

The PackRat

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

July/August 2006



ChiaMing Lake in Taiwan's Yushan National Park.

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**RMRA
Executive Committee**

President

Tom Flanagan
president@ramblers.ab.ca

Vice President

Ron Mason
vicepresident@ramblers.ab.ca

Treasurer

Laszlo Jamniczky
treasurer@ramblers.ab.ca

Secretary

Ron Hunter
secretary@ramblers.ab.ca

Trips Director

Jim Powers
trips@ramblers.ab.ca

Program Director

Jim Paterson
programs@ramblers.ab.ca

Social Director

Barbara Mitchell
socialdirector@ramblers.ab.ca

Membership

Dave Harding
membership@ramblers.ab.ca

Newsletter Editor

Irene Willett
packrat@ramblers.ab.ca

Past President

Allan Mathies
pastpresident@ramblers.ab.ca

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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Taiwan: The Amazing Island

by Irene Willett

TAIPEI, September 23, 2005 - 6:00 a.m. It was easy to spot my son, Stephen, waiting for me at the air terminal in Taipei. As one of the few foreigners there, he really stood out amongst the Taiwanese/Chinese. After a quick exchange of greetings, we boarded the bus to Taichung, the third largest city in central Taiwan (only two hours away from Taipei). Stephen and his wife, Tyla, have been living in Taichung and teaching English for almost five years now. It was time for me to visit them and also to see if Taiwan is truly a mountainous island as they say.

Taiwan's total land area is only about 36,000 sq km with a population of 21.5 million. It is shaped like a tobacco leaf that is narrow at both ends. It lies off the southeastern coast of mainland Asia, across the Taiwan Straits from Mainland China—a solitary island on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean. To the north lies Japan and Okinawa, to the south is the Philippines

Since I had a few days to myself, I am off on a 3-day hike into the mountains to discover if indeed Taiwan has 219 towering peaks over 3,000 m above sea level. Now that is impressive for such a small island. However, Asia's highest mountain and most sought after by mountaineering groups from around the world is Yushan (Jade Mountain), at 4,000 m and located within the Central Mountain range along with eleven connecting peaks. Paths leading to these peaks are well

maintained, but exposed ridges and steep inclines make them challenging. In contrast to similar mountains elsewhere in the world that are covered with perpetual snow, Taiwan's mountains are thickly forested and many species of lush flora grow everywhere. A permit and a Taiwanese guide is required for a foreigner to climb any peaks over 3,000 m.

Wednesday, September 28, 2005 - 5:00 a.m. Through my son, arrangements were made to pick me up by my guide, England and our driver. We drove for five-hours to Yushan National Park where the trailhead begins for the hike up to SanCha Mountain (3500 m). After a rollercoaster drive on twisted and curvy roads, narrow turns and steep drops along the side of a mountain, I was relieved to arrive at the Forest Range Station. We checked in with the officials and were told the weather will be good until Friday. After that, a typhoon was on its way and they don't allow anyone to go up.

With a start of the trail at 2400 m, I immediately feel the effects of the steep climb compounded by the hot and humid weather. It is only 10:00 am. but after 4 km of steady climb, we reach the first hut at 12:30. We find the area is under construction. They were adding and renovating huts and bathrooms. After a brief lunch and rest period, we continued on for another 4 km to the next hut

only to find that, too, is under construction. Since the workers are using the facilities, the only option is to sleep under a make-shift tarp with both sides open and lightly flapping in the wind.

There is no need to bring a tent here as huts are stationed



On Top of SanCha Mountain, with Jade Mountain (the tallest in Taiwan) nearest on the opposite side.

along this route and elsewhere in the Park. However, I never imagined I would be practically sleeping under the stars. The temperature dropped to 10° C that night. It was home for two nights. The only visitor we had on the second night was a little brownish-red weasel.

Today, we head out at 7:00 am to **SanCha Mountain** for a leisurely ridge walk and then continue on a steeper descent into **ChiaMing Lake**. This pretty blue lake was created by the impact and force of a comet. I was disappointed I could not see the ocean from the top because of the heavy sea of clouds hovering over the Pacific. There are numerous hiking trails that connect with other peaks and all are clearly identified. I was impressed to see mileage markers every few kilometers and trail maintenance workers in

progress.

