

# The PackRat

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association April/May 2004



PHOTO BY RAY RASMUSSEN

*Robert Bolleurs, Holland, looking down on the Persimmon Headwaters Basin, Willmore Wilderness Park.*

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## President's Report...

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**I**t was great to kick off the Ramblers' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on March 3 with a fine celebratory cake complete with the ram's head logo. The usual suspects showed good restraint in their cake consumption as there were even pieces left over despite the crowd of current and former members. We can look forward to more good times for the other events in May and July when hopefully a number of former members will be able to attend.

With the the ski season winding down I think it will go into the annals as one of the better snow years in the recent past. We did not have a lot of easier track set ski trips as a number of our usual coordinators were not available this season. There is a Coordinators Council meeting in the near future, so if anyone is interested in becoming a coordinator for such trips (or other trips that you don't think are being offered as often as you would like), ask a Coordinator to sponsor you. You can also contact the Trips

Director, Allan Mathies for an application form or pick one up from me at a weekly meeting. We ask candidates to take a basic first aid course and have some experience with the type of trips they expect to take out. Call Allan or me for more information. As a Coordinator, you always get to go on the trips you want on the day you want!

By the time you read this or shortly thereafter you will be able to access the Photo Gallery on the website. Thanks go to Bob, who has put a lot of time and effort into setting up an easy method to save digital photos for both trip reports and for the club history. Check out some of the early pictures from the first decades of the Ramblers. There is also a means to protect members' privacy preferences for the public area so please read the accompanying documentation regarding name display.

***Happy trails!***

You are Invited!  
You are Invited!

**To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of  
Rocky Mountain Ramblers**

**T**he Rocky Mountain Ramblers and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee invite you to join us in the following events to celebrate this special occasion:

**Sunday, May 9 - Mount Yamnuska**

In 1954 the first hike organized by the Ramblers was an ascent of Mount Yamnuska. Come and join us as we repeat this trip. Please dress in period costume.

**Saturday, July 17**

Join us for a day of renewing old friendships at the Rosemont Community Hall located at 2807 - 10 St NW. Starting at 9:00 A.M. with a Stampede Breakfast. Please bring slides, photos, films, and memories for the afternoon festivities.

**Sunday, July 18**

This day will consist of a number of hikes in Kananaskis. One of the hikes will go to the Rock Garden on the Centennial Trail of Mt. Allan to re-install the Rambler plaque. A potluck dinner will follow at the Opal picnic area in Kananaskis with the club supplying a good portion of the food. Those who are not able to join the hikes are very welcome to join the potluck.

Please check our Web site [www.ramblers.ab.ca](http://www.ramblers.ab.ca) to see more of our plans. A Mount Allan print of a commissioned Glen Boles sketch and an Anniversary t-shirt may be purchased through the club.

In order to assist the committee in the food planning please **RSVP by June 30, 2004**. We would like to know in which decade you were a member of RMRA via email to [social@ramblers.ab.ca](mailto:social@ramblers.ab.ca) or via mail to

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association  
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council  
1111 Memorial Dr. NW Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

**Calgary Pathway &  
River Clean-Up**

Get a group of friends, co-workers or family members together and take part in the 37th Annual Pathway and River Clean-up!

This year's event is scheduled to take place on **Sunday, May 16, 2004**. Hundreds of volunteers begin garbage collecting at 10:00 AM and continue until 1:00 PM.

Volunteers must be 12 years and older and those between ages 12 to 16 must be accompanied by an adult. This is a great opportunity to pitch in and help maintain Calgary's clean pathways.

For a complete volunteer package and more details visit [www.caoc.ab.ca](http://www.caoc.ab.ca) or call Tara at the Calgary Area Outdoor Council at **270-2262** between 12:00 noon and 5:00 p.m. Registration **ends April 14, 2004**.



