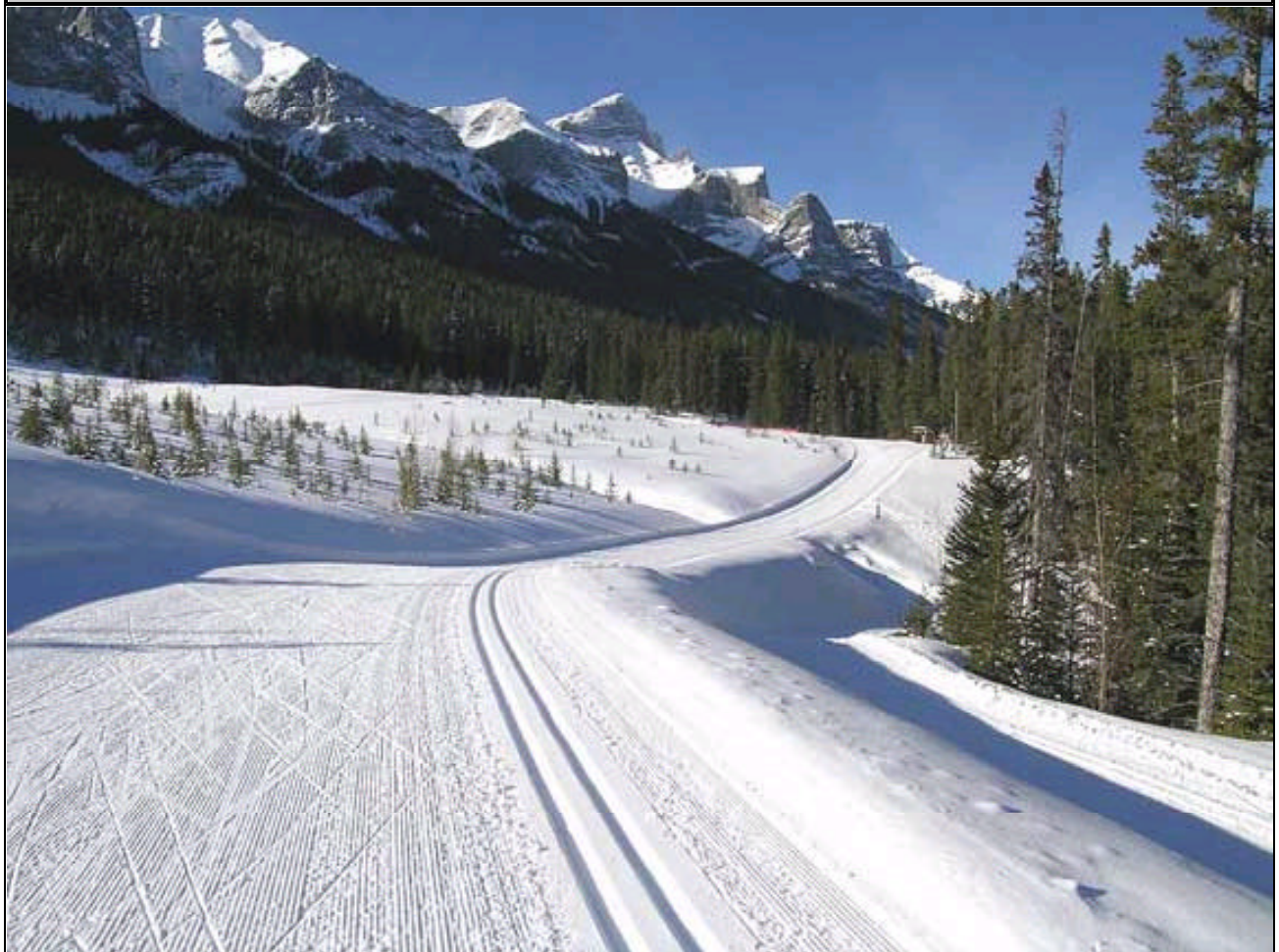


# The PackRat

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

January/February 2005



*Groomed trails in Kananaskis. (story on page 3)*

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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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## President Report...

**T**he best way to start out a New Year is to recognize the previous year's successes. The annual Christmas Potluck was well attended and everyone seemed to have a very good time. It is during this event that the club recognizes the coordinators that put out that extra effort for the period of October 2003 to September 2004.

The club has created a structure that recognizes these efforts. The Rammies are based on this year's effort which measures how many trip days each coordinator has called.

The following coordinators called ten or more trip days this year (Blue Rammy), and are receiving this recognition the first time: Aldis (probationary coordinator), Greg (probationary coordinator), Madeleine, Ron M., Ken, Rita, Arnold, and Alistair D.

For coordinators who have called ten or more trip days this year, the following are receiving this type of recognition for the second year in a row: Bernie and Anita.