On the third day, we leisurely headed back down taking in the magnificent surrounding vistas for the last time. With so many peaks over 3000 m elevation, Taiwan indeed offers some outstanding opportunities for walking and mountaineering. We were back in time to meet our driver for the long drive back.

Along the way, we stopped several times to view some interesting temples and landmarks.

It was only as recently as the 80s that Taiwan established six national parks so there are many trails to choose from. During my stay, I visited three of them: **Taroko National Park** in the south, which is famous for its marble gorges. This scenic park features lofty mountains, breathtaking cliffs, magnificent waterfalls, flowing rivers and tunnels. **Yushan** in central Taiwan, which is the largest and includes the mountain area and **Yangmingshan** in the north is the smallest. It is renowned for its unusual volcanic landscape and pools of bubbling water. One trail lead to the main peak, Mt. Cising (1120 m) where we had a panoramic view of Taipei and the sea.

Taiwan's national parks are not true wilderness areas. You will find houses, hotels, telephones

and roads. New developments are strictly controlled and houses cannot be built without permits and are extremely difficult to get. The emphasis now is on constructing walking trails that are well marked showing distances. The mountainous east coast of Taiwan is now at least semi-protected as the East Coast National Scenic Area.

On another day, my son brought me on a scooter to the Dakeng Forest Recreation Area. It is located in suburban Taichung and is one of the best preserved natural environments with eight hiking trails that wind through its forested hills. The combination of spectacular natural scenery and recreational facilities makes this the best place in Taichung for mountain hiking and quiet relaxation.

For my remaining stay, we rented a car and toured around the east coastline stopping at an



old seaport town of Lakung. Then, it was off to two towns noted for its pottery-making in **Yinge** and wooden carvings in **Sanyi**...a shopper's delight in search of artistic creations.

The highlight of my trip was indeed a visit to the spectacular monastery in **Puli**. **The Chung Tai Chan** monastery is 150 m



tall and sits on a hill of sixty acres. It took ten years to build from its planning stage to its completion. The manicured monastery grounds are adorned with statues, stone benches and curved pathways. What a peaceful setting for long walks and meditation.

A few miles across the main road from the monastery, a gigantic gold Buddha sits on the side of the mountain. Before too long, we were standing beneath this 50 m high statue.

On our last day, we drove to Kenting, a popular resort town, situated at the southernmost tip of Taiwan. Kenting's rugged coastline provides some of the area's most outstanding attractions. The most prominent of these is the Eluanbi Park.



A 50 m Buddha

It stands 21.4 meters high and is reputedly the brightest lighthouse in Asia. The park covers an area of 59 hectares. Within the park there are a number of recreational facilities and a wide range of interesting geological and botanical features. There are numerous activities to choose from swimming, scuba diving, seados, quading on the sand dunes to sunbathing or simply strolling around the park.

Taiwan is definitely an ideal travel destination that is overlooked. It is an interesting country with many Buddhist and Taoist pagodas and shrines. Taiwan has it all: good food, a beautiful ocean, majestic mountains, friendly people, lots of sunshine and lots to see and do!

What made it most enjoyable was being able to get around with Stephen and Tyla. Since they speak Mandarin, travelling in Taiwan was a breeze. Taiwan can be both frustrating and challenging to navigate as it is not a place that caters to tourists.

In Eluanbi Park is one of the peninsula's most notable landmarks, the Eluanbi Lighthouse.



K Country – Kananaskis Trail Users Report

by D. Reimer

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.



The latest meeting was held May 24/06. I acted as Ramblers representative. There is a new Minister of Community Development, Denis Ducharme. He is an unknown in terms of environmental or recreation issues, and we will have to wait to see how he handles things.

Following are some of the issues discussed.

Management Plans

1. The Peter Lougheed/Spray Valley final plan is still waiting for sign-off by Minister Ducharme. (Post meeting note: plan finally signed and being printed as of June 26).
2. The expected draft plan for Sheep/Blue Rock management is still ready for public input but is expected sometime in June, 2006. Deadline for responding will be early fall (probably late September) to allow enough time for submissions.