### 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

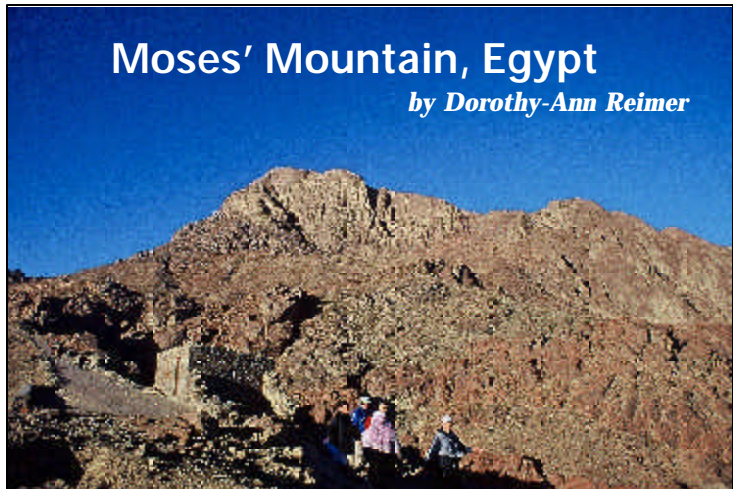
282-6308 Information  
Line and at Meetings

### 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.

## Moses' Mountain, Egypt

*by Dorothy-Ann Reimer*



**T**he wake-up call came at 2:00 am. The group I was traveling with had arrived well after dark at St. Catherine's village in the Sinai. We'd eaten supper and crawled into our beds barely three hours before but the rooms were so cold that most of us had slept very little. The warmth from the heater in my room wasn't detectable beyond 15 cm.

We collected our breakfast, packed into individual boxes by the hotel staff, donned all the extra warm clothes we had and climbed aboard our small bus to drive the 3 km to the start of a trail that would lead us to the top of Mt. Sinai or Gebel Musa (Moses' Moun-

tain) as the Egyptians call it.

Reluctant to leave the bus, which was much warmer than our beds had been, we nevertheless stepped down and were immediately startled to find ourselves amid dozens and dozens of others, all preparing to trudge up the path with the goal of viewing sunset from the top of this famous peak. Adding to the confusion of scores of people milling about were the Bedouin cameleers, with their camels, wanting to carry us up the trail – only 60 Egyptian pounds, about \$12 Cdn. But no self-respecting Rambler would dare take such an easy option.

Zero degrees, 3:00 am, and no one seemed to know the distance we'd have to walk. The night sky was filled with brilliant stars and a nearly-full moon hung lazily in the west. With my flashlight I joined the string of bobbing lights that stretched upwards as far as I could see.

The path was rocky, especially lower down, but wide and well-graded for most of the route. Enterprising Bedouin had set up small shelters every 2 km or so where they sold food, hot drinks, flashlights (and batteries), and rented out blankets.

The temperature hovered around zero but climbing kept me warm. Just before 5:00 I arrived at a major rest stop where there were at least six or seven shelters. This was the end of the camel path. From here it was 900 rock steps up through the cleft above to finally reach the broad summit of the mountain.

This last climb was the oddest part of the trek. People were much closer together, no more wide path, and I realized that many had no lights, presumably relying on others. That

worked well on a wide path but was no use on the narrow steep incline we were traversing now. Amazingly, everyone seemed to make it safely.

At last, the top. In the dark I could barely discern clumps of people clustered along the ridge. The small chapel there, built to be close to the cave where Moses was sheltered by God, had just closed. To the east a faint light was growing. A pale rose grew slowly into the vivid gold and red of sunrise. Wow!

I had two options for the descent. Return the same route or take the steeper route which was all steps called the Path of Our Lord Moses or Steps of Repentance. Not feeling particularly repentant, I chose the easier path and was rewarded by great views of valley and mountains.

Statistics: Elevation gain 1000 m, distance 6 km to the base of the upper steps and another 1½ km to the top, height of Gebel Musa 2285 m and finally, number of Repentance steps 3750.

At least Moses only had to carry the tablets up once

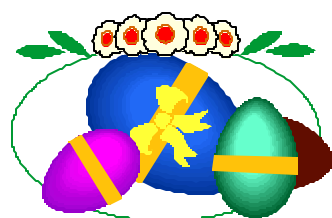
though he did have to carry them down twice. And I doubt that he had that wide camel path either and had to do a lot more scrambling to get up and down.



