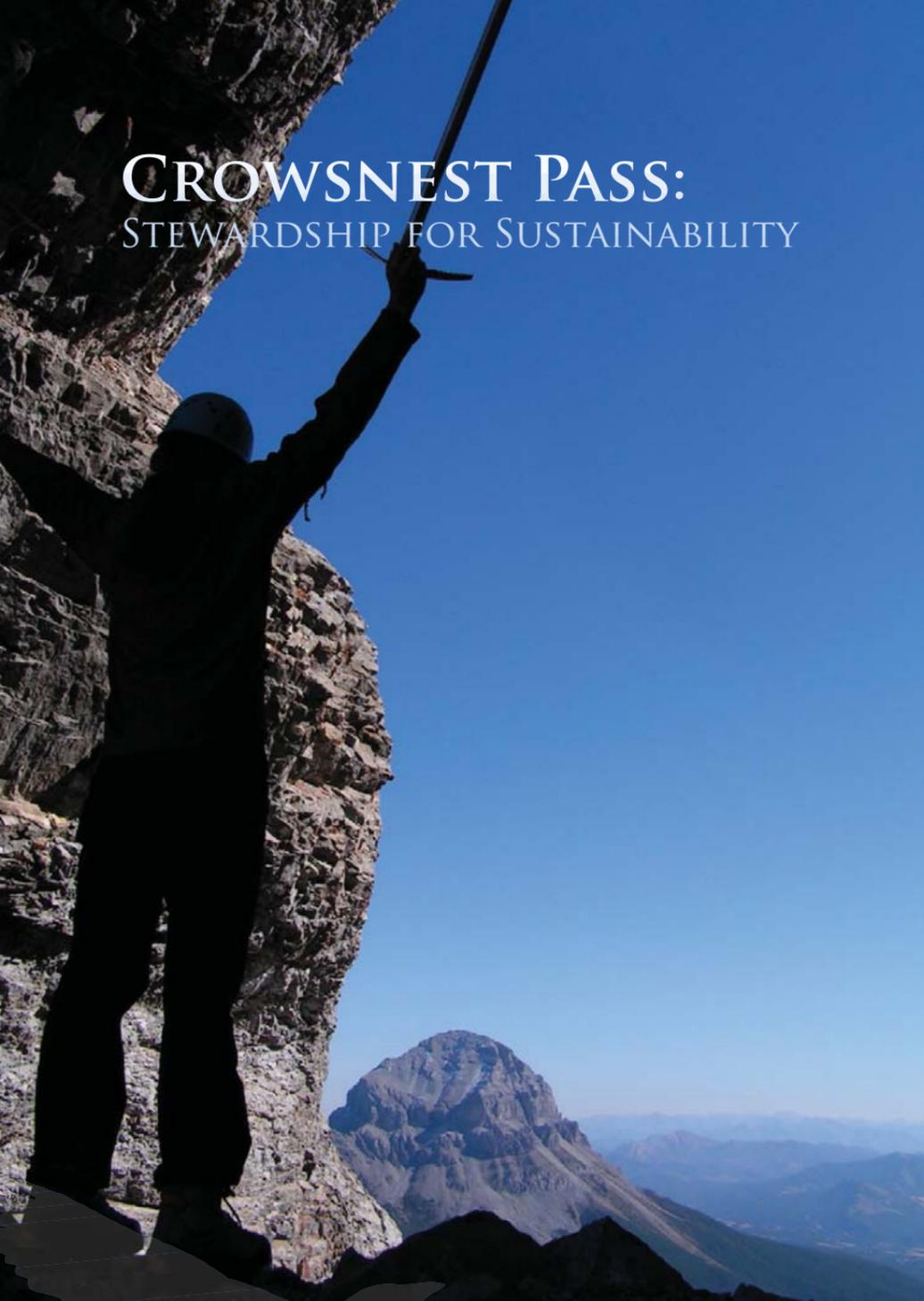


CROWSNEST PASS: STEWARDSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY



This Crowsnest Conservation Society project is made possible through grants from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

PHOTO: JEFF SMITH

WELCOME TO CROWSNEST PASS

Many people call Crowsnest Pass home: those who have lived in this diverse mountain community their entire lives and continue to build roots for their families and those who have recently discovered the draw of this unique landscape.

Long-time residents and newcomers enjoy living in a community where the cultural history is as celebrated as the mountain views. In the early days coal mining was the foundation on which a resilient community grew. Today mining jobs have moved west, and while many locals now commute to work, they continue to live in Crowsnest Pass—a testament to the appeal of the area. People are relocating to the mountains for a change of lifestyle, and an economy based on resource extraction is shifting to one tied to tourism and outdoor recreation.

