

The

Pack Rat

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

November / December 2008



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your new executive

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

E-mail contributions to the editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca or forward to RMRA c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council 1111 Memorial Drive NW, Calgary AB T2N 3E4.

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rambles by the editor

It's Not About Age

by Sharon Wingenbach

I used to hate phys ed. I wasn't good at anything. I couldn't jump over that wooden horse to save my life. I sucked at basketball. No one ever picked me to be on their team until I was the only one left, but that was OK - I didn't want to play anyway.

But in the spring, we'd go outside to train for the track meet. I couldn't jump high or far. I couldn't run fast. But I could run for a fairly long time. I remember the first time I looked behind me and realized that I was ahead of most of the class. I was 16.

The week I got my first adult bicycle, we set out to ride a 35 mile route. By the end of the day, I realized that I couldn't make it all the way. My friend had to ride home, and come back for me with the car. I was 26.

Once when my older son was two, I picked him up and set him on my hip, and my friend asked me if I was pregnant. No I wasn't.... I was 29.

When I took part in the 1981 Canada Fitness Survey, I was in the 35th percentile for flexibility. 65% of Canadians could touch their toes better than I could. That's not very good.

The PARTICIPATION movement of the '80s motivate me. I signed up for their points program: any activity I did - walking, bicycling, gardening - earned me points. I like points.

I started walking with friends in the evenings after the kids went to bed. Haha - the louder we talked, the faster we walked. I was 40ish.

I started bicycling to work. What a great way to start a day. I started bicycling after work too.

My son began running. He wanted me to run too. Me? You've got to be kidding. Then a young friend of his died tragically, and Rodney and I trained together to run her 5 km charity run. I did lousy, but I learned about 'mob mentality' and how it can push you to do more, and enjoy it. So I bought better running shoes.

I joined the Ramblers, and I bought a good pair of hiking boots.

And then one day, I was with a group of Ramblers at Shouldice, and I happened to look across the parking lot at another group of Ramblers gathering for a different hike. I smiled when it struck me that every one of them had nice, strong legs. I was 50ish.

And I was one of them.

I truly believe that I am as fit as I am today because **I was never a jock**. I had to keep trying, until I found something I enjoyed doing. And then I just kept doing it.

I once heard a man on CBC Radio say that every year his tennis game gets better. And he was 76.

Nope, it's absolutely not about age.



Activities

Hiking
Backpacking
Cross-Country Skiing
Downhill Skiing
Snowshoeing
Cycling
Climbing
Scrambling
Mountaineering
Camping
Education and Awareness Programs
Socials

Meetings

Every Wednesday evening at 7:30
Rosemont Community Hall
10 St NW at Confederation Park

Contact Us

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Trip Info

The Information Line at 282-6308,
our website and weekly meetings

Website

www.ramblers.ab.ca.

If we have your e-mail address,
we will automatically notify you when
an electronic copy of the Packrat
is on the website.

A Message from the President

by Tom Flanagan

After three years as President of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers, I've decided not to run again. It's time for some one else to bring new ideas and fresh enthusiasm to the job.

I'm grateful that I had a chance to be President because it's an honour and a privilege to serve the Ramblers—a club that for 54 years has been offering its members a wide variety of outdoor trips and social events.

We have money in the bank, our membership numbers remain strong, and we are always recruiting new coordinators to offer trips. We organize hiking, downhill and cross-country skiing, biking, and snowshoeing trips, as well as an annual dinner dance, Stampede breakfast, and assorted socials throughout the year.

We're part of what makes Calgary such a great place to live.

Being "president" wasn't that hard; all I had to do was to "preside." Other members of the Executive did all the heavy lifting, and I'm thankful for that. I'm sure the new President will get the same kind of cooperation from the Executive. I will continue on the Executive as Past President and will do whatever I can to help the club keep on serving its members.

From all of us, thanks, Tom.
And thanks, Peter Fischer, for
taking up the torch. We're looking
forward to another great active

If you received this newsletter in the mail, but instead you prefer to receive it online, send an e-mail to the editor. About 85% of Ramblers receive the PackRat online only.

Online, you can see all the brilliant colors in the photos, and you save trees....

packrat@ramblers.ab.ca

PACK RAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertising space in Pack Rat and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page	\$10
Half Page	\$20
Full Page	\$40

Payment **MUST** be received prior to publication

hiking the West Highland Way

Scotland

by Carl Potter

I think there is something special about a long-distance point-to-point hike. Living where I do, near the Rocky Mountains, this normally means a backpack in the wilderness, either in the mountains or somewhere in the Canyon Country of the American Southwest. Those trips must entail the logistics of car shuttles, heavy packs and food planning, as there will be no services, and sometimes little semblance of trail.

