

The PackRat

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

May/June, 2006



Trail to Grass Pass - April 30, 2006

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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 or forward contributions to RMRA, c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council, 1111 Memorial Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3E4.

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Some Ramblings by D. Mulligan

2005 – A PEAK YEAR!

As those regular readers of the Packrat will know, in recent years, I have written several articles on “middle-aged” fitness. This is a similar article but with a different twist.

The year 2005 was an interesting year for an outdoors person in Alberta, Canada. It was Alberta's 100th Anniversary and RMRA actively participated in the project to climb 100+ peaks. Eight of these were climbed by Ramblers: Baldy, Allan, Cory, Big Sister, Crowsnest, Richardson, Oyster, Bogart. See www.climbalberta.org for more details. My apologies if I forgot any.

It was interesting to read of the diverse experience of the participants who varied from school groups, through ex-park wardens to seniors and very proficient technical climbers. I hope that all participants are inspired to continue to enjoy our mountains.

Continuing in a similar vein, one of our own members, Rick Collier, finally completed all the named peaks in the Southern Rockies “green book” (about 960). Congratulations to a true old goat. ACC member Nancy Hansen became the first woman and 8th person to summit all the 120 Canadian Rockies 11,000 ft mountains. At a recent related ACC slide show, I was impressed and even scared by the activities of this young woman and her husband.

As this year 2006 is also the ACC's centennial year, be watchful for some interesting exploits.

My year was much more modest, though I did manage 52 peaks (including two twice) and 60,000 metre vertical. Another female Rambler ascended more than 70 peaks. Even with the poor winter snow, I managed to ascend five peaks by ski approach including two 11,000 footers, Columbia and Hector.

Despite heavy spring rains, several Rambler groups made various attempts on Mt Charles Stewart near Canmore. Most were driven back by the poor weather and choice of route, but a group of us (three women and one man) finally made it on June 25th in 13 hours round trip. It was barely worth the effort.

The ACC Calgary section camp in the Jumbo area of BC was a success. Weather was good as was the company, peaks were ascended including five over 11,000 feet. It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine this area as a year-round ski resort. Are politics only driven by money?

A week long backpack along the Canadian Divide Trail from the Crowsnest Pass to Waterton was probably the highlight of my year, if not my 40+ years of backpacking. In my opinion, this strenuous section of the Divide Trail, by the alternate ridge route, ranks higher than either the West Coast Trail or the Chilkoot Trail.

The above-tree line hiking season came to an abrupt end by early October with significant early snow. When I look back on the season, it's the multi-day trips that I remember most. Funny that!

I've heard that other Ramblers enjoyed trips to China, Patagonia and even Antarctica. A few have been shared publicly (thanks to Wally and Dawn), but it would be nice to see some slide presentations in the near future. We are told that the *baby boomers*, of which I am one, will drive the eco-tourist market in a few years. Let's see some ideas.

What else has been happening with RMRA? Well, we continue to thrive with the major activity remaining local day-hiking trips on established trails. As usual these are coordinated by some very dedicated people. For the most part they are middle-aged men, some retired. It would be nice to see more women and younger (<40) individuals assuming this role.

In summer there is a core of scramblers and some keen backpackers. In winter, snowshoeing is gaining in popularity with the non-skier members. Still, winter activities remain at about quarter of summer trips. With the reorganization of the hostel association, we welcome some ex-HOG members.

Despite the retirement of our two web-masters, Bob St. John and Keith Walker, to the BC's West Coast, we have an excellent website www.ramblers.ab.ca. We can be rightly proud of this active website with its suite of photograph albums compli-

menting a comprehensive database of all known local trips (about 850) cataloged for length, difficulty. What makes it so much better than most others, is that with 4 security levels, members can easily provide input. With most other websites all input is done by the webmaster who eventually gets bogged down and fed up as input increases.

With such a magnificent legacy, I think that is only a matter of time before the weekly meeting changes both in structure and regularity. Although this remains a controversial issue, one aspect that seems to be agreed on, is that personal communication is essential. How we achieve it is very debatable.

Safety and liability issues are ongoing. When I was secretary for two years in the late 1990's and had easy access to old minutes, I was surprised to see how little had changed re safety issues over the decades.

Throughout the decades, Rambler groups were getting split up, people were in over their heads, objectives were diverse, arguments ensued, accidents happened. It's a shame especially when this causes good long-time members to quit the club. If only we would admit our mistakes and look at the issue from the other person's point of view, rather than save face. I'm pleased to see that the executive are looking into professional advice in this matter (at least, I think they are).

