



# The Pack Rat

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

February/March 2004



BOB ST. JOHN

*Snowshoeing in the Mesa Butte area, west of Millarville, in December.*

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<p><b>RMRA</b> <b>Executive Committee</b></p> <p><b>President</b> Ron Hunter president@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Vice President</b> Ghulam Jamro vicepresident@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Treasurer</b> Evelyn Mathies treasurer@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Secretary</b> Carl Potter secretary@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Trips Director</b> Allan Mathies trips@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Program Director</b> Jim Powers programs@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Social Director</b> Shirley Tacjnar socialdirector@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Membership</b> Diane Lyders-Reid membership@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Newsletter Editor</b> Irene Willett packrat@ramblers.ab.ca</p> <p><b>Past President</b> Dorothy-Ann Reimer pastpresident@ramblers.ab.ca</p>
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## President's Report...

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**W**ith winter upon us it is worthwhile to remind members that 'tis the season to go prepared. While the day time may be relatively warm, a little cloud, sunset or a strong breeze will bring a rapid reminder that it really is winter. Backup clothing, a thermos and a headlamp are good assets to carry if you are venturing away from the roads and unexpectedly have to spend longer than planned in one spot. If you are hiking, consider a pole and traction devices for your feet, we have had one wrist injury on an icy trail. If in doubt, check with the coordinator

about the requirements for the activity.

The recent Executive meeting was mostly reviewing the work of the committees. Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities are starting to get active and for starters, we have refurbished the Rambler plaque for the Mount Allan trail and will re-install it next summer, possibly on July 18<sup>th</sup> when we have the hike 'n pot luck day.

As for events, come to the meeting on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and partake of some cake to commemorate the club's founding on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1954.

SEE YOU THERE!



## RMRA 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary

**W**elcome to a very special year for the Ramblers. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> 50 years ago, the club was founded by a group of outdoor enthusiasts who wanted an alternative to the Canadian Youth Hostellers Association and the Alpine Club of Canada.

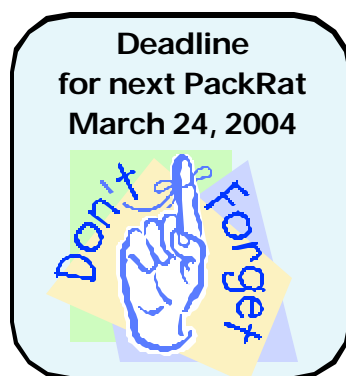
The first hike was on May 9, 1954 to Mt. Yamnuska. To commemorate this event, Ron Hunter will coordinate the same hike on May 9, 2004. So sneak some champagne into your pack and don some 1950's hiking clothes (maybe you're still wearing them!) for this memorable day.

Many more events are planned throughout the year, the highlight being the weekend of July 17-18 when there will be a Stampede breakfast at the hall, many different hikes and a semi-catered

pot luck dinner in Kananaskis country.

Add to that RMRA T-shirts, commemorative prints of Mt. Allan by Glen Boles, an on-line photo album and of course, the week long camp at the Elizabeth Parker hut at Lake O'Hara. To launch our celebrations, there will be an anniversary cake at the March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

So mark your calendars now! The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee is busy planning to make this a memorable year for all of you.



## RMRA Environment Committee

**A**fter years of talking about it, Ramblers now have a committee to monitor environmental concerns on behalf of Club members. We have agreed that the thrust will be to collect, and give to members, information on environmental issues of interest to the Club, and to recommend/suggest action.

We'll focus on S. Alberta (K-Country, the Whaleback, Banff).

Elsewhere in this Packrat you'll find Chris' article about the Whaleback. I think of it as 'Aha – So you thought you'd saved it. Think again – 'cause Those Guys Never Quit Trying.'

We hope to modify the website so it'll be easier to locate the Environment issues. In the meantime, we welcome comments, ideas, complaints, or?

Committee: D. Reimer, A. LeFaive, D. Davison, C. Saunders, R. Hunter.

### 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](http://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.

## Christmas Pot Luck

A lively gathering of 86 Ramblers, family and friends enjoyed a fabulous selection of dishes at what was truly "The Feast of the Season".

Many thanks to those who came early to set up, and to Keith Walker for his sensitive and thoughtful grace. There was a huge response to the request for food items for the Food Bank. Thank you to Peter Fischer who took the responsibility of loading it into his car and delivering it.



## The WHALEBACK – a key decision in its favour BUT...

*By Chris Saunders*

**T**he Whaleback is a unique wild area approximately 140 km south of the City of Calgary just north of the Oldman River and west of the Porcupine Hills. It is likely the largest, most varied and intact montane landscape left in Canada. Montane refers to the plant communities that live in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Ramblers have been regular visitors for many years, the main attractions being the amazing variety of wild flowers and the superb views of the mountains to the west.

