



# The Packrat



June / July 2001



*Logan Massif from the Northeast, Kluane National Park, Yukon*

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## Editor's Note

This issue brings us to South America with two trip reports, first to Ecuador then to Peru. We are also going North-West for a quick report on the Mt. Logan climbing expedition where two Ramblers have reached the summit of the highest mountain in Canada.

Closer to home, the hiking season has started and one can tell judging by the number of people showing up at Wednesday's meetings.

While out there, remember to be alert for possible changes in weather conditions since this is the prime time for thunderstorms and associated lightning strikes, and don't forget to check for ticks if you hike in areas frequented by sheep and other ungulates.

Happy Hiking! ❖

## President's Message

By D. Reimer

When I see the line-up at the Membership table at meetings I know that summer hiking is really here!

Thanks to those April snows, Ramblers have been held back from getting on some of their favourite Foothills hikes and more than a few of us were greeted with knee, even hip-deep snow. But except for those April snows, we've seen very dry conditions and Spring flowers are 2 to 3 weeks later than usual.

The River Cleanup at the Weaselhead was the Club's 28<sup>th</sup> year as participants. A great turnout of 17 found the usual weird detritus. Many thanks to Dave for the excellent organisation and to those who gave up a sunny day on the trails to help.

Still on Cleanups, Ramblers will again be joining other clubs for K-Country Trail Maintenance on the second Saturday of each month from May to the Fall. If you can fit it into your busy life, consider volunteering for one of these days. This is a great way to keep both your body and those trails in shape.

On the environment action front, many members signed a petition expressing opposition to creating a Forest Management Area of the unprotected areas in K-country. Spray Lake Sawmills and the Provincial government are in near-final negotiations on this issue and Alberta Wilderness Assoc. is heading the drive to have public input into the issue before it is too late.

The other issue of concern has been the status of the Evan Thomas Recreation area. I have written a letter outlining concerns and it has been available at meetings. Interested and concerned members can read it and add their signatures or send their own letters.

Looking forward, there will be our Orientation Day, June 3, with hands-on activities (so what WOULD you do if someone fell and broke a leg? Or you had to spend an unplanned night out?) and a pot luck supper at its end. Then, Stampede Breakfast with flapjacks and syrup and Wally's famous rhubarb made into sauce. Plus scads of great hikes.

Walk softly, leave no trace and enjoy the Wilderness experience. See you on the trails. ❖

## Lake O'Hara Backpack

Aug. 31 – Sept. 3, 2001

It's not really a backpack 'cuz we go in & out by bus but you'll need the same preparation & equipment as a normal backpack trip.

Each of the 4 days a beautiful yet challenging hike will be planned. On the menu of hikes will be the Abbot Pass A.C.C. Hut (the only Swiss-style stone Mtn. Hut in Alberta), the all soul's prospect alpine route & McArthur Lake. The area abounds with literally dozens of beautiful lakes and viewpoints. The campground has a rain-sheltered cooking area and for those genteel folks you may partake of afternoon tea at the lake O'Hara Lodge.



- Max. 8 Persons
- Bus Cost ----- \$12.00
- Camping Fee ----- 18.00
- Daily Park Fee ---- 15.00
- Reservation Fee --- 2.50
- Total: \$47.50
- Additional Misc. Costs;  
Gas, Dinner

### Registration Deadline:

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001

(\$20 Deposit Req'd)

Call Trip Co-ordinator

Ken Park @ 244-6809

To Sign-Up

**PLAN AHEAD!**

If you're interested in following Loris Neff's one-year tour around the world, you can visit her website at:

<http://www.lorisunleashed.homestead.com>

**Deadline for next Packrat is:  
July 18, 2001**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### PRESENTATION ON COUGARS

JUNE 13, 2001 @ 8:00 P.M. (AFTER THE MEETING)  
Ian Ross of Arc Wildlife Services will give a 1 ½ hour presentation on cougars.

### STAMPEDE BREAKFAST

JULY 7, 2001 (STARTING AT 9:30AM)  
LOCATION: 4015 COMANCHE ROAD N.W.  
Marietta Portigal and Brian Westcott will be our hosts for this event. There will be a nominal charge of \$5.00 per person. Please, let the Social Committee know before June 30<sup>th</sup>, if you are interested in attending. A headcount will help us plan our shopping!