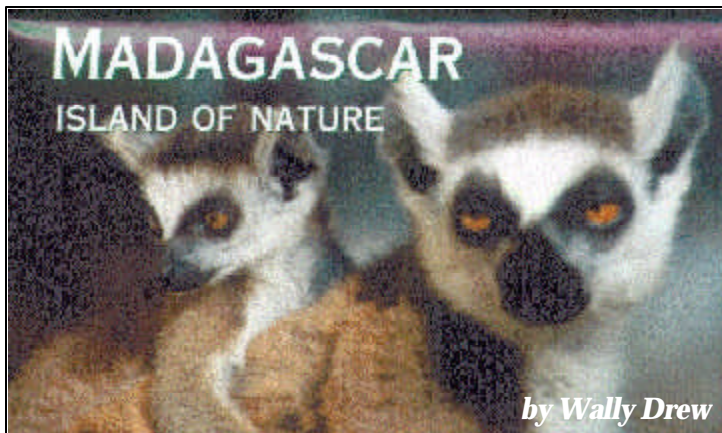
The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome comments, articles, and ideas from our members and, if content is deemed suitable, will be used as space permits.

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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Happy Easter



**I**n October of 2003, my trip was to Madagascar with ElderTreks. My first night was crossing the Atlantic from Toronto to Paris. The second night was crossing Europe and Africa to Mauritius, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. From there, it was a short hop to Antananarivo, Madagascar's capitol.

Madagascar is an island nation off the southeast coast of Africa. With most of the people originally from southeast and south central Asia. It is more like Asia than Africa. It is a world apart with 80% of the flora and fauna species occurring nowhere else.

Antananarivo, or Tana for short, is also Madagascar's largest city located in the highlands in the north

central part of the country. It is very hilly and our hotel was up on a hillside with a fine view over the city and the sunsets. It takes 6,000 of their francs to equal \$1 US or 4,500 to \$1 CDN...so, you get money in big stacks.

The official language is French but they also speak Malagash and other local languages. Most tourists come from France but also some from South Africa, Italy and Germany. Very few Americans can be seen, and we didn't meet any other Canadians. The southeast coasts of South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius are the farthest countries from Calgary.

The taste of food comes with a strong French as well as Indian flavour. Accommodations are surprisingly good for a poor primitive

country. However, the roads are in terrible condition. The one main highway which runs north/south through the island is mostly narrow and blacktopped, but broken up in long stretches that our van could average only 25 kph/15 mph. As in Sri Lanka, we had lots of fruit and fish but were short on vegetables.

From Tana, we traveled south and southwest. The first stop was Anistrabe still up high. We went for pouse pouse ride through good and poor parts of the city. They are similar to rickshaws pulled by runners. We had our first of many thunder showers there. We could see fires burning more forest— most of which has already been removed in Madagascar causing soil erosion and loss of wildlife habitat. They have a lot of red lateritic soil which is pretty in contrast to the green and the beautiful flowers that are abundant in spring.

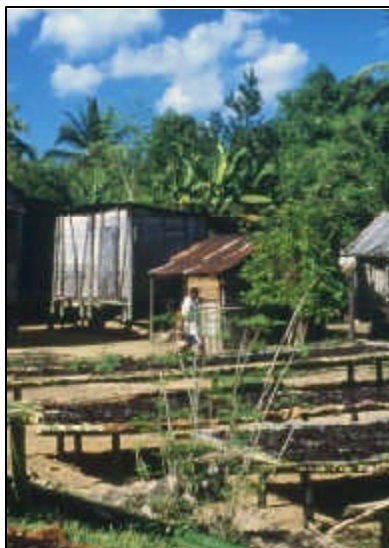
It is a hot, tropical, disease-ridden country except in the highlands which are more moderate. Our rooms were usually too hot with fans much more common than air conditioning. Dining was usually in

open air and under roofs.

