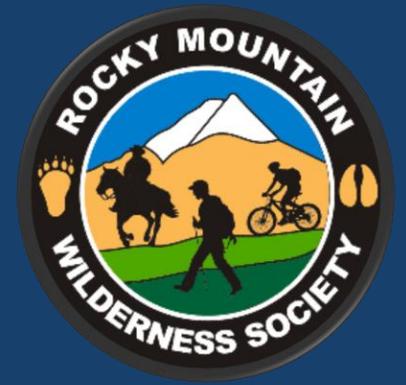


ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



FALL 2016

NOVEMBER

President's Report by Ken Groat

Good day everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the tremendous support shown to RMWS these past five years. This Society has many things to be proud of in the accomplishments achieved in the short period since the first diamond hitch was thrown in 2012. We



have had a very strong commitment from the Board of Directors to ensure the work being done on the trail clearing projects completed to-date, was done in the highest possible standard allowed by Alberta Parks. We can humbly say that there are over 125 kilometers of trail through the Majestic Mountains of Alberta (*In the Willmore Wilderness Park, along the lower Hay River and Clear Water River*) that any back-country traveler, be it hiking, mountain biking or horseback will enjoy travel on with the peace of mind, knowing they will reach their destination journeying down a safe well maintained trail.

With one more project along the Sulphur River and up to Summit Cabin in the Rock Creek Valley the Mountain Trail from Grande Cache to Rock Lake will be completed to a standard that has never been seen since cats plowed trails through the Wilmore Park while doing exploration work. The last leg of the project will have to wait one more year as the Trail crew went into Sunset Meadows this year to work on a very dangerous portion of the Sunset Creek Trail. This trail passes by a huge beaver dam that has been in a narrow valley for quite a number of years. The dam fills the valley floor and the existing trail travels through the water for distances up to 400 feet long which drops off into swimming water in almost all areas, which we saw when we cut the Porcupine Licks to Rocky Pass trail. Knowing how dangerous this is to travelers we decided to change the trail location along this dam. We built a



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



new trail along a steep side hill about 30 feet plus up from the high-water mark of the dam which will take the risk of drowning a horse, or heaven forbid a rider, right out of the equation. This new section of trail had to be gouged into the side-hill, using grub hoes, wide enough for a horse to travel on and not allow pack boxes to drag on the

bank. After a couple days work the crew realized this was not going to be an easy task as the progress was slow, but a goal was set to achieve a hundred meters a day and this put goal posts up which helped keep moral up as the project was taken in bite size pieces. The days went by and soon the end of the beaver dam could be spotted through the trees lifting everyone's spirit. On day eight we connected the new trail to the old at the end of the dam, we had a trail roughed in and measured in at 750 meters. With a little clean up and checking this trail out with horses we had completed a section of trail that is probably a first to be done in this fashion in the Wilmore Park.



Above shows the new trail constructed on the left with the old trail going into the water where horses and hikers were forced to walk through water.

As we all know when traveling through the mountains there is always problems with blowdown through old



Lyle Moberly and Ken Groat cutting blowdown on Big Graves to Monaghan in 2015

growth forests; often times it gets so bad travelers have to find their way around these wind thrown trees. But we have noticed and are very pleased to report in most cases these blowdown trees are cut and thrown off the trail, and I believe this is happening because the trail being traveled on is maintained to such a high standard so it makes it a little easier to stop and help out.

RMWS has also given support to the University of Alberta's Wolverine study which was wrapped up this past winter. RMWS has bought two collars that were put on different Wolverines to learn more about this mysterious creature and how they live and travel through Alberta's Boreal Forest. The data collected from these collars has given the researchers a lot of help in trying to figure out what kind of habitat is required and what do the Wolverine live on.

The Board of directors of RMWS have met with Alberta Parks management team each year since 2012. This



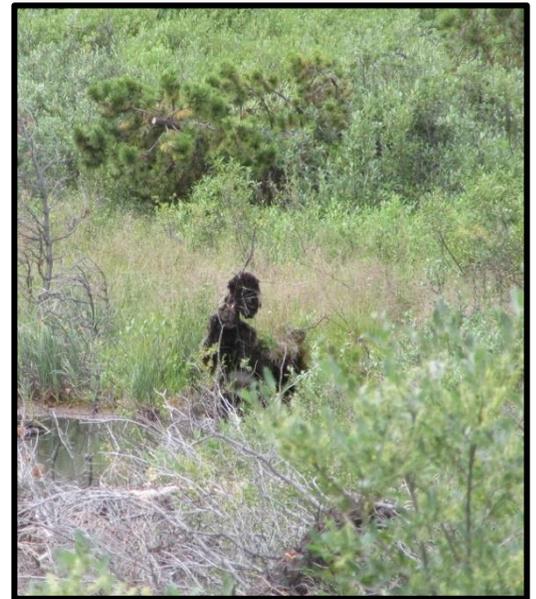
ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

meeting is to go over the current year plans of the RMWS and revisit the action plans from the previous year to update Parks management on the progress of the projects as far as completion or requiring more work; as well as ensuring RMWS plans fit with management plans for the area we plan to do projects in. An example of the types of discussions that take place is in 2015 RMWS pushed for the expansion of the equine staging area on the Hay River to the west of Rock Lake Lodge. RMWS went to the extent of having Director Bryan Allan and members Ken South and Don Law develop a plan for the expansion of this facility. We felt the need for this expansion was initiated by the amount of camping taking place at the commercial staging area which at times caused havoc on the outfitters when packing up or arriving from a pack trip with a large amount of horses. An alternative site for camping and a couple trail loops starting and stopping at this staging area would likely take a lot of pressure off the commercial site. Well we are pleased to report that Alberta Parks heard us and did start working on the expansion of the equine campground along the Hay River early this summer. This is a great site to camp and it gives access to the Wilmore Park through the Jackson Creek Trail which has no river crossings and intersects with the main trail west of the commercial staging area about three kilometers past the Hay River Crossing.

Another endeavor of RMWS we had planned for this summer is the rebuild of the historic forestry cabin known as Summit Cabin (*built in 1928/29*). If you have been into this area in the past few years you would have noticed the bottom round of logs of this cabin have seen better days. Over the years many RMWS members and non-members have enjoyed the heat radiating from the stove in this cabin and listening to the mice scurrying for cover with a rain storm or snow storm blowing through the Rock Creek valley. Well if our plan carries through to fruition the bottom round of logs will be replaced, the floor rebuilt and the cabin will be chinked so that users will be able to lay in their bed and not worry about mice pulling their hair out for nests. This will be a great example of RMWS and Alberta Parks working in collaboration on a very worthwhile project and saving a historic building for the next generation to enjoy. This project has now been put off until next summer due to other commitments and individuals with holiday schedules.