The area's first brush with a development threat from the oil and gas industry was in 1994 when Amoco Canada (now BP Canada) applied to drill an exploratory well in the middle of the

lower Bob Creek valley deep within the Whaleback's montane landscape. The Energy Resource Conservation Board rejected the application on the grounds that "the Whaleback area represents a truly unique and valuable Alberta ecosystem with extremely high recreational, aesthetic and wildlife values."

In 1999 Amoco donated its petroleum leases to the Nature Conservancy of Canada which will hold them until 2004 and then transfer them to the Alberta Government with the intent of conservation in perpetuity. In the same year the Alberta Government announced its intention to create the Bob Creek Wildland Park (21,000 ha) and the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland (8,000 ha). These were officially created in June 2003. These events were greeted by all involved as a significant breakthrough in the protection of the Whaleback. Premier Ralph Klein said

"The government has fulfilled its promise to protect the exceptional landscape of Alberta's Whaleback region. The Bob Creek Wildland Park and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland protect the largest undisturbed montane landscape in Alberta's Rocky Mountain Region."

In 2002 Polaris Resources Ltd, a small oil and gas company, acquired subsurface mineral rights for the half section of land that borders the Bob Creek and Black Creek protected areas and submitted an application to drill a sour gas well on the southern edge of the Whaleback. The proposed well was on privately held land that could not be included in the two new protected areas for technical legal reasons but it is just as ecologically significant and vulnerable. However, allowing development so close to the protected areas would jeopardize their validity

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## A Russian Adventure - Part Two

*By Bob St. John*



*North face of Lenin*

Peak (Pik) Lenin, at 7165 m is the third highest summit in what was the former Soviet Union. (Peak Communism (7495) and Peak Pobeda (7345) are #1, and #2.) It lies in the Pamir range of mountains on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. You can get to base camp with a 4-wheel drive vehicle, making it one of the most accessible of the world's 7000 meter peaks. This easy access makes it a popular summit for climbers,

especially this year (2003) being the 75th anniversary of the first ascent. Jerry and I had hired Asia Mountains to look after accommodation, transportation, and the necessary paperwork for us to get on the mountain. They also provided tents and food at Base Camp and at Camp 1. Above Camp 1 we would be on our own.

After returning from Elbrus and a day touring in Moscow, I had a 4-hour flight to Bishkek. Why the only flight from

Moscow arrives at 4:30 am is beyond me, but I guess Aeroflot has their reasons - perhaps they need the day shift to work on the plane. Jerry was already at Asia Mountains guesthouse, a new and luxurious (by Bishkek standards) abode for climbers and trekkers alike. After a day wandering around town, we were off by plane to Osh, an ancient city that was an important stop for caravans on the Silk Road to China. While one could

almost imagine Bishkek as a western city, Osh in contrast could be little changed from the days of Ghengis Khan. We toured the open market where one could buy basic food supplies for the climb.

The drive to base camp is a day long affair on moderately good paved and gravel roads. This is a poor country, evidenced by scenes of hand-scythe harvesting and subsistence sheep and goat herding. We passed many trucks loaded with rusting Soviet-era industrial scrap metal heading for China, where I suppose it's made into nail clipper. While some former Soviet republics have vast oil and gas reserves, Kyrgyzstan has none, and not much arable land either.

Base Camp is located at 3800 meters in Lukovaya glade, or Onion Meadows, so named for the abundance of that plant growing there. Several companies had their tent sites and dining yurts (traditional dwellings made of

wood and felt) set up for their clients. Generally the camps were well run, and the meals quite good, depending on who was cooking that day. It is possible to buy propane-butane gas 'bombs' for camp stoves here, albeit at a relatively high price.

The first day we walked up to Puteshestvinikov Pass on a good trail. From here we could see the panorama of Lenin and its surrounding peaks and glaciers. The following day we took a load up to Camp 1, arriving after 6 hours of leisurely walking.

The lower reaches of the Lenin Glacier are generally free of snow during the summer months, and while heavily crevassed in places, the route winds its way over easy terrain. The stream crossing that the various route descriptions warn about turned out to be nothing to worry about. We had also taken our rope just in case, but left it at Camp 1 before returning.

The return trip the next day had a bit of excitement. We got a little off route on the glacier and found ourselves in a crevasse field. At one particularly wide slot I elected to walk 50 meters to where it pinched out. Jerry had decided to cross on a snow bridge, and as I reached the pinch out I turned to see the bridge fail under his weight. Luckily many bridges had collapsed here before and had plugged the crevasse with snow, resulting in only a 6 meter fall for him. He was fine, but it took 25 minutes to haul him out with the help of others who had been attracted to my calls for help. Credit must be given to Jerry for brushing the incident off, and we continued up to Camp 1.