CROWSNEST

HOME TO MANY

One challenge of the changing economy is the effect of a growing urban community on a wilderness setting. Crowsnest Conservation Society hosted a number of public workshops to discuss issues on all of our minds—wildlife preservation, transportation and development. Participants were united in their commitment to preserving the aesthetic, ecological and cultural character of the place we all call home. This brochure highlights ideas shared at the workshops and what residents and visitors can do to further this common goal.

A HOME TO MANY

In addition to the diverse human population of the Pass, other inhabitants discovered the value of living here long before we did. Golden eagles and red-tailed hawks soar across the skies; black bears, grizzly bears, cougars and wolves meander through the mountains; bighorn sheep and mountain goats scale the ridgelines; deer, moose and elk roam the forests; and several species of fish swim in the lakes, streams and rivers. Preserving their habitat and presence is a primary concern of human residents of the Pass.

crowsnest

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Many residents enjoy the presence of wildlife within the urban community—deer grazing in backyards and moose strolling down main street. Food deliberately or unwittingly provided by their human neighbours entices them, compromising the safety of both animals and community residents. Deer and moose that wander into town to feed on attractants can be followed by predators such as cougars.

Bears are perhaps the most high profile “problem diners,” making a smorgasbord of garbage, kitchen compost, fruit trees and the contents of bird feeders. They are habitual and will return if rewarded for their efforts. A bear’s sense of smell is seven times keener than that of a bloodhound: a kitchen compost pile may not smell like much to the average person, but to a bear, it’s an invitation.

PROBLEM BEARS AREN’T BORN—THEY’RE MADE: IF A BEAR IS HANGING AROUND, CHANCES ARE SOMETHING ON YOUR PROPERTY IS ATTRACTING IT.





BEARSMART is a provincial program for reducing human-bear encounters. Components include the Karelian bear dog wildlife aversion training and education program and a committee of local citizens who promote BearSmart practices.

What does it mean to be BearSmart?

- Store garbage in a bear-proof container and put it out only on the morning of pick-up.
- Advocate for a community-wide BearSmart waste management program.
- Keep property free of attractants (fruits/berries, kitchen compost, dirty barbecues, pet food).
- Use bird feeders only between October 31-April 1.
- Report wildlife encounters to Fish and Wildlife officers whenever public safety is a concern.
- Encourage our neighbours to follow BearSmart practices.

LIVING WITH BEARS a community education and outreach project initiated by Crowsnest Conservation, supports the local BearSmart mandate and is committed to the coexistence of people and wildlife.

- UnBearAble Bins (bear-proof waste containers) are available for loan or purchase to residents experiencing problems with bears.
- The Community Apple Network aims to reduce fallen fruit attractants for bears and other wildlife while building friendships and bringing neighbourhoods closer together through an old fashioned apple exchange!

The goal of BearSmart and Living with Bears is to be an advocate for all wildlife. Applying BearSmart strategies to our home benefits us and our human and animal neighbours.

IMPORTANT WILDLIFE CORRIDORS IN THE PASS

Preserving wildlife populations goes beyond safeguarding habitats. Just as we travel to work, run errands and go on holidays, animals move in order to find den sites, mate and adjust to seasonal change. Preserving corridors, or linkage zones, ensures that wildlife in the area have sufficient space to travel and access the benefits of their home range.

Three main corridors in the Crowsnest Pass are critical for wildlife passage.

- **The West Corridor** is located on the western edge of the municipality between Coleman and Sentinel. Research shows this passage is essential to the viability of wildlife in this area.
- **The Centre Corridor** is located between Coleman and Blairmore. What was once a frequent conduit for carnivore movement is becoming compromised due to increased traffic and human activity.
- **The East Corridor** is located between the eastern edge of the Frank Slide and Burmis. Currently the least vulnerable of the three corridors, the East Corridor facilitates movement of cougars, grizzlies, badgers, bobcats and wolves.



WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Factors that increase the vulnerability of the corridors:

- Highway 3 and the railroad, running east and west, fracture various channels for north-south wildlife movement.
- In sensitive areas, manmade barriers such as buildings and fences further restrict the movement of wildlife and can result in population decline due to isolation.



PHOTO: BOB PIŠKO



PHOTO: JEFF SMITH



PHOTO: RAYMOND TOAL

Highway 3 and the railroad

Increased traffic on Highway 3 and the railroad hinders wildlife movement. Animals are struck and killed by vehicles on the highway. Wildlife feeding on grain and other attractants on the rail lines are killed by passing trains. Their carcasses attract scavengers that are vulnerable to the same fate.

Traffic on Highway 3 also has a significant human cost:

- Vehicle collisions kill an average of 2.2 animals per kilometre each year throughout the Crowsnest Pass at an estimated cost of \$750,000 per year.
- On average nearly 500 Albertans per year suffer minor to fatal injuries as the result of animal-vehicle collisions.