### CAR CAMP 2001

SEPTEMBER 21, 22 & 23, 2001  
The RMRA is looking for a volunteer to co-ordinate the annual car camp. Reservations have been made at the Highwood Group Camp. If you are interested, please contact one of the executive members.



## Get the Right Bus in Ecuador!

*By K. Witham*

Ecuador is a hiker's paradise, if you care to travel that far! There are easy walking/hiking trips, and the ultimate climb of Cotopaxi (5897 metres), or Chimborazo (6310 metres), requiring crampons, ice axes and ropes. There is no lack of popular adventure activities in out of the way places, and there is a good network of roads. Acclimatisation is of some concern. The city of Quito is relatively high and there are several strenuous hikes in the area to get the climber in shape. "Climbing and Hiking in Ecuador" by Betsy Wagenhauser & Rob Rachowiecki, is a great guidebook, or if you're really serious, join the South American Explorers Club for \$50US per year. They have a clubhouse in Quito, Ecuador and in Cusco, Peru. There are also guides available, \$60US per two people.

Three of us travelled together in Ecuador from Dec 16, 2000 to Jan 3, 2001.... my sister and I (with absolutely no Spanish), and my niece, Cheri (delightfully fluent in Spanish). We spent two days in Banos, located 150 miles Southeast of Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The main attraction in Banos is the thermal hot springs, and there are many hotels and eating places to accommodate tourists. The gentle sub-tropical climate is another draw, as well as hiking up the slopes of Tungurahua along many different trails. We chose to rent mountain bikes and cycled along a quiet road that twisted and hugged the steep hillside of the Pastaza river gorge. Several times we stopped and hiked down the hillside and across the river bottom to the other side to see some beautiful waterfalls. At one spot we took a small cable car that spun us across the river gorge to the other side where we enjoyed a cup of tea in the calm and windblown stillness. It was a glorious day topped off by a soak in the thermal hot spring pool. (Hostel price \$3US each per night, very clean, with 3 beds, bathroom/shower).

The next day we headed for Chugchilan, a small village deep in the heart of the Andes, to re-unite with some of Cheri's student friends. In Banos, Cheri attempted to confirm that there was a bus from Banos to Chugchilan. "They tell you what they think you want to hear", said

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Cheri of the polite and condescending Ecuadorians. We boarded the bus and continued to Latacunga, where the bus driver stopped, shrugged his shoulders and said, "Go to the bus depot over there, it is only a few blocks away". Slinging our backpacks on our backs, we walked the 8 blocks in the hot sun to the depot. There, we got more positive (?) affirmation as to boarding the right bus to Chugchilan. This particular bus was full of the local indigenous Quichua residents. Their purchases of sacks of rice and corn were piled in the aisles, there was a seat piled high with crates of eggs; live chickens were tied by the legs and tossed into the luggage compartment, and a live sheep tied, standing, on top of the bus. I loved this bus. It smelled like earth and leather, and was full of smiling people and children. I wanted to be on this bus and see its destination! But Cheri was intuitive...."Get off this bus", said Cheri, "This is the wrong bus."

Finally, we were on the right bus (not as intriguing as the first one), and were soon twisting and winding up the mountains for 2 ½ hours. Suddenly the road became worse, washed out, and full of holes. We began the precarious descent, sometimes backing up to make it around a corner or across a bumpy spot. Don't go there if you're afraid of heights! About 2 hours later we were in Chugchilan, a small and very poor village. Our hostel was only a few minutes walk, La Posada Oveja Negra, The Black Sheep Inn, an environmentally friendly operation. For \$17US each per night, we had clean, adequate accommodation plus dinner, breakfast and lunch. It was totally relaxing, far removed from any noise and bustle, and the air was clean and refreshing. Check out their website at [www.blacksheepinn.com](http://www.blacksheepinn.com) There are many beautiful hikes and walks in the area, from easy walks to 6 hour excursions, and a guided bird watching trip. You can pay a guide, very inexpensive, perhaps a dollar or two. Don't miss the Laguna Quilatoa hike, a beautiful volcanic crater lake. The temperature 25 to 30+°C, was hot in the sun, but always a breeze or occasional cloud for cool relief. We relaxed here and rested our upset gringo stomachs. The food was generous and vegetarian, and there were cookies, muffins, tea & coffee! We spent sunny days walking the almost deserted roads and hills.