RMWS has had an amazing first five years with many successful projects behind us and numerous reports from travelers regarding how much they enjoy traveling through the mountains on well-marked and maintained trails. This would not be possible if we did not have the support of our sponsors. Two major sponsors that played a huge roll in making sure these projects had the funds behind them to see them completed are **ACA (Alberta Conservation Association), and Alberta Wild Sheep Foundation;** along with individuals that sponsored different trails like the Ferlin Koma family, Brian Parker family, Kallio Contracting, the Rob Bailey family and the lively saddle auctions that were made possible by Dave Barron and Bob Kallio. We can't forget all the individuals that come to our fall fundraiser and support the cause and the businesses that give willingly each year to the fundraiser. RMWS board of directors recognize each and every one of the aforementioned organizations, families, businesses and individuals as role players in the Society and we would like to thank each and every one of you for helping get the RMWS through the last five years. Looking forward to the next 5 years!!!!



Sasquatch sighting or resting RMWS Trail Hand? Near Sunset Meadows



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Ted Loblaw, Alberta's Horse Ranger

Interview by:
Cliff Henderson and Bob Stevenson

The RMWS was given the opportunity by Ted to publish a tale of his first trail riding job. This story shows the character and personality of one of Alberta's true horse rangers. Ted was in the same class of horse rangers as Harry Edgcombe. Ted served as a Forest Ranger from 1952 to retirement in 1987 and

before then, he had an upbringing surrounded with horses. Ted continues with his outdoor adventures to the present day.

To provide some background, Ted was born in 1929 in Banff, Alberta. He grew up on the family ranch on the Little Red Deer River next to the Forest Reserve Boundary. Ted's mom, Violet, was concerned for the children's schooling and convinced her husband, Bill, to buy another farm near Bottrel some 18 miles to the south of the ranch. Ted spent his school days at Bottrel where he went to grade 9 in a one room school.

When he got older he would go back and forth to the ranch to trap and work. Like most of the kids of the time, he had a horse to go to school and ride for boyhood adventures. His first saddle was a Riley McCormick. Thus, Ted had horses and the love of the outdoors in his blood lines. Ted said the Ranch's hired hand, Al Fraser, was a very experienced horseman and teamster and he and Ted's dad passed along their skills and knowledge. Ted's mom was a sister of Bert Mickle an early and well respected outfitter. Also, Ted's dad was called Big Bill and was one tough cowboy. Big Bill was the header for his wild horse team and appeared in the 1923 Calgary Stampede.



Young Ted at Little Red River Ranch

Ted's career with the Alberta Forest Service began as a predator control officer in the early 50's and he was promoted to Assistant Ranger in 1957 starting on the Elbow, and as his career progressed worked on Ghost, Clearwater and Nordegg Districts until he retired. In the 50's and 60's Ted spent a lot of time on his horse doing fire patrols and allotment inspections. He retired in 1987 as the Chief Ranger at Nordegg and is now a sharp 87 years old. Since retirement Ted had many different jobs from cooking and wrangling for an outfitter in the Yukon, trapping a line along Rough Creek and working for the RCMP. Ted and Dot live on their acreage near Farrier a few miles west of Rocky Mountain House. Until a couple years ago, Ted still had horses and even a mule.

For our Annual Newsletter, Ted picked his first trail job story:

The First Trail Job:

Like most young men of the time, Ted decided to leave the Little Red River Ranch and headed out on his own when he was 18 years old. His older brother Jack also was interested in leaving and headed out with Ted. Men were back from the war so his dad was able to hire farm hands and the boys could make their own fortune. Ted and Jack heard about a trail job with a Federal survey crew from coffee shop talk at Bear Berry. The Federal Geodetic Survey Department was assembling crews to survey the mountains in Northern BC and the Yukon. The



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

survey was for locating mountains and completing a topographic map of the area. The mountain tops were surveyed by triangulation, and the distances chained and slopes taken to get the topographic features.

The Federal Geodetic Surveys were headquartering at Champagne Landing 10, Yukon, which was just northwest of Whitehorse, in the late 40's and early 50's. Champagne had been chosen because the horses could be grazed and overwintered. There were about 6 to 8 crews that headed out every spring. Each crew had 5 people and from 18 to 20 horses.

By the time Ted was hired, all that was left was a cooking job on one of the four survey crews that was directed to survey the Atlin Lake area. He was offered the cooking job and took it at \$6.50 per day. Ted and Jack and several other members of the crew flew from Edmonton in a Pacific Western DC 3 to Fort Nelson and drove to Champagne Landing 10. You guessed it, the old highway was very rough and many soft spots and mud holes but they made it all in one piece with rigs provided by the Federal Government.

The project started in April, 1949 and lasted for over 150 days. At Champagne, the Chief Surveyors assembled the crews and supplies while Ted and his brother Jack and a couple other cowboys started to get the horses caught and shod from a herd of 139 mostly wild Indian ponies. You can picture the rodeo as they were shod and tasted a saddle for the first time. Each crew had a chief surveyor, chainman, wrangler, packer and cook. All the horses, saddles and rigging were provided by the Survey Department. All of it was from World War II decker packs, pack boxes, saddles, bridles, halters, etc. The camp rifle was a 30-30 Winchester.

Ted's crew started at Jakes Corner, Yukon which is on the Alaska Highway and southeast of Whitehorse. They had 18 horses and loaded up the next morning heading south along Telegraph Creek trail to Little Atlin Lake and then on to Big Atlin Lake. The first day was wild and one rodeo after another. None of Crew members on Ted's crew had been around horses and the horses were some wild. Also, there was so many supplies that everyone but Ted had to walk. The first day they made all of one mile before then had to stop and set up camp for the night.



*Unloading a bogged pack horse.
Notice the pack box made out of compressed cardboard and rope used to break the suction on the hind legs.*



*Stove top pack
The cook stove was a four-lid solid stove that weighed about 65 pounds - a pack horse killer*



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Things got a little better as they continued south along the telegraph creek trail and finally reached the Atlin Indian Settlement. There were about 150 locals who lived there trapping and fishing at the time.

Atlin Lake was famous for gold prospectors and there were several mines which had their supplies hauled in in the winter on the ice or by pack train.