After a rest day at Camp 1 (4200 m), we took a load up to Camp 2 (5200 m). This section has many deep crevasses with sometimes dubious bridges. Roping up is definitely recommended. Amazingly

many did not including climbers, skiers, and snowboarders. We witnessed one skier fall in a crack - and luckily rescued without injury. Others were seen crawling gingerly over thin snow bridges. Why on earth they don't just rope up is beyond me. There is one steepish section that has a fixed rope, appreciated but not entirely necessary with good firm snow. Perhaps later in the season it gets icy there.

Camp 2/latrine is situated on scree runout over the edge of the glacier. There are some good tent sites, but most are on sloping scree covered ice. We found a site lower down on a pile of rock at the junction of two minor crevasses.

As I indicated, people answer the calls of nature anywhere and everywhere - it's not a pretty sight. Water is available during the day as run-off from the slopes above camp. (Camp 2 was once located lower down on the glacier, but in the early 1990's an

earthquake generated avalanche swept down and killed 42 climbers early one morning (one survived).

We returned to Camp 1, then moved up to Camp 2 the next day, followed by a rest day. Throughout

BOB ST. JOHN



*Peak Lenin rises 4 km above the plain.*

this time the weather was sunny and warm, even too hot on the grunt up the glacier.

The following day Jerry was thinking he would not go further due to back pains and ill-fitting boots. As the weather was still fine I decided to carry a load up to Camp 3 on my own,

but not alone as many were making this trip.

The climb up Razdelnaya (a 6200 meter bump at the west end of the summit ridge) was tedious and by the time I reached the top, the weather had changed to a blowing

gale. I was making my way down the 100 vertical meters to Camp 3 when I came across a crevasse in the now worsening storm. I thought that to continue was not the smart thing

to do, and retraced my steps to a camp occupied by seven Russian climbers. They graciously invited me to spend the night, and I accepted. (I did have a sleeping bag and emergency shelter with me, so I could have spent the night out if I had to.) Thus, I crammed into a tent occupied by



Leonid and Yuri from St. Petersburg. They were planning a summit ascent the next day, and I was invited to go with them. Unfortunately, the weather was no better in the morning, and we retreated to Camp 2.

Jerry had decided to go back down, and I returned with him to Camp 1. That night brought thunderstorms and hail, but the next day it was sunny again. I hooked up with a group from the Czech Republic, and made the ascent once more to Camp 2 with Honza, who was a little behind in acclimatization. The other Czechs would follow later.

After a rest day in Camp 2, we both moved up to Camp 3, and set up camp in moderately good but gusty weather. That night a storm rolled in with high winds and blowing snow. This lasted through the day and into the next. Another group with radio contact found out that the storm was going to worsen which confirmed my altimeter's

lower barometric reading. With only three days left, I decided to retreat with Honza down to Camp 2 where we met the rest of the Czech group. I continued down to Camp 1 with a group of Russians, and thus ended my summit attempt. (I left my tent up at Camp 3 for the Czechs to use as it is useful to have tents at both Camps 2 and 3. It would be returned to me later.)

The following day I went down to Base Camp, and then made the journey back to Bishkek with Jerry. I later found out that the weather was bad for the following two weeks, and few if any made the summit. With a day to spare before we flew home, we took a day trip to Lake Ysyk-Köl, a summer retreat for many Kyrgyz.

While walking around Bishkek we came across numerous Soviet era plazas with quite inspiring monuments, often to Lenin, but also featuring past heroes both imagined and real. Today these

squares are largely empty and falling into disrepair - the locals are too busy trying to scrape out a living to care too much about them. The whole country seemed to be just barely making it in their transition from central planning. Many said that while things seemed worse now, at least their children would have a future...I wonder.

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](mailto: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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and the process that established them.

Alberta Energy and Utilities Board ("AEUB") regulations require a person wishing to drill an exploration well to hold a full section (one mile square) of mineral rights. In what seems to the uninitiated a move of quite extraordinary cheek, Polaris sought to force the Nature Conservancy to pool certain of the rights donated by Amoco with its own rights so that the company could meet the regulatory requirement to have a full section for its exploration project.

Naturally the Conservancy has rejected any voluntary contribution of the rights to the project but could have been forced to participate by the AEUB.

Fortunately, on December 16, 2003 the AEUB rejected Polaris's application to drill the exploration well along with the related pooling. The

decision appears to have been based on a variety of inadequacies in Polaris's plans rather than a conclusion that any well in this area would be well outside the public interest simply because of the environmental considerations. Indeed the Board's report states that the decision should not be perceived as necessarily excluding resource development in the area.

