

The PackRat

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association June/July 2003



*Mt. Temple and, in front of it, Eiffel Peak taken from Wenchemna Pass
(though on a sunnier day than the one in the story on Page 3, **Super Hike, Super Muffins**).*

IN THIS ISSUE

- West Nile Virus 3
- Super Hike, Super Muffins 3
- K-Country Trails Update 6
- Low Impact Hiking 8
- Food - Bad News for Bears 9
- New View of Ecotourism 11

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President's Report...

SUMMER APPEARS TO be making a stealthy approach this year, hidden behind early May's veils of snow. This may have had a beneficial effect in shortening the wood tick season as hopefully the early hatchlings were buried under the late snows!

The other insect that may be a problem this year is the West Nile Virus-bearing mosquito which may be making an Alberta appearance this year. Check out the link to the Alberta Wellness website in the Reference section of the Rambler website to read up on the likelihood of this hazard and preventive measures.

At the last Executive meeting topics discussed included a passed motion that the Stampede Breakfast be free to members and \$5 for guests. We also decided to give new members copies of the summer "Q" cards which contain a lot of safety and first aid reminder information.

There will also be a summer barbeque or weiner roast that will serve as a volunteer recognition event. Membership is over 260 members so we remain on solid financial footing.

We have been circulating a survey of member opinions and we have over 55 returns so far which I have tabulated the results on the Feedback discussion forum in the members area of the website.

Briefly, two-thirds are satisfied with the activities offered and more of the activities wanted were snow related, possibly a function of not many trips this winter account lousy snow.

For communications, the website is used by 85% of respondents, the phone line 56% and meetings are 58%. Since most of the surveys were handed out at meetings this may skew the results. A PDF copy of the survey is accessible from the last line of the website Calendar from where it could be printed and

maybe you can get a Coordinator to drop it off at a meeting.

On the subject of making donations to other organizations, more than half said no. No organization was mentioned by more than 20% of respondents. There were a number of comments either way and they are reported on the Feedback forum.

I will continue to tabulate responses and update the results for circulation at the meetings and on the forum.

PACKRAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertising space in **PackRat** and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page	\$10
Half Page	\$20
Full Page	\$40

Payment **MUST** be received prior to publication.

West Nile Virus - Don't Panic, Take Action!

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the Canadian Wildlife Federation Bulletin and explains ways how you can protect yourself and your family against the West Nile Virus this summer. You can get more information by visiting the Health Canada web site: www.hc-sc.gc.ca.

WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV) is frightening, but there's no need to panic. Rest assured that minimizing your risk is easy. Did you know that of the more than 75 mosquito species in Canada, only two are known WNV carriers? They include the northern house mosquito (*Culex pipiens*) and the white-dotted mosquito (*Culex restuans*). With a few simple steps, you can readily control both species and drastically reduce your family's chances of exposure to WNV.

- Eliminate breeding grounds.
- Remove sources of standing water, such as empty flowerpots and watering cans.

- Store kiddie pools upside down, cover garbage and compost bins, and maintain a clean and chlorinated swimming pool.
- Refresh birdbaths weekly, sweep out puddles, and keep gutters clear.

These simple strategies will take you a long way towards controlling the mosquito population around your home. But some mosquitoes are inevitable.

- Encourage natural predators, such as birds, frogs, beetles, and dragonflies to frequent your yard.
- If you have a pond, maintaining a healthy, balanced system will keep mosquitoes under control.

Activities

Hiking, Backpacking,
Skiing, Cycling,
Climbing,
Scrambling,
Mountaineering, Educa-
tion & Awareness
Programs, Social
Functions

Meetings

Every Wednesday
evening at 7:30 p.m.

Mail

Rocky Mountain Ram-
blers Association
c/o Calgary Area Out-
door Council (CAOC)
1111 Memorial Dr NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

Trip Info

282-6308 Information
Line and at Meetings

Website

The Packrat is available
on the RMRA website at
www.ramblers.ab.ca. If
we have your email
address, you will be
automatically notified
that an electronic copy
of the Packrat is on the
website.

- You can also install an aeration system, and/or use environmentally sound biological control agents, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*.
- Finally, minimize your likelihood of getting bitten. Limit your outdoor activities between dawn and dusk, when the two WNV-carrying species are most active. Wear long sleeves and loose clothing, ensure that window and door screens are in good repair, install bird houses around your property, and use repellent according to directions.

Super Hike, Super Muffins

by Dorothy-Ann Reimer

JULY 25, 1987 - The bright early morning sun promised a great hike to Wenkchemna Pass. Led by Angus Henley, a good-sized group set off up the switch-backing trail leading from the NE end of Moraine Lake.

