WAGNER NATURAL AREA RECEIVES A GIFT  
by Coral Grove, Volunteer Steward Coordinator

The first day of summer was filled with sunshine and blue skies. The birds were singing from the tree tops, butterflies were flitting in the meadow and the tadpoles were swimming in the marl ponds. Who could want anything more? Well, I definitely received more than that. I was fortunate enough, along with approximately 80 other people, to spend the day at the Wagner Natural Area to join in a very special celebration. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) announced the Wagner Natural Area Extension Property as one of their ten Gifts to Canadians for 2006. This addition of 80 acres was made possible by NCC, together with:

- Wagner Natural Area Society,
- Federation of Alberta Naturalists,
- Canadian Wildlife Federation,
- Alberta Conservation Association,
- Community Initiatives Program,
- Suncor Energy Foundation,
- Parkland County, and
- and numerous generous individual donors.

This land now creates a buffer to the existing site protecting one of only a few spring-fed calcareous fens in Alberta.

Celebratory speeches and acknowledgements from the various parties involved ended with the official signing of the Stewardship Agreement and the unveiling of the new interpretive sign for the property. Guided walking tours followed along with time to converse and meet with friends, both new and old.

Congratulations to the individuals and organizations that made the addition to the extension property a reality. It is through your efforts and hard work that natural legacies are preserved and conserved for all Canadians to enjoy.

If you have never had the opportunity to visit this site I would recommend that you take the time to come out and enjoy the marl ponds and orchids.

I can’t think of a better way to have spent the first day of summer!

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- BCBC Grand Opening
- Wagner NAS define Stewardship...
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- Managing Industrial Activities In NA
- Volunteer Steward Program Update
- ... and much more
Managing Industrial Activities In Natural Areas

Submitted by: Doug Bowes, Manager of Policy & Land Use Planning

In the early 90’s the government of Alberta transferred the responsibility for administering all of Alberta’s highway wayside campsites, water access campsites, forest recreation areas, natural areas, wilderness areas and ecological reserves to the parks program, which was already managing Alberta’s provincial parks and recreation areas. After this consolidation, the parks program managed more than 700 parks and protected areas and efforts became focused on integrating these programs into a single, cohesive parks and protected areas program.

At the same time as this integration, Alberta announced the Special Places program in 1995. When it was completed in 2001, Alberta’s network of parks and protected areas had increased its total land base by more than 600%. It now covers 4.1% of the province and includes just over 500 sites in eight classes of parks and protected areas.

Prior to 1995, ongoing exploration and development activities for petroleum and natural gas (PNG) resources were permitted in only two provincial recreation areas and the natural areas class. Surface access conditions for PNG licences under natural areas were negotiated on a case-by-case basis at the time each natural area was designated up to 1995. As a result of this approach, there is a range of restrictions (“No-surface-access permitted”, “Access subject to restrictions”, and finally “Surface access not subject to restrictions”) that are attached to these pre-’95 natural areas. Pre-’95 natural areas are a mixture of sites whose lands may be covered entirely or partially by any one or more of these three restriction types.

While Community Development always tries to encourage PNG developments from surface locations (well sites) located outside of these natural areas, the department can not unreasonably deny access inside these...
sites if this is the only way to develop those PNG resources. As a result, a number of these older natural areas have been impacted by exploration and development activities within their borders. New PNG interests will continue to be sold in these natural areas, as this was a condition negotiated at the time they were designated.

All new protected areas established after 1995 through the Special Places program are subject to a different management regime for the exploration and development of PNG resources inside their borders. The Government of Alberta agreed to honour existing PNG commitments (any tenure, disposition, right, agreement or approval that existed prior to a protected area being established) in the new sites. This includes all surface and subsurface activities needed to recover the resource defined in the existing PNG commitment. As the PNG resource associated with these existing commitments is developed and depleted over time, it is expected that these protected areas will eventually contain no PNG commitments that require surface access.

It is estimated that less than five percent of the approximately 2.8 million hectares parks and protected areas network is subject to existing PNG commitments that have surface access rights. Community Development will continue to work with affected stakeholders to ensure that the impact of exploration and development activities in these sites is minimized to the greatest degree possible.

Because the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act (WAERNAHR) has no regulation of its own, recreational activities are largely unregulated in natural areas and industrial dispositions are issued and managed under the Public Lands Act. An amendment to WAERNAHR, passed in 2006, sets the stage for the development of regulations. These will enable the management of recreational activities and industrial dispositions in natural areas under WAERNAHR, rather than the Public Lands Act.