The fauna and flora are the main attractions in Madagascar, especially the monkey-like lemurs. We eventually saw 14 of the 32 surviving species in the remaining patches of their natural jungle habitat. We did both day and night jungle walks to do that.

We went to the national parks and nature preserves. The others of our group were nature/bird watching types so walks were slow paced with lots of stops. In drier granitic Isalo National Park I got better hiking, especially on a free morning when I went alone. There are no animals, reptiles or snakes poisonous or harmful to people in Madagascar. We did see boas but they aren't big enough to constrict a person. I lost my altimeter in Ranomafana which took some of the pleasure out of the rest of the trip for me.

We took a round trip on the Micheline, the only one operating in the world, to visit Madagascar's only tea factory. It is a rubber-tired bus that runs slowly on railroad track. The tires are flanged so it can do that. There were only the five of



us for the 19 unanchored wicker chairs. The leader and driver took our van. Another time, we toured the country's only winery. We got to taste their wine. It was quite awful. Most houses in rural Madagascar are built of hardened clay or clay bricks. Some aren't much bigger than dog houses. The smallest were thatched shacks in a sapphire digging boom town.

The south end of Madagascar, except the eastern coast, is lower, drier and hotter—that's where we saw the spiny forests and spikey desert. Most trees have leaves, if any, and too small to be readily visible. They are not like anything I have seen anywhere else. After

overnight in Tulear on the flat southwest coast, we went to the arboretum which has 1,000 species from southwest Madagascar.

Then we flew to Fort Dauphin, now called Tolanaro on the southeast coast because the intervening road was so bad.

We had a bumpy drive west through spiny forest and sisal plantations to Berenty Reserve for more nature walks and lemurs. We also went to a sisal factory and an ostrich farm.

Back in Tolanaro after a hot drive, we had a nice hotel on top of a narrow peninsula overlooking the Indian Ocean. That was the most scenic part of our trip with low mountains coming right to the coast and lush vegetation and flowers. It was also the only place where there was a likely chance of being mugged on walks.

In those coastal regions, there are more people of African stock vs Asian stock in the more populated highlands which occupy most of the country.

From Tolanaro we took a day trip in small open boats

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## SKOKI BACKPACK

July 29 - August 1, 2004

(4 days, 5 nights)

By hiking into Hidden Lake back-country campsite on Thursday evening (gets dark approximately 10 p.m.), our group can stay two nights at Red Deer Lakes camp which is the headwaters of the Red Deer River. This will allow us to have a day trip to view the Drummond Glacier and to find the natural bridge near Mt. Douglas and Oyster Peak.

Highlights of this circle trip which covers about 40 km will be Boulder Pass, Ptarmigan and Baker Lakes and the surrounding spectacular valley, the cyclone warden's cabin, Jones' Pass, Skoki Valley, Skoki Lodge and the fabulous views from Deception Pass.

- Co-ordinator: Ken Park **244-6809**
- Maximum number of hikers: **8**
- Call early to reserve.
- Reservation deposit required.
- Approximate Cost: **TBA**



**"A truly happy person can enjoy the scenery even on a detour."**

### 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.



**Deadline  
for next PackRat  
May 26, 2004**





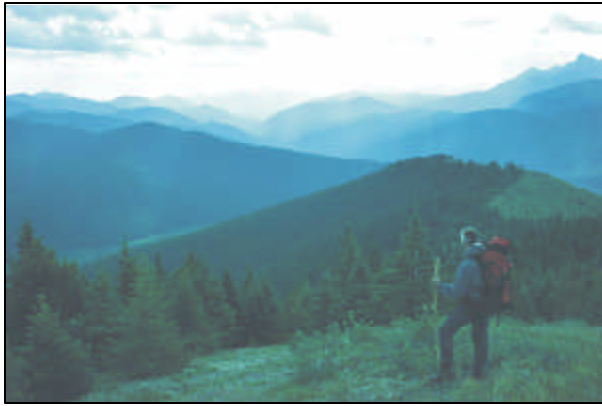


PHOTO BY RAY RASMUSSEN

*Florence Ross, RN, hiking the Wildhay Ridge in Willmore*

Celebrate 50 Years of Rambling

**Hike the Willmore Wilderness**

Special Guest Guide for  
 July 10-25, 2004  
 Ben Gadd, author of *Handbook  
 of the Canadian Rockies*