What can we do?

- Participate in programs such as Road Watch that work to protect both humans and animals from collisions. Road Watch encourages residents to visit www.rockies.ca/roadwatch to report wildlife sightings along Highway 3.
- Canadian Pacific Railway has committed twenty million dollars to repairing leaky cars that spill grain and other attractants. Encourage CPR to continue addressing train-wildlife strike issues.

AVOID ANIMAL-VEHICLE COLLISIONS:

- PAY ATTENTION TO ALL WILDLIFE WARNING SIGNS.
- DRIVE AT AN APPROPRIATE SPEED.
- REDUCE SPEED AT NIGHT, ESPECIALLY ON UNFAMILIAR RURAL ROADS THAT ARE NEAR WATER OR LINED WITH TREES.
- SCAN THE ROAD AND DITCHES AHEAD FOR ANIMALS.
- BECOME FAMILIAR WITH ANIMAL-VEHICLE COLLISION "HOT SPOTS" BY CHECKING ROAD WATCH.

DEVELOPMENT WITH A CONSERVATION FOCUS

Balancing conservation values with the pressures of development on our growing urban community is key. A long-term vision is essential to ensure responsible development guided by sustainable environmental practices. Identifying and maintaining wildlife habitats, preserving wild spaces and corridors, and protecting natural waterways are necessary components of a strategic plan to preserve the ecological integrity of the Crowsnest Pass.

CONSERVATION FOCUS



CROWSNEST PASS
IS LOCATED AT THE
TOP OF THE OLDMAN
RIVER WATERSHED.
DEVELOPMENT AND
RECREATION ALONG
OUR RIVERS, CREEKS,
LAKES AND WETLANDS
IMPACTS WILDLIFE
AND COMMUNITIES
DOWNSTREAM.

In creating our own vision we can learn from other mountain communities whose experience has yielded positive results:

Higher density means lower impact

Higher density development adjacent to existing infrastructure in existing communities limits the overall footprint on the land base and benefits both human and animal inhabitants:

- Preserves wildlife habitats and corridors
- Decreases the tax burden with more efficient use of community services
- Reduces energy consumption
- Enhances sense of community

Use the past to build the future

Development on previously disturbed land offers benefits:

- Saves undeveloped land from encroachment and degradation
- Eliminates health and safety hazards
- Removes eyesores
- Brings new investment into the community
- Increases the productivity of the land
- Raises property values

Plan for green space

Natural open spaces that enhance the landscape and provide a habitat for animals benefit the community:

- Help preserve natural ecosystems and keep existing wildlife corridors intact
- Reduce soil erosion; dense cover of plants and mulch holds soil in place, keeping sediment out of lakes and streams
- Protect natural water flow
- Enhance quality of life for humans and animals



CONNECTING WITH NATURE RECREATION IN THE CROWSNEST PASS

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."

~Native American Proverb

We all practice environmental stewardship on some level: picking up a piece of litter while on a hike, pulling weeds instead of native wildflowers and reporting signs of mountain pine beetle.

Think about stewardship while pursuing one of the many recreational opportunities in the Crowsnest Pass. Whether we are paddling down the Crowsnest River, hiking up Turtle Mountain or using a pair of binoculars to follow the flight of a golden eagle, we are connecting to the natural world. A trail can connect to a mountain summit, and a river to a waterfall, but stewardship extends those connections to something deeper.



SELF-PROPELLED RECREATION: JOIN A GROWING MOVEMENT

Crowsnest Pass is on the move! Biking to work, walking to the grocery store and cross-country skiing or snowshoeing to those perfect winter getaways are all ways in which we can self-propel. Explorers of the many trails of the Crowsnest Pass are choosing to tread softly on the landscape we value, improve fitness levels and save money on transportation expenses.

CROWSNEST CONSERVATION PLANS YEAR-ROUND BIRDING EVENTS, INCLUDING FESTIVALS AND WORKSHOPS.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN EAGLE RESEARCH FOUNDATION MONITORS THE "EAGLE HIGHWAY". MORE THAN 5000 GOLDEN EAGLES, A WORLD RECORD, AND THOUSANDS OF OTHER RAPTORS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED IN A SINGLE SEASON FROM THE CREST OF THE LIVINGSTONE RANGE.

CHECK OUT THE UNIQUE NATURAL AND HERITAGE TRAILS IN THE CROWSNEST PASS.