A few days later we did a REAL hike, more to Rambler standards. About 100 km NE of Quito, near the city of Ibarra, we decided to hike the volcano Imbabura (4600 metres). Cheri took us to Casa Aida's, another bargain at \$15US each for two nights, including all meals! We had our own straw-roofed round hut and a real bathroom just a few steps away, as well as a shower room. We arrived there on Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, amidst great excitement along the way. There were many straw-filled effigies of prominent political figures everywhere. These were set afire at midnight amidst the noise of firecrackers and fireworks in celebration of New Year's Eve. Due to this holiday celebration, we were unable to get anyone up early enough to drive us to the trailhead. At 6 a.m. Aida had huge pancakes with berry sauce ready for us and packed lunches. We walked the extra 2 hours to the trailhead, a pleasant walk through quiet farms and fields along an ancient stone cobbled road. Imbabura's approach is a path almost overgrown with the long sierra grasses, and almost treeless along the way. The rest of the pathway was not difficult and overall a good hike, similar to many of our Rambler hikes. Unfortunately, the mist dropped down and we were unable to get that fabulous view that Cheri kept telling us about!

Politics can change very quickly in Ecuador and so can the prices. But even in US dollars we found it incredibly economical. However we didn't require guides, interpreters or tour prices. My niece did all of that for us! She has lived there for 8 months and became a strong hiker, and climbed Cotopaxi about a month ago.

We enjoyed Ecuador, and were enchanted by the history, the climate and the scenery. I will always remember that bus ride to Chugchilan, the endless, green patchwork fields climbing to the highest most inaccessible places. Everywhere there were people tending the fields, or a few sheep or cows, perhaps a pig tethered to the side of the road. I often think about the beauty as well as the harshness of their lives. My only regret was not having more time there. And I always wonder what kind of adventure we would have had if we had taken that "wrong" bus! ❖

# Highlights of Executive Meeting - March 27, 2001

*By D. Reimer*

## Reports

Finances are in good shape. Printing costs for Outdoor Guide and Application forms are up but Packrat costs are down (only 34 copies were mailed, the rest were e-mailed). Membership is 175. There are still 17 who paid last summer but have not signed forms yet - they will be notified.

CASC met Feb 5. Courses to be arranged were: Leadership course (by HOGS), First Aid (RMRA), and a Risk & Liability workshop. Bob & Dorothy-Ann will attend the Risk workshop on behalf of RMRA. Cost is \$15/person. A planned Avalanche course was postponed to next winter because the instructor cancelled.

Website privacy & security were discussed. It was decided that each member will have the option of designating a 'Public' name for themselves to be used in the Packrat, the published membership list and the website. The Packrat will be moved to the Public area of the website after suitable editing has been done.

It was agreed that e-mail, via the Packrat editor, can be used to promote programs, social events and courses.

## New Business

Orientation Day will be held June 3 and will be organized by the Coordinators' Council. Non-members

will be allowed to attend and will sign the old (1999-2000) waiver.

CAOC asked RMRA if the club wished to have a display at the Annual Gear Sale on Apr. 21. The executive concluded not to have a booth because of limited public interest in previous years.

Request for someone to coordinate the River Clean-up (May 6) will be made at a Wed. meeting.

Some discussion on recognition for coordinators. The executive thought such recognition to be a good idea but no decision was made.

Subsequent to this meeting a short meeting was held April 18 to address 2 further issues. From this meeting the following were decided.

The Programs Director will work on some guidelines for honouring guest speakers and present them at the next executive meeting. In the meantime, \$75 will be donated to A.W.A. on behalf of Ian Ross for his cougar program in mid-June.