So last summer, lying in my tiny backpacking tent in the rain, with thunder and lightning crashing around me, it dawned on me that I should do another inn-to-inn hike in Britain.

I talked the idea up with friends in the club, and pretty soon we had the critical mass to get serious about it. Having had a good experience on the coasts of Devon with a logistics company called **Contours**, I looked at their brochure and quickly decided that now was the time to do the 95-mile **West Highland Way** in Scotland. And with our linear hike laid on, it was easy to tack on two side trips—**Ben Nevis**, highest mountain in the U.K., and **Ben Lomond**, the southernmost Munro (Scottish mountain over 3,000 feet in elevation).

I requested permission from the executive for an overseas trip (I don't think it has been done before, except once a three-man expedition climb in South America), and after due deliberation, they decided they could deem the U.K. safe to visit.

I posted the trip for a maximum of six, but the initial response was 10 eager would-be participants. I got **Contours** working on the file in November, and they were able to accommodate 9 people by splitting us up on several nights, but they just couldn't get one more. The toughest thing about all the organization was having to disappoint "number 10." We all knew the chances were slim we could all go, but it was harder to tell just one person than several

trail, we had the benefit of outside organization. The logistics for the coordinator were not that complex. In fact I would go so far as to say it was easier than doing a backpack. This is because we had **Contours** to book all the inns and B&Bs for us, and hire a company called **Travel Lite** to provide the portage of our suitcases from inn to inn every day. It would indeed be a logistical nightmare to do this ourselves, as there is very little accommodation



that they just missed the boat.

The commitment to the trip was outstanding. I have never done a multi-day trip before without having a fair amount of "churn" in the list of participants, but on this one everybody made the serious commitment of cash for the booking and there were no dropouts.

The beauty of this kind of trip is that, while we were a Ramblers group doing our own thing on the

available on the trail, and if you book one and can't fit the ones before or after, the whole plan folds like a house of cards.

Likewise, you really have to find someone to carry your bags, and that has to fit into their schedule as they are already working with people like **Contours**.

So after that, all we had to do was arrange our own flights and get ourselves to our first B&Bs in a suburb of Glasgow.



- Well-maintained trail.
- Unusual highlights along the trail like a Scotch whisky distillery and a free wee dram.
- Sometimes a pub strategically set at the midway point of the day's walk, for lunch.
- Fresh sandwiches for lunch always available.
- Totally different scenery.
- Quaint hamlets and villages.
- Charming little inns in very isolated locations, with no other habitation for miles.

Combining this intense two-week visit with one of the most spectacular areas in Scotland with another two-week motor coach trip, seeing everything up to the Orkney and Shetland Islands and some of the Inner Hebrides, I spent the whole month doing more of Scotland, learning more about their culture and history, than most people could ever imagine.

There are a lot of charms in this kind of trip, and no deprivation. Examples:

- No car shuttle. At the end of the trip, we all took the train back to Glasgow--on one of the most scenic rail trips in the world, no less--and we could enjoy the scenery from a different vantage point.
- No heavy pack. We just took our normal day packs as if we were going on a normal day hike.
- Warm, dry accommodation every night, and a chance to dry out wet things.
- Showers every night - the hot water type, not the cold evening rain.
- A pub every night, and the local draughts to experience.
- Full Scottish breakfast every morning, with cultural experiences like Haggis.
- Restaurants every evening, with more Haggis, but also Indian and Italian.
- Good guide book and map of the route.
- Excellent waymarks all the way - no losing the trail.

We had a wonderful time and were a very compatible group. I know we will all cherish the memories forever. Would I do something like this again? Oh yes, absolutely!



By the age of 6 months, the average Canadian has consumed the same amount of resources as the average person in the developing world consumes in a lifetime. (Recycling Council of Ontario)

No surprise there.

river, mountains, tiger

Up the Ganges

by Ron Mason

The river Ganges is the holiest river in the world and Varanasi (Benares) is the holiest place on the Ganges. Ganga is the Hindu god of the Ganges and she emerged from Vishnu's toes. Vishnu is one of the tripartite of Hindu gods, the others being Brahma and Shiva,

The river threatened to descend upon the Earth and destroy it but Shiva allowed it to fall onto his head. After some time in Shiva's hair the river separated into seven streams and fell to the Earth. There are now the seven main tributaries of the Ganges.