The surveyors would take the pack horses for as far as they could make it and then continue on to the top on foot.

Ted would usually stay with the horses making a smudge to reduce the insects and keep the horses in line. Mosquitoes and black flies were plain ugly. The survey crew would complete triangulation between the mountain peaks to determine the location and elevation between the mountains. It was grueling work carrying big cameras and surveying equipment to the top of the mountains and back down. Back at camp, Ted was the chief cook and

bottle washer for the crew as well as the wrangler. The horses were a wild bunch and Ted let them out to graze at dusk.

He said he never kept a camp horse because the horses made a bee line for the camp when the sun came up and bugs started flying. One could see clouds of them after a couple hours of warm sunshine. The only fly repellent was bacon grease and smudge fires. He would make the smudge fires in a triangle and the horses would move around to stay in the thick smoke.

Camp grub was pretty plain living with dried rations day after day. Ted often cooked because the fellow who was supposed to be the wrangler could not do the job so Ted



Cook tent (Ted on the right)



Watering the horses in a creek crossing the telegraph trail



Crew headed out to the mountain top



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



Ted with his next meal



Traveling along the south end of Atlin Lake. Where there was no trail, Ted led the string above tree line and better ground.

traded jobs with him. But he could not cook either so Ted often cooked as well as wrangling. The monotony of the dried food was broken with fresh fish and grouse.

A Balanca aircraft on floats brought in grub once a month to Atlin lake where they would rendezvous with the supply aircraft.

Ted did shoot one caribou, but he said he hated to see the meat wasted so they ate fish and fish and more fish and some grouse. It took about 7 days to complete the triangulation and then it was a camp

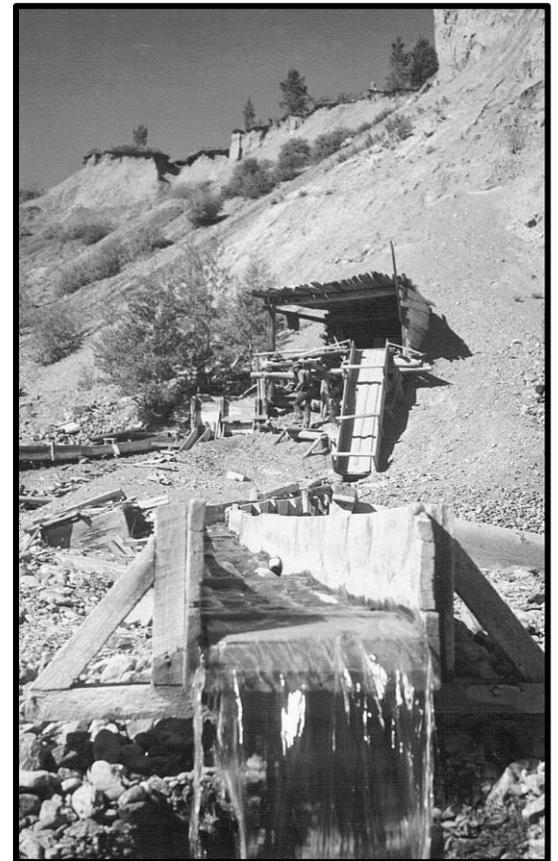
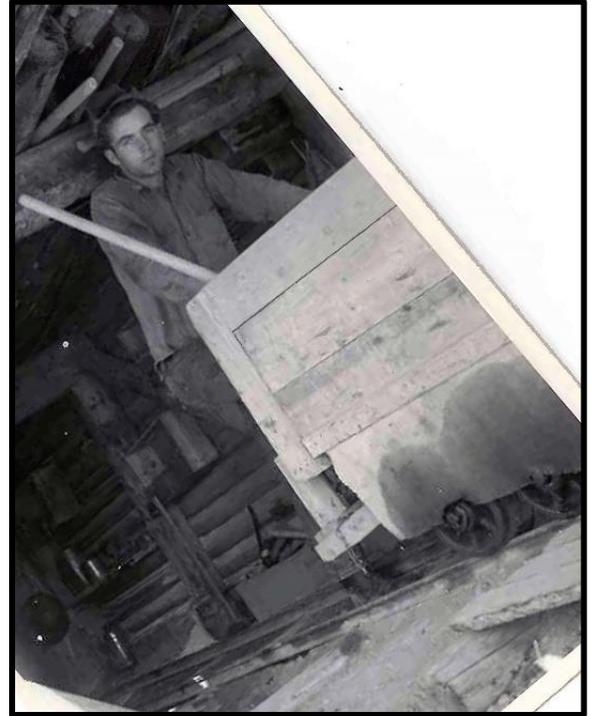
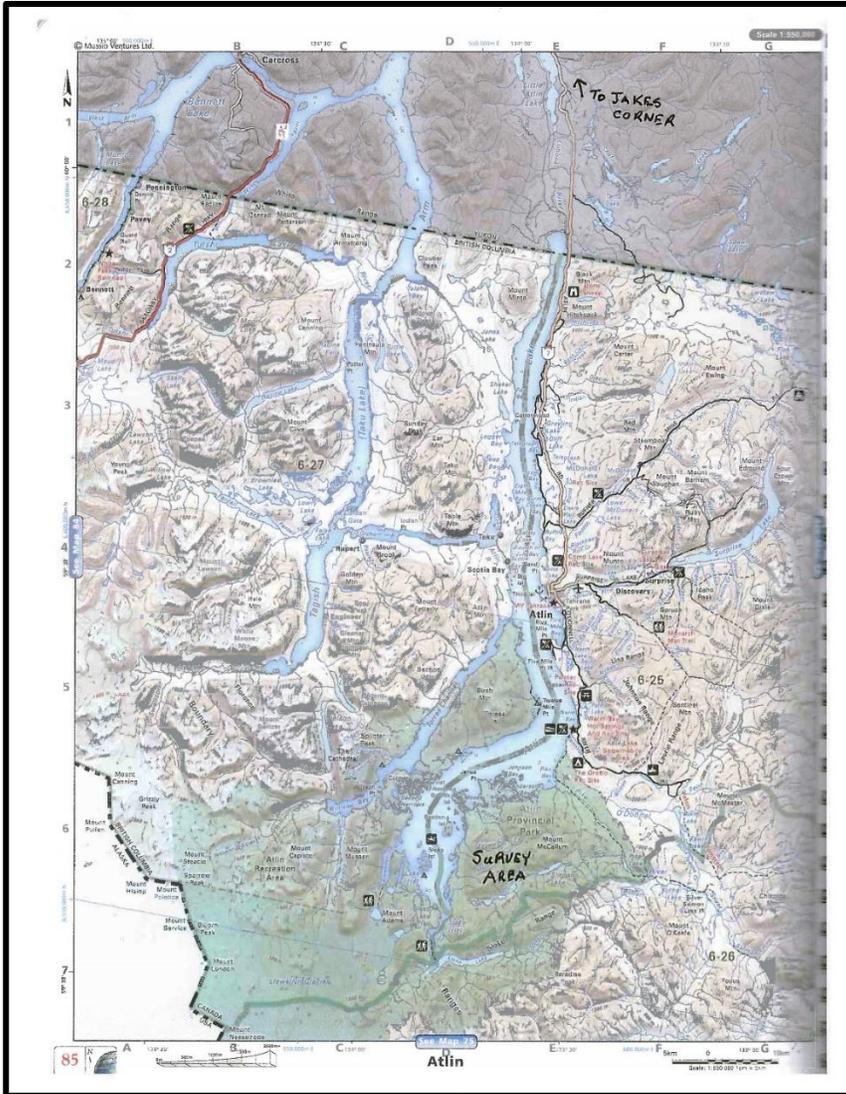


