



The PackRat

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

October/November 2003



With the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration and in partnership with the Friends of Kananaskis, Ramblers volunteer to help out with some trail maintenance on Mt. Allan in September.

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President's Report...

With the end of the Rambler fiscal year, I am happy to report that we remain in good financial shape. We have also had a successful year of outdoor activities with lots of trips going out, ranging from roller blading on city pathways to ascents of Mount Aconcagua. Most of us chose to experience that last one vicariously through the subsequent slide show.

The annual General Meeting will be held on the 15th of October, and I encourage you to attend. I also encourage you to consider running for a position on the Executive. A number of positions are open and you can contact Wally Drew who is heading the Nomination Committee.

One idea that I believe the club will move towards is more of a committee approach for each position. The adage of '*many hands make small work*' certainly applies. This will help keep the workload very manageable. The Executive meets about six times per year and the position responsibilities are outlined on the website in the Reference section under The Association-Committees.

Also, don't forget about the Annual Dinner & Dance on the 24th of October, details are in this PackRat. It is always a fun event, especially if you can think up an entertaining award for one of your fellow members, e.g. '*fanciest hat seen on a trip*'.

Hope to see you at both events!



Some Background

Twenty-five years ago, on September 22, 1978, former Premier Peter Lougheed officially dedicated Kananaskis Country and Kananaskis Provincial Park (today's Peter Lougheed Provincial Park).

His vision was of **recreational** and **wilderness** areas that "may serve as a model for future projects on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains". Sadly, maintaining that vision has slipped lower and lower in the Province's agenda.

In September 2002, representatives from a large number of outdoor groups (mostly skiers) formed an ad hoc action group; the Kananaskis Trail Users Group. The intent was to urge the Province and K-Country to continue grooming and tracksetting ski trails in the Parks, then in jeopardy of being discontinued immediately.

It soon became apparent, however, that the problem went far beyond grooming ski trails. The entire infra-

structure of K-Country was deteriorating because funding was continually falling short of need. Some estimates put the shortfall in the region of \$3 million per year. The Canmore Nordic Centre alone needs \$15 million to bring it back to competition standards.

The Group set out to try to get some changes made.

What's Been Accomplished

- 1.** Managed to ensure that grooming and tracksetting of ski trails continued for last winter and again this winter.
- 2.** Met with K-Country staff several times on issues such as conflicting trail use, trail use signage, and needed facilities.
- 3.** Registered a name for the group!! We are now the Kananaskis Trail Users Association (KTUA). Gives us more credibility.
- 4.** Continue to act as gatherer of information about K-Country operation issues that would affect

the clubs and pass it on to the representatives of about 40 groups.

- 5.** Prepared an information tabloid on K-Country, explaining the problems caused by continued underfunding. It will suggest what action people can follow to get the Province to provide sufficient and sustainable funding for Kananaskis.

NOTE: This will happen if **we** (KTUA) can get some funding for the printing – around \$1000 to \$1200.

- 6.** Opened dialogue with senior K-Country staff regarding our concern that Minister Gene Zwozdesky may impose a fee for winter users of the Parks, ostensibly to pay for the "extra" cost of grooming trails.
- 7.** Started discussions on the possibility of volunteers taking over operating Bragg Creek's ski trails.
- 8.** I don't know if we can take any credit but, in late July, the Province added a

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.

little over \$300,000 (one
time only) to the
Kananaskis budget!
Maybe those letters are
getting some action.

What Can You Do?

Spread the word...K-
Country has more than
three million visitors a year,
increasing 5% annually but
their operating budget
doesn't seem to have a
corresponding increase.

Refer to previous
PackRats (February/March
and June/July of 2003) for
more information. A list of
Calgary MLAs can also be
obtained by contacting D.
Reimer or email
pastpresident@ramblers.ab.ca.

PACKRAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertis-
ing space in **PackRat** and
the following rates apply:

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

Payment **MUST** be
received prior to publica-
tion.

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER & DANCE

DATE: October 24, 2003

PLACE: Calgary
Winter Club
4611- 14 St.NW

TIME: Cocktails at 6:00
Dinner at 7:00

PRICE: \$35 per person



Dress is semi-formal.

Tickets are on
sale at every meeting.

There will be
a buffet dinner
with dancing to follow.

Singles are welcome.

This is just like
a hike – good company,
some exercise and food!

Please join us
this year.

TRUE GRIT

By Ron Mason

In my last little tale you may have read about our ascent of the Pic du Midi in the French Pyrenees. Following this, we had many more adventures in the mountains, about which I shall not bore you by rambling on in my usual fashion.