Re the Evan-Thomas Recreation Area, the President will write a letter expressing concern about the status of the area. This letter will be circulated at several meetings so that individual members may sign if they wish. ❖



# The Colca, Deepest Canyon in the World

*By D. Reimer*

Peruvians were quick to extol the beauty and grandeur of the Colca Canyon and tout it as the deepest in the world, deeper even than the Grand Canyon. Having hiked down into the Grand Canyon, I had to check it out.

On a sunny morning in early December, 1999, I arrived in Arequipa, Peru, at 5:30 a.m. on the overnight bus from Nasca and my only thought was - catch up on sleep – so straight to my hotel, the delightful Casa de mi Abuela (translation 'My Grandma's House').

Arequipa is a fascinating city in its own right but, lying 150 km south of the Colca, it is the spot where most Canyon tours originate. Dave & Diane planned to fly in from Lima and join me the following day and we would 'do' the Colca as a 3-some. Thus, after my nap, I set out to find a good tour.

No shortage of tour companies – it seemed every second shop on the busy Avenida Jerusalem was prepared to take my money but not all offered what I wanted or even a good product.

At last we settled on a 3-day trip, private van with driver and with an English-speaking guide. When I say English-speaking, I use the term loosely. Marcelo was a sincere young man who had enough of the language to tell you what he needed to but his understanding of our questions was pretty limited.

Arequipa lies under the mountain Misti at 2400m. To reach the Colca our route would cross a pass at 4205m. It was a longer route but easier on our systems as we worked at acclimating our bodies to the elevation. Dave & Diane did some chewing of coca leaves and claim it helped them. I preferred to suffer for the 24 hours I knew it would take to become acclimatized.

Along the way we stopped to watch domestic alpaca and llama and were thrilled to see, close-up, a small herd of vicuña (1 male and 10 to 12 females). The vicuña has never been domesticated but its hair is, nevertheless, carefully clipped by the locals and retails in the USA for around \$4000 to \$6000US per kg. The price is high since one animal yields barely 200g per shear and can be shorn no more often than every 2

years with 5 shearings being maximum. We were relieved to learn that the Peruvian government regulates this very closely.

The Colca stretches due west from the village of Chivay where we prepared to overnight in a very modern posada or bungalow-motel. At 3633m., Chivay was still high and we walked slowly, feeling the effects of the soroche.

Away at 8 a.m. the next morning, our van followed the winding gravel road along the south side of the canyon. At the eastern end, the sides sloped more gently to the River Colca and remnants of terraced fields marched upwards, almost to our road. As we continued west, the land grew wilder, more barren, and the peaks of the enclosing mountains seemed to loom closer and closer. Ampato, at 6318m, had gained fame as the site where archaeologist Johan Reinhard discovered the perfectly preserved body of a young Inca woman, sacrificed to the Gods on its peak. Nearby Sabancaya, at 5798m., is no less impressive.

We, however, stopped at the Mirador del Cruz Condor (around 3450m.) to try for a glimpse of the condors that nested in the cliffs below. With at least 40 or 50 other tourists we hung around. Here, the canyon narrows and its steep-sided edges make it hard to see the river almost 1200m. below. The condors, no doubt wise to this unwanted attention, were elsewhere and were no-shows. Marcelo told us that in the busy season (June through August) there would be literally hundreds of gawkers at this spot every morning. Good grief – so much for a wilderness experience!

Then Marcelo took us a little further and led us, on foot, along a narrow westerly path for 2 or 3 km. It was here that we finally glimpsed our condors, flying high and disappearing over Ampato to the south. Surely we can be forgiven for feeling just a tad smug that we saw these huge birds when the others did not!

On our final morning we followed Marcelo as he took us down to the river near Chivay for a walk among the terraces and ruins of past civilizations. Nothing remains of the earliest inhabitants, over 7000 years ago, but today's farmers are slowly resurrecting the ancient fields built and used as late as Incan times in

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## Mt. Logan Summit Report

Saturday May 26, 2001, 10:30 a.m. - Summit Day

Conditions on Mt. Logan at 5273m (17,300ft): -35°C.

The team of four, including two Ramblers, Bob St. John and Arnold Westberg, leave camp for the summit, estimating a 10 hours day. The snow turns to ice as they ascend. Crampons replace the skis slowing progress. 11:30 p.m. the sun sets on Mt. Logan.