Balanca float plane (a float plane that was comparable to a Norseman)



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



move of around 15 miles to the next mountain. Considerable travel was above the tree line but even there, there was bog and more bog.

Ted did give a chuckle; the chainman had to walk behind the horse string because there were not enough horses to ride so he walked at the back. The horses kick up considerable insect activity so the fellow was pretty much occupied most of the trip slapping mosquitoes and slushing through the bogs.

Ted pushing a mine car – Top Right

Map of Atlin Lake - Top Left

The Old Mine South End of Atlin Lake - Bottom Right



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

The south end of Atlin Lake had several abandoned and operating gold mines.

Rumor had it, that there was a nugget the size of a potato found in the area so this whetted the appetite of the crew members. On their days off, they worked the abandoned mines in hope of finding a big nugget, but Ted said all they found was color and a lot of sore muscles from shoveling gravel and running the gravel through a slush trough.

Ted stuck with the job for the season which was wrapped up in October and he had worked his 150-day contract and then some. Going back to Jakes Corner was a lot easier, because the Government had pushed in a dozer road to the Atlin Indian Settlement. When he got back to Fort Nelson, the Survey had another project and offered Ted another job for the winter. He hired back on that fall to survey the Liard River from Fort Liard to Fort Simpson in the dead of winter. Another story for sure. To get a feel for the country in the middle of winter, read B. W. Patterson's Dangerous River.

"There are some that can live without wild things and some who cannot." – Burton Spiller

Why we should feel so lucky to be part of the Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society by Cathy Tipler

If you enjoy statistics, here are some interesting ones:

- There were 7 billion (plus) people in the world last year.
- There were 1,645 billionaires in the world last year.
- There were 500 (plus or minus a few) people who travelled the Willmore Wilderness last year. We represent .00000714% of the world's population.
- This makes most of the people reading this article, members of the one of the most elite groups in the world. Our membership is earned by spending time in this pristine wonderland most can only dream about.
- This is mind blowing, and every day in the Rocky Mountains I remind myself how being there is a day spent in heaven (minus the dying part).
- One of the things I love most is the absence of "sign" pollution.
- In fact, if the 5 Man Electrical Band had lived in the Willmore, we would never have sung along
- "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign, blocking out the scenery, breakin' my mind....."
- You can hike, bike or ride in the Willmore (or any trail for that matter) for hours never seeing a sign. In much of the vast expanse of mountain, trees and blue sky you wonder if anyone has travelled before you.
- Moose antlers are one of the main markers out here, with names carved in, and writing slowly fading away, or disappearing





ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

altogether, due to hungry squirrels looking for calcium. No neon, no flashing, no advertising or political campaign pollution to spoil your view here.

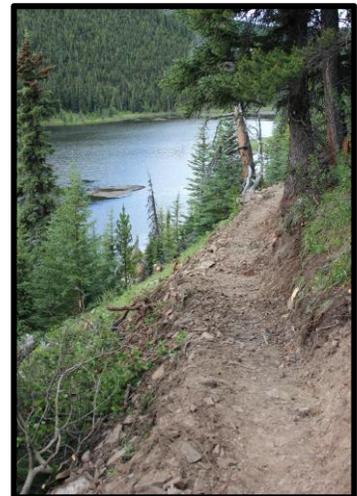
- For the little tomboy who grew up on a prairie farm following behind her brothers and the dog, joining the Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society on their annual trail clearing expeditions has been a time machine back to those happy days of childhood when I played outside from dawn to dark.
- For the past two summers, Gordon and I have been part of this volunteer group working on the restoration of the original outfitter's trails that crisscross the great Rockies.
- One year we left from the Berland, on to Porcupine Licks, where we spent 12 days cutting, hacking and pulling trees, in plus 30-degree heat, up to Eric Lake. Some of the hollering in the tents at night wasn't for joy - some of the guys ended up with leg cramps because of all the sweating during the day. (Nothing a little salt didn't cure. Funny how horses know they need it, but people are afraid to use it? That is another subject though, and I will save that for another time.)
- The next year we started from Cowlick and came in to Big Grave where we cut toward Monaghan Creek. When the ride became too long, we moved camp to Monaghan and cut back toward Big Grave. That time we encountered enough wasps and hornets to reassure me no neonicotinoids are reaching their infamous murderous fingers into this amazing area. Our young riders were smart enough to figure out if they wanted to gallop their horses on the trails, they could holler "Bees!!" and away we went, lickety split.
- This year the home base was Sunset Meadows, with our crew working to bring a trail up and around the beaver dam that had flooded the way to Porcupine Licks. This was definitely the most difficult trail we have ever worked on. At the end of every day everyone was exhausted. Lots of tools broke on those rocks and roots before we finished and by the time we were done this one we were all celebrating. A few extra days allowed us to improve the trail into Sunset Meadows as two of our crew had their horses go down in one of the mud holes on the way in. All in all, this was a great trip once again and we are already looking forward to next year.



Gordon Groat and Lyle Moberly enduring hard labor on the new trail past the Beaver dam



An example of some very gnarly roots that had to be removed off the steep banks.



A Job well done! The brand new trail that will safely carry travellers to their destination without swimming let alone getting their feet wet!