A good website documenting most major Canadian accidents is [http://alpineclub-edm.org/](http://alpineclub-edm.org/accidents/index.asp)

[accidents/index.asp](http://alpineclub-edm.org/accidents/index.asp). It's amazing the number of idiots out there. Thanks to Bob's efforts in the late 1990's following Ron Folkin's death in an avalanche, we at least now have a credible safety policy. Liability and related insurance questions are something the club should revisit as we are now very much in the minority as a Calgary outdoor club without liability insurance.

As we move along the early 21st century, where do I see RMRA going? I see the core of the club remaining with the day trail hikes and ski/snowshoe trips. These are easy to organize and appeal to many of the members. However, I see an increasing number of members turning to scrambling and backpacks. This requires caution as there is less room for error. Currently, overnights trips mostly to ACC huts are often over-subscribed and I see this trend continuing. Reasonable cost is not the issue even as RMRA maintains its cheap image. We certainly know how to eat and drink.

I would love to see younger people (20's and 30's) back in the club. Most of us older folks have the experience but less energy. Still, I continue to be inspired by members in their 50's, 60's and 70's who venture out into the mountains weekly if not more frequently.

It surprises me that there are not more bicycle trips, both road and mountain bike. Many of us own bikes and it's a good form of exercise that is friendly to aging joints.

CARAVAN-ING IN COSTA RICA

By J. Tombouliau

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,
Website, 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.

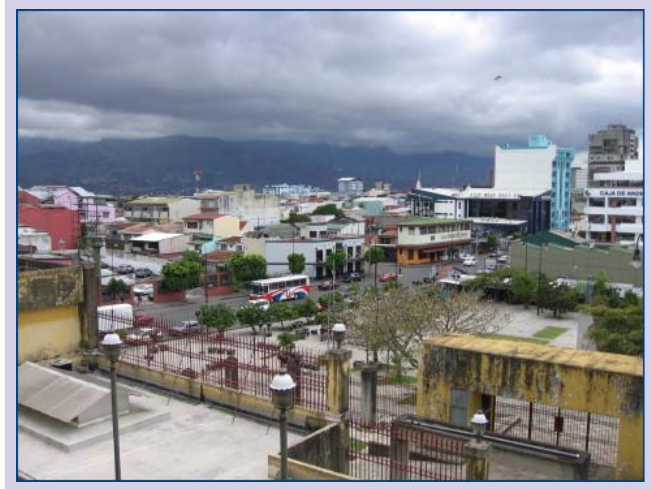


Costa Rica had long been on my priority list to visit, with its great variety of natural environments—rainforests, volcanoes and mountains, Caribbean coast, Pacific coast, river valleys, – 12 eco-zones in all.

Finally in February 2006, a friend and I booked an all-inclusive ten-day trip offered by a travel company called Caravan Tours www.caravantours.com with an amazing itinerary at an amazing price that would take us to most parts of that scenic country. Being a small country, only about half the size of Ireland, it is possible to see the highlights of Costa Rica in ten days.

Our tour started in San Jose, the capital and largest city. About half of Costa Rica's four million people live there, and in the surrounding valley. We stayed two nights at the lovely Barcelo Palacio hotel, not far from the airport, where parrots and other tropical birds cavorted in the gardens. Here, we first experienced the wonderful all-you-can-eat buffets at every meal, with excellent variety of local and tourist foods, that were to be the staples throughout the whole trip. No losing weight on this vacation!

We were also impressed by our excellent tour bus, a brand new, shiny black air-conditioned Mercedes-Benz coach with huge windows, padded leather seats, and self-contained washroom. I have yet to see a tour bus of this calibre in Canada! Tourism is industry Numero Uno in Costa Rica. We were already beginning to experience the special treatment given to tourists, as well as the excellent services of our local



guide, Sergio, and our driver, Manfred. Costa Ricans call themselves *Ticos* and they are invariably friendly, helpful and informative about their country, of which they are justly proud.

Our first adventure was to the Poas Volcano, not far north of San Jose, driving through coffee plantation country and some lovely towns on the way. The weather was uncooperative, though, and the crater, with its reportedly beautiful lake, was completely socked in. But, we did some enjoyable hiking in the misty rainforest that surrounds

the crater. Back to San Jose, we visited the excellent National Museum that traces the history of Costa Rica from pre-Columbian times and, as well, got to see some of the city from our bus window.