So much for Hindu mythology.

I started my acquaintance with the Ganges at Varanasi where the river is wide and slow and also heavily polluted. Here there are many ghats along the river banks (a ghat is a wide stepped terrace leading down to the river). Here many rituals are performed of which the essential one is to wash in the river, preferably by full immersion. Many pilgrims come from all over India to bathe and take home samples of the holy (polluted) water.

At Varanasi, it happened to be the wedding season and the wedding parties came one after the other, arriving to the music of bells, drums and gongs. The bride and groom and close family would board a boat and go for a short trip on the river.

Apparently the festivities go on for several days.

Further down the river were the burning ghats where the dead are cremated and there were several fires burning in various stages of combustion. The ashes (and any unburnt bits) are then thrown into the river, probably to purify the soul but not the river. At night we took a boat trip on the river along the front of the ghats, of which there are dozens. We came in front of



what I considered to be a sound and light show, but was probably a very holy performance. Five holy men were chanting into a sound system and waving flaming censers or clashing cymbals. They were surrounded by hundreds of followers also chanting and waving lamps. There were also many electric spotlights and an amplification system to put any rock stars to shame. The Hindu religion is moving with the times.

After Varansi I went back to Dehli and joined a group travelling to the source of the

Ganges in the Himalayas. We travelled in a small bus and reached the Ganges again just below the town of Rishikesh which was my favourite town in India. The river is clean and there is a pedestrian suspension bridge, dividing the town in two. The town is full of ashrams where pilgrims (or anyone) can stay to meditate, practice yoga and study under a yogi or maharishi. The Beatles did just that. Some holy men must be very rich because there

are some huge ashrams up to ten stories high. The town is very busy with lots of restaurants and shops and has a very friendly atmosphere.

Unfortunately we didn't have time to stay in an ashram.

We chose to take a rafting trip, driving several kilometres up the river to a deserted riverside resort – it was the winter (February). We went down with two rafts and just before the first rapids we drove an escaping water buffalo out of the river to his owner on the bank. The rapids were lots of fun and at the end, some of us jumped into the water. I was told

later that total immersion in the Ganges would forgive all my sins, past and future!

On up the river which became smaller as we passed several confluences. At each confluence there is always a temple situated between the rivers as they join and these give a breathtaking view of the two rushing rivers swirling together. Usually they are different colours. At one of these temples, for a few rupees I received a blessing for all my family.



Instead we took a cable car up to the local ski hill (One of the highest in the world). The view was amazing, many Himalayan peaks over 7000m and there in the hazy distance – Nanda Devi – the mountain of

in 1936 and at the time was the highest mountain to be climbed in the world. An American climber, Willi Unsoeld also made an unsuccessful attempt and subsequently named his daughter Nanda Devi. In 1976 they both went to climb the mountain and, tragically, she died during the attempt.

There were a number of Indians taking ski lessons but there was very little snow, the ski lift wasn't working and the snow was either slushy or icy. Not the best conditions for learning!

As the river got smaller, the gorge got deeper and the rapids became more rapid. We passed an interesting road sign "Excidental Prone Aria" followed by "If married to speed – Divorce".

Where the two rivers Alaknanda and Bhagirathi meet is officially where the Ganges begins. However continuing up the Bhagirathi eventually leads to the real source as it emerges from a glacier. This is known as Gaumuck or the cow's mouth which is just above the holy town of Badrinath. We had planned to go there but the road was closed by snow or an avalanche.

my dreams. This mountain was first climbed by Tilman and Odell



Reluctantly we left the mountains and the river behind and started our descent back to the Gangetic plain. On the way we visited two national parks which were reserves for the few tigers remaining in India. We spent a couple of hours in the first one driving around in a jeep. No tigers but lots of birds and deer. In the second one we had the remarkable luck to come upon a tiger. It came out of the woods about 10m ahead of us. Took a disdainful look and padded silently away down the road.

We spent a few more days getting back to Delhi by bus and train. A wonderful journey, the highlights were undoubtedly Nanda Devi and the tiger.

● Plans to bring golf and skiing package tourism to the Himalayas are likely to end the Annapurna circuit, which opened to backpackers in 1977. Buses, taxis, motorbikes and tractors will travel a new road connecting the mountain resort of Manang, now reachable by footpath or air, to Nepal's national transport network. Wildlife and plants will be destroyed and scores of porters and guides could



Road to ruin ... Annapurna circuit
lose their livelihoods, officials concede.