For more information  
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[raysweb.net/willmore](http://raysweb.net/willmore)  
 780.693.2296

CONT'D FROM PAGE 7

with outboard motors on coastal waterways to a fishing village and beach at Lokaro. On the way back, the motor on our boat broke down beyond repair. We paddled ashore and waited until other tourist boats came along.

Our last excursion was to Perinet Reserve for more jungle nature walks. We had a really good big Malagasy meal back in Tana. Then to a big rural crafts market where I walked along rice paddy dikes.

I spent a night and a day in Mauritius on the way home. It is a more expensive but pretty tourist island



with over 150 hotels, mostly on beaches. French is spoken but many know English.

Next morning I took a nice long walk along the beach. It was the Hindu light festival holiday so many local families were there.

Since my flight wasn't until 10:00 pm, I was able to get a private taxi tour through the hotel. The driver took me around the other side of the island where I was able to walk on the beaches. At the nice little airport, Air Mauritius gave me boarding passes to London and Calgary. It's one of the better air

services. Houses in Mauritius looked more like the white stucco or cement ones in California but the water is still not fit to drink.

## Keep Jumbo Wild

**I**n a remote valley in the heart of the Columbia Mountains 50 kms from the nearest community and accessible only in summer by rough logging roads, Phedias Project Management is aggressively pursuing a course to open a four-season ski resort on the Jumbo and Commander Glaciers.

Currently the home of grizzly bears, wolverine, and mountain goats and favoured by mountaineers for its superb alpine climbing, the Jumbo Glacier Resort will cover six times the land area of the nearest community (Invermere) and will house 6,500 tourist beds, including over 1,300 privately owned condominiums. Gondolas, chair lifts and T-bars will be installed on both the Jumbo and Commander Glaciers to allow year round skiing – a dubious economic prospect at best while prime wildlife and mountaineering terrain is destroyed.

Road construction alone is expected to cost the taxpayer up to \$2 million/km while additional road maintenance and avalanche control costs could cost up

to \$450,000/year. This money could be better spent helping existing communities, such as Golden and Invermere, as they transition their economy from resource based to tourism based. Impacts on wildlife will likely be significant due to habitat destruction and yet another road corridor through scarce wintering grounds.

For 13 years, local and national opposition to Jumbo Glacier Resort has stalled the project, but with a pro-development Liberal government and the passage of Bill 75, essentially streamlining development in wilderness areas, the threat to this pristine valley is stronger than ever.

We need you to write, email or call the following people to register your opposition to the Jumbo Valley Resort and to call for a public hearing on the proposed development. Go to [www.wildcanada.net/jumbowild/faxengine.asp](http://www.wildcanada.net/jumbowild/faxengine.asp) to instantly send an email registering your opposition to the project or send your own individual letter to the following people:

• Premier Gordon Campbell: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

PO Box 9041 STN Provincial Government, Victoria, BC, V8W 9E1, (250) 387-2160

• Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management: [george.abbott.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:george.abbott.mla@leg.bc.ca) - PO Box 9054, STN Provincial Government Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2 (250) 356-9076.

• Mr. Martyn Glassman, Senior Planner, Environmental Assessment Office: [Martyn.Glassman@gems4.gov.bc.ca](mailto:Martyn.Glassman@gems4.gov.bc.ca) - PO Box 9426 STN Provincial Government, BC, V8W 9V1, (250) 387-2206.

• Sandy Santori, Minister of State for Resort Development: [sandy.santori.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:sandy.santori.mla@leg.bc.ca) Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4, (250) 953-4246.