#### **Suggestion:**

Rambler members contact the Alberta Government to

- (a) applaud the AEUB decision, and
- (b) suggest that any future applications for exploration and development in the area be rejected even more firmly in order to preserve the government's commitment to conservation.

What is the point of creating protection for an area of extraordinary environmental value if industrial activity is going to be allowed on its borders?

## The Foot in Mouth Award



This award was first given in 1993 and is for a truly baffling comment.

The 2003 winner is United States Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, for comments in a press briefing.

***"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know."***

## Indepth: Forces of Nature Wind Chill

**T**he wind chill factor is the method used by weather forecasters to tell us how much colder the wind makes unprotected skin feel. So why do meteorologists say it's -10 with a wind chill factor that will make it feel more like -18? Why don't they just say it's -18?

The wind doesn't actually change the temperature outside. But a person will think it's colder because the wind steals body heat by blowing away warm air that surrounds them.

The wind chill factor measures how much energy (or heat) the body loses per second depending on how much skin is exposed to the wind. This means the wind chill factor is not a factor for inanimate objects like rocks, cars and snow - they will all maintain the same temperatures no matter

how strongly the winds blow.

Wind chill is measured in watts per square metre, with values ranging from 1,000 to 2,500.

But because a wind chill factor of 1,500 watts/m<sup>2</sup> is meaningless to the average person, the value is translated to the temperature it would have to be to cause the same degree of heat loss. This is called the wind chill equivalent temperature - what you hear when meteorologists say, "Dress warm. It's -10 but with the wind chill factor it will feel more like -18."

Different countries use different formulas to calculate the wind chill factor and the wind chill equivalent temperature. However, they are all based on research conducted by scientists Paul A. Siple and Charles F. Passel in the 1940s, later used by the U.S. army to develop warmer clothing for soldiers. The research found that the rate at which water freezes depends on three factors:

how warm it was to begin with, the outside temperature and the wind speed.

Canada and other countries adopted the wind chill index as a public health tool so people could protect themselves from cold-related ailments such as hypothermia and frostbite. This is especially useful for those who are going to be outside for long periods of time whether snowmobiling or shovelling the driveway.

According to Statistics Canada, 111 Canadians died from effects of the cold in 1997. Ninety-two of them were victims of hypothermia. Two cases of chilblains were fatal that year, and one person died from conditions resulting from frostbite of the hand.

*Amy Foulkes Owen  
Wood, CBC News Online  
July 10, 2003*

## Why Athletes Can't (Shouldn't) Have Real Jobs

**1.** Chicago Cubs outfielder Andre Dawson on being a role model: "I wan' all dem kids to do what I do, to look up to me. I wan' all the kids to copulate me."

**2.** New Orleans Saint RB George Rogers when asked about the upcoming season: "I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first."

**3.** And, upon hearing Joe Jacobi of the 'Skins say: "I'd run over my own mother to win the Super Bowl, Matt Millen of the Raiders said: "To win, I'd run over Joe's Mom, too."

**4.** Torrin Polk, University of Houston receiver, on his coach, John Jenkins: "He treats us like men. He lets us wear earrings."

**5.** Football commentator and former player Joe Theismann, 1996: "Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."

**6.** Senior basketball player at the University of Pittsburgh: "I'm going to graduate on time, no matter how long it takes." (now that is beautiful)

**7.** Bill Peterson, a Florida State football coach: "You guys line up alphabetically by height." And, "You guys pair up in groups of three, and then line up in a circle."

**8.** Boxing promoter Dan Duva on Mike Tyson going to prison: "Why would anyone expect him to come out smarter? He went to prison for three years, not Princeton."

**9.** Stu Grimson, Chicago Blackhawks left wing, explaining why he keeps a color photo of himself above his locker: "That's so when I forget how to spell my name, I can still find my clothes."

**10.** Lou Duva, veteran boxing trainer, on the Spartan training regime of heavyweight Andrew Golota: "He's a guy who gets up at six o'clock in the morning regardless of what time it is."

**11.** Chuck Nevitt, North Carolina State basketball player, explaining to Coach Jim Valvano why he appeared nervous at practice: "My sister's expecting a baby, and I don't know if I'm going to be an uncle or an aunt." (I wonder if his IQ ever hit room temperature in January)

**12.** Frank Layden, Utah Jazz president, on a former player: "I told him, 'Son, what is it with you? Is it ignorance or apathy?' He said, 'Coach, I don't know and I don't care.'"

**13.** Shelby Metcalf, basketball coach at Texas A&M, recounting what he told a player who received four F's and one D: "Son, looks to me like you're spending too much time on one subject."

**14.** Amarillo High School and Oiler coach Bum Phillips when asked by Bob Costas why he takes his wife on all the road trips, Phillips responded: "Because she is too damn ugly to kiss good-bye."