



# The story of the first TREE HUGGERS

Can you imagine waking up one morning and finding a large earth mover in your driveway ready to demolish your home? Your home! Your source of shelter, food, water, clothing, memories and stories. What would you do?

This is the situation the women of Uttar Pradesh in the sub-Himalayan region of India were in when they became the first tree huggers. Chipko is a Hindi word for "Hugging."

The term "tree huggers" was not a joke nor a disparaging term, but the Chipko movement was a serious stand they took to defend their families against logging - where logging did not belong and where it would be destructive to both the forest and to their families.

Shobita Jain describes the balanced relationship the people of the sub-Himalayan traditionally had with the forest that surrounded them. They depended on the forest for shelter, food, water and clothing. In return they took care to treat the trees, plants, soil, water and wildlife with respect and gratitude. They acted to support the health of the forest and all the living beings that co-existed in it. You can find her article at <https://sniadecki.wordpress.com/2022/11/23/jain-chipko-en/> Vandana Shiva has also documented the Chipko movement and all it involves in her 1989 book, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*.

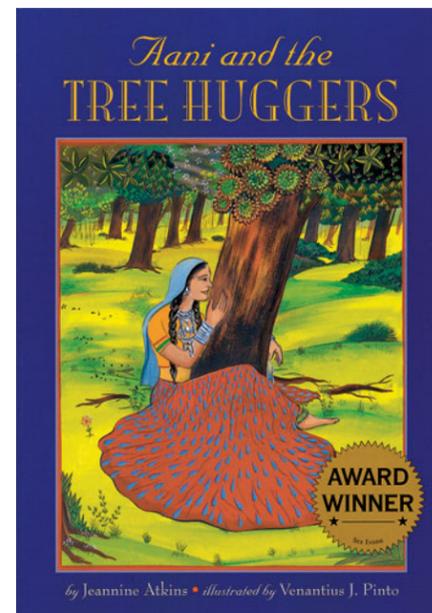
Today, we humans do not depend so directly on the forest that surrounds Bragg Creek, but the wild animals who live there do. They are an integral part of a complex ecosystem where all parts interact in complex ways, and all are needed for the health of the ecosystem. We need to be respectful of what the wildlife and plants around us need to have preserved.

Forests guard the health of the water and soil that we actively still depend on. And then there is their beauty. Whether we hug trees or not (and many of us love to) for so many reasons, we need to act to preserve the health of our forests.



## The Original Tree Huggers

Chipko movement in Uttar Pradesh, India, led by village women to save their forest from logging in 1973.



Suggested reading:

**Aani and the Tree Huggers**

By Jeannine Atkins

Written for elementary school level complete w with a teacher's guide.

# What are Natural Assets and why they matter

While roads, schools, and water/sewer infrastructures are assets to a community, they are man-made. Rivers, wetlands and wildlands are natural assets and are nature-made. Both are important and enhance our quality of life.

Man-made assets are recognized, valued and maintained. The same cannot be said for natural assets - yet, without clean water, clean air and healthy forests, life would be very different both in Bragg Creek and in the landscape downstream.

In its seemingly endless abundance, we take nature for granted and enjoy our natural assets - but overlook the impact we have on them with human activity. We need to help keep them healthy and functional.

Understanding, valuing and caring for our local natural assets can ensure the preservation of what we love about our area. Trees, water, open spaces, topography, wildlife and the area's beauty are the elements that draw visitors to Bragg Creek to recreate and residents to enjoy living alongside nature.