Next day, we headed for the Caribbean Coast via Braulio Carillo National Park. Here we rode through the rainforest canopy in an aerial tram with a knowledgeable guide who pointed out the variety of vegetation and birds that surrounded us. We also went on an interesting hike, seeing the leaf cutter ants on the march along the forest floor. Then onward to Tortuguero National Park, passing by miles of banana plantations. The last leg of our trip was by boat (because there are no roads) through the lagoons to the coast. Our stay at the Laguna Lodge was like paradise, with the Caribbean on one side, the river on the other, and beautiful



gardens with tropical birds, butterflies and flowers. Here we had several 'boat safaris' on the rivers and canals and saw a wonderful variety of wildlife

and birds. It was not, alas, the season for sea turtles to come to shore to lay their eggs, which we heard is quite a spectacle. Oh well, another reason to come back.

After our two-day stay, we hated to leave, but soon found that every part of Costa Rica had its own charms that we wanted to further explore.

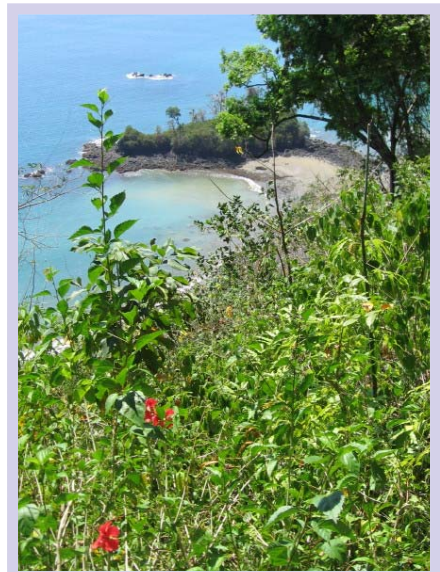
Our next stop was at the town of Fortuna in the highlands where our resort looked



right out at the Arenal Volcano, which has been active for years. Too bad it was socked in with cloud for the whole time we were there (not unusual, we heard).

It wasn't the only show in the area, though. We visited Cano Negro, a national park almost at the Nicaraguan border. On another river safari, we saw incredible birds and wildlife, including roseate spoonbills, a jabiru, jacanas, several varieties of kingfishers, storks, egrets, a rare blonde howler monkey, numerous caimans and crocodiles, and many others, as pointed out by our entertaining and knowledgeable guide, Bernal. Then we were in for a real treat: Relaxing at the beautiful Arenal Hot Springs, with a series of pools, progressively hotter as one climbed higher.

The next day we moved on toward the Pacific Coast through the surreal cloud forest where we enjoyed a short hike—fabulous hummingbirds, but no quetzal bird. It was hotter and sunnier on the Pacific Coast, certainly the most popular tourist area, judging from the number of resort and condo developments, many under construction. Time for some relaxation at the beach at Jaco, but more especially at the marvelous beaches at Manuel Antonio National Park, a short drive south. We had to watch out for the cunning white-faced monkeys who would steal anything the unwary swimmer left on the beach. Some of us hiked to a grand viewpoint overlooking the Pacific, seeing monkeys, coati mundi, iguanas, lizards and many birds on the way. Then back to the pool at our Amapola Resort, sipping cool tropical drinks (all included) and socializing with the friendly group members. What a tough day!



All too soon we were heading back to San Jose and our farewell dinner, trying to assimilate

the immense variety of experiences we had enjoyed. Almost 25% of Costa Rica's land area is protected, with about half of that being National Parks. No wonder there's still so much rainforest, wildlife and birds to enjoy. Also, it is one of the most progressive of the Latin American countries, having long since abolished its military and diverted the resources to education (about 95% literacy rate) and excellent health care. It isn't only the lower cost of living that attracts so many American and Canadian retirees to live there.

Our short tour just whetted the appetite for more, and although this was mainly a sight-seeing trip, with light hiking, all manner of outdoor activities can be enjoyed in Costa Rica.

So much more to do another time...!



"I travel not to go

anywhere, but to go.

I travel for travel's

sake. The great affair

is to move."

Robert Louis Stevenson

INTERESTING WEB SITE

There's now an impressive new option available on www.peakfinder.com. It provides an amazing way to enjoy and learn about the Canadian Rockies. **Google Earth** is a free, downloadable program that dynamically displays satellite images draped over terrain. There is coverage for the entire planet.

When you open **Google Earth**, the program zooms in on the Canadian Rockies where you will find all 1558 peaks identified. You may then fly over the mountains, changing the elevation of your viewpoint, your angle of view, and the direction you are viewing. You can zoom in on a particular peak or valley and then travel around it to get views from all sides. It's three dimensional-like piloting a helicopter through the mountains.

Clicking on the icon next to the name above the line leading to a peak opens a window that provides elevation information. You will also find a link to the corresponding page of information and photos for that peak from www.peakfinder.com.