Leaving the trees behind, the path followed the slope high above the shimmering lake. But now clouds and occasional rain spats were moving in. The group paused to don warmer clothes.

A light wind treated everyone with periodic gusting but the group finally arrived at the Pass for lunch. Pulling out rain gear and thermal blankets, everyone settled down to their reward; great views and tasty food.

However, the threatening weather wasn't ready to give up and Angus decided it was time to retreat. Two or 3 had already left and the rest packed up to follow.

Now facing into the wind, the hikers watched lightning in the east connecting sky to land. Jagged forks split the air and lunged to the mountain peaks ahead. The storm had become violent and was skimming down the lake towards them, bringing wind, hail, and dangerous electrical strikes.

Rushing down from the Pass, the group spied a

large boulder with hollow space beneath and quickly crammed themselves under it—probably the worst place to shelter in a lightning storm. Luck was with them and they emerged, unscathed, minutes later to continue the return trip.

Nearly 2 cm of hail fell but soon it turned to rain. A couple of people without rain gear were outfitted with large plastic garbage bags. By the time everyone reached the cars, as so often happens, the storm had moved on and the sky was clearing.

On this trip, one of the conversation topics was food (has there ever been a Rambler hike when we didn't talk about food!), especially muffins. One of the women offered us a great 'Super Muffin' recipe. I don't remember her name, she hiked with the Club only that one season, and she never signed my copy but now, 16 years later, I'd like to share with Ramblers both the recipe and the memory of that hike.

SUPER MUFFINS



1 cup bran
½ cup wheat germ
1 cup milk

Soak these together 'til milk is absorbed then add:

½ cup oil
2 eggs
2 tsp vanilla
3 med. bananas, mashed
½ cup honey

In a separate bowl, mix together:

2 cups wholewheat flour (or substitute ½ white flour)

5 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
2 Tbsp soy flour (or substitute white flour)
½ tsp cinnamon
½ cup shredded unsweetened coconut
¾ cup raisins
½ cup sunflower seeds

Add wet ingredients to dry, mix. Bake at 375° F. for 15-20 minutes.

Yield: 18-20 muffins.

K-Country Trails Update

by D. Reimer

ON A WET FRIDAY morning, April 25, representatives from the Kananaskis Trails User Group met with K-Country senior personnel to review progress in our on-going effort to improve trail care. Following is a summary of the main points discussed. For further background, see the Feb/Mar 2003 PackRat.

- 1.** K-Country staff said a big thanks to those who wrote to them and to the Minister to say thanks for what they had accomplished, despite cutbacks.
- 2.** Once again, K-Country's Operating Budget remains at \$8.3 million, unchanged in 3 years, despite the loss of the prisoner labour force, rising costs and deteriorating facilities.
- 3.** Friends of Kananaskis will operate the Volunteer trail care program, every 2nd Sat. of the month, from



May to Sept. Some seniors' groups also plan to field work parties during the midweek.

- 4.** The winter program (grooming, track-setting) was very successful, thanks to the lower-than-expected snowfall. Our letters did have some impact. However, under normal snow conditions (i.e. snow from late November through March), staff could not have coped.
- 5.** West Bragg Ski Area: There is a volunteer user group working on putting together a plan to take over this area, perhaps as soon as next winter.

6. User fees are still on the table but no decision has been made.

7. Lots of talk about skate vs classic skiing. There have been complaints about skate

skiers destroying the groomed tracks. Some from our Users Group will work on ways to minimize the concerns (e.g. possible information signs, colour-coded maps to show best skating and classic trails).

Banning particular usage (no dogs, no skating on certain trails, etc.) is not feasible because K-Country does not have the staff to enforce it.

8. The Group decided to wait until late June before deciding on what further (if any) political action would be pursued.

Here are a few personal

comments:

- no increased funding means that, should we have decent snow next year, the **trail grooming will be severely limited.**
- Friends of Kananaskis, which operates as an independent non-profit society, do much work in trail upkeep. It relies on public donations entirely. It applied to the Provincial Lotteries Board for grants but was refused because the funds would be used for trail work. The Board

states that this work is the responsibility of the government and no funds are available where the province has such responsibility. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to realize this and appears unwilling to come up with the needed cash.

- This year marks the 25th anniversary of creation of the visionary K-Country plan. No, there is no celebration planned. It seems there is no money available to do

more than mention it on the official website.

- Protecting the environment, looking after K-Country, is very low on the provincial priority list. Until a very large part of the general public becomes really vocal about it, we can expect very little improvement.

Don't forget...

- a) to notify K-Country of problem areas, and
- b) to get out and help the volunteer trail crews.