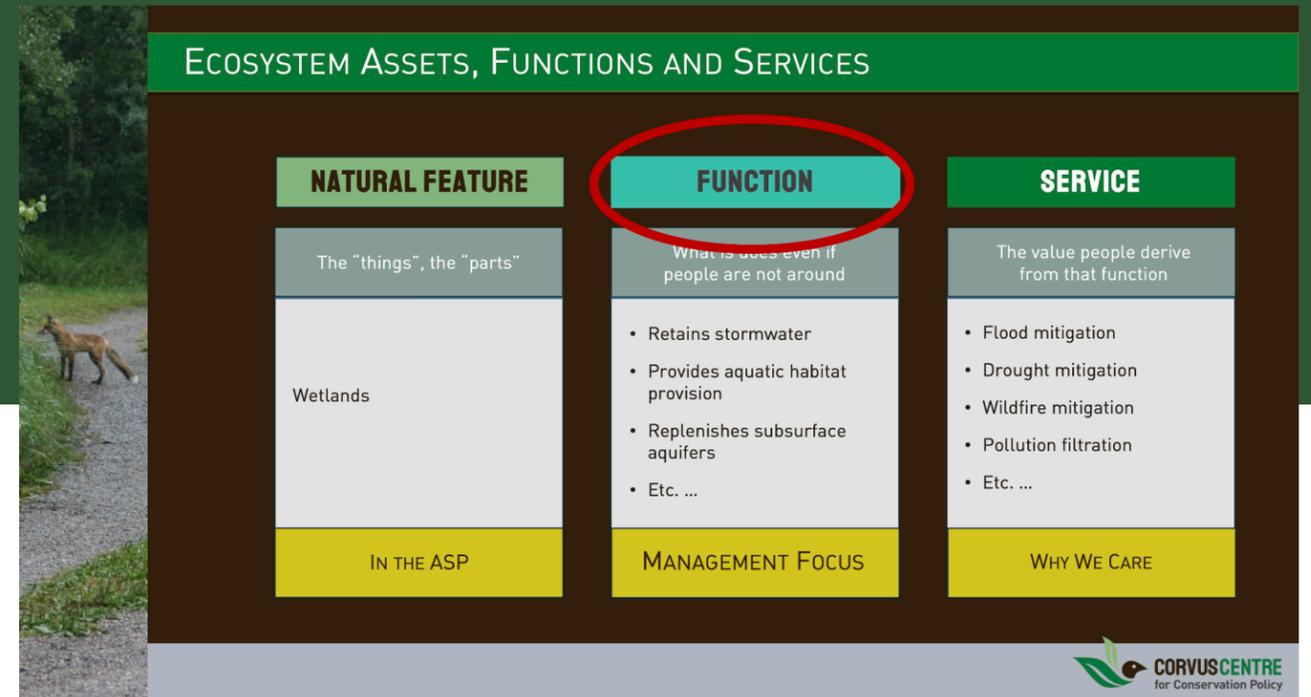
## NATURAL ASSET INVENTORIES

### Natural infrastructure

- Recognition that nature provides 'infrastructure' services
  - Health, water management, sense of place, gathering sites, adaptation
- These can be identified and planned for
  - Protection, augmentation, restoration







Various community conversations will take place over the next year as part of the renewal of the Bragg Creek Area Structure Plan. This process will help determine how our county and community should manage the Bragg Creek area for the next decade. Along with ensuring that we maintain functioning water and sewage systems, identifying and maintaining our natural assets is crucial for preserving healthy area ecosystems. Building on the fine work undertaken by the local community in 2007 affords us the opportunity to further a vision of what it would take us to get there.

Imagine developing a mountain community that is truly adapted to its environment! Such an outcome would surely create a great source of local pride and might serve as a model for other local communities. It would also provide value to larger communities downstream such as Calgary, whose 1.3 million people rely on about 40% of their drinking water from the Elbow River; an incredible resource from waters that pass through Bragg Creek into the biggest city in the province.



"Calgary's water crisis should be a wake-up call for Canada, experts say."

CTV News, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024



Elbow River and its Watershed – Invaluable Natural Asset.

Elbow River was the only water source supplying Calgary's 1.3 millions residents in the June-July 2024 water-main crisis.



Dear Foothills friends,

I can't wait to visit you again this summer ...to play in your gardens, by the mountain streams and in the grassy meadows! You can call me Red Admiral, your butterfly friend who brightens your days with my colourful wings and dainty flight as I flutter from flower to flower and drink from the puddles. I love the colours, patterns, smells and tastes of flowers just as much as you and my friends do - the swallowtails, skippers, gossamers, sulphurs and brushfoot butterflies (with their hairy legs!)

On your trip to Mexico this Christmas did you see any of my Lepidoptera (Lep) cousins and friends? You got there by airplane, but we need to flap our wings for many many miles - and we are starving after such a long journey! When you've come home and there is no food in the house, what do you do? Must you eat a special diet so you don't get sick?



It's hard for us butterflies too, so I am writing to ask you for HELP and we have a few suggestions:



- Please plant a variety of *plants that are native to Alberta*. These are our favourite foods - they are very nutritious and help us to stay very strong. Some of my butterfly friends rely on only one kind of native plant to keep them healthy.
- Please *don't spray your yard with chemicals* to get rid of weeds and bugs as this is poisonous to us too.
- Is there a *wild area* in your yard? Please leave us a wild space so we can play hide-n-seek in old leaves and sticks and logs.
- In the fall and early spring, please *leave the stems on your plants* because we lay eggs in those stems. They make perfect 'hotels' and keep us warm until we are ready to hatch.
- *At night, only use a little nightlight*. Big bright lights interfere with our ability to find food and to fly well. Moths, my nighttime friends, need darkness with visible starlight to do their special work.





Gossamers

- Save water - both inside your house (taking short showers and turning off the tap when brushing your teeth) - and outside (collecting rain water for your garden and plants).

- Ask your friends to help. When your friends and neighbours help us too, we'll have connected **butterfly highways** to fly along which help us 'Leps' to get the food we need.