However, I will bore you with a further adventure (for me at least) which took place after leaving France and arriving in England at my sister's, near Skipton in Yorkshire. I have a nephew, Stephen, who is about 25 and is a fanatical rock-climber - rather like I used to be many years ago. He had heard all about his Uncle Ron's exploits in the mountains and he had come to consider me as something of an expert. Now he wanted to take me out and show me what he could do.

Off we went up onto the moors, passing a small reservoir covered almost wall-to-wall with small sailboats (the British still seem to be enthusiastic sailors!). We walked along an escarpment for a little

while with wonderful views over the Yorkshire Dales to the north and west. Soon we met up with Steve's buddy Bob, not without the help of several cellphone conversations.

I was somewhat relieved because now Steve had someone to climb with and I could just sit in the sun and watch...or so I thought!

The rocky escarpment where we arrived was made of gritstone, or millstone grit which is a very hard kind of sandstone. It weathers into rounded ledges and blind cracks and so is particularly suited to friction climbing. It is the type of rock on which I was weaned, almost since I first climbed out of my crib. It was also the training ground of some of the best British climbers such as Joe Brown, Don Whillans and many more. It was Joe Brown who perfected the painful *hand-jam* to overcome the smooth rounded gritstone cracks.

Climbers in Britain do not normally set up top ropes, instead someone leads the climb, protecting it as he

goes, even if it is up to grade 5.9 or 5.10 equivalent. Usually everyone gets a turn to lead one of the routes.

“Knowing full well that “aving a look” in climbing terms means no turning back...”

I sat at the bottom enjoying myself as I watched several parties climbing. I studied the different techniques used as they surmounted the rounded ledges and smooth walls, *smearing* their soft rubber climbing shoes onto the rock where there were no holds. As I looked around I saw a kestrel fly below me, a flash of reddish brown against the green fields



below.

I half suspected that Steve had a plan for me, but I was hoping he had forgotten while he was leading up various desperate looking routes.

“Ow would thee like to ‘ave a look at the best easy gritstone climb in west Yorkshire?” “What? er? er?, well, OK, er! er!, maybe just a look”

Knowing full well that “aving a look” in climbing terms means no turning back, I scrambled over to a rock wall about 20 metres high with a series of widely spaced ledges and nothing much in between. It didn’t look too bad and I watched carefully as a few other climbers went easily up.

My excuses of not having a harness, a helmet or climbing shoes did not hold water. I just tied on with a good old bowline and tightened up my floppy running shoes. No “smearing” for me.

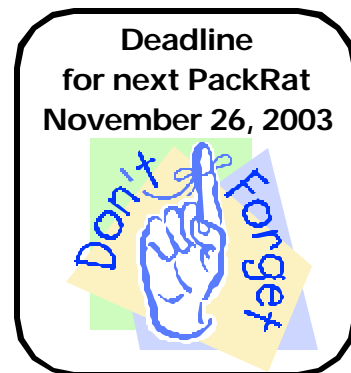
It wasn’t too bad after all, but the spacing of the ledges, with only friction in between, made for delicate mantelshelf moves and occasional judicious placing of knees. However I perse-

vered and with the security of the rope and after a number of hesitations I came over the top like a stranded whale. I had climbed a “Hard Very Difficult” route (in North American terms about 5.5), and I was quite pleased with myself. It was my first climb for over 10 years and I couldn’t get as close to the rock as I used to! More important, I had vindicated myself in the eyes of my nephew, and not only that, I had really enjoyed myself. If I can do a 5.5 on gritstone maybe I can do 5.6 anywhere else.

But for me the real joy has always been in leading, so I think that these days I shall stick to scrambling to get my jollies.



Down at the pub over a pint or two Steve piped up, “I have one of those daredevil short kayaks at home, how about a try in some big rapids I know?” I sat silently, supping my pint, trying not to panic.



How to Care for Your Sleeping Bag

Every sleeping bag, down or synthetic, must be cleaned.

Accumulated body oils, trail dust and grime all serve to decrease the effectiveness of a bag’s insulation, and increase obnoxious odours and fibre-weakening microbes.

Machine Washing

For down bags, use mild soap or specially formulated down soap. For synthetic bags, use a mild detergent or cleaning agents designed for synthetics.

Scrub the head and foot section before washing the entire bag. Wash warm and rinse cold with the minimum recommended amount

of cleaning agent in a front-loading machine only.

Be sure that all soap or detergent is thoroughly rinsed out. This may mean running two or more rinse cycles.

Hand Washing

Wash with warm water in the bathtub using a mild detergent for synthetics and a specialized cleaner for down.

Knead water through the bag thoroughly and carefully scrub the head and foot. Don't expect to remove every stain from the shell and never use commercial stain removers.

Once the bag is clean, begin draining the tub and press the soapy water out of the bag with your hands. Do not lift the bag and do not wring it.