RESPONSIBLE

RESPONSIBLE TRAIL USE

Many users take advantage of the scenic trail systems within Crowsnest Pass. We can be responsible trail users by:

- Watching out for wildlife
- Concentrating travel on existing trails to reduce the likelihood of multiple routes scarring the landscape
- Travelling in small groups to lessen impact
- Sharing trails with other users

NO IMPACT CAMPING

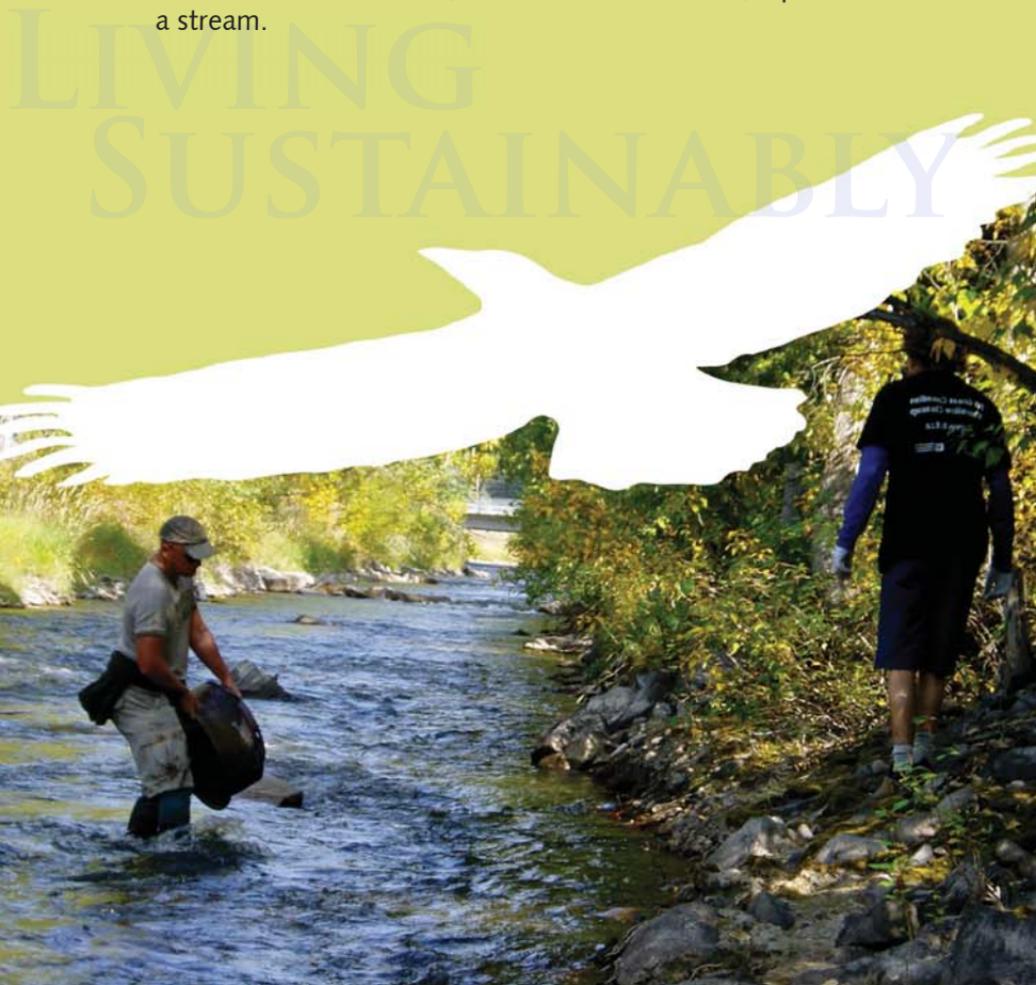
No impact camping is a mindset of conservation and respect. Some guidelines:

- Stick to campsites that appear to be frequently used, rather than impacting undisturbed habitat
- Dispose of waste properly: pack it in, pack it out!
- Go BearSmart
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces including rock, gravel, dry grass or snow

LIVING SUSTAINABLY

Crowsnest Conservation's mission is valuing and connecting people and nature for a healthy future in the Crowsnest Pass and beyond. We can play a role:

- Join stewardship organizations; for more information go to www.crowsnestconservation.ca or stop by the Crowsnest Conservation office for a visit
- Volunteer with local initiatives like the Apple Network, Earth Day Cleanup, Ed Gregor Stewardship Day, Crowsnest River Cleanup
- Use sustainable green technology in our homes and businesses—like energy efficient light bulbs, programmable thermostats and low-flow showerheads
- Compost garden and lawn waste; learn about worm composting kitchen waste
- Shop locally, use a reusable grocery bag and a to-go mug
- Make use of recycling facilities
- Enjoy community walking trails
- Respect wildlife
- Remember, “a fed animal is a dead animal.”
- Climb a frozen waterfall, take a wildflower walk, dip our feet in a stream.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Crowsnest Conservation Society is a non-profit organization based in Crowsnest Pass, Alberta, devoted to working together with community partners to ensure a healthy future for the natural environment and the people and wildlife that live in it.

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