It will take several years to develop and approve the regulations. In the interim, Community Development and Sustainable Resource Development will continue to ensure both Departments work together for the effective management of natural areas.

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 Ecological Reserves</td>
<td>(29,444.41 Hectares)</td>
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<td>3 Wilderness Areas</td>
<td>(100,988.79 Hectares)</td>
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<td>32 Wildland Parks</td>
<td>(1,732,958.34 Hectares)</td>
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<td>1 Willmore Wilderness Park</td>
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<td>68 Provincial Parks</td>
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<td>1 Heritage Rangeland</td>
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<td>149 Natural Areas</td>
<td>(132,382.58 Hectares)</td>
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<td>248 Provincial Recreation Areas</td>
<td>(80,457.22 Hectares)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>518 Parks &amp; Protected Areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>(2,756,102.66 Hectares)</strong></td>
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While skimming through previous volunteer newsletters I came across this comment from a volunteer steward at the fall 2004 conference:

“...we definitely got the message that there is interest and investment in the stewards’ program, that our concerns are being listened to, and that the hearts of the staff are in the right place!”

Wow, what a powerful statement, and Yes, we are listening.

This is where I come in to the picture…

Hi, my name is Doug Marvin and I am the Head of Stewardship Services. This is a new position and my first order of business is to assess stewardship opportunities for Parks and Protected Areas. This will begin to set new direction that expands the concept of stewardship, beyond volunteering, into new arenas such as partnerships, etc. Our small but mighty team of three includes Coral Grove – Volunteer Steward Coordinator, Brad Marshall – Volunteer Services Coordinator and me as the unit leader. We are responsible for the strategic planning, evaluation and coordination of public stewardship opportunities across Alberta.

The majority of my professional career has been with Strathcona County where I had the chance to work closely with a variety of volunteers in a number of settings. My most recent projects involved environmental planning, parks planning, and community business planning. The Strathcona Wilderness Centre and the Heritage Hills Wetlands are two great examples of successful stakeholder input at the community level. I certainly understand the value of local volunteers. Coming to provincial parks and protected areas has given me the chance to adapt my municipal experiences to a broader provincial system.

Safeguarding Alberta’s natural and cultural heritage preserved within the parks network is everyone’s responsibility. You as a volunteer obviously feel a strong sense of that responsibility...and we are thankful that you are involved.

STEWARDSHIP is instrumental in building public support, both financially and morally, for the parks and protected areas program. We continually observe examples of your passion for the land.

You, as a volunteer, help us build a strong constituency of support through community involvement where citizens and organizations play leadership roles in preserving and presenting the province’s natural heritage. ... And you thought that it was just a walk in the woods!

As we assess stewardship opportunities and set new direction for the program we will need your help. We will ask for that help through surveys, observations and dialogue. Please feel free to contact me @ (780) 644-5044 or doug.marvin@gov.ab.ca

I can’t wait to meet you and personally hear how you are contributing and what suggestions you may have for the program.
Volunteer Steward Program Update
Submitted by: Coral Grove, Volunteer Steward Coordinator

Well, spring has sprung and the summer has just begun. I am sure that many of you have already made a trip or two out to visit the site(s) that you steward or maybe you are planning your upcoming trip(s). I have started to receive some of your inspection reports, but I am always happy to see more of them coming in. I do look forward to reading your inspection reports, seeing your photos to update me on the different sites and hearing how things are. Pictures are always a great item to include with your report if possible. Please remember that if you have access to a computer with the internet, you can send me your inspection reports electronically. This is the link to the online form: http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/involved/parks/volunteer/stewardreport. I still ask that you please send me an e-mail or give me a call to indicate that you have sent in an inspection report.

Since the last Steward Update, there has been a new addition to the Visitor Services Branch. The position for the Head of Stewardship Services was filled by Doug Marvin. One of his tasks is to conduct a review to determine how the concept of stewardship can be expanded and enhanced beyond simply volunteering. Doug has written an article in this newsletter to introduce himself and give you an overview of what he will be doing.

I hope that many of you are able to attend this year’s Volunteer Conference in Lac La Biche, September 15-17. It will be a great opportunity for a fall trip up to the beautiful northern part of the province. The sights and sounds should be spectacular.

I invite you to contact me if you should have any suggestions on what topic(s) you would like to discuss at the Volunteer Steward Session at this year’s Volunteer Conference. I look forward to meeting you and seeing you there. Have a great summer!

CALLING ALL SUBMISSIONS!

Partners in Preservation is always looking for great articles and photos. To streamline our administration, please follow these guidelines.

Articles should be no longer than 500 words, and include title and author.