Trail Work

After the 2005 floods a huge amount of work needs to be done, especially in the Elbow Valley. K Country did get disaster funding which helps greatly. Work is expected to take place mainly July-Sept. Much repair is needed particularly for bridge work (replace or reinforce).

Some of the trails to be done are: Baldy Pass (bridge), Lusk Creek, McLean Creek (bridge), Moose Loop (bridge), Prairie Creek (trail re-grading), Prairie Link (bridge), Hog's Back (trail grading but nothing will be done to the 3-Point Creek trail where new bridges are needed), Gorge Creek (bridge). Bridge work has to get permits from Alberta Environment because of impact on waterways.

Death Valley trail is not on the list but work is planned for 2007.

K Country Budget

K Country is being close-mouthed about their own budget, willing only to refer us to the overall Parks & Protected Areas budget. We estimate that K Country gets about 40% of that. This year the dollars are much better than any year reaching back to before 1990.

I did note that leases and permits to use park lands (e.g. cattle grazing) have finally gone up, the first increase since 1983.

Gorge Creek Trail Road Access

This road will remain closed in the centre section, and there will be no access to the Volcano Ridge parking lot. The Ware Creek parking lot is accessed from the north, the Gorge Creek parking lot from the south.

Bow Corridor Regional Transportation Steering Committee

This is the group of 6 Authorities (e.g. Canmore, K Country, Mountainview, etc.) that are looking at transportation issues in the Corridor. The first priority is to evaluate potential for a commuter bike route between Banff & Canmore. A consultant is being sought to do the feasibility study and will report in September.

The 2nd priority is to reduce driving and parking along the Corridor.

Canmore Nordic Centre

Work has begun again on the Centre and should be complete in August.

The Day Lodge is a different story. Bids were so excessively high that the entire issue will be reviewed.

New & Used Ski Sale, 2006

Date will be Oct. 27-29. K Country have agreed to participate and this is hoped to bring a higher profile to XC skiing in the region (not to mention snowshoeing as well).

Where the Snow Falls Best

Alf Skrastins (again) reminded K Country people that the best snow is up on the Smith-Dorrien and that it would make much better sense if they groomed and track-set the Sawmill trails regularly.

Wild Smart Program (former Bear Smart)

This program began last year to identify animal movements and alert the public in the Banff-Canmore area. It has been expanded for most of K Country. Recreationists are asked to let them know of any sightings of animals such as bears, cougars, possibly wolves (though there aren't many of them left), lynx.

Off Highway Vehicles – Waiporous

It appears that the recent crack-down by SRD (Forestry) of destructive OHV use in the region has just moved the problem elsewhere such as over to the Red Deer river valley.

DOGS in Provincial Parks

In case you didn't know, DOGS MUST BE ON LEASH in ALL Provincial Parks as well as ALL National Parks.

Next Meeting will be mid-September. If you have any comments or concerns you can call or e-mail me.

Words from the David Suzuki Foundation

The Foundation has a 10-step Nature Challenge to conserve nature for the future. Some you might not be able to achieve but the suggestion is that each of us commit to 3 of them. You can find out all the details and a lot more at www.davidsuzuki.org.

The 10 steps are:

1. Reduce home energy use by 10% .
2. Choose an energy-efficient home and appliances.
3. Replace dangerous pesticide with alternatives (does this mean digging out those pesky dandelions).
4. Eat meat-free meals one day a week.
5. Buy locally grown and produced food. Some advocate the 100 mile rule, i.e. eat food that's been produced 100 miles of your home.
6. Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle.
7. Walk, bike, carpool or take transit.
8. Choose a home close to work.
9. Support car-free alternatives .
10. Learn more and share the information with family and friends.

Also on this website you can find the Foundation's vision for achieving 'Sustainability Within a Generation', developed and described on behalf of the Suzuki Foundation by David R. Boyd, an environmental lawyer and professor.