A hand that's dirty with honest labor is fit to shake with any neighbor." - proverb



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Fiddle Pass

By Gary Last and Jock

This past fall (November, 2015) I did a trip with Jock, my Chesapeake Bay retriever. Jock was carrying his dog pack with gear and I had a backpack for an

overnight trip. I have done this trip many times including on snow shoes in the winter. We started from the trail head outside of Cadomin. We hit the trail about 8:30 am and hiked for 2 hours when we ran into a grizzly coming down the trail the other way. Although I had a goat bell on, we were near a creek and the bear did not hear us. Jock stepped out in front and chased the bear off. Jock was fast but the bear outran him, luckily!



We kept going uphill towards the pass. At the height of the pass we came down the other side and ran into a colony of marmots which Jock chased. Despite having a pack on, Jock caught up with one which I thought he was going to “chomp”. Instead he put his nose under it and flipped it in the air. Satisfied with this he came back to me and we kept going.

We cleared the pass and veered south west down the other side. Eventually the trail disappeared and we started climbing. We then broke out into the subalpine. I have done this trip a dozen times or more and in the past we ran into a grizzly sow and cub (the sow turned on us but did not charge). At the end of the valley we began a steep ascent up the side of a waterfall and climbed over a ridge. We ran into a herd of bighorn sheep, which probably

had trophy size horns but they were well within Jasper Park.



Finally, after 7.5 hours of hiking I set up my tent, a Hilliberg Akto expedition tent used for my arctic expeditions. It is bomb proof and can withstand any storm. I climbed into the tent just as a big storm blew in. I set up my MSR stove in the vestibule. While dinner was cooking, I had a shot of my medicine and read my magazine and then had some more medicine. I threw Jock a big chunk of salami, extra spicy the way he likes it. I read my magazine

(House and Garden) by headlamp. I got up in the dark and took my food about a kilometer away from the tent and buried it under some rocks so it wouldn't attract bears in the middle of the night. Jock was on high alert after running into that grizzly and was perched up on a knoll watching the valley below. The storm starting raging, with high winds. I called Jock in to sleep in the vestibule of the tent, out of the storm. He lay down for about a minute and then went back out into the storm and commenced guard duties.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

The next morning snow had covered the alpine meadow. As I went to look for my food bag I realized I could not find it and wandered around in circles. Finally, I called Jock and told him to go and find it. He marched off in a completely different direction and stopped. I dug up the snow and found the bag in front of him.

We broke camp and headed down the valley. At the height of the pass I thought I saw another grizzly, but because of an optical illusion it turned out to be a porcupine that looked the size of a grizzly from a distance.

When we arrived back at the vehicle I fetched a beer out of the creek and Jock and I headed home thus ending one of thousands of such adventures.

“People leave imprints on our lives, shaping who we become in much the same way that a symbol is pressed into the page of a book to tell you who it comes from. Dogs, however, leave paw prints on our lives and our souls, which are as unique as fingerprints in every way.” Ashly Lorenzana

Cooks Corner

By Gail Wildman

I found this recipe in the Anchorage Daily News, when Dave and I were in Alaska several years ago. We were not in the back country, but we *were* camping. The recipe was

a hit, and it has been my “go-to” dish ever since. It is easy, and has ingredients everyone has on hand. Depending on your facilities, it can be cooked in the oven, on a barbeque, in a Dutch oven, or in foil packets.

Davy Crockett Potatoes

- 4 lbs. new potatoes, sliced into thin rounds
- 2 small bags baby carrots, sliced in half
- 1 large onion, sliced thinly
- 2 tbsp. seasoned salt (or to taste)
- 1 tsp. pepper
- ½ lb. butter

Combine all ingredients in large roaster or Dutch oven. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

Not sure why it is called “Davy Crockett.” Maybe because it could easily be made in the back country?



“Cooking is like love. It should be entered into with abandon or not at all” - Harriet Van Horne



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Mile 58 Summit Cabin

By Richard Aarsen

It was snowing again. Heavy wet snow the third day in a row. We were part ways into a mid-September sheep hunt, several days ride in from Rock Lake. The snow would probably disappear this early in the season but not in time to adjust to our schedules so we needed to head home. The horses were having difficulty getting down to the grass with their hobbles on and I was worried about finding the trail up over the shoulder from the South Sulphur to the Rock Creek Valley.

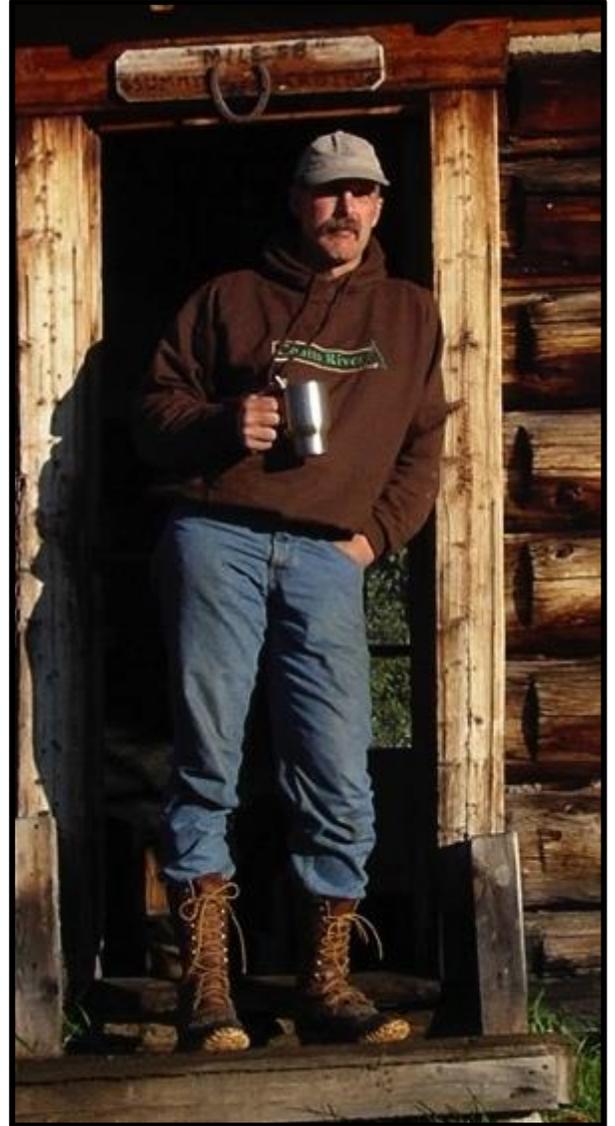
The willow meadows were covered with a foot of snow and had become one big carpet of white with no indication of where the trail was. The horses were anxious to go - anywhere but here was their thinking - so we gathered up our wet tent and gear, packed up and headed out.