If including a photograph, please provide a brief description of the image, including names, activities, location and photographer by full name. We prefer having the original photo or slide, and will return them to you if you provide a return address. Here are the requirements if you are submitting in digital format:

• Do not send photos in PowerPoint or MS Word. Use TIF or JPG format.
• Ensure all slides/photos are scanned at 300 dpi resolution.
• If scanning a slide, please enlarge by at least 500%.

NOTE: The Editor retains the right to edit or refuse submissions (article or photo).

If you require assistance regarding the photo requirements, please contact Darren McGregor at (780) 427-7304.

To submit an article, to contact us regarding changes to the mailing list, or to receive a free subscription please contact:
Lori at (780) 427-3805 or e-mail at Lori.Ruzycki@gov.ab.ca
or write to:
Partners in Preservation
Visitor Services Branch
Parks & Protected Areas Division
2nd Floor, Oxbridge Place
9820 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J6

Deadline for submissions for the next issue is September 30, 2006.
Stewardship … as defined by the Wagner NAS

Submitted by: Alice Hendry, President of the Wagner Natural Area Society (WNAS)

This was part of the Wagner Natural Area Society president’s annual report. We thought we would share it with all our PPA volunteers. Though the specific examples may be different, we can all identify with the key words Alice has used.

As I have a captive audience this evening, and more space than a handbook or a dictionary has for defining the word “steward,” I would like to propose a new, Wagner specific, definition. The word “steward” is seven letters long. Each letter had a special meaning for what WNAS has accomplished in the months since our last AGM in March of 2005.

‘S’, the first letter in the word, stands for science. The more we learn about WNA, the better we can protect it. This year, we revisited the eighteen 20 m x 20 m permanent monitoring plots established in the 2000 soil and vegetation inventory. This meant a lot of work (“S” also stands for sweat) for Derek Johnson, Patsy Cotterill and several volunteers. Each plot had to be monitored for changes in vegetation. Derek also established a tree growth study to monitor the growth rates of spruce tree seedlings. Monitoring of spawning frogs and toads, of plant species in bloom, of breeding birds and of orchids also continued this year. Perhaps our grandest foray into science occurred in the area of hydrogeology, but more about that research when we get to the letter “W.” “S” stands for success. Our efforts to obtain the 80 acres of Project Land as a buffer for WNA were concluded in late December when the land title was transferred to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). WNAS is now negotiating a stewardship agreement with the NCC so that WNAS can manage the NCC land as part of Wagner Natural Area. WNAS is also working with NCC to establish a biophysical inventory of the NCC property and the 160 acres of WNA to the east of the NCC property.

‘T’, stands for time. Managing WNA this year, as in previous years, required many hours of time spent on site – monitoring, cleaning up garbage, pulling and mowing weeds, participating in special events and leading groups of visitors. Additional hours were spent at meetings (both WNAS board meetings and meetings with the AB Dept. of Env., the NCC and at the Parkland County office) and workshops. Many other hours were spent on letter writing, minutes and newsletters. Pat Webb, our new treasurer, worked long hours to balance the books and to satisfy government requirements. In view of our twenty-three years of managing WNA, “T” should also stand for tenacity and teamwork.

Blue-eyed Grass (Sisyrinchium septentrionalis)

Round Leaf Sundew (Drosera rotundifolia)
groups, from as far away as China, were guided through the natural area in 2005.

‘W’ stands for water, WNA’s most important resource. Ben Rostron and graduate student Cate Hydeman, furthered our knowledge of Wagner’s water source in the summer and fall of 2005 with electroresistivity tomography studies and with the drilling of seven additional research wells in January of 2006. The more we know about Wagner’s groundwater source, the better we can protect that source in the future.

‘A’ stands for advocate. Although this word is in rather “bad odour” in some circles, it is a reality for the WNAS. We cannot protect WNA, and particularly the water source of WNA, if we do not speak out about our concerns. WNA is in the middle of a rapidly developing commercial area. The City of Spruce Grove announced in 2005 that it plans to annex property, from Parkland County, so that the city can extend to within half a mile of the natural area’s western border. We are also concerned about development that took place to the north in 2005. Development has already taken place, and continues to expand, to the south and to the west in Parkland County’s Acheson Industrial Area. If WNAS did not speak out, as an advocate for WNA, no consideration would be given to WNA and to protecting Wagner’s all important water source.

‘R’ stands for rewards. For this year, the 15 year volunteer steward award is a good example of a meaningful reward for all of our efforts, as is the knowledge that the 80 acres to the south of WNA is now protected from development.