**Deadline
for next PackRat
August 30, 2006**

Spray Lake Sawmills – Clear Cutting Issue

by D. Reimer

Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) has a Forest Management Agreement, the only one given by the Province in S. Alberta. It extends along the Foothills from Twp. 33 to Twp. 8 (Sundre to Blairmore). Under the terms of their 2001 agreement, they must, within 5 years, submit a plan to Sustainable Resources Dept. (SRD) describing the cutting they will do. The plan requires that SLS “conduct public reviews of their Detailed Forest Management Plan [DFMP] prior to submission to the Crown”.

SLS began this review with an Open House May 11, 2006 in Cochrane. The final date for this process was June 23 when the documents were to be forwarded to SRD. The SLS Advisory Group doesn't have anyone from K Country, from Calgary City. Sandra Foss is the only one representing non-motorized recreation and I don't believe she has the necessary background.

The key areas covered by this current plan include forests near Bragg Creek and Waiporous, both areas that Ramblers hike, bike and ski in.

The documents are on the website but they are huge files with probably 400 plus pages (www.spraylakesawmills.com).

Searching through the chapters I failed to find any map showing the actual planned

clear-cut blocks.

The Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition (BCEC) have come to the surface as vocal opponents and have collected some valuable information including a MAP of the cut blocks. Unfortunately trails are not shown for all the blocks.

BCEC want to make Moose Mtn. and vicinity a wildland park but I think we need to treat this as a side issue since a wildland park is fairly restrictive. If anything, a Provincial Park would probably be wiser from a recreationist's viewpoint.

AWA (Alberta Wilderness Assoc.) is concerned about watershed protection. So is the City of Calgary (which was not notified about the plans until almost the June 23 date).

Dr. David Swann (Liberal MLA in Mountainview riding) has expressed concern and has published a Land Use Strategy

paper that you might also want to look at.

What to do

If you are concerned about the environment or about recreation in these areas you may still act.

- Read some of the stuff on the issue.
- Write or e-mail your concerns to the Ministers (David Coultts of SRD, Denis Ducharme of Comm. Dev. which includes K Country, Guy Boutilier of Environment) whose addresses are on BCEC's website.
- At the very least ask the Province to hold off on a decision for a little longer. They have already sent SLS back to the drawing board once (about 6 months ago) – another couple of months would give more time to review the plan properly.

FIND BCEC AT:

www.braggcreek.ca/forest

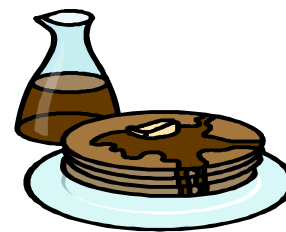
www.braggcreek.ca/forest/forest_before&after.htm
(map)

www.braggcreek.ca/forest/index.htm

www.braggcreek.ca/PDF/clearcut.pdf (printable map & satellite photo)

Annual Pancake Breakfast

will be held on
Saturday, July 8, 2006
at the Lakeview Community Hall



You must register, so please call Barb at 296-3042 during the day or add your name to the survey on the Rambler website www.ramblers.ab.ca. You need to bring all your eating utensils and a lawn chair.

Burrowing Owl

This owl:

- ★ is smaller than a pigeon,
- ★ hunts as much in the day as at night in the summer,
- ★ mimics the hiss of a rattlesnake,
- ★ is one of the most endangered birds in western Canada.

Once plentiful in Western Canada, the burrowing owl is now one of the most endangered birds in the region. Their decline started in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s.

Contrary to the meaning of its scientific name, “little digger,” burrowing owls rarely dig their own burrows. Instead they use abandoned burrows for resting, nesting, and storing food. Habitat loss is one factor attributing to the burrowing owls decline. Less than 24 per cent of Canada’s original prairie habitat exists today. This reduces hunting and nesting territories resulting in low birth and high death rates.



Another factor contributing to their decline is the use of pesticides. While burrowing owls may not be the targeted species for these chemicals, they often end up receiving lethal amounts.

Work is underway to change the plight of the burrowing owl. For more information visit www.hww.ca and to view the newest HWW vignette about the burrowing owl.