We let the pack animals run loose to free our hands to knock snow off the trees overhanging the trail. One horse couldn't handle the freedom and decided to buck off his pack within the first mile, so there was a quick stop to repack and carry on our way.

When we got to the main trail on the South Sulphur we saw fresh, large bear tracks headed out the same direction as we were going. The bear knew where the horse trail was and had knocked all the snow off the willows so it was easy for us to find our way. The horses knew he was close as every hill and corner they came around, their ears perked up. We did catch up to him just before we left the main valley, but he simply stood, checked us out and left for the timber. He was going down the South Sulphur and we were going up over the ridge so all was well.

The horses knew where the trail was better than we did and only needed an occasional correction to stay on course. Dropping down into the Rock Creek Valley we were soaking wet with snow packed into our scabbards, saddlebags, hats and crotches. We knew Summit Cabin was only half an hour ride ahead, but weren't sure if it was occupied.

Summit Cabin was built in 1928 by the government of that time as a patrol cabin. The log cabin was built on-site with hand-hewed and whip-sawed lumber for the roof and floor and a good cook stove in it. It has been used as a patrol cabin for the last one hundred years by Forestry then later Parks and has been open for many decades to hikers, riders, hunters and cross country skiers. It is situated in a beautiful open valley on the divide between the Athabasca and Peace River drainages. Hence the name Summit Cabin. Above the door is a sign with Mile 58 written on it signifying it is that far from Entrance, a small town that is the start of the Mountain Trail.





ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Riding up we kept our fingers crossed that we could warm up and dry out at the cabin as well as having grass available for grazing the horses. We came around the corner and there stood our 'gem' sitting empty. As we stepped inside we were greeted by delicious warmth - remnants of the previous occupants. A check of the guestbook in the cabin showed us that the previous occupants had just left that morning. They were headed north, recreating a historical ride, done I believe, by Samuel Faye Prescott.

We got a fire going again and soon had the walls covered with wet slickers and assorted gear trying to dry out. We sat down, thankful for the shelter and a safe spot, a shelter from the storm. Alberta Parks had built a new patrol cabin about a mile up a side valley in approximately 2013, so we knew if they were patrolling we would not get kicked out. Summit Cabin has always been open to people on a first come to first serve basis. It is never locked up and has sheltered many people.

Mice have also been a regular occupant. For that reason, one of the park wardens called Summit Cabin "The Hantavirus Hotel". But to us, right now, it felt like the Hilton.

Shelter cannot always be assured. In the summer of 2015 Dave Wildman and I were riding by Summit Cabin on our way to the Natural Arch in Jasper National Park. At mile 52 it started raining but we kept on riding hoping for a dry, warm place for the night at Summit Cabin.

Coming up the Rock Creek Valley you can see the cabin from quite a distance away. We strained our eyes through the rain to look for any sign of occupancy. No horses tied in front of the cabin. No smoke coming from the chimney. Things look hopeful and our spirits lifted.

But, riding over the last little hill right in front of the cabin we saw ten sets of hiking poles propped against the wall. We tied up the horses and entered the cabin to find ten bedraggled hikers enjoying the shelter. They were a young group of hikers from Minnesota on a 28-day hike through Wilmore. They were there picking up their supplies that Johnny Groat had dropped off several days earlier. We showed them how to get a fire going in the cabin and then with heavy hearts we proceeded towards Desolation Pass where we finally set up our tent in the rain. The name was rather appropriate.



Unfortunately, Close to One Hundred Years of weathering the elements has taken its toll on the cabin. The floor has a strong downhill lean; the bottom logs are rotting and it needs a good cleaning.

Young Minnesota hikers taking refuge at the cabin



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



Left to right - Jessie Aarsen, Dave Wildman and Jan Aarsen

The Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society, together with Alberta Parks hopes to do some work on the cabin next summer to prevent further deterioration. With a little bit of work, we hope we can keep this gem preserved and available, making sure it and the beautiful surroundings can be enjoyed by many people in the future.

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children’s children.” – Henry David Thoreau

Wonders of Wolverines

By Brian Bildson

Wolverines are a fascinating creature but are still a mystery to most of us. The Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society however has played a significant part in moving forward our understanding of this iconic Canadian species. For the last four years the University of Alberta, Alberta Trappers Association, and the Alberta Conservation Association have been collaborating on a wolverine research

program. The study and initial pilot program have stretched across northern Alberta from the Willmore Wilderness, Bistcho Lake, Rainbow Lake, and finally the Birch Mountains. Last year lead researcher, Matt Scafford, sent the following letter to RMWS president Ken Groat:

Dear Mr. Groat,

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta studying wolverines in Northern Alberta. I appreciate the funding your organization has given my research over the last few years. I attached a brief year-end project report and letter detailing the movements of two wolverines with radio-collars funded by the Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society. If you have questions about our research, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks again for the support.

*Sincerely,
Mathew*

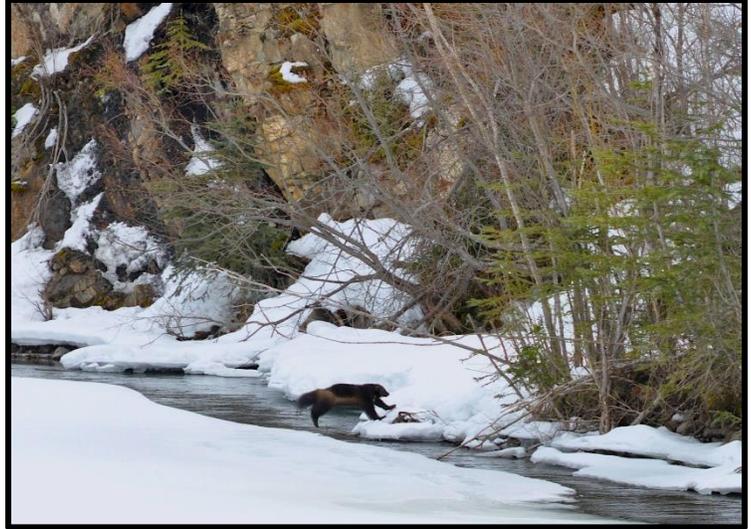


ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Mathew wrapped up his portion of the research this past winter. The results have been amazing. The research group was able to live capture and place collars on over 40 wolverines. There has never been a wolverine research project that has captured anywhere near that many wolverines before. Having that many animals with collars on really revealed the secret world of the wolverine. Some of the more surprising findings were discovering just how efficient a hunter the wolverine really is.