For coordinators who have called ten or more trip days this year, the following are receiving this award for the third year in a row: Garry, Christine, Ron H., Alastair S. and Marianne.

For the coordinator who has called more than 20 or more trip days this year (Red Rammy), we recognize Ivan Pull as the

person receiving this award, and this is the first time for Ivan. (probationary coordinator)

For coordinators who have called more than 20 or more trip days this year, the following are receiving this award for the second year in a row: Dorothy-Ann and Jim.

For coordinators who have called more than 20 or more trip days this year, the following are receiving this award for the third year in a row: Allan and David.

For the coordinator who has called more than 30 or more trip days this year (Gold Rammy), we recognize Carl as the person receiving this award. Carl has received awards for three years in a row.

For longer term, more than just this year, the club has created a structure that recognizes the cumulative efforts since the Year 2000. The "Pins" are meant to recognize this cumulative effort over many years.

For coordinators who have called more than 50 trips since the Year 2000 (Bronze Pin), the following are receiving this Pin: Dorothy-Ann and Allan.

For the coordinator who has called more than 100 trips since the Year 2000 (Silver Pin), we recognize Carl who continues to excel.

The club thanks all of you for your efforts.

*Allan Mathies*

# Cross-Country Ski Trail Grooming

by D. Reimer

**H**ow do those two grooves get in the snow? Is it magic? No – not at all! Here’s how we get those nice even ski tracks that some of you love so much.

**First:** Before the snow flies somebody has to get out there and clear out the deadfall, cut low branches (at least 2.5 m clearance), trim bushes.

**Second:** Pack the snow. As early in the season as possible! Two types of machines are used:

Snowmobiles, heavy duty ones that pull various sled-type implements to make the snow firm. These are cheapest, coming in around \$15,000 new.

Snowcats, large tracked vehicles, similar to those used by Downhill resorts, operate on wider trails. When you hear skiers talk about “Pisten Bullys”, they are referring to one brand of these beasts. You can buy a new one for a mere \$180,000 to \$400,000. One advantage of these big fellows is that often they can pack and track set in one pass.

**Third:** The snow is packed now, but it has to be groomed to level and harden it so that your skis and, especially, ski poles won’t rip it up. This is done with special equipment that is attached to the snow cat or snowmobile. When Chinooks leave behind icy trails, the grooming is called *renovation*.



(i.e. fill in tree wells, cover bare spots, etc.). Under average conditions, it takes 75 man-hours to groom and trackset 75 km of trail in Peter Lougheed P.P.

## **Where are those tracks?**

**Fourth (and Finally):** Get out the track setting attachment and cut that pair of grooves, Cutting the tracks is tricky work and a good driver has to understand the terrain and put them in the best place.

## **How long does all this take?**

Snow cats can work at 5 to 10 hours per 25 km and need only one or two passes. Snowmobiles operate at 25 hours for 25 km and normally need around five passes. Extra time is sometimes needed to do manual grooming



**Banff:** about 50 km, groomed by staff and volunteers.

**Kananaskis Country:** 350 km, groomed by staff in six areas. All are free except for the Canmore Nordic Centre.

Canmore Nordic Centre - a fee applies.

Ribbon Creek/Evan Thomas  
Peter Lougheed Prov. Park

Mt. Shark

Sandy McNabb Rec. Area

West Bragg Creek - This is the only area where there is some volunteer help with track setting.

**Calgary:** Public, no fees, groomed and track set by Calgary Ski Club and Foothills Nordic Ski Club.

Shaganappi Golf Course

Maple Ridge Golf Course

Confederation Park

## **Private, fees**

Canada Olympic Park (1.8 km)

Hawk Ridge Centre (7 km)

### Activities

Hiking, Backpacking,  
Skiing, Cycling,  
Climbing,  
Scrambling,  
Mountaineering, Education  
& Awareness  
Programs, Social  
Functions

### Meetings

Every Wednesday  
evening at 7:30 p.m.

### Mail

Rocky Mountain Ramblers  
Association  
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor  
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.

**Deadline for next  
PackRat  
February 25, 2005**

Submissions can be emailed  
to the editor at  
**packrat@ramblers.ab.ca**

*from the Editor's Notes...*

### Thank You Lord

Although I clutch my blanket  
and growl when the alarm rings  
each morning...thank you, Lord,  
that I can hear. Many are deaf.

Even though I keep my eyes  
tightly closed against the morn-  
ing light as long as possible...  
thank you, Lord, that I can see.  
Many are blind.

Even though I huddle in my  
bed and put off the effort of  
rising...thank you, Lord, that I  
have the strength to rise. Many  
are bedridden.

Although the first hour of my  
day is hectic, when socks are lost,  
toast is burned and tempers are  
short...thank you, Lord, for my  
family. Many are lonely.