‘D’ stands for dedication, the kind of dedication that is recognized by the 15 year volunteer steward award. Any volunteer organization, especially one as small as ours, depends on dedicated members. This has been my last year in my three year term as President of the WNAS. I know that my successor and the other members of the new board of directors will continue to be dedicated stewards, in every sense of the word, for wonderful Wagner.

Join us in Lac La Biche
For the 2006 Volunteer Conference
September 15, 16 & 17

McArthur Place
Located along the shore of Lac La Biche Lake, beside McArthur Park

Walk in the sand,

enjoy the beautiful sunsets and
the company of fellow volunteers.
Don’s Eagle

Submitted by: Bonnie Castle-Dixon, Friends of Fish Creek Park Society

On Sunday January 8th, Don Hughes (Friends Vice-Chairperson) and his faithful companion Gunde were out for their usual stroll by Mallard Point just down from Diamond Cove at the northeast end of Fish Creek Provincial Park. Close to the Ivor Strong Bridge, by Deerfoot Trail, Don came across a bald eagle on the ground and he marveled at how close he was able to get to the raptor. When Don approached the 10 meter mark the eagle donned a defensive posture. Thinking that it was protecting a kill and not wanting to intrude upon the eagle’s private space, Don continued on his walk. A little way down the path he stopped to rearrange his backpack; he looked back and from that vantage point he was able to determine that the bird was injured.

Don decided to go back to see if he could help the bird. At 5 meters, he could tell that one wing was damaged. When he approached within 2 meters, the eagle was unable to fly away. Realizing that he had left home without his cell phone, Don determined that the best course of action was to find a birdwatcher or someone else with a phone.

The first gentleman he came across offered to help. They called 411 and asked for Bird Rescue. When the operator was unable to help, Don proceeded back to his house. At the top of the hill he came across a woman taking her 2 dogs for a walk. Don approached her and told her of the situation. She offered to go back to her house to call the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, while Don returned to the eagle to keep watch.

A volunteer from the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society quickly returned the woman’s call and she gave them directions to the injured animal. In a very short time, 2 volunteers (a man and a woman) arrived with an enclosed canvas bag similar to a butterfly net. They had padded gloves, were confident and competent. The male volunteer walked out on the ice - then came back towards the bird. This action closed off the eagle’s escape route, since the eagle could still walk. Don offered to help the volunteer confine the bird and was amazed at the size of the talons.

Curious as to why the bird had ended up there, he asked the volunteers for their opinion. They thought that the raptor was not from the surrounding area and that it was on its migration path. Local birds would know of the power lines and stay away from them. When eagles become focused upon prey they are able to block everything else out. It looked like the eagle was stranded less than 24 hours, as his feathers were not scruffy and there was no apparent weight loss. If it had been any longer, the eagle would have become vulnerable to the other predators in the park.

The eagle was taken back to the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society where they attended to his physical and mental injuries. At the beginning of March, we called to check on the eagle’s progress. He is well on his way to making a full recovery and will be released back to the wild in a couple of months.
Partners in Preservation

Summer 2006

The More We Get Together...

Submitted by: Brad Marshall, Coordinator of Volunteer Services

Last year’s campout at Miquelon Lake Provincial Park was such a resounding success that we had the date picked for a return in 2006 before anyone even left the event. However as fate would have it, it was later announced that the park would be the recipient of a major upgrade and totally closed for the 2006 season. So the hunt was on for a new location. Thankfully assistance was offered quickly by Conservation Officer Doug Pilkington, who invited everyone to Pigeon Lake Provincial Park for May 5-7th.

Doug went on extended leave just prior to the start of the 2006 season, but he left us in good hands as Harry and Annie Wit (long-time volunteers with the park), facilitated onsite logistics and warmly received everyone upon their arrival Friday. A fire ban prohibited sitting around the fire that evening, but the weather was warm. Everyone came together to welcome old friends and meet those new to the event, including recent addition to our staff Doug Marvin, Head of Stewardship Services.

Saturday morning began with relaxation, visiting and a bit of discussion about the grouse that kept thumping most of the night. Like several others in attendance, I toured the park and was pleased to see several campers in the main campground this early in the season. I was also lucky enough to track down that ruffed grouse and watch it for a while.

Getting back to the group campsite, preparations were already underway for a potluck supper that evening and I needed to get my contribution underway. The cake I baked on my Coleman stove last year was such a hit, I whipped up another for this year. The potluck was served in the cozy enclosed shelter and we feasted like kings.

After the meal we had one of our signature “Host Chats”, discussing the upcoming season, our new Alberta Parks Vacation Guide and the hazard assessment work that is underway. The remaining evening was spent in casual conversation and storytelling with all enjoying the experience.