Rinse thoroughly, making sure all of the cleaning agent is out of the bag. Refill the bathtub with clean, cold water at least three or four times to be sure you have adequately rinsed away all the detergent. If soap remains in the fibers, it will cause the fill to mat.

Drying

Once you have completed the final rinse, gently roll the bag to press out as much water as possible. Do not wring.

Carefully place the bag into either a large pillowcase or a plastic clothes basket. If you try to lift it without support, you risk tearing the baffles and ruining the bag.



Take a supply of quarters to the nearest laundromat. Tumble dry in a large commercial dryer on medium-low heat. The dryer must be large enough for the bag to be tossed around freely.

Dry slowly and thoroughly with some terry cloth towels and two tennis balls thrown in. The terry cloth minimizes static electricity and speeds the drying process, while the tennis balls fluff the fill.

Plan on two to four hours total drying time.

Mistakes to Avoid

- Do not use a top-loading washing machine.
- Do not use strong soap or detergent.
- Do not use your home dryer.
- Do not attempt to lift your bag from one end when wet. Lift the entire bag all at once.
- Do not hang dry in the sun. UV damages nylon.
- Do not ever dry clean your synthetic fill bag. Dry cleaning will irreversibly damage the fill.

Care

Want to extend the useable life of your sleeping bag?

The following are a few tips to help you:

- Always stuff your sleeping bag, never roll it. Stuffing is actually easier on the fabric and fill.
- Be gentle with your sleeping bag when removing it from the stuff sack, never yank it out.
- Store your bag uncompressed in a large, breath-

able storage sack or king-sized pillowcase. Hanging it or storing it flat also works.

- Wear a T-shirt, shorts and socks to bed. The clothing protects the inside of your bag from damaging sweat and body oils.
- Never lay your bag directly on the dirt, use a ground cloth.
- Air and fluff your bag after each use and never leave it compressed for long periods.



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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In Memory

Biologist & Cougar Man
Extraordinaire

By D. Reimer

Ian Ross – 1958-2003

On a cold but sunny morning in February, 2001, I met Ian Ross for the first time. He was leading a group of cougar enthusiasts on a day trip to the Sheep River Wildlife Sanctuary.

He was the acknowledged International expert, having spent many, many years researching the big cats in our own Kananaskis. In fact once before, in early March 1989, a group of us did encounter him while skiing on the Wolf Creek trail. He was tracking cougars but at the time we had no idea who he was or of how valuable his work would become.

We gathered around him, ignoring the -24° temperature, drinking in his statistics, his stories. Then he led us through the light snow cover to look and learn about the puma concolor.

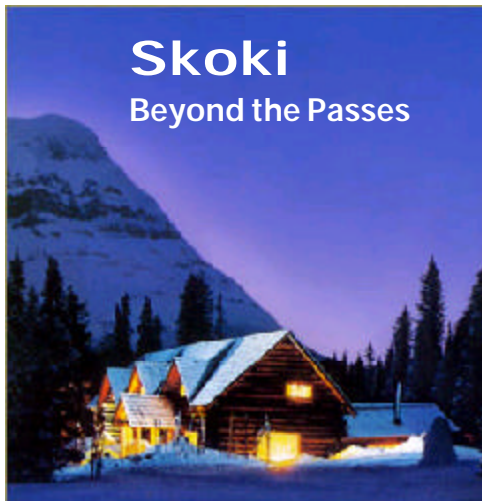
We never found any cats but we learned so much about this hunter and its prey. When we left, we had a far deeper understanding and respect for these mysterious animals.

Ian agreed to come and talk to Ramblers about cougars in June of that year. The presentation was fascinating and detailed. I think he could have talked for hours about his experiences and his research.

Ian Ross was a quiet spoken man, deeply committed to the big mammals that he had researched for most of his adult life. He died too young, on June 29, 2003, in the crash of a light plane while tracking lions in Kenya for the Laikipia Predator Project.

A service in his memory was held in late July in Millarville and, as he wished, his ashes were spread in Kananaskis Country where he had spent so much of his life.

May we remember him when we find ourselves in the Sheep area that he knew so well and think of him whenever we spy a cougar print in the snow.



February 20 - 24, 2004

3 days, 2 nights

Historic Skoki Lodge is western Canada's first backcountry ski lodge. This is a trip back in time. Re-trace the ski pioneer's route from Temple Lodge, past the halfway hut, up and over Boulder and Deception passes and down the valley into the Lodge. Enjoy ski touring, telemarking, home-cooked meals and chatting round the fireplace. Price includes two dinners, two breakfasts, two lunches, snacks, lodging, GST and Alberta hotel tax. To reserve call trip organizer, Ken Park at **244-6809**.