Although our breakfast table  
never looks like the pictures in  
magazines and the menu is at  
times unbalanced...thank you,  
Lord, for the food we have. Many  
are hungry.

Although the routine of my  
job is often monotonous...thank  
you, Lord, for the opportunity to  
work. Many have no job.

Although I grumble and  
bemoan my fate from day to day  
and wish my circumstances were  
not so modest...thank you, Lord,  
for the gift of life.

We have so much to be thank-  
ful for...

*Author Unknown*

Since my husband and I moved  
out to Carstairs, I have come to  
learn few things about country  
living. If you are ever thinking  
of doing the same, there are  
some things you should be aware.

You know you're in a small  
town when...

- ☺ You don't use your turn signal  
because everyone knows where  
you are going.
- ☺ Third Street is the edge of  
town.
- ☺ You dial a wrong number and  
you talk for fifteen minutes  
anyway.
- ☺ The biggest business in town  
sells farm machinery.
- ☺ You miss a Sunday in church  
and receive get-well cards.
- ☺ You write a cheque on the  
wrong bank and it covers it for  
you.
- ☺ The polka is the most popular  
dance on Saturday night.
- ☺ You can't walk for exercise  
because every car that passes  
you offers you a ride.
- ☺ The pickups on mainstreet  
outnumber the cars three to  
one.
- ☺ You drive into the ditch five  
miles out of town and word  
gets back to town before you  
do.
- ☺ Someone asks how you feel  
and then really listens to what  
you say.



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## Ramblers in La Belle Province de Quebec

by Carl Potter

It was certainly the longest trip I have ever taken to the trailhead for a Ramblers hike, and definitely the most interesting pre-and post-trailhead experience. Our trip to Quebec with coordinators, Marianne and Anita this Fall was clearly the highlight of the season.

The journey there involved three planes, allowing me an aerial view of the Toronto and Montreal skylines en route, and dropping me in Quebec City after dark, wondering what it would be like.

I was keen to use and improve

my meagre knowledge of the language as my friendly taxi



driver took me to the International Hostel right in the heart of old Quebec, and he was as eager to practice his English, so we got along just fine. Throughout our trip we found that the

Quebecois were almost universally friendly and very fluent in both official languages. Even Emily, our Quebec born participant, was often answered in English when she spoke French. Up to that point she was not aware that she had picked up a bit of a western accent. We usually found that the friendliness picked up even more if they figured out that we were actually Canadians, as opposed to the more common American tourists.

My "shave and a haircut" knock on the door of our lovely, recently renovated private room, brought a quick "two bits" response, and greetings from Anita, Emily and Ginger, who had arrived on the

“red eye” overnight. As Air Canada had starved me at 30,000 feet, we went out for a quick dinner at a nice little bistro nearby, and I got my first taste of the Quebec cuisine. From then on we dined sumptuously on some of the finest gourmet fare I have ever enjoyed. There are so many restaurants that for your evening entertainment you cruise the streets “menu shopping.” Many establishments employ a “barker” to stand beside their menu offering to answer your questions and lobby you to come on in.

The sophistication of restaurants was equally impressive in the rural towns we visited. My only dining disappointment of the trip was that my “flambéed” crepes Suzette were not set on fire before my eyes.

We tried all the native dishes we could, and one pleasant surprise was ground cherries, a type of gooseberry, which is presented with its dry outer leaves artistically arranged, along with strawberries and truffles.

We were also taken with the usual practice of table d’hôte— you have a choice of entrée (the appetizer— wonder why in other areas we call the main course the entrée when the word is clearly a derivation of “enter”?), choice of main course, choice of dessert, and coffee or tea, for a fixed price. Even at McDonald’s, it was: “do you want poutine with that?” If

we hadn’t been there in advance of a seven day backpack we might have gained weight, except walking up all those steep hills seems to keep the locals thin.

The city is a feast for the senses. I was expecting the usual small historic district surrounded by modern development, but I found a very European type city with ancient, narrow streets and



buildings, and historic districts going as far as we could hike. The museums, parks and public buildings like the parliament could keep a tourist happy for many days. No wonder Quebec City is one of the top 10 tourist destinations in the world!

Being Ramblers, we walked all day through parks, the ancient walls and old streets. Of course,

we took the funicular *down* the cliff below the Chateau Frontenac and climbed back *up* the “break neck” stairs. The weather was superb. The only rain shower came while we were savouring our dinner in a bistro. The views of the St. Lawrence and the Laurentians were spectacular.

After two busy days of urban hiking we changed the pace, taking advantage of a hostel bike tour to the Montmorency Falls. This spectacular waterfall is within view of downtown Quebec City and is higher than Niagara. A series of 478 steps led us up the cliff and over a suspension bridge right over the brink. As this was a Quebec City urban bike we revelled in a picnic lunch with wine and truffles.

