

Winter Newsletter



Do you know what these two places have in common?



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Bragg Creek and COP15

COP15 - what's it got to do with us?

by Contributor and BCW board member Dave Klepacki



Our local biodiversity - a precious resource in need of our care and protection

News reports before the holidays about the United Nations COP15* in Montreal, which finished on 19th December, announced that the 195 member nations had agreed to protect and restore at least 30% of Earth's land and water by 2030.



This might have sounded like some distant bureaucratic decision that doesn't affect us here.

But it isn't. It's important to all of us. Protecting biodiversity means ensuring clean water, fresh air, and healthy soils - among other things - all essential to sustain us humans, through farming and other services.

Globally, we're seeing habitat loss and elimination of animals and microbes that maintain these natural systems, and biodiversity is being eroded - even here in our Foothills. In the last 30 years, for instance, water quality degradation in the Elbow River has been clearly measured.



Last summer the deaths of mama bears due to human activity in the Redwood Meadows/Bragg Creek area, leaving 5 orphan cubs, upset many local residents. We had discussions with a number of well-known biologists and bear experts looking at how we can limit future wildlife human conflict: biologist Dr. Brad Stelfox, Brett Boukall (Senior Wildlife Biologist with the Government of Alberta) and bear expert Dr. Sarah Elmeligi.



And some of these discussions led to a surprising revelation:

Bragg Creek and COP15 (cont'd)



We heard that wildlife experts consider our area to be at a unique juncture in its development history. We have a surprisingly intact functioning ecosystem here, considering we live so close to 1,500,000+ people in the greater Calgary area. In fact, Dr Stelfox maintains that the only area in the world with more wildlife diversity near such a large human population is Nairobi National Park in Kenya, near the 4.4 million people of Nairobi city.**



This is exciting news, meaning we can choose a future where we protect and sustain our wildlife and the habitat/movement corridors they need ...or follow the path of Canmore, Fernie, Cochrane, Golden and Revelstoke with the resulting loss of wildlife, habitat, and local environment they've incurred.

Identifying critical habitat and movement corridors is a good first step towards preserving our wild neighbours. BCW's mapping work aims to support our vision of a future that works to preserve all this.

We live in this area because we love it, and because we know it's special – and it turns out it's even more special than we thought! In our view, the work done at COP 15 is not a distant gaggle of bureaucrats, NGOs and media discussing something our grandchildren will have to deal with. Careful planning can take account of what we've been told by scientists both local and international, so that we're not the last generation to see grizzlies, cougars and moose in our area, and to drink from a pure Elbow River and its tributaries. That would be very sad indeed.



A version of this report by Dave Klepacki appears in February editions of the High Country News/Chatter in the Woods.

We're very grateful for all reports of sightings (both live and deceased) of wildlife. Please continue to contribute to this important project. Thank you - your reports will help to make a difference!

* The United Nations Montreal 15th Convention of Parties on Biodiversity
** Dr Brad Stelfox (UofA Adjunct Professor) Pers Comm 2022



some buzz words.....

AN ECOSYSTEM

is a geographic area where plants, animals, and other organisms, as well as weather and landscape, work together to form a bubble of life.* In a healthy ecosystem, a wide variety of animals, plants, insects and micro-organisms are able to co-exist, supporting and interacting with each other. An example is the foothills ecosystem we have here.

HABITAT

is the landscape wildlife (and plants) need to survive, where they can find food, shelter, where they can mate and where they can give birth. Here in this area we have the right kind of landscape for many wild neighbours to meet those needs. Here we share the landscape with bears, moose, fox, deer, cougars, coyotes, beavers, bats, crows, owls and more.

DEGRADED HABITAT

may actually look as though it's functioning well, but a range of problems can render it incapable of supporting native wildlife. This might be because of invasive species (like certain garden plants), pollution, some types of development, or activities on the landscape that make wildlife move out of the area. This can lead to the disappearance of native wildlife from an area, as has happened over the years with some local elk herds.

CORRIDORS

Wildlife need to move from place to place to meet their different needs, so the pathways they use to move between locations are extremely important. Moose prefer our willow-rich wetlands, deer prefer the aspen parkland around some of our homes, and bears frequent the edges of the spruce and pine forest etc. For food, we know coyotes prefer to predate on mice and snowshoe hare, cougars prefer to feed on deer, and wolves and grizzlies prefer young and sick moose and elk - and these are found in different habitats. The animals need to move between where they prefer to live, and where they have to go to find prey.

FRAGMENTATION

happens when there's a flood, a fire, construction, road building etc. which stops the animals from moving between the locations that support their needs. When there's a route used by wildlife to move through or across the barrier, this is known as a 'corridor'. Road signs in some mountain parks alert drivers to these. Bragg Creek is home to significant wildlife corridors, such as the route across the Elbow from Two Pine to the Provincial Park area.