Sunday morning was bright and cheery, and we were pleased to be joined by Conservation Officer Anita Schmidt from Miquelon Lake Provincial Park. Anita shared with us what Miquelon Lake Provincial Park will look like next year when it re-opens. By mid afternoon, most everyone had their camping units ready to roll, either back home for a few days or for some, straight on to their summer placement. With attendance having grown over last year’s event, there was 100% consensus to meet again in 2007 on the May 4-7 weekend. The location is yet to be determined.

Thank you to everyone who attended and made this year’s event another success and we hope to see you back next year.
The Value of Parks

Excerpts from ‘The Value of Parks’ Brochure

Close to our Hearts
Value of parks for Albertans.

Parks are places for interactions with nature in fun and exciting ways.

Hiking, cycling, canoeing, swimming, horseback ridding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other recreational activities in provincial parks encourage active lifestyles that reduce the risk of many chronic diseases.

Friends and families gather to socialize and reconnect, experiencing nature and outdoor activities together.

Parks provide the ideal setting for rejuvenating your spirit; and reducing stress, mental fatigue and tension.

Parks inspire creativity and become part of our cultural expression through art, photography, poetry and writing.

As outdoor classrooms, parks are great places for exploring and learning about Alberta’s landscapes and natural heritage.

Over 500,000 parks visitors explore visitor centres or participate in programs that promote learning through first hand experiences.

Healthy Habitats
Value of parks for our environment.

Alberta’s provincial parks network preserves 27,525 square kilometres, or 4.15% of Alberta’s land base.

Parks protect wildlife habitat and promote ecological diversity contributing to clean air, water and soil. For example, protecting headwaters helps maintain clean water downstream.

Over 9,000 square kilometres of important wetlands and lakes in Alberta’s parks help maintain, store and purify water.

Forests in parks help clean air and reverse the effects of climate change by breaking down pollutants and, through photosynthesis, releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere.

Parks protect critical habitat for many endangered plants and animals, 7,500 square kilometres of woodland caribou habitat is preserved within the network.

Cherished by Millions
Over 8 million outdoor enthusiasts visit Alberta’s provincially protected areas each year.

Parks and protected areas like Dinosaur, Writing-on-Stone, Cypress Hills and Kananaskis Country are national and international tourist destinations.

Alberta’s more than 500 provincially protected areas vary from hot dry badlands to old-growth forests, to the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains. When visiting parks, we experience the full range of our province’s natural beauty.

In a recent survey, 93% of Albertans say they are interested in taking time to enjoy and explore Alberta’s natural heritage.

The survey also tells us that 99% of Albertans say protecting natural resources, such as parks, is important to overall quality of life.

Each year over 2,000 Albertans volunteer more than 100,000 hours of time, using their talents to preserve or interpret our rich natural heritage for all.

Parks and protected areas contribute to our prosperity and a healthy and sustainable environment, upon which our quality of life and future depend.

A downloadable PDF of ‘The Value of Parks’ brochure can be found at www.albertaparks.ca under Publications/Media.
World Heritage Site Project
Submitted by: Mary Fitl, Public Information Officer

In June 2005, as a Centennial Initiative, the grade five students from Holy Family Academy in Brooks, with their teachers, Mike Fleck, Paula Scharmer and Wayne Lorenz and visiting artist Sharon Thirkettle began a project to create a clay tile sculpture for the new visitor centre at Dinosaur Provincial Park.

The sculpture is made up of clay tiles made by the fifth grade students and framed within the UNESCO World Heritage Program emblem.

The artist volunteered hundreds of hours, first guiding the students in building up, carving and painting the clay tiles, and then once the tiles were finished, combining the tiles to create this 4’ diameter plaque.

The plaque was presented to the park at the official opening of the new visitor centre on June 20 this year and will be displayed in the main entrance of the visitor centre.
The clouds parted and the sun came out for the June 4 Opening Ceremony for the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC).

Strategically located in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, the BCBC will play a vital role in the research of neotropical migratory birds that live and breed in the boreal forest. It will also be a prime destination for national and international volunteers, scientists and educators, or anyone who is interested in birds and the boreal forest.

Based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, it is designed for minimal impact on its surroundings and is expected to achieve gold status in low energy use.

The centre will contribute to the conservation and sustainability of Alberta's boreal forest and birds, help educate our children and produce significant economic benefits by attracting scientists, educators, volunteers and visitors to the region.

Get more information about the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC) at www.lslbo.org and make a plan to visit.