Top Five Camping Tips

1. Bear bells provide an element of safety for hikers in grizzly country. The tricky part is getting them on the bears.
2. Get even with a bear who raided your food bag by kicking his favorite stump apart and eating all the ants.
3. Acupuncture was invented by a camper who found a porcupine in his sleeping bag.
4. You can compress the diameter of your rolled up sleeping bag by running over it with your car.
5. The guitar of the noisy teenager at the next campsite makes excellent kindling.

Wilderness, Wildlife, and You!

The Friends of Kananaskis Country is sponsoring the development of a new visitor centre display in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. The new display will have four main components and use interactive video techniques that will allow visitors to choose stories and information they are interested in.

The first section of the display will present the grizzly bear as a species that can be used to indicate the health of the wilderness environment. The second section will allow visitors to interact with science researchers working with a variety of mountain wildlife from earthworms to bears. The third section will focus on how each of us can influence the wilderness.

The final phase of the display will be an Internet production that can be accessed from any home computer. This Internet program will be designed so that schools, youth groups, and interested individuals can learn about the concepts presented in the display dealing with wildlife, wilderness, and how people interact with these things.

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.

INTERESTING WEB SITE

There is a new site for hikers and cyclists to post bear sightings. Such information can help the public reduce bear encounters www.trailex.org

Survival Kit Suggestions

ITEM	USES
Coffee Can	Pot, shovel, seat, waterproof container
Yellow Plastic Garbage Bag	Signal device, wind sock, waterproof clothing, bedding, container of material like snow
283g Coffee Container	Cup, melting snow, reflective bottom for signaling device, waterproof container
Sewing Kit	Repair clothing & backpack, fishing line
Orange Marking Tape	Marking area, or path taken, signal device
Twine	Binding and repair materials
Plastic Sandwich Bag	Waterproof container
Fishing Line and Hook	Catching food by fishing or possibly snaring
Safety Pins	Fishing hooks, patch clothing
Strike Anywhere Matches	Lighting fire
Candle	Lighting fires, heat, light, comfort
Triangle Bandage	Tourniquet, filtering device, bandana, bandage, sling
Whistle	Signaling device
Dried Bounce Sheets	Tinder, air freshener
Pocket Knife	Sawing and cutting
Lighter	Starting fires
Tylenol	Relieving pain and headaches
Paper and Pencil	Writing messages, tinder
Emergency Blanket	Sun still, warmth as blanked, heat and light reflector, signal device
First Aid Kit	Relieve pain and treat injuries
Snare Wire and Binding Wire	Snaring, binding objects together such as needed in smoke signal teepee
Compass and Map	Navigation
Water Purification Drops	Water Purification
Fire Paste	Guarantee fire starter
Power Bars	Energy source
Tea	Comforting, energy, makes water more drinkable
Extra Band-aid on Top	Prevents digging around to obtain item
Orange Lid with Smiling Face ...	Seals contain, signal device, friend
Condom	Water container, fastening device
Duct Tape	Binding and a million other uses
50ml Rum	Fire starter, cleanser, moral booster/ calmer
Purell Hand Sanitizer	Prevent illness

Editor's Note: A recent article appeared in the CAOC newsletter describing a 3-day backpacking ordeal when a hiker left her hiking partner and ventured out on her own. It was due to her survival kit that helped her get through this ordeal. As a result, she has compiled a list of what to have in your survival kit.

A Week in the Life of a Gardener's Spouse

*She dug the plot on Monday, the soil was rich and fine
But she forgot to put the dinner on, so out we went to dine.
She planted roses Tuesday, she says they are a must
They really were quite lovely, but she forgot to dust.
On Wednesday it was daisies, they opened with the sun
All pinks and whites and yellows, but the laundry wasn't done.
The poppies came on Thursday, all bright and cherry red
I guess she really was engrossed, she never made the bed.
It was violets here on Friday, in colours she adores
It never bothered her at all, the dirt upon our floors.
Saturday I hired a maid, I'd not admit defeat
She can garden all she wants now and the house will still be neat.
It's nearly lunchtime Sunday, I cannot find the maid
Oh, I don't believe it. She's out there alongside my wife with her own spade!
~Unknown~*