Midnight May 26 **ALL FOUR REACH THE SUMMIT** at 5959m (19,551ft), the highest Peak in Canada.

The glaciers glisten in the low light of dusk against the bright sky in the background.

Bob estimates the temperature to be colder than -35°C and the winds had increased.

On summit time: 5 min. 4 a.m. the sun rises on Mt. Logan. Headlamps were not required.

May 27, 7:30 a.m., 21 hours later all return to camp.

Congratulations to all four and stay tuned for a trip report in the next issue of the Packrat. ❖



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the 1500s. From across the river, they look like a Roman amphitheatre with their precise symmetry.

So is it really the deepest canyon in the world? At more than 3400 m deep and 100 km long it would certainly seem so. When challenged, Peruvians are apt to measure it from the River Colca to the peak of Sabancayo or, better still, Ampato. Regardless of the statistics, it is truly impressive and well worth the visit. And, if you can catch a view of a condor or 2, all the better. ❖

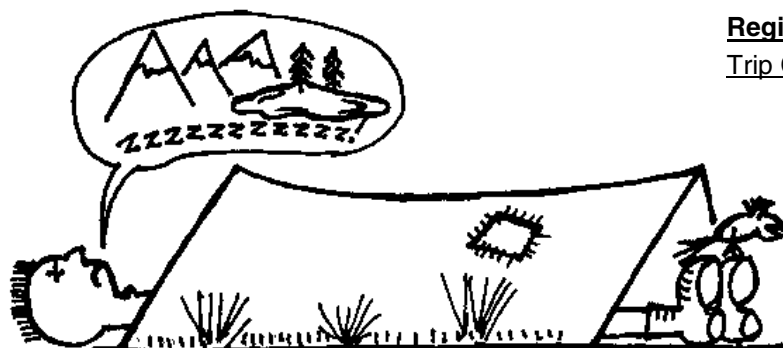
## Egypt Lake Backpack

August 3 – 6, 2001

On this trip we'll camp 2 nights at Egypt Lake and 1 night at Shadow Lake, then out past the Twin Lakes and Vista Lake to Hwy 93, a total of 40.4km.

After coming in through forests, meadows and over spectacular Healy Pass our 2 nights at Egypt Lake will give us a full day to explore the areas' many lakes renowned for their beauty. Then this classic route will take us over 3 Passes; Whistling Pass, Ball Pass and Gibbon Pass plus no less than 12 Lakes will come into view over the 4 days of our journey. A traditional "Rite of Passage", so to speak (bad pun intended) will be observed by way of dinner in Canmore to top off the weekend.

Maximum trip capacity is 10 persons. First come, first served. To sign on, a \$20 deposit is required.



**Registration Deadline:** July 4, 2001

**Trip Costs:** Backcountry Fees \$18 / Pers.  
Daily Park Fee 15 / Pers.  
Reservation Fee 1 / Pers.  
Total: \$34

Misc. Expenses: Gas, Dinner

Call Trip Co-ordinator  
Ken Park @ 244-6809  
To Sign-Up

## RMRA Executive Committee 2000 / 2001

President	D. Reimer	225-2499 (H)		<a href="mailto:president@ramblers.ab.ca">president@ramblers.ab.ca</a>
Vice President	Danielle Tardif	210-2501 (H)	294-6688 (W)	<a href="mailto:vicepresident@ramblers.ab.ca">vicepresident@ramblers.ab.ca</a>
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Acrobat Reader 4.0 or above is recommended for best results. If you don't have the latest version, you can

download it for free from Adobe's website at: <http://www.adobe.com> Click on



The Packrat is also available on the RMRA website at: <http://ramblers.ab.ca>

**Activities:** Hiking, Backpacking, Skiing, Cycling, Climbing, Scrambling, and Mountaineering, Educational and Awareness Programs, Social Functions.

**Meetings:** Every Wednesday evening at 7:30 P.M.  
Rosemont Community Hall, 2807 - 10 Street NW

**Mail:** Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association  
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council (CAOC)  
1111 Memorial Drive, NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

**Trip Info:** 282-6308 Information Line and at Meetings