When you open Google Earth through www.peakfinder.com all the peaks are identified. There is a folder structure in the left panel that allows you to turn off all these identifiers. You can then select a single peak or several if you wish, or all the peaks over 11,000', or 10,500', or 10,000'. A sub-menu structure allows the selection of

peaks by parks, by major valley, by range, or by hiking area.

The resolution of the photos varies, the highest being an area centred on Mount Hector and another in the Goodsir Towers area. Presumably, over time, the resolution will improve over the entire range.

If you're a Canadian Rockies enthusiast, it's possible to spend hours re-living old trips and planning new ones with this amazing combination of Google Earth and www.peakfinder.com.

Thanks to Marta Wojnarowska, Chester, and Patrick for making this possible.

Welcome New Members

*Grace Deviat
Lisa Lee-Johnson
Pauline Orton
Maggie Studer
Millie
Tom Hamp
Mike Eberhard*

Why Stretch You May Ask?

by Dawn Jones, AFLCA (Certified Fitness Professional)

Stretching is one of the most important aspects of a fitness regimen. The benefits of having a daily and planned fitness workout, are such that a body:

- can move with greater ease;
- has a greater range of motion;
- is more able to survive the trauma associated with falls and sports activities;
- will show less post activity discomfort and stiffness;
- has more stamina;
- reflects a clearer mind and a more positive way of thinking;
- has more energy; and
- has a greater feeling of general well being and health.

Consider the following: Stretching, as you might do it in a gym or privately, must always be preceded by a warmup of ten minutes or so, of gentle marching on the spot, with arms gently circled and the body parts moved in as many different planes as one can think of.

If you are not at the beginning of a sport outing or game then the pre-stretch warmup may be changed to simply be a ten-minute period of putting the body (slowly) through the actual moves that will be expected of it during the moves in the outing or game.

Now, please consider these cautions and techniques I am offering you several stretches as part of this article. It is wise to never take exercise information

and just use it without asking your physician to give you permission to do so.

- you must listen to your body and note when it is saying that a stretch is not appropriate for one or more parts.
- being relaxed when you stretch is important.
- any stretch should be held to the point of as a light pull, and should be done gently.
- the body should not bounce, and there should be no pain.
- stretches should be held for about 20 seconds or more, and can be repeated.
- select parts to be stretched randomly, trying to balance muscle groups.
- stretches can and indeed should be done daily, for a period of 15 minutes or more.

Summary:

Held stretches as described in this article are to be used particularly after an event which Ramblers may engage in, such as hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, scrambling. They can, of course, become part of your daily stretching routine.

They should be done for about 15 minutes at least. The stretches can be done using a vehicle where a support might be needed.

Don't let that vehicle head for home without what might be the most important experience of the day for your well being, and that is stretching!

The photos appearing on Page 8 are of held stretches. Do them only with your doctor's permission. They are for using in your own daily routine but are especially important ones to use immediately after a hike or ski. If you have any problem understanding the techniques involved, please phone Dawn at (403) 289-2271.

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
June 28, 2006**



BEER!

submitted by R. Mason

Historically, society recognised the nutritional value of beer, and beer was an essential element of the daily diet. In places beer was colloquially known as “liquid bread.” While the keg is unlikely to replace a workout at the gym, beer is worth another look.

Caffeine-free and nitrate-free, a typical beer contains about 140 Calories, fewer than an equal volume of milk, juice, or regular soft drinks. None of beer’s calories come from fat and it is low in free sugars.

So why the beer gut? Beer is usually consumed in quantity, while slouched in an easy chair, munching on chips, nachos or peanuts. The beer gut is a misnomer and comes from the sedentary lifestyle and the high-fat, high-salt munchies usually consumed with the beer. An eight-ounce bag of chips contains about 1,200 Calories—same as eight beers!

Beer is one of the rare non-fortified sources of the entire B-complex of vitamins and of Vitamin D. Two pints of beer provide approximately 35% of the daily adult requirement of Vitamin B6, 20% of the requirement of riboflavin (Vitamin B2), and 65% of the requirements of niacin (Vitamin B3).

These two pints of beer will also supply significant minerals, including magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. Also contained is up to 60% of the recommended intake of soluble fibre.

In addition, recent studies have shown long-term benefits to moderate consumption of beer. Beer is as effective as wine in preventing oxidation of blood plasma. But beer is even better than wine for reducing homocysteine, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Homocysteine levels increase after wine and spirits consumption, but not after drinking beer. Beer drinkers also appear to have lower hypertension than wine or whisky drinkers.