Far from being just a scavenger the wolverine is a very effective predator of small species. We were shocked to find out how many beavers were killed by wolverines in the Rainbow Lake area. The wolverines are able to access winter beaver houses despite their fortress like construction and regularly clean out the colony. Another surprising fact is that wolverines will kill beavers on shore during the spring while they are most vulnerable, and then stash the carcass underneath sphagnum moss. The moss appears to have some preserving qualities that allow the wolverine to feast on their spoils months later.



Scoob (Nick Name) on CBC Nature of Things

Wolverines will also predate on snowshoe hares to a great extent. The uploads from the radio collars often show “clusters” of hits in a specific location. When researchers snowshoed into the locations afterwards to check them out often they would find a wolverine had staged there for a couple of days hunting all the hares out of that patch of bush. Grouse are another frequent victim to this stealthy hunter. And of course, wolverines will take advantage of any carcass on the landscape as well. They are the ultimate survivor.

Matt’s main thrust of his research was on how wolverines interact with industry on the crown land. He’s currently doing his thesis using the results of all the research from the last several years and surprisingly finding that wolverines can exist with low levels of some industry. This wolverine research that the RMWS contributed to may well play a key role in future management plans in wolverine habitat and make a real difference in the future of the tenacious wolverine.

On behalf of all the parties who conducted the research I’d like to thank the RMWS for their generous support to this project.

Brian Bildson
Alberta Conservation Association
Business Representative
(proud trapper & RMWS member)

“Where there’s a wolverine there’s a way.” – Andrew Manske



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



OFFICE OF THE DEAN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

6-189 Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science (CCIS)
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2E1
Tel: 780.492.4757
Fax: 780.492.9434
www.science.ualberta.ca

January 15, 2016

Mr. Ken Groat
Board Chairman
Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society
213 Pembina Ave
Hinton, AB T7V 2B3

Dear Mr. Groat,

On behalf of everyone in the Faculty of Science, thank you and the Rocky Mountain Wilderness Society for your generous support of the Wolverine Project. Because you chose to give to the Faculty of Science, we can shape the future by pushing the boundaries of knowledge in the classroom, laboratory, and field, and competitively position our students, staff, and faculty for current and future success.

There are many exciting endeavours in the Faculty of Science. As you may know, Matthew Scrafford's wolverine project studies the influence of the oil and gas industry on wolverines, a species of special concern in northern and western Alberta. Through his research, population management practices will be improved. Their improvement is critical to the survival of wolverines in Alberta.

Matt's wolverine project is only one example of the groundbreaking projects initiated by students and researchers in the Faculty of Science. If you haven't visited campus recently, please connect with us to learn more about our strategic plan for the future and see the difference your gift is making to students and researchers on campus.

Please send any comments you wish to share about the University of Alberta or our Faculty to Dean.Science@ualberta.ca or call 780-492-4757.

Our donors are an essential part of our past, present, and future. Once again, thank you for being part of our success.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Schaeffer, PhD FRSC
Distinguished University Professor
Dean of Science

“Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give.” – Ben Carson



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

LET IT BE

A poem about the Willmore Wilderness

Written by
Harry Edgecombe
November 1982

I am patrolling the Willmore
for the Alberta forestry,
following the track of the horse and pack
the way it used to be.

The years have slipped by,
all too quickly it seems.
Many changes have been made
in the forestry trade
for the past it is memories and dreams.

Today I am back where I started
patrolling the mountains once more;
with horses three, and only me
it is the same as it was before.

Time has no real meaning,
today is all that is real.
You find your way
through the mountains gray,
happy is the way I feel.

There is a message carried in on the breeze
a meaning that is easy to see;
a message told by the mountains old,
LET IT BE. LET IT BE.

This is not the land for loggers
who fells and cuts up the tree,
and not for oil or ore –
they have been here before
LET IT BE. LET IT BE

The message rings loud and clear:
This is not the land of industry!
No motel or store on the valley floor
just LET IT BE. LET IT BE.

All around me the world is gleaming,
the streams are rushing along.
Spring has aroused the bear

from its mountain lair,
the valley is singing a song.

A song of land of beauty,
a land that is wild and free
from the shimmering glow
of the mountain snow
LET IT BE. LET IT BE

As I ride along the mountain trail
an owl sleeps in an old dead tree.
He opens an eye as I ride by,
and hoots, LET IT BE.

As I pass through the Rocky Creek valley
there are changes new to me.
The forest fire scene has all turned green
where a blackened mantle used to be.

A little farther on my way
you can see where the mountain's broken,
memories sadden for a spell
as I pass the cliff where she fell;
a young girl's life was taken.

That night in camp at the summit
my mind goes to wandering ahead,
to the Indian grave and the life it gave
to the man that lies there dead.

He sleeps alone on the mountain trail
facing the morning sun.
His message to me is Let me be!
Please tell it to everyone.

I am a Ranger
that has gone down this trail before.
I have loaded my tack on a horse back
and ready for what is in store.

I have read the signs in the mountains,
I have known what it is like to be free
with beauty grand in this wild land,
it is very plain to me.

We should leave the park as it is,
don't change a land that is free.
The message is clear for all to hear,
LET IT BE. LET IT BE.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter



Harry Edgcombe – June 5, 1924 - December 13, 1995

After his retirement from the Forest Technology School of the Alberta Forest Service at Hinton, Harry returned as a Patrolman for the Willmore Wilderness Area during the summer and fall of 1982. His job was to patrol the area by horse as done in the Dominion Forestry days before 1930, and in early days of the Forest Service. He checked the trails and cabins doing what maintenance he could and making notes of work that should be done. He also checked the traditional camping areas to assess cleanup work that was needed. He visited with travelers in the Willmore including guides and outfitters, most of whom were old friends, and travelers – and with all, he shared stories and ideas for the protection and managing of the Willmore. It was an area he loved, and enjoyed sharing with his family and wide circle of friends. His time on the trail gave him an opportunity to reflect and to formulate the idea for this poem that he completed that fall. The poem speaks volumes –both about the land and himself.

“Time is not measured by the passing of years but by what one does, what one feels, and what one achieves.”
– Jawaharla Nehru



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

The Willmore Wilderness Park was named after Norman Willmore through his hard work and foresight, this majestic piece of Alberta remains the only Park of its kind that we know of.