PROTECTION

of the ecosystem and of wildlife habitat starts with knowledge of what is there, and what the local wildlife needs. Our mapping project is working towards this. We're working to locate the preferred habitats and corridors of our local wild neighbours. Without this knowledge, we can't begin to make informed decisions about the best ways forward.

*<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/ecosystem>

The Wild Questionnaire

SHERRI OLSEN

- Local resident, realtor, and Bragg Creek and Area Chamber of Commerce President



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

After bringing my beloved old dog every Sunday for a walk in West Bragg I decided he should see out his days surrounded in nature. I lucked out and bought a cool old cabin so "Bear" my dog had the best last few years. Bragg warms my heart for so many reasons. This is one of them.

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

Eclectic, bountiful, healing

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

The moment my Swedish rental guest looked up into the night sky and was visibly moved by seeing the stars. That was an amazing moment and his face said it all.

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

Ha, a view of Two Pine from my bathroom! :)

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

Nature walks with my dog then a patio lunch with friends.

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

A bear outside my fence, happily viewed from inside my cabin. Cougar screams at night behind.

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

I'd love to fly like a bird!

8. What's your favourite season in Kananaskis?

Fall is so pretty, but I love summer warmth.

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

Hiking. My goal this year is to try something 'faster' so I can see more beauty. I long to venture out further and farther.

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

Two teenage Moose trotting along - so majestic!!

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

Any place without taking your phone. Stop, look, listen. Breathe. The silence and beauty will speak to you from any place here. But ok, walking along the river to see the series of Beaver dams by Elbow Falls.



Bragg Creek Wild has a board of Directors

Bragg Creek Wild became incorporated as a Society in September of 2022. Following that, a board of directors was nominated in December, and the first official board meeting was held in January. Our directors bring diverse skills, expertise, and connections to our community. Together, we hope to build relationships with organizations and individuals to encourage the creation of “a safe and sustainable environment where wildlife and humans co-exist in the Bragg Creek area.”

Our vision

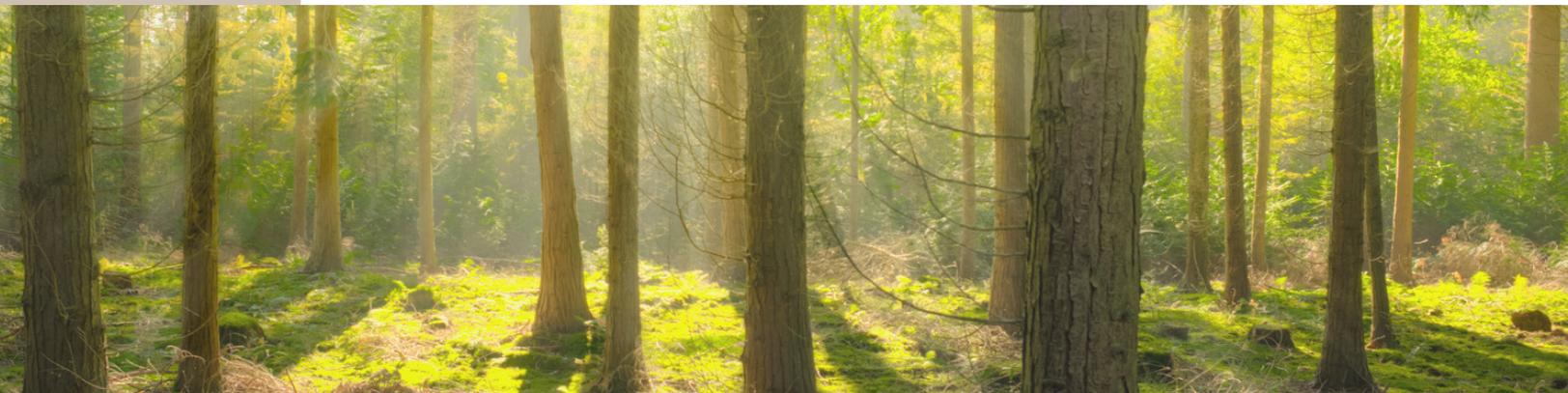
will be realized through advocacy, awareness work as well as the implementation of solution-based activities. In particular our goals are to protect wildlife and their habitats by:

- Preserving connectivity;
- Promoting safe wildlife routes; and
- Educating the public to reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

Setting Priorities

Our next step as a board is to set priorities on the many challenges our wild neighbours (and humans) experience, such as:

- wildlife feeding and garbage management;
- road safety;
- safe wildlife ramps off the berm to the river
- and the protection of a rare orchid microcosm on public land in the hamlet next to the river.



Our News (cont'd)

There is no doubt other issues will surface and with your help we look forward to addressing them. And so while we will connect on an ongoing basis via social media, email lists, newsletters, articles, public meetings and more, we encourage you to connect with us and share any concerns, ideas, comments, observations you may have and - if you have a bit of time - to volunteer.