Finally heading for our main objective, we took the bus to Bai St. Paul, where we met Marianne at the Portes du Soleil motel, which had a lovely large hostel-type room for all of us. The next day we headed up into the mountains where, after the car shuttle, we started to hike the Traversee de Charlevoix, a 100 km, seven- day hike.

Now I am used to a pretty minimalist approach on a backpack— mini-stove and freeze dried food, but there was no “roughing it” on this backpack, with six lovely log chalets spaced evenly along the trail. Each one had a propane stove, propane lights, table, airtight heating stove and loft for sleeping. The nicest ones had a deck with a view. Luckily I carried a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size axe, as the axe was missing in some of the cabins.

The first day was a mere three km so we packed in some fresh food and dined in the manner to which we had become accustomed—wine, chicken, ground cherries and truffles. The rest of the time we also ate well, as the full kitchen allowed us to bring a better class of food yet keep our packs reasonably light.

The trail is one way so we never met any other hikers, but



across the St. Lawrence. The summit of Mount Lac L'Empeche was very subarctic with black spruce and significant areas of reindeer moss, but, alas, no caribou.

It was a very unusual fall trip and a great group. We bonded by howling at the full moon every night, and even on a dock on the St. Lawrence, shared our

farewell howl at the street lamp.

In case anybody was wondering, that was some of us howling

because they opened up great vistas, which we would miss in the bush. The whole area is very dense jungle, obviously second-growth forest from earlier logging. We were disappointed that we saw no wildlife, but after the backpack we were rewarded with some whale sightings from our cruise boat on the St. Lawrence and Saguenay Fjord, and a beautiful lynx which ran across the highway in front of us.

We were lucky with the weather. The only rain was light showers, which came only after we were safely ensconced in our chalets. There was just a trace of snow and frost on two chilly days.

The mountain vistas were beautiful, especially in the western part of the hike, and in the lower areas the autumn colours were in their prime. We got our coveted view of red maples back closer to the St. Lawrence after the hike. The highlight of the trip for three of us was hiking to the top of Mount Le Noyee, from which we had a tremendous view right



did see three hunters. We dressed our sac a dos (backpack) in a blaze orange vest, as it was hunting season. The down-sides of the trip were the roads and highway we crossed every day, and sections of boggy trail. We actually looked forward to the huge power lines, which criss-cross the area,



at the total eclipse of the moon the other night at the Rosemont Hall!

Thanks Marianne, Anita, Emily and Ginger for showing your trophy escort a good time.

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## Social Events

Barb, our Social Director, reports that the Christmas Potluck held on December 8, 2004 at the Rosemont Community Hall was attended by about 80 hungry Ramblers - so hungry, in fact, that the last table was left with very slim pickings!

For next year, please keep in mind that each person needs to bring a dish to feed six. A special thanks to those people who helped set up and clean up afterwards.

Please mark Wednesday, February 9, for the next social event, when we celebrate Valentine's Day with a Dessert Potluck starting at the same time as the meeting. Bring your favourite dessert to serve six or eight people; also, a plate, fork and cup.



## Humour



### Husband Mart

A store that sells husbands has just opened where a woman may go to choose a husband from among many men. The store is composed of 6 floors, and the men increase in positive attributes as the shopper ascends the flights.

There is, however, a catch. As you open the door to any floor you may choose a man from that floor, but if you go up a floor, you cannot go back down except to exit the building.

So a woman goes to the shopping center to find a husband. On the first floor the sign on the door reads:

### FLOOR 1

These men have jobs. The woman reads the sign and says to herself, "Well, that's better than my last boyfriend, but I wonder what's further up?" So up she goes.

The second floor sign reads:

### FLOOR 2

These men have jobs and love kids. The woman remarks to herself, "That's great, but I wonder what's further up?" And up she goes again.

The third floor sign reads:

### FLOOR 3

These men have jobs, love kids and are extremely good looking. "Hmmm, better" she says. "But I wonder what's upstairs?"

The fourth floor sign reads:

### FLOOR 4

These men have jobs, love kids, are extremely good looking and help with the housework.

"Wow!" exclaims the woman, "very tempting. BUT, there must be more further up!" And again she heads up another flight.

The fifth floor sign reads:

### FLOOR 5

These men have jobs, love kids, are extremely good looking, help with the housework and have a strong romantic streak.

"Oh, mercy me! But just think... what must be awaiting me further on?" So up to the sixth floor she goes.

The sixth floor sign reads:

### FLOOR 6

You are visitor 3,456,789,012 to this floor. There are no men on this floor. This floor exists solely as proof that women are impossible to please. Thank you for shopping at Husband Mart and have a nice day.