“The broad basic problem is whether or not the Government should condone and encourage the industrialization of Alberta at the expense of the rivers, the air and the countryside of our Province through a lack of policy and foresight, or should we endeavour to promote industrialization in an orderly manner which will bring the greatest possible benefits to all the people in Alberta without necessitating the improper exploitation of our greatest natural resources – which are the air we breathe and the water and the soil.”

Public address by Norman Willmore to the Edson community on February 25, 1955.

Feb 1, 1909 – Feb 2, 1965



Above - Norman Willmore and Dextor Champion – Location unknown

Below – Norman Willmore – Note the camera that the gentleman on the left is holding!



“The world is changeable, and its ability to change is so fragile that a single person can be responsible for it.”

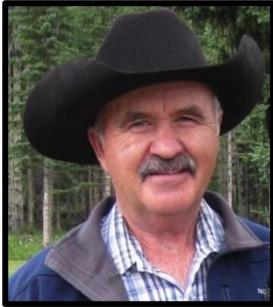
— A.J. Darkholme, Rise of the Morningstar



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Board Members



Ken Groat – President

Ken is one of the founding members and is in his 2nd term.



Bryan Allan – Director

Bryan has been with us since 2014



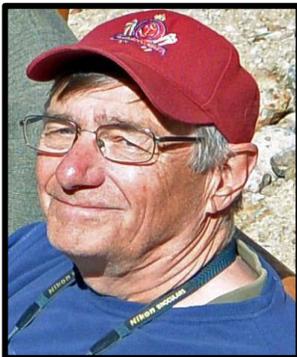
Dennis Quintilio – Vice President

Dennis has been with the Society since 2013 and was voted in as Vice President last year in his 2nd term.



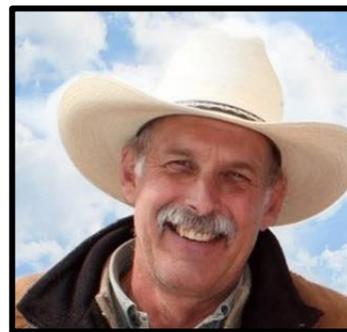
Virginia Stafford – Accountant and more.....

Virginia joined the Society as Director in June of 2016



Jim McClelland – Secretary/Treasurer

Jim also is a founding member and on his 2nd term.



Richard Aarsen – Director

Richard joined our team in June of 2016



Cliff Henderson – Director

Cliff has been with the Society since 2013 and is in his 2nd term.

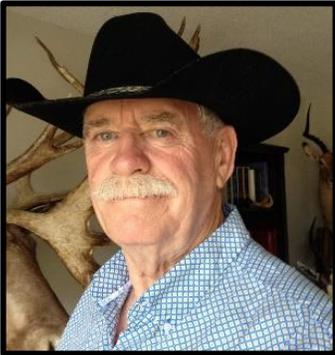
“If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities.” - *Maya Angelou*



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Past Board and Founding Members



Pat Long – Vice President

Pat is one of the founding members of RMWS and put in one term as vice president. Pat played a big role in helping get the society started and at the time he was with us he was sitting on two other boards so he stepped aside after one term so he could focus more on the role of president of the board of the Alberta chapter Wild Sheep Foundation and Alberta Conservation Association. Currently Pat is the chairman of the board for the ACA and past President of WSF Alberta Chapter and enjoying retirement in the Peace River area.



Lyle Moberly – Traditions Director

Lyle is one of the founders of RMWS and had agreed to sit for one term as a board member when the society started. Lyle played a huge roll in the decisions of the society that brought us through the first five years, with his solid business sense and being an accomplished outfitter in his own right the contributions Lyle has given to the society have helped carry this society in many ways. Lyle has just stepped aside from the board not the society and he will remain as a strong member and carry on with his usual involvement with the RMWS.



Brian Bildson – Business Representative

Brian is one of the founding members of RMWS and put in one term as the Business Director for the society. Brian has a very strong passion for the Wilmore Wilderness Park and holds a trapline along the Sheep Creek watershed with the Park. He is a board member of ACA and owner of Compass Media and Sheep Creek Lodge which keeps him busy doing the things he loves to do in the bush. Brian was a huge help in getting RMWS to where it is today and remains a strong member.



Denise Moberly – Go to Person for RMWS

Denise also one of the founding members has played a huge role with the RMWS and helped with most things done within the society. She did memberships, helped organize the AGM's, member rides, worked the annual fund raisers and played a big role with the financial end of the society and advisor. When you consider what she did no wonder she needs a break for a while, she remains a strong member and will always be there for advice and help when needed.

“Surround yourself with good people. People who are going to be honest with you and look out for your best interests.” - Derek Jeter



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

Update on Cowboys Ball

The RMWS board of directors decided to hold the Cowboy Ball in the spring of 2017 rather than late October due to the tough economic times in the area. We have booked the Community Centre in Hinton for the annual Cowboys Ball on March 18th, 2017. We need volunteers to come forward to strike a committee to help with organizing this event and are asking all members that would like to participate to please contact one of the board members as soon as possible. As well we are asking members to gather fundraising donations for this event. The sooner we can get these organized the more successful the event will be! AGM, Spring and Fall Campouts to be announced.

Photo Credits

Cover Page – Shelli Orava Groat, Andrew Manske

Page 2 – Ken Groat, Shelli Orava Groat

Page 3 – Ken Groat

Pages 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 – Jack Rankin

Page 9 – Shelli Orava Groat

Page 10 – Gordon Groat

Page 11 – Gary Last

Page 12 – Shelli Orava Groat

Pages 13, 14 & 15 – Courtesy of Richard Aarsen

Page 16 – Andrew Manske

Page 19 – Courtesy of Wanda Edgecombe

Page 20 – Courtesy of Weldwood Historical Collection (Bob Udell)

Page 22 – Shelli Orava Groat, Leanne Quintilio, Annette McClelland, Mitchell MacKenzie, Lynda Allan, Virginia Stafford and Carolyne Aarsen

Page 23 – Pat Long, Gordon Groat, Iris Jasmine, Shelli Orava Groat

For Memberships and other inquiries please see info below or contact a board Member.

RMWS

Box 6664

Hinton, AB

T7V 1X8

780 865 1103

info@rmws.ca – Ken Groat

admin@rmws.ca – Virginia Stafford

www.rmws.ca

<https://www.facebook.com/RMWSociety>