How to reach us

This can be done on our Facebook pages, by emailing braggcreekwild@gmail.com or calling 403-200-9961. After all, Bragg Creek Wild is all of us.

Membership

On that note, we are calling everyone who believes in BCW's mission and vision to sign up and become a member of the Society. Membership is essential to a not-for-profit Society as it shows relevance and needs. Please visit our website and social media for more information and to sign up for a free membership.

Yours truly,

Bragg Creek Wild Board of Directors

Shannon Bailey Director and Secretary
Liz Breakey Director
Joe Crawford Director
Mike Decore Director and Vice President
Renée Delorme Director and President
Dave Klepacki Director and Chairperson
Gord McDonald Director and Treasurer



WINTER REMINDER: PLEASE DON'T FEED THE DEER (OR ANY OF THE WILDLIFE!)

While it may seem to be a kindness at this bitter and barren time of year, feeding the deer can lead to more harm than good. As they're native to this habitat, the deer around Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows are naturally adapted to surviving our winters. They have fat deposits built up through the summer and fall to see them through the winter. They naturally behave through winter in ways that conserve energy and keep them relatively safe from predators. If there are non-wild food sources available, they will cease to be wild and will become more dependent on humans. This can cause a range of associated problems, including deer congregating on or near roads, causing potential danger to both themselves and us. It can also mean they are all congregating where they are easier for predators to find!

Here's a useful website if you want to know more about this:

<https://extension.unh.edu/resource/more-harm-good-why-you-shouldnt-feed-deer>

DROP YOUR FOOD WASTE IN BRAGG CREEK

Following the installation of the compost facility at Redwood Meadows, there's now a pilot project food waste station at the Bragg Creek Transfer Site. This is great news for those wishing to dispose of food waste in ways that don't attract and endanger local wildlife.

Follow this link to find out more:

<https://www.rockyview.ca/bragg-creek-transfer-site>



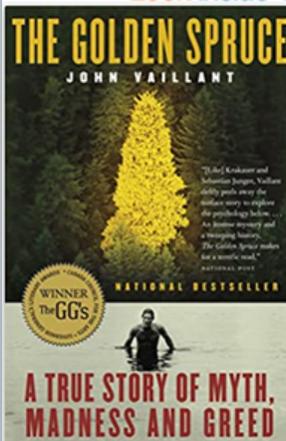
AND LAST BUT DEFINITELY NOT LEAST.....

Thank you to our neighbours at Bragg Creek Distillery for this generous support!



Winter Reading and Viewing

BOOKS, ARTICLES, DOCUMENTARIES ETC. RECOMMENDED BY BCW MEMBERS



An old favourite: not specifically Alberta, but a fascinating account of the history of the logging industry, as well as the loss of a very special tree.



In the light of a number of recent raccoon sightings in the area, here's an interesting take on our relationship with our local scavengers etc. Published on the Weather Network website in December.

<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/en/news/nature/animals/from-foe-to-friend-how-to-change-perceptions-of-nuisance-wildlife>



You might like to read more about other projects and initiatives being supported by YtoY (Yellowstone to Yukon), who are one of our sponsors.

<https://y2y.net/work/hot-projects/>



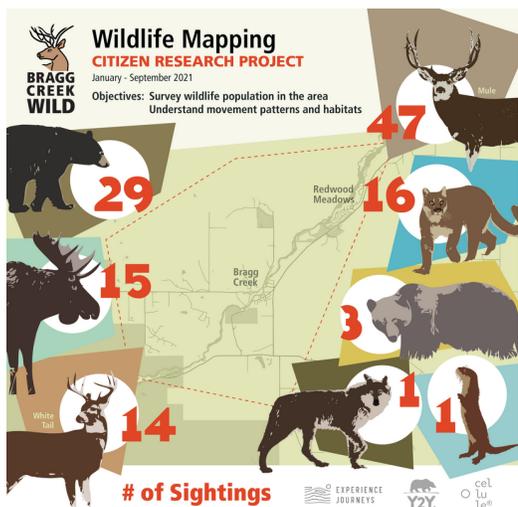
The Canadian Mountain Podcast | S2:EP2
Human-Wildlife Coexistence



This archive edition of the Canadian Mountain Podcast from a couple of years ago covers local citizen science initiatives - which is just what we've been doing with our wildlife mapping.

www.canadianmountainnetwork.ca/podcast

Resources



Please continue to submit your sightings. In the light of what we know about the special nature of this area, all sightings are useful in building a clear picture of what's going on with our local wildlife, and crucial for our efforts to maintain this beautiful place as a healthy, diverse habitat.

Thank you.



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-Us> *use the form for all other issues

PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH INDIVIDUALS OR WILDLIFE YOURSELF



CONNECT PARTICIPATE VOLUNTEER

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