WE ALL GAIN!



The Packrat

Low Impact Hiking

by Bruce Darwin

“WAY TO GO JIM!” I recently accompanied Jim Powers on a Rambler hike that was very gratifying. The hike was Threepoint, North Fork, Ware C, 9999 loop. We had a very enjoyable day partly due to Jim’s knowledge of the history of this area.

To me the most gratifying aspect of the hike was hearing Jim’s request for people to avoid contributing further to the braiding of this very muddy trail. Few of us actually slipped and sloshed our way along the primary trail even after Jim’s exhortations.

For the past two years, I have witnessed coordinators and other members braiding trails, taking shortcuts, walking in single file where there was no trail and avoiding rock beds where the impact would be minimal.

During that time, on the hikes that I was a participant, not one coordinator requested adherence to

these basic precepts. I am certainly not without guilt as I occasionally copied my fellow travellers and said nothing.

Three or four years ago, there was the spring introductory hike with various stations to inform new



members and remind existing members of various aspects of hiking such as safety, medical emergencies, proper equipment, etc. These were very beneficial for my wife and me as we were relatively new to hiking. The potluck afterwards was also very enjoyable and an opportunity to meet other members. The

station I remember the most was (wo)manned by Dorothy-Ann Reimer and colleagues. There, I learned how to keep my impact on our precious playground to a minimum.

It is now time (urgent) we renew our practice of low impact hiking. We are all aware of the potential of reduced access to these wonderful natural areas that we enjoy so much.

I believe the Ramblers are a respected outdoor organization that can provide a shining example of an environmentally friendly organization to our fellow travellers on the paths we share.

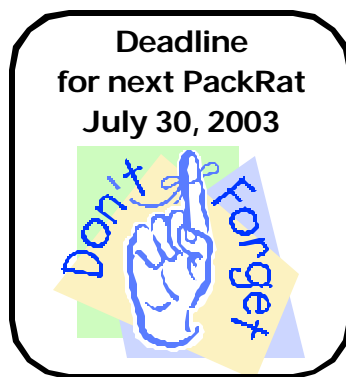
An announcement of the appropriate practices was made at this year’s Open House in May, but there were a very low percentage of members in attendance. The web site has a wealth of information on low impact hiking, but you will only find it if you are curious. One of the Terms

of Membership addresses Leave No Trace but this is obviously not registering with the membership.

Although I understand that each member is responsible for their own actions and the coordinators already contribute so much to the organization, I would like to request that coordinators quickly remind their hiking parties of these practices at the pre-hike circle. Although this even sounds extremist to me, I would also suggest that chronic offenders, as reported by coordinators, be expelled from the club.

I would appreciate hearing other views on this through the discussion forums on our web site.

Happy, Safe, Enjoyable and Caring Hiking!



The Packrat

FOOD

by Kathleen Donnelly, (Backpacker, Sept./02)

Bad News for Bears

Keep unwanted dinner guests away from your camp with this guide to eating safely in bear country.



Fact: Bears like camp food. **Fact:** You don't want to get in a tussle with a bruin over a bagel.

Fiction: It's difficult to dine safely in bear country. According to Stephen Herrero, author of the landmark book ***Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance***, improvements in backcountry food etiquette have made bear-inflicted injuries extremely rare. He says that the positive trend is a direct result of changes in the way humans handle food and garbage.

Yellowstone National Park, for instance, has seen bear-inflicted injuries drop from 49 a year between 1931 and 1967 to one a year during the 1990s. Bear management specialists

credit the development of bearproof food and garbage containers, plus the use of bear poles and canisters.

Still, bears are a risk to take seriously. Tom Smith, Ph.D., a U.S. Geological Survey bear researcher who spends his time among the oversize grizzlies of Alaska's Katmai Peninsula, estimates that a bear can smell a dead deer 9 miles away. That means that your three-alarm chili might prick up noses a long way off. And many parks don't provide bear canisters or food-hanging poles.

So should you jettison all your smelly (read: good-tasting) camp food? To find out, we asked the experts—researchers who regularly camp among grizzlies in Alaska's backcountry. They told us that backpackers can cook and eat worry-free in bear country by taking a few

simple precautions.

RULE 1. Don't eat where you plan to sleep. Choose a spot at least 300 feet downwind from camp to cook and clean, and another spot 300 feet from there to store food canisters or hang bags. In grizzly country, you might want to eat dinner in the early evening, then pack up and hike a few more miles to set up camp.

RULE 2. Minimize prep time. Smith favors freeze-dried meals that require him only to boil, mix, and eat in the bag. There's no prep time and barely any cooking time, and cleanup means sticking the foil packet in his zipperlock garbage bag.

