

Fall Newsletter



It's that time of year again...



Fall is here, and around now the deer are getting busy working on the next generation! Have you seen some “Rutting Season” signs around recently? Yes, it’s that time of year again, when the white-tail deer and then - a bit later - the mule deer go into rut. The shorter days trigger this “photo-period”. The bucks now have muscular thick necks and fully developed antlers, ready to spar and fight for the opportunity to mate with a doe in oestrus. They’ll lose their antlers later in the winter after the rut, when their testosterone levels drop significantly. Often we see a single doe along the road at this time, and that could mean that there are several bucks in pursuit. Bucks may chase off fawns, too, which means they could be confused without their mum.

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It's rutting season again!

For males it's a time when every ounce of focus is on successfully fighting for dominance and chasing potential mates. In fact, they often lose a lot of body weight as a result of this singular focus – fasting and fighting make them vulnerable. That means their attention isn't on the dangers of the roads running through their territory. For us around Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows this means being alert on all local roads. Deer may be drawn to roadways by salt on roads and vegetation in ditches, or they may be in mid-chase, as they steer a doe to a secluded place to mate.

November's the most dangerous month in Alberta for wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs), with approximately 80% of those involving deer. On average the number of WVCs is more than double that of any other month in the year, according to the AMA. Costs in insurance payouts can be huge for vehicle damage, and there are often personal injuries as well. The highest numbers occur around the time the clocks change (Nov 6th this year).

As always, play it safe when driving in deer country. Be particularly aware at dawn and dusk– the danger factor increases overwhelmingly at these times of day. Look out for movement in the shadows in day time, too, and look out for spots of light (eyes) at night.

- Don't speed – especially on slick roads it's hard to slow down or stop quickly enough if a deer appears on the road ahead of you.
- Use high beams when possible – while still respecting other drivers.
- Keep your eyes on the roadside as well as the road ahead. Deer may be browsing in the ditch. They may also not be alone.
- If you encounter a deer on the road, brake gently. Don't swerve – you don't want a collision with oncoming traffic.
- If a deer is standing in the middle of the road, don't use your horn or lights – instead, you could steer very slowly towards the animal's rear end and that may encourage it to continue in the direction it was headed. Or you could wait.

Let's keep ourselves and our neighbours (human and otherwise) safe this fall. If you see an injured deer (or other wildlife) you can report it to AIWC: 403 946 2361.

Living with our Bear Neighbours



In late August, a black bear sow was euthanized in Bragg Creek, orphaning three cubs. Unfortunately, she'd become habituated to humans and human waste/food. This was upsetting and frustrating for all involved, and caused a lot of sadness in the community. Bragg Creek Wild members immediately contacted experts and the authorities after the incident, and have been very active in trying to ensure the safety of the three small cubs.

Bragg Creek Wild believes there's much we can do to prevent this happening in future, and promote co-existence with bears. We collaborated with Cochrane Ecological Institute to organise a public meeting at Bragg Creek Provincial Park on 7th September, where community members came together to hear experts speak on what we can do immediately and more long-term. Speakers included local conservation biologist Lisa Dahlseide, bear expert Dr. Sarah Elmeligi, BCW's own Dave Klepacki and two speakers from the U of C's biology department - Dr. Peter Neuhaus and Dr. Kathreen Ruckstuhl. In attendance were Miranda Rosin MLA and Kevin Hanson, RockyView County councillor, as well members of the media. The majority of people at the meeting expressed deep concern and wanted to better understand the policies and protocols that led to the euthanization, as well as regarding cub rehabilitation. Experts at the meeting agreed writing to AEP.Minister@gov.ab.ca is an effective way to take action.

As part of our mission to preserve our wildlife neighbours and their homes, and as a result of this incident, we're in favour of the following initiatives:

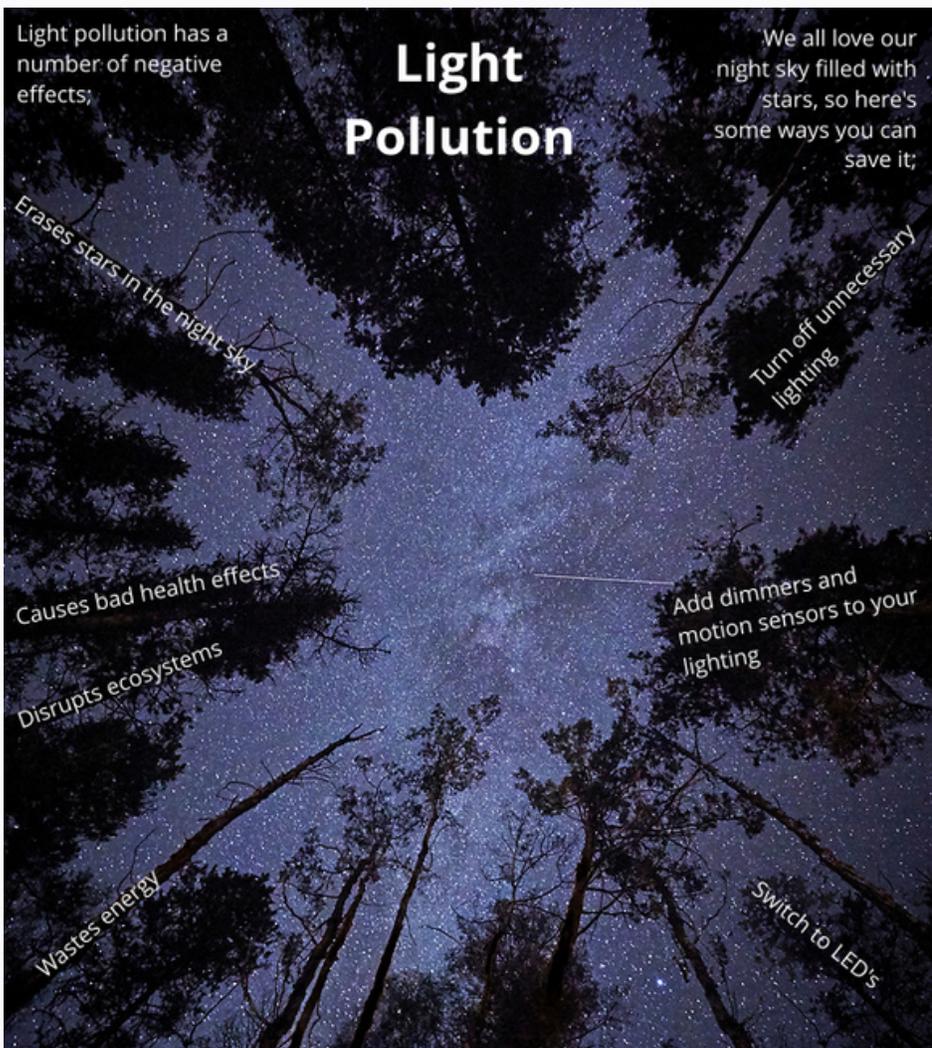
1. A WildSmart education initiative along the lines of Bow Valley WildSmart – BCW member Emma Barry has already been trained to be an educator in the Wildlife Ambassador programme.
2. Rockyview County municipal bylaws penalizing residents and businesses maintaining unprotected food attractants such as garbage and compost, and including bird feeders in spring and fall. We're studying other jurisdictions similar to Bragg Creek, like Canmore and Redwood Meadows, with established animal and waste protection bylaws.
3. Humanely capturing and rehabilitating orphan black bear and grizzly bear cubs in animal care institutes like the Cochrane Ecological Centre and the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation. We urge Alberta and Environment and Parks and Alberta Fish and Wildlife to design protocols that set rehabilitation as a priority over euthanasia.
4. Changing AEP protocols for bear/human interaction to include hazing strategies such as bear spray, air horns, etc. to disengage bears from conflict incidents before fatal strategies are considered.
5. Continuing our work to limit habituation by regularly cleaning up at the Provincial Park to limit harm to bears living in that part of the community, with a view to extending to other parts of the community.

Fall reminders: Leave the Leaves! Turn down the lights!

After our amazing extended fall display of colour, our deciduous trees have mostly dropped their leaves now. The most important thing we can do with them now is leave them (as long as they aren't in gutters and eavestroughs and drains). They provide shelter and protection for pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths that don't migrate. Many beneficial organisms stand a better chance of surviving the winter cold if we leave the leaves where they can make use of them.

As the nights draw in, and particularly as the clocks change, our world gets darker around this time of year. We're lucky enough to get amazing starry evenings and nights, with breathtaking sights of the Milky Way (and the Starlink satellites, too, if we're honest...)

Many of our wildlife neighbours are crepuscular or nocturnal and rely on darkness for protection, or to hunt for their prey. Artificial light has a disruptive effect on ecosystems by upsetting the balance of light and dark that many species rely on. Those impacted can include many birds, species that are trying to hibernate such as bats, wolves, deer and others that we live side by side with here. Take care to limit the amount of artificial illumination by shining lights with purpose - and not when we don't need them.



Fantastic poster was created by one of the students at Banded Peak School last year as part of the science project collaboration with Bragg Creek Wild.

www.bpeak.rockyview.ab.ca

There are some great reminders here of what we can do to limit light pollution.

The Wild Questionnaire

PATRICIA JOHANSEN - Local landscape watercolour artist



1. What's your connection with this area? What's important to you about this place?

I live about 10 mins from the hamlet of Bragg Creek. Being close to the mountains, access to all the hiking trails, camping areas and a quieter life style.

2. Can you give us three words you think describe the Bragg Creek/Redwood Meadows area?

Beautiful trees, fauna & view of the mountains

3. Share a treasured memory of being out in nature around here.

A female deer with triplets bathing in our pond

4. What's your favourite view / body of water/ high place in the area?

Fullerton Loop, the view of the west is breathtaking

5. If you have free time in the area, what's your favourite thing to do?

Painting! Nature has so much to offer anytime of the year

6. Have you ever had a 'close call' wildlife encounter? Where?

Moose Mountain hiking trail, came across a black bear, she stood up looked at us, then continued eating as we slowly carried on.

