



Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails

www.friendsoftrails.org

Box 3212, Castlegar, BC V1N 3H5 Phone (250) 365 - 5350



Volunteers repair a bench on Dove Hill...better than a day at the office!

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**Friends of Parks and Trails Annual General Meeting
Tuesday, March 29th, 7:00pm, Recreation Complex**

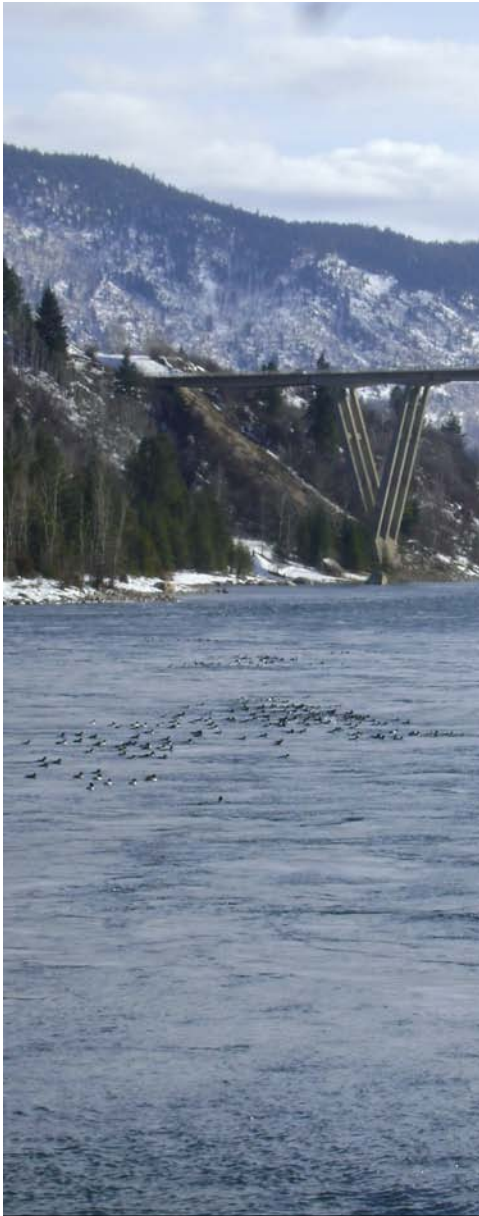
Guest presentation:

"Evaluating and Managing Impacts of Trails on Biodiversity"

Marlene Machmer, R.P.Bio., Pandion Ecological, Nelson, BC

THIS LIFE IS FOR THE BIRDS!

We all like to watch the birds. What better way to start your day than to hear or see our feathered friends out in our shrubs or trees or soaring overhead! Well, okay, sometimes the crows can be a bit much but they still have their place in the scheme of things. Bird watching (or birding) is a fascinating, ever-changing activity that increases our awareness and appreciation of natural wildlife, and it is inexpensive and easy to learn. It can be enjoyed on an individual level but can also provide an opportunity to help contribute to conservation. How?



A flock of Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes floats on the Columbia River in mid-February. Enjoy the Selkirk College Trails and you'll likely spot these common local ducks.

Twice a year, there is an opportunity for you to participate in local official bird counts during which you can identify and count the birds. These bird counts are part of a national bird count which is used, amongst other things, to track the distribution and migration habits or trends of hundreds of bird species. There is a small group of dedicated birders who participate in counts in the West Kootenay but more birders are needed to provide good coverage of our area during these counts. What kind of coverage is this?

Maybe you don't picture yourself out in the woods with binoculars and notebook, but you are interested in watching those flying beauties from your kitchen window or deck. The birds that fly into your bird feeder can contribute to the count. You can also stroll up and down local roads or alleyways checking out the backyard action. If you are more energetic, there are several local routes along rivers, estuaries and pastures that are often teeming with birds that need counting.

Your pace can be rigorous or relaxing; it can be solitary or with companions; you can be any age. It is good to have some knowledge of local bird species (each count has about 50 different species) but keen observation skills are an asset as well. You likely already know many types of birds and it is simple, with a good field guide and binoculars, to distinguish between types of a species such as Common or Barrow's Goldeneyes or types of ducks. So don't feel inadequate if you are not an expert! You can help!

There are two bird counts each year, one in June and one in December or early January. If you would like to get involved in a half-day of birding as part of the national count, please give Peter McIver a call at 365-1191. He would be very appreciative of your offer to assist and can give you some tips in the art of bird watching.