But fast doesn't always mean bland. Steve Partridge, one of Smith's research partners, spends extra time at home dehydrating ingredients so he can eat gourmet. His favorite trail meal takes only minutes to cook, but includes one of the world's most fragrant sauces, which he rehydrates in camp.

RULE 3. Master the art of one-pot cooking. Tania Lewis, who kayaks Glacier Bay collecting information on campsites frequented by both bears and humans, isn't afraid to dirty one—but only one—pot. The fewer dishes you use, the fewer you have to wash, and the quicker your meal is finished, especially if you eat out of the pot, too.

Bear Country Basics

Our experts add these tips for preventing unwanted dinner guests. (For more advice, consult Smith's web site at www.absc.usgs.gov/research/brownbears/safety/safeconduct.htm.)

- Ask local managers about bear activity and special requirements. Rules vary by region.
- Pick sites with good visibility so you can see bears approaching—and they can see you. Avoid sites that are near bear feeding areas (like berry bushes) or in constricted travel corridors (like a narrow valley).
- Check potential camps

for signs of bear activity and messy human activity. If you see bear scat, spilled food, or garbage in the in the fire ring, move on.

- If your dishwater contains food waste, filter it through a nylon stocking or a small wire mesh strainer. Hang strainer with your food.
- Pack out food particles and leftovers. Never bury or burn garbage, as both will still attract bruins.
- Drain cooking liquid like water used to boil pasta at least 100 yards from camp. Better yet, use foods that don't require draining, such as rice and couscous.
- Don't sleep in the clothes you cooked in. Wash your hands and face well after cooking.
- Store anything with a scent in bear resistant canisters or a bear bag hung properly from poles, trees, or a cliff at least 100 yards from your sleeping area and 100 yards from your cooking area.

- Seal stored food in plastic bags to minimize odor.
- Use a funnel to fill your stove. Bears are attracted to fuel spills, especially diesel and kerosene.
- If a bear approaches your camp, store all food in bear-resistant canisters and back slowly away. Use your voice and raise your arms overhead to alert the bear to your presence.
- If a bear gets your food, report it. Your information could help other backpackers.

*submitted by
Alistair DesMoulins*



The Packrat

A New View of Ecotourism

Editor's Note: Here's another article borrowed from the Canadian Wildlife Federation Bulletin on Ecotourism and the impact on wildlife and habitat.

TOURISM IS one of the world's largest industries, and Canada is ranked as one of the top-10 tourist destinations on Earth. Thanks to our bountiful lakes, mountains, and forests, visits to Canada's natural areas are increasing, bringing employment opportunities and economic justification for conservation.

Yet tourists often harass and inadvertently disturb wildlife. Litter is a common sight, and fragile habitat is frequently trampled. The problem is that travel to natural areas is unregulated, and tourists are often unaware that their presence and behaviour can impact on wildlife and habitat.

The term "ecotourism" represents a specialized

segment of the travel market comprised primarily of wealthy travellers who want to learn about nature. However, CWF has decided to take a broader approach and develop a "resource-based tourism policy." Whether the activity is photography, hiking, kayaking, or whalewatching, conservation of the resource base must be a priority. Ecotourists and all users of natural areas need to be educated about how their behaviour impacts on wildlife.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

The highest concentration of grizzly bears in Canada is in Kluane National Park, outside Whitehorse, Yukon.



Bob Smith Performance Evaluation

- 1- Bob Smith, my assistant programmer, can always be found
- 2- hard at work in his cubicle. Bob works independently, without
- 3- wasting company time talking to colleagues. Bob never
- 4- thinks twice about assisting fellow employees, and he always
- 5- finishes given assignments on time. Often he takes extended
- 6- measures to complete his work, sometimes skipping coffee
- 7- breaks. Bob is a dedicated individual who has absolutely no
- 8- vanity in spite of his high accomplishments and profound
- 9- knowledge in his field. I firmly believe that Bob can be
- 10- classed as a high-caliber employee, the type which cannot be
- 11- dispensed with. Consequently, I duly recommend that Bob be
- 12- promoted to executive management, and a proposal will be
- 13- executed as soon as possible.

Addendum:

That idiot was standing over my shoulder while I wrote the report sent to you earlier today. Kindly re-read only the odd numbered lines.

submitted by Danielle Tardif

The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome comments, articles, and ideas from our members and, if content is deemed suitable, will be used as space permits.

Email submissions to the newsletter editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca or forward contributions to RMRA, c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council, 1111 Memorial Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3E4.

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**DON'T FORGET
TO WATCH OUT
FOR TICKS!**