More information on the project is available from:  
[www.jumboglacierresort.com](http://www.jumboglacierresort.com)  
[www.wildcanada.net](http://www.wildcanada.net)  
[www.jumbowild.com/index.html](http://www.jumbowild.com/index.html)

**Editorial Note:** *This article was submitted by Doug Brown to raise awareness among our members for the Jumbo Glacier and the imminent Phedias Project.*

## KANANASKIS PASS TRAVERSE

September 3 - 6, 2004  
(4 days, 5 nights)

Starting at K-country's Upper Kananaskis Lake, this circle trip will cross both the North and South Kananaskis passes by entering BC's Height of the Rockies Provincial Park and descending onto the Palliser River Valley. Highlights of this backpack include Lawson Lake, Maude Lake, Beatty Lake, Beatty and Leroy Creeks, Palliser Valley and River, Three Isle Lake and super views of the Palliser Pass and the Royal Group Mountains.

- Co-ordinator: Ken Park **244-6809**
- Maximum number of hikers: **8**
- Sign up early he/she who waits is f\_\_\_\_\_ (foolish)
- Reservation deposit required.
- Approximate Cost: **TBA**



### Cinnamon Makes Your Blood Better

A new study reports that small amounts of powdered cinnamon taken daily lower blood glucose, cholesterol and triglycerides in diabetics.

Sixty Pakistani men and women were divided into six groups and given 1, 3 or 6 grams of cinnamon or similar amounts of a placebo for 40 days.

Statistically significant drops averaging 20 percent were found. There did not appear to be a dose response; that is, there was no further decrease in any measure from the lowest to the highest dose.

Another unusual finding was that levels of the metabolites stayed low 20 days after cinnamon intake was stopped. The study appeared in the December 2003 issue of Diabetes Care.

Here's what you need to know: This study confirms observations made in lab rats several years ago. The active ingredient is not present in cinnamon oil, which can be toxic. There are two major species of cinnamon plants and the one used here was cassia, the type sold in the U.S. In Europe, most cinnamon is a different species. Cassia is reddish-brown while true cinnamon is tan. Cinnamon can also kill bacteria and make your shoes smell sweet!

If you want more health related news, point your browser to [www.nutritionnewsfocus.com](http://www.nutritionnewsfocus.com)

## A WEBSITE FOR MOUNTAINEERING & HIKING ACCESS

There is a useful website at **Bivouac.com** that has a huge amount of mountaineering information.

It started about 1995. It's known as the Canadian Mountain Encyclopedia. It seems to be the most comprehensive list of Canadian mountains ever compiled, with about 8000 individual "pages", one for every mountain in Canada and bordering states of the USA. Several thousand trip reports and photos are attached to these mountain pages.

The attachment of articles to mountain ranges and mountains is done by a geographic information system that uses the lat-long waypoints to determine the relevance of the articles.

It also has a map system that will generate a map of any part of Canada.

These maps are simple line drawings showing mountains, rivers, roads and trails, and act as a quick visual index to show you what trails are relevant to a

given peak. It's better than searching by name.

The encyclopedia also contains technical articles, such as equipment reviews, and articles on map technology, GPS usage, and photography.

A basic membership is free, and allows you to access all the basic mountain pages. However to get at the trip reports, online guidebooks and photo essays you have to be a paid member. This costs \$20/year.

Although the basic infrastructure is controlled by various regional "editors", any member can begin by writing articles. The regional editors are just regular members who have been around for a while and know the system.

### **Editorial Note:**

*The site is included as part of the "Links" in the Ramblers website under Reference - Links - Local Outdoor Organizations.*

## GEAR SWAP

The Calgary Area Outdoor Council and University of Calgary Outdoor Centre are partnering up once again for the 20th Annual Ultimate Gear Swap.

This huge event is taking place at the Olympic Oval on **April 3, 2004** from 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM. Admission is free and there is parking available in Lot 10.

If you have any new or used gear to consign, bring it down to the Olympic Oval on April 2nd, from 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM or April 3, from 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM.

For more information please visit CAOC's website at: [www.caoc.ab.ca](http://www.caoc.ab.ca) or call us at 270-2262.