Thank you for considering yourself to be part of this important activity!

Some thoughts about trail location, creation and maintenance considering environmental issues.

For Friends of Parks and Trails by Mary Kate Woodward

Members of Friends of Parks and Trails enjoy nature. We want to continue doing so in ever-growing numbers without causing damage to the places we love. We can minimize our detrimental impact by making careful choices about where we locate trails, when and how we build them and when and how we maintain them. Ideally we would have specialists like botanists, entomologists, ornithologists, zoologists, and geologists to help determine where to locate trails and how to build and maintain them. Failing this we can search out local knowledge, users' memories and photographs to help determine where and how to accomplish this with least detrimental impact.

When trail building and maintenance are done at times that are least harmful to the wildlife in the area our detrimental impact on their lives is minimized. Before choosing where a trail will go as many varieties of wildlife using the area as possible should be known. Numerous surveys of the area are needed to identify these. No one would consider cutting down trees when birds are known to be nesting in them. Some forms of wildlife are less obvious. Plants like bitterroot are only visible for a short period of time each year. Unless it is seen in bloom it probably will not be noticed. Such plants can become rare when they and their habitat are dug up for development. Many native insects are active for short periods of time each year. Ground nesting bees are busy hovering over their holes in the ground for a few weeks, then they are not seen again until the following year. Most varieties of butterfly are in flight for only a few weeks each year. The plants they use as larval hosts must be protected. These must be identified and remain undisturbed during egg laying and the seasons when the larvae are active. Large fields of flowering plants should not be disturbed. These support our populations of wild pollinators. Some reptiles such as the rubber boa snake are shy, avoiding people as much as possible. We have seen two of these snakes on trails in our area. Amphibians too are susceptible to disturbances of their environment. Some animals migrate short distances using the same routes each year. There was recently a successful project to protect a native turtle environment from destruction.

Though there is much emphasis on the negative, trail building is sometimes beneficial to wildlife. We have seen large colonies of ground nesting bees using man-made clearings in which they burrow and nest. One of these is near the lower Skattebo Reach trail. Another part of this trail is home to both Sheridan's Hairstreak butterfly and the Immaculate Green Hairstreak butterfly. Both butterflies require a particular variety of buckwheat for their larval host. Both fly for a short period of time in the spring. Their flight periods are sequential and overlapping, not identical. One can walk the trail in spring never noticing the flash of tiny green wings flitting up or down the hillside unless specifically looking for them.

Situating trails adjacent to areas that are especially environmentally sensitive rather than through them is one way to minimize impact. We can enjoy watching and photographing wildlife, seeing the interaction between species without trampling their habitats.

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Trails should be located far enough away from user hazards such as large dead trees that these wonderful habitat trees can be retained without endangering trail users. Cavity nesters need these trees in which they raise their families. Insects living in the dead wood provide food for many wild creatures including woodpeckers.

Some other considerations when locating and building trails include stability of the land on which the trail will be built, steepness of hillsides, drainage, proximity to rivers, creeks, lakes and ponds with potential for erosion, contamination and interference with wildlife access, and kinds of use the trail is intended to accommodate. All these factors impact trail location and surface. Some trails are for foot traffic, others for bicycles, horses or motorized sport vehicles. Surface requirements, allowable slope and trail widths differ for each usage. Trails must be located and maintained to a standard that helps people avoid stepping off them, for instance to avoid walking through muddy ground people step onto more solid ground. Avoidance of poor walking surfaces thus widens trails and degrades habitat. Solutions include building raised walkways which Friends of Parks and Trails has done successfully along the Waldie Island trail. Water bars dug across trails that rise steeply up hillsides help reduce erosion. Retaining walls built along lower sides of exposed areas of trail that are susceptible to crumbling protect the trail, the hillside and trail users. Signage designating particular trails for specific kinds of traffic protects both habitat and users.

If we are thoughtful about location, creation and maintenance of trails through our natural environment we can gain access while mitigating our negative impact on the original inhabitants of the places we love.