7. If you could come back as a local wild animal, what would you be?

A bird, to view anything from the sky

8. What's your favourite season in Kananaskis?

Winter, hiking & skiing

9. Pick one: fat bike/x-country skis/snowshoes/hiking/cocoa by the fire.

Hiking

10. What was a really cool thing you saw around here recently?

Top of Prairie Mountain, an incredible view

11. Can you tell us what's good to read about nature in the area?

The local newspaper: High Country News

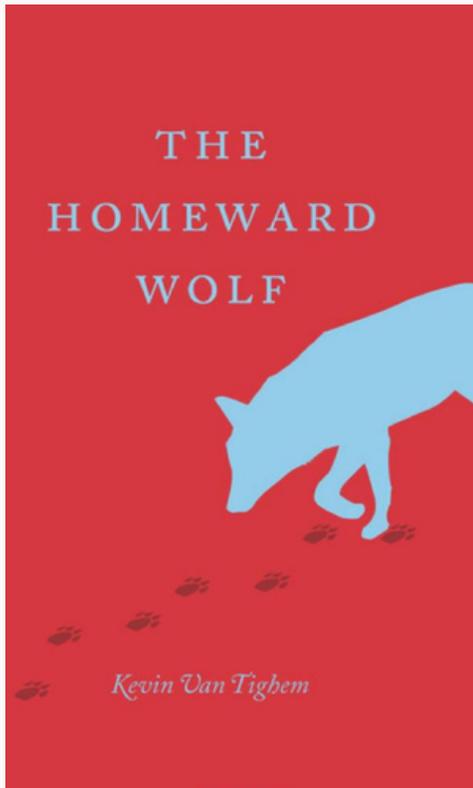
12. Is there one place you'd recommend to visitors to the area?

West Bragg Creek Trails, offers so many trails in both summer and winter. Well maintained.

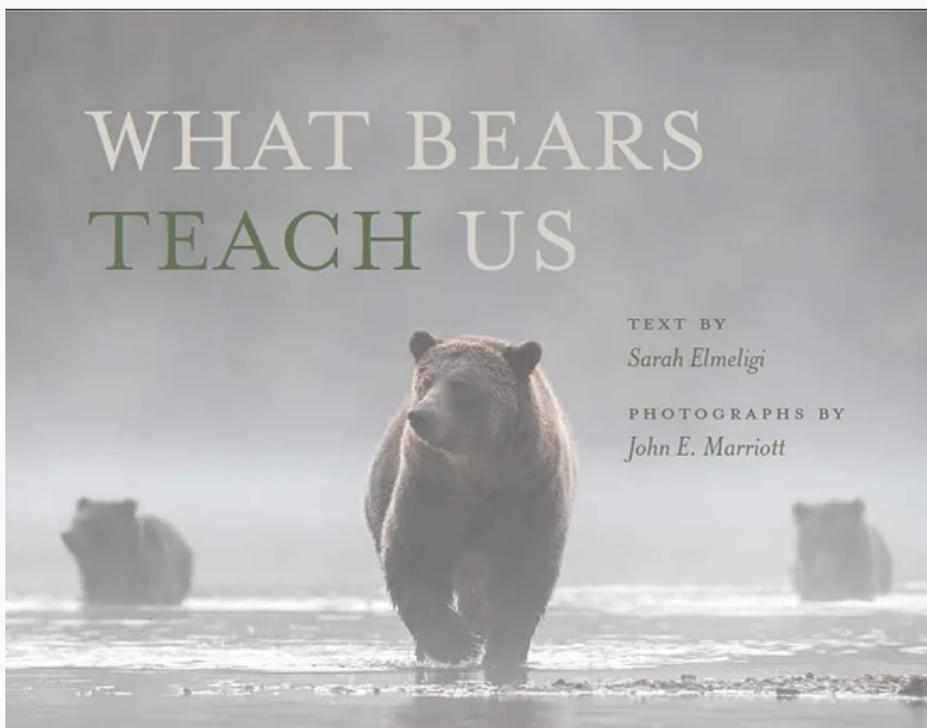


Fall Reading

BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY BCW MEMBERS



Given recent sightings and 'hearings' of wolves in West Bragg Creek, this would be a very interesting read - highly recommended on the Bragg Creek/Redwood Meadows FB page by a local resident.



A beautiful book written by one of the expert speakers at our 7th September community information sharing meeting in the Provincial Park. The more we know, the better we can plan to be good neighbours. The pictures in this book are spectacular, too.



Resources



Over the summer we've experienced a wonderful increase in reported sightings registered on our wildlife mapping form. Thank you to everyone who has contribute to this project: it will help us to identify and maintain the integrity of wildlife habitat and corridors in the area. Here is the QR code to follow



Handy Numbers

- Kananaskis Enforcement 403-591-7755 ext. 4 *littering, illegal fire pits Kananaskis, including Bragg Creek PP
- Fish and Wildlife 403-932-2388 *report a dead animal (not for random live sightings)
- Emergency 911 *illegal fires
- Kananaskis Maintenance <http://tinyurl.com/Kananaskis-Contact-U> *use the form for all other issues

PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH INDIVIDUALS OR WILDLIFE YOURSELF



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