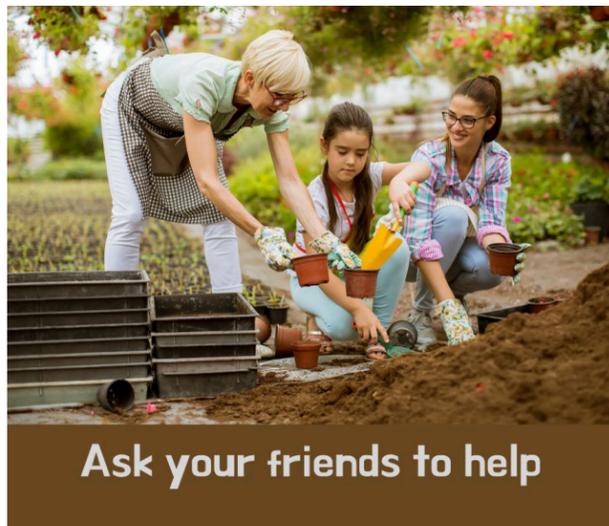
Thank you for helping! Us butterflies will be stronger and more able to help your families and friends by pollinating their farm crops, helping the soil to be healthier - and you'll find more of us to play with you each summer.

See you soon!

Your friend,

*Vanessa* (aka Red Admiral)

To find out more on butterflies and how to support them visit [the Butterflyway Rangers program](#) with the David Suzuki Foundation or reach out [to our local representative - Janet Markwan at janmarkwan@aol.com](mailto:janmarkwan@aol.com)



Ask your friends to help



At night, only use a little nightlight



Swallowtails



Pesticide



Save water

# Living Wild Smart Important Reminders

This summer, let's make our homes boring to wildlife.

Bragg Creek residents constantly report wildlife sightings of bears, cougars and other area animals on or near their properties. Although we are extremely lucky to share this beautiful land with such amazing wild animals, this privilege comes with an important responsibility – that of reducing the risk of harm to both ourselves and these animals. Wildlife will always seek easy access to food. When they do, they often pay with their lives - being killed for being seen as threats to humans. Let's make our homes and property boring to them and encourage them to thrive in nature.

## PLEASE

- Keep all garbage and kitchen scraps securely inside
- Please don't feed wildlife
- Keep pets under control at all times.
- Don't approach wildlife – give them space
- Avoid the use of chemicals in your garden and yard
- Build wildlife-friendly fencing and leave openings on your property for wildlife such as does and fawns to move through freely





# News From BCW

## BRAGG CREEK WILD'S 2024 BOARD MEMBERS

On May 22nd, the Bragg Creek Wild membership held their 2nd Annual General Meeting. The majority of the board members were enthusiastic in continuing on to achieve the goals of the organization. In addition, BC Wild is excited to welcome added expertise and new perspectives with two new directors joining the Board.

The 2024 Board of Directors for Bragg Creek Wild are: Shannon Bailey, Mckenzie Latham, Lucy Curtis, Rosalind Greenwood, Terrill Gordon, Brian Wilson and Renée Delorme.

Executive positions will be assigned at the next board meeting in June.

BC Wild wishes to express our gratitude to both Gord McDonald and Mike Decore who are stepping down from the Board in 2024. Contributions made through your valuable advice and hands-on work efforts have helped to make Bragg Creek Wild what it is today.

Guest Speaker  
**Guy Greenaway**



**Bragg Creek's Natural Features**

Unlocking the Mystery: What Are They?  
Discover Their Significance: Why Do They Matter?  
The art of care: How Can We Nurture Them?

October 23, 2024



## Save the Dates Three Amazing Community Events

Guest Speaker:  
**Brian Keating**



**Discover the Wonders of the Alberta Foothills Wildlife!**

Join us for an exciting evening as Brian invites you to celebrate our wild neighbours and their amazing contributions to our beautiful area!

March 14, 2025



Embark on an adventure of discovery at our **Wild Smart event!**



Whether you're a seasoned nature enthusiast or just starting your journey, the Wild Smart Event offers valuable opportunities to expand your knowledge and deepen your connection to the natural world.

Spring, 2025

# THANK YOU!

## BRAGG CREEK WILD VOLUNTEERS

Over the past year, several enthusiastic volunteers came forward to offer their time and energy into inspiring work being done by BC Wild. Talent, expertise and commitment abound, and the organization is increasingly being seen as a resource to reach out to and work with.

BC Wild in 2024 will further strengthen internal operations and increase capacity to build on the work started last year - by focussing on these priority issues: pursuing a Bragg Creek Garbage Bylaw, getting additional wildlife access points over the Elbow River berm, engage in the new Bragg Creek Area Structure Plan and in the planned clear-cutting project by West Fraser in West Bragg Creek. We will also inform and help prevent vehicle-wildlife collisions, raise animal food attractant issues and ensure our safe co-existence in this special region we share with our amazing wildlife neighbours.

Lastly, and importantly, we look forward to collaborating with Banded Peak School on wildlife initiatives and in engaging the local community with three upcoming community events.



## Want to be part of the action?

We'd love to have you!

Become a member - Engage in our social media  
- Volunteer -



[www.braggcreekwild.ca](http://www.braggcreekwild.ca)  
[braggcreekwild@gmail.com](mailto:braggcreekwild@gmail.com)