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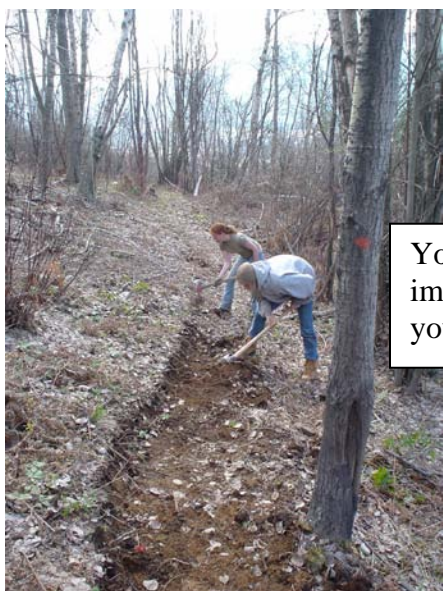
Syringa Park's waterfront trail is now snow free and the tread dry and firm.



A young sheep on the road in Syringa Provincial Park.

Please renew you CFPT membership for 2011.

This winter considerable time and energy has been spent trying to secure funding so our local trails can continue to receive the regular maintenance work that makes them so enjoyable to use. Sure, we can thrash through bush and most of us can step over, or



Young backs work on trail tread improvements in 2007. Thank you Jesse and Erik!

find our way around deadfall, but this does discourage use. Anecdotal evidence indicates that ticks are the wildlife species instilling the greatest fear in many potential users meaning that vegetation intruding onto the trail from the edges may be an ominous deterrent to use! And then there is the tread;

a nicely cleared and level tread of sufficient width that is consistent along a trail allows users to

raise their gaze from surveying for potential roots, rocks and gouges up to the stunning scenery and wildlife and other visual pleasures of our trails. And of course a good tread is safer. What has CFPT done in recent years?



In 2007 CFPT hired two Selkirk students and received 4 volunteers from Katimavik allowing us to invest roughly 3200 hours in local trails. In addition to extensive maintenance work on all our

A trail slowly disappears as bracken fern overgrows it. After rain or heavy dew users will be quickly soaked from brushing against the fronds.

trails we also restored access from the Brilliant Park and Ride through the Brilliant Canyon for the Skattebo Reach Trail (a major project). Our talented crew also built some new bridges and refurbished others. I still recall how many people commented on how fantastic the trails were: all pruning done, brush cleared, and tread in great shape. As a relative newcomer I nearly took these high quality trails for granted! 2007 expenditures: roughly \$30,000.

In 2008 we took a bit of a rest and were carried through the year by the thoroughness of the 2007 work. But the lack of regular maintenance did show - Bracken fern encroached on some trails and the tread was sometimes completely hidden from view. In 2008 a volunteer work party completed significant maintenance work on the Waldie Island Trail with project-specific funding from RDCK Area J. Boards were replaced on the boardwalks, the boardwalk was leveled, a metal lathe was placed over the bad boardwalk to improve traction, and a bear proof garbage can was installed at the Railway Bridge end. 2008 expenditures: roughly \$10,000.

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In 2009 we hired one Selkirk student and he supervised two Katimavik volunteers providing us with 1200 hours of maintenance work on all local trails. This was carried out from April through to June. We then received funds from CBT and the Federal Government that allowed us to construct 7 trailhead



A new bench on a new trail: the Blagodatnoe Village Loop provides a new trail for all to enjoy. Specifically for young mtn bikers!

kiosks, 5 benches, a new trail (Blagodatnoe Village Loop), Columbia Trail upgrades, and to upgrade our website. We also were able to do routine maintenance through to the end of August. 2009 expenditures: roughly \$33,000.

In 2010 we again hired a Selkirk student to supervise Katimavik volunteers (3 this time) and roughly 1400 hours was invested in trail maintenance; installation of kiosks and benches built during the previous winter was also completed. But work ended in June and by mid-August the brush and branches were encroaching on some of my favourite trails. 2010 expenditures: roughly \$22,000.

So what about 2011? It is true that volunteers can (and do! Thank you!) take care of some basic trail maintenance. Depending on the trail our trail stewards are able to address some (or all) of the wind or deadfall - addressing a key access issue. Pruning work also seems to be something volunteers regularly contribute to (perhaps the pruning saw or hand pruners are regularly ready in their daypack). But when I look at the photo of Jesse and Erik reworking the trail tread in 2007 (first photo this article) I feel my back begin to ache and my enthusiasm for trail volunteer work waning. Am I alone?



Volunteers complete repairs to Waldie Trail boardwalks in 2008.



Trailhead kiosks, six now installed (one to go), provide year round access to trail information



At left the trail tread is slowly being lost; after work (right) the tread is wider and requires less maintenance.



Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails has spent the past 3 months working to obtain funds to allow us to continue to maintain the public recreational trail assets in this area. We reviewed data from the past 4 seasons to arrive at time and cost estimates. As the brief summary provided shows, a number of factors influencing costs have changed from year to year so it is not yet possible to arrive at a firm number. 2011 will be no different, for example we have assumed new full maintenance responsibilities for the Ward's Ferry Trail from the now defunct Nelson Area Trails Society. At 8km in length this adds a little more than 10% to our total trail inventory, and as it is in ecologically sensitive terrain some additional work may be needed in the first few years (we'll soon see ...). One completed kiosk remains to be erected and if we are fortunate we may have two new mountain bike trails to attend to (volunteer construction).

Recognizing that Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails is maintaining a public recreation asset of importance to area residents we approached the Recreation Commission for funding. Unfortunately the Commission is prohibited from supporting recreation outside of the narrow mandate it currently has; primarily the recreation complex. Commission members expressed strong support for the work of CFPT and a desire to address the funding gap for public recreation trails. They recognize that unlike other recreational groups we are prohibited from collecting user fees and that our prime function is maintenance of public recreation facilities - not delivery of a recreation program. It's a unique circumstance and it will require a unique solution. The RDCK is exploring creation of a "recreational trails service" or other such service. At the recommendation of the Recreation Commission CFPT has applied for Columbia Basin Trust Community Initiatives funding to address 2011 funding; five RDCK areas and the Cities of Nelson and Castlegar were applied to (as these RDCK areas are where trail users primarily reside). Last word: our 2011 program is still uncertain.

In April we will begin winter clearing work with the aid of part time hires from Selkirk College and local high schools. We have sufficient funds to see all trails have at least one work crew day. If funding is sourced part-time work can recommence in June followed by full time work for July and August. We estimate that 1600 hours are required to keep all trails and supporting assets (benches, toilets, kiosks, etc.) properly maintained. With a crew comprised of a college student supervisor and two high school students, plus transportation expenses, the cost will be ~\$25,000.

Our trails serve an estimated immediate area population of ~35,000 people, and provide economic value to our community and province. Over 4 years we have spent roughly \$95,000. (For comparison purposes our neighbouring Kootenay-Columbia Trails Society received \$84,000 from local government in 2010 for core maintenance, and leveraged these funds into a one year budget of \$207,000.)

A key challenge for our Society moving forward is maintaining the asset we all love. Your input is requested at the AGM, hope to see you there.



Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails

Executive:

President/newsletter editor –Lawrence Redfern 250-365-5350 [lsredfern at shaw dot ca](mailto:lsredfern@shaw.ca)

Vice-President – Sheena Stienstra

Past President – John Mansbridge

Secretary – Erica Scott

Trails Maintenance Coordinator – Peter Wood

Membership Coordinator – Rick Johnson

Treasurer – Rita Wege

Our website is taken care of by Dave Sharp.

Please contact Lawrence with any comments, questions, suggestions, etc.

The purpose of Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails Society is:

1)To build and maintain local trails. All of these trails will be open to the general public at no charge. Subject to environmental sensitivity, the Society will build multi-use trails.

2) To develop community support for outdoor recreation, appreciation for the natural environment and education. This purpose will be met through publishing of brochures, trail maps and a regular newsletter, affiliation with local heritage and recreation groups, provision of guides and interpreters to local schools, contributions to local media and participation in community events.

3) To raise funds from local governments, business and individuals in support of the activities of the Society

Mission statement:

Castlegar Friends of Parks and Trails Society (2001) is established to encourage the creation, maintenance and use of environmentally-friendly, multi-use public trails through public education and direct trail development and maintenance activities.



Waldie Island Trail is a delight in all seasons.

AGM, March 29th, 7:00pm, Castlegar Recreation Complex



CASTLEGAR FRIENDS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

BOX 3212 CASTLEGAR BC V1N 3H5

Phone 250-365-5350

www.friendsoftrails.org

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Member information is **not** sold or shared with any third parties.

YEAR 2011

NEWSLETTER:

_____ POST (black & white)
or _____ E-MAIL (full colour)

__ **Renewal**

_____ **Basic** \$10.00

_____ **Supporter** \$20.00

_____ **Partner** \$100.00

If you are able to volunteer some time, how would you like to help ?

(If you are able, please consider selecting an e-mail newsletter to save Society funds and editor time)



THANK YOU KATIMAVIK! Over the past few years youth from across Canada have made a major contribution to our local trails.