There are other health benefits unique to beer. Beer helps maintain bone strength because of its Vitamin D, which studies suggest may be as important as calcium for strong bones. Beer also prevents the oxidation of low-density and very-low-density lipoprotein, the two types of bad cholesterol. Beer drinkers also have a reduced risk of kidney stones.

However, drinking lots of beer does not guarantee good health. The quantity of beer you should consume depends on body weight, diet and lifestyle, but it seems to be agreed that by drinking more than two pints a day the detriments outweigh the benefits.

The health benefits of beer are derived mainly from the grains and yeast used in the fermentation. Premium or draft beers have a greater percentage of malt than lagers or light beers, which use corn, rice or sugar. Unfiltered beers with a yeast sediment are also healthier,

even if they are hazy and yeasty.

Drink beer with a clear conscience and be healthy!



CHEERS!

Aging Robs You of Muscles

With aging, it takes more effort and time to walk up stairs, mow the lawn, fix a faucet or wash the dishes. Tasks that you did without effort when you were younger can become major ordeals that leave you exhausted when you are older. Dr. Jerome Fleg, a cardiologist at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, tested 800 men and women over several years and found that their ability to sustain exercise decreased rapidly as they aged. The older they became the faster they lost what researchers call aerobic capacity (*Circulation*, July 26, 2005).

Aerobic capacity is a measure of your ability to use oxygen to do work. If your body can process more oxygen than that of another person, usually you will be able to run faster, walk or work longer, and have more energy than that person. The men and women lost three to six percent per decade in their 20’s and 30’s, and 20 percent per decade in their 70’s. The men

lost aerobic capacity faster than the women. The men lost 8.3 percent of aerobic capacity in their 40's and 23 percent per decade in their 70's.

This study was done with people who were healthy enough for vigorous exercise on a treadmill that measured their exercise capacity. People who have had heart attacks, strokes, diabetes or other wasting diseases would lose aerobic capacity much faster than healthy people. The results showed that a regular exercise



program can increase exercise capacity by up to 25 percent, which would give the older participants the same exercise capacity as you would expect in people who are twenty years younger.

The loss of aerobic capacity with aging explains why older people cannot compete effectively against younger ones in endurance events. The good news is that a regular exercise program can increase your maximum heart rate. By exercising regularly and vigorously, you will develop stronger skeletal muscles.

When you contract your leg muscles, they squeeze against the veins in your legs and pump blood toward your heart. When your leg muscles relax, the veins dilate and fill with blood. This

alternate contracting and relaxing pumps extra blood toward your heart. The extra blood returned to the heart stretches and strengthens the heart muscle, causing it to beat faster and with more force. So strengthening your leg muscles increases your maximum heart rate, even as you age. www.drmirkin.com

Andy Rooney's Tips for Telemarketers

1) The three little words are: "Hold On, Please..."

Saying this, while putting down your phone and walking off, instead of hanging-up immediately would make each telemarketing call so much more time-consuming that boiler room sales would grind to a halt.

Then when you eventually hear the phone company's "beep-beep-beep" tone, you know it's time to go back and hang up your handset, which has efficiently completed its task.

2) Do you ever get those annoying phone calls with no one on the other end?

This is a telemarketing technique where a machine makes phone calls and records the time of day when a person answers the phone. This technique is used to determine the best time of day for a *real* salesperson to call back and get someone at home. What you can do after answering, if you notice there is no one there, is to immediately start hitting your # button on the phone, 6 or 7 times, as quickly as possible. This confuses the machine that dialed the call and it kicks your number out of their system.

3) Another Good Idea

When you get "ads" enclosed with your phone or utility bill, return these "ads" with your payment. Let the sending companies throw their own junk mail away. When you get those "pre-approved" letters in the mail for everything from credit cards to 2nd mortgages and similar type junk, do not throw away the return envelope.

Most of these come with postage-paid return envelopes, right? It costs them more than the regular 37 cents postage **IF** and when they receive them back. It costs them nothing if you throw them away! The postage was around 50 cents before! The last increase and it is according to the weight. In that case, why not get rid of some of your other junk mail and put it in these cool little, postage-paid return envelopes *One of Andy Rooney's (60 minutes) ideas*. Send an ad for your local chimney cleaner to American Express. Send a pizza coupon to Citibank. If you didn't get anything else that day, then just send them their blank application back! If you want to remain anonymous, just make sure your name isn't on anything you send them. You can even send the envelope back empty if you want to just to keep them guessing!

Eventually, the banks and credit card companies will begin getting their own junk back in the mail. Let's let them know what it's like to get lots of junk mail, and best of all they're paying for it...Twice! Let's help keep our postal service busy since they are saying that e-mail is cutting into their business profits, and that's why they need to increase postage costs again.