Main Lodge: \$144.72 p/person p/night

Maximum: 8 persons

Out-Cabins: \$168.32 p/ person p/night

Deposit: \$100 ASAP

NOTE: Skiers should be fit and have minimum intermediate skills.
Avalanche equipment required.

According to George Carlin on Aging

HOW TO STAY YOUNG

1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctor worry about them. That is why you pay him/her.
2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.
3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever.
4. Never let the brain idle.

“An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” And the devil’s name is Alzheimer’s.

5. Enjoy the simple things.
6. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.
7. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be **alive** while you are alive.
8. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it’s family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, and,

etc., your home is your refuge.

9. Cherish your health: If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.
10. Don’t take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, to the next county, to a foreign country, but **not** to where the guilt is.
11. Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.
12. Get yourself a red VW Beetle, loaded with a moonroof...like me!

The Packrat



December 6, 2003
Trip Co-ordinator Session

December 13, 2003
General Member Session

The trips are subject to weather and snow conditions. The group size is limited to six skiers per session. To register call Ken Park at **244-6809**.

Here's an opportunity to get some **FREE** input on your ski technique from a former professional cross-country ski instructor. Ken has Level 2 CANSI certification and National coaching credentials in both theory and practical. The format is a regular day trip but with ski tips from the co-ordinator as we ski. There will be two categories: trip co-ordinator sessions and regular member sessions. **NOTE:** The tours are intended for fit skiers who have taken a recent previous ski course or who have recent active ski experience.

MONDAY EVENING SLIDE SHOWS

Kinesiology B-132 **FREE ADMISSION** Starts 7:00 PM

Oct 27Cycling New Zealand

Nov 03Backpacking the West Coast Trail

Nov 17Staying Safe in Avalanche Terrain

Jan 12Ski Touring - The Southern Cariboos Traverse

Jan 19Glorious Waterfalls by Wolf

Jan 26Backpacking the Chilkoot Trail

Feb 2A Day in the Life of a Sea Kayaker

Feb 9Hiking Utah & Grand Canyon

Check www.ucalgary.ca/opc for details and additional shows.











Did You know...?

If you have a change in your email address, special requests, home phone number and address, you can do it **yourself** by logging on the Ramblers web site under member's area and by selecting Update your personal info.

Check it out at www.ramblers.ab.ca and see how simple it is.



Wanted

-  **1. Your T-shirt design entry to commemorate the RMRA 50th Anniversary.**
 The design must have Rocky Mountain Ramblers and a commemorative phrase such as “established 1954” or “1954 – 2004” or “50th Anniversary”

 -  **2. Your historical or hysterical photos to complete an online photo album.**
 Your early submissions will be appreciated. We would like to have time to complete a scrap-book album with photos and stories as well.

 -  **3. Names, addresses, or email addresses of all former members.**
 We want everyone to hear about Ramblers’ 50th Anniversary celebrations in plenty of time to attend. Please help by submitting the names and addresses to the Committee or email at socialdirector@ramblers.ab.ca or to Ann Moran.

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Good for the Body, Good for the Soul

By Kym Putnam

So...who are you? a smiling 40-ish women asks us.

We are having breakfast in a quaint teahouse on the water in Queen Charlotte City. Ten of us, all women, all talking at once about our next adventure. This woman's curiosity has gotten the better of her. She has left her male partner alone at their table by the window.

I can't quite remember our reply. Probably something like, "We're just a bunch of women who love to travel and have adventures." I'm glad that as a group we appear approachable to this woman.

We have spent five days learning to sea kayak and camping together on the Queen Charlotte Islands, so our bonding as a group is pretty tight. Still we remain open and friendly to anyone who would like to join us. In fact we can

hardly wait to share our enthusiasm with anyone who will listen.

She leaves me her name and address and I promise to put her on the mailing list. As usual at the end of a wonderful experience, we begin to dream of our next escape. "How about the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in March?" someone suggests. "Yes!" we all agree, our eyes sparkling with anticipation. I know some of us will really do this trip. We know how to do this now. We know how to make things happen at this stage of our lives.

And what an exciting time in our lives it is! We range in age from 30 to 65. We are beginning to know who we are and what we want. We want the simplicity and solitude of nature, we want the camaradie and support of other women, we want the

challenge of leaving our 'comfort zone' in order to grow.

This week we have laughed together until the tears rolled down our cheeks, cried with each other and for each other. We've learned from each other and taught each other. We've had a chance to be alone too.

"The great thing about travelling with other women is, we don't have to explain how we feel," exclaims Gail.

We finish breakfast and an entire glorious day stretches before us until we have to board the ferry for home. We set out alone, or in twos and threes. We need down time to reflect on our last week and just be in the moment before we get back to our busy and sometimes complicated lives.

Yes, I think at least one week a year for just ourselves is a minimum requirement for happiness and health. It's good for the body and good for the soul.

