CAJ will be a 2-volume edition with historical content. The pamphlet "Melting Mountains" has been well received. It was agreed that a subcommittee be formed to gather information about how climate change is affecting mountain environments. We will be looking for people with knowledge and/or access to information about this topic.

The next Board Meeting will be in Lake Louise on November 1-2, 2003.

Submitted by Dave McCormick, Saskatchewan Section Board Representative.

NO MORE CAMPING AT YAM!!

By Jesse Invik

I got into the Yam parking lot quite late on Good Friday. Much to my shock, I discovered a new sign saying no camping. I shouldn't have been too shocked, I guess. After all, there has been a lot of debate on this issue and there were management plans proposed not just for this area, but a much larger area around Mt. Yamnuska. I made an attempt to read this proposal but found it overly complex and difficult to understand. I sent in my comments and saw some comments from a few folks in the Calgary section. One fellow, whose name I can't remember, and whose comments I can only paraphrase at this point, having lost all the paperwork I had on this matter (organization is not my strong suit), made the point that while LaFarge is busy eating away at the side of Mount Grotto, and dumping God knows what into the water, and everybody and his dog is driving gigantic R.V.'s through the main thoroughfare, and Canmore is putting up new condo developments faster than you can climb a 5.5 on top rope, can a few scraggly climbers camping out in a meadow at Yam really be a detriment to the environment?

Well, maybe it can. I'm sad though, that the proposed idea of enforcing the 1km rule (no camping within 1km of the parking lot), was not thoroughly tested out first. On the other hand, I must say I've seen a lot of bad behaviour happening at Yam. Most of it occurring during the olden days when you could still drive around in there freely. Last summer I myself lost two tents to a bear attack (fortunately I wasn't in the tent at the time), which I attribute, at least partially, to the not so intelligent folks camping beside me with coolers strewn out on the ground. They had packed up before the bear showed up, so suffered no damage, but I'm guessing that their debris drew the bear to the area, at which time he/she decided that maybe my tents were worth a bite or two just in case they were as tasty as the garbage left on the ground not too far away from them.

The oddest thing that I ever witnessed at Yam happened 2 summers ago. I got into Yam in the morning and someone was parked there with a kind of an odd looking trailer, from which was emanating odd little sounds. Upon closer inspection it appeared to be loaded with chickens, live ones. I found this very strange, but went on my way to do some scramble or another. We slept at Yam that night, and in the morning the chicken people appeared. The curiosity got the better of me, and I went over to ask them about the chicken trailer, which was now empty. This rather odd, passionate woman explained to me that they were from a church youth group and that they had taken the chickens back into the far meadow and had each of the kids in the youth group slaughter and clean a chicken for themselves. I got as much information out of the woman as I could without sounding like I was going to run to the nearest phone with it as soon as she was done talking, which was exactly what I did. She explained to me how this was a spiritual experience for the kids, filled with laughter and tears, and how they had all done it very cleanly and humanely and did I want them to give them my phone number so I could join their church? I thought not. The big garbage bin at Yam was indeed filled with bloody paper and chicken parts. The Kananaskis conservation officers were very interested and perplexed, but I never did find out if they tracked down the chicken slaughtering youth group.

So back to Good Friday. We spent the night at Yam anyway, making sure to get our butts out of bed good and early, and we escaped the \$28 fine we later learned we would have been dinged if we'd gotten caught. The next night we met some friends at the Three Sisters Campground, and paid a whopping \$17 to stay there, listening to the highway which seemed to be three feet away, and to a group of horribly obnoxious partiers until about 2:00 a.m. Night number three we were perplexed about. Yam didn't seem like a good idea, but the Three Sisters Campground definitely didn't warrant repeating. We ended up climbing right up till darkness at Wasootch, so decided to have a bite to eat in the Widow Maker's Day use area. Well one thing led to another and we parked our tent in the parking lot and stayed for the night. This illegal camping is a bit risky, a bit exciting, and seems to make sure of a good early alpine start every day. I think I'm pretty tempted to keep it up!

I'm not sure that I understand completely the decision to close Yam to camping, and I'll sure miss being there; it has felt like a second home for a number of years now. But I've decided to respect the decision to keep this beautiful area as pristine as possible.

THRASHERS WEEKEND - (THE SAGA CONTINUES...)



Norma and Darcie test out the rock at Wasootch.



SK SECTION STYLE GUIDE

Finally, we were sent this picture a couple of months ago. Bruce Keith is the Executive Director of the Alpine Club of Canada. You will find him hanging out in the National Office at the Clubhouse in Canmore. Perceptive readers will note that he is wearing, happily, a stylish Saskatchewan Section T-shirt. And this is a guy who is almost “never” seen in T-shirts!

Thanks for the picture Bruce!

Anyone who wants to look good too should contact the Section and arrange to get their OWN Section T-shirt. Wear it with pride!



The Alpine Club of Canada
SASKATCHEWAN SECTION

1722 Alexandra Avenue
Saskatoon SK S7K 3C5
242-0707, fax 249-5054
www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/saskatchewan
E-mail: info@accsask.ca

Chair: Shelley McKinlay (242-0707) - shelleym@axonsoft.com
National Rep: Dave McCormick (384-3676) - davemcc@shaw.ca
Treasurer: Nikki Hipkin (373-7355) - nikkih2@shaw.ca
Secretary: Heather Matheson (374-5416) - hdm365@mail.usask.ca
Newsletter: Dave McCormick (384-3676) - davemcc@shaw.ca
Activities Coordinator: Ivan Hitchings (329-4484) - hitchings.ink@sasktel.net
Members At Large: Saskatoon:
Peter Burgess (242-2922) - pandgburgess@hotmail.com
Andrew McKinlay (242-0707) - mckinlay@suneido.com
Deanna Miller - deanna@cyancorp.com
John Mollison - (934-6811) molli.m.j@shaw.ca
Dan Kallstrom (931-2962) - dankallstrom@bigfoot.com
Allan Janzen - (956-3460) - ajanzen@shaw.ca
Richard St Pierre - stpierre@sask.usask.ca
Jesse Invik (652-0016) - invik@softhome.net
Prince Albert: Gary Kolar (764-6072) - g.kolar@sk.sympatico.ca
Regina: Mike Esson - m.esson@sk.sympatico.ca