Trail Users' – K Country Meeting

by Dorothy-Ann Reimer

The last meeting between trail users and K Country was Sept. 17, 2008. Following is a précis of some of the items discussed. Key points are high-lighted.

Hand Sanitizers

In case you wondered what those white things on the walls of the toilets are, they are hand sanitizers and the public are delighted with them – unfortunately to the point where quite a few have been stolen. K Country hopes that soon the "needy" thieves will have enough and thefts will stop.

SRD Update

Rob Mueller (SRD) gave an update on Forestry activity, mainly on Spray Lake's cutting. Cutting for Pine beetle mitigation is ongoing and is now focused on Hwy 68 near Hwy 40. A road may be cut into the area. There are no beetles there as yet.

Users wanted better info on where cutting will be, especially using the Spray Lake's website (which tends to be out-of-date or inadequate). Mueller will see what can be done. He said harvesting is a three year cycle; year 1 – cut, year 2 – scarify, year 3 – reclaim/replant.

The road built for Baldy Pass work will eventually be reclaimed. The Lusk trail is being re-routed to better ground.

Snowshoe Trails

K Country still has no overall plan for snowshoe trails. It is putting in some short trails (Marl Lake and Canyon). No information was available on K Country's

A big warm welcome to our new members

Alastair Watermeyer

Dale Galbraith

Pam Brandt

Violetta Kwiecinska

Marianne Azizi

J. Ana Hawryluk

Nancy Kirby

Cathy I. Lloyd

Andrea Willwerth

Matt Magolan

Hannes Braun

Happy trails to you!

response to users' suggestions for new trails. Mike Benny asked that suggestions be sent to him directly with a copy to his secretary (Mike.Benny@gov.ab.ca and Janet.Freear@gov.ab.ca)

Benny also said that they are looking at changing some less-used ski trails to snowshoe trails. This could include some currently track set trails.

PRA Management Plan Update

The deadline for submissions on the proposed plan for the Prov. Recreation Areas is Sept 30. It was noted that the 3 proposed fixed roof accommodations in the Plan would be the size of Engadine Lodge.

NOTE: Ramblers submitted a response to this Plan and opposed these accommodations.

Sheep/Bluerock Management Plan

This Plan was signed by Minister Ady. Some of the trail users believe that very little attention was paid to the non-motorized recreation public and K Country implemented decisions well before the Plan was finalized (especially about Gorge Creek road). A strong statement of concern was presented by Gillean Daffern, Dorothy-Ann Reimer & Alf Skrastins. Mike Benny

suggested that this concern be brought to the next meeting of the Kananaskis Country Interdepartmental Consultative Committee (KCICC) Nov. 18, 2008 in Canmore.

Winter Program

Two new snow cats are leased this year (one for Ribbon, one for Peter Lougheed/Spray). Terrace trail will be widened to 25-30 feet. A snow barrier between sleigh and snowshoers will be used. The paved bike trail at the Village will be ploughed.

In Peter Lougheed/Spray, the program remains unchanged (e.g. no track setting at Sawmill). Chester Lake snowshoe trail gets new posts and signs. The Elk Pass snowshoe trail gets blown in even though' packed two or three times last year. They may put up more signs.

Cataract Creek Campground Entrance Gate

G. Daffern asked that this gate be moved or at least left open past Labour Day to allow hikers to park closer to the trailhead for Salter Pass/Mt. Burke in the shoulder season.

Permits for K Country Trail Use

Jim Dennis, Special Events Coordinator for K Country, explained the permit system for the region. The users were

surprised to learn that, effective last Spring, all non-commercial groups were expected to apply for permits or Letters of Authority to use trails in K Country.

He stated that there are group size limits and application should be made in advance with follow-up information after the event. Annual permits were acceptable. No fee is charged.

Reasons given were

1. gather information on where larger groups are going.
2. decide what areas need better protection.

Users were shocked and angry and asked for the name of the committee or person who had introduced this requirement.

Post-meeting Information on Permit Issue

The Rambler Executive discussed this issue and decided to bring it forward at the AGM with a motion to allow the incoming Executive to react as it felt appropriate. There is some confusion among K Country staff as to whether this requirement for a permit is mandatory or voluntary. At the moment, the Executive plans not to act on this issue until or unless the issue is clarified by K Country.

Next Meeting: January 21, 2009

Be kinder than necessary, for everyone out there is fighting some kind of battle.

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THAILAND OASIS

February 8 to 22, 2009

Countless new experiences await you in Thailand – hike through tribal villages, visit incredible floating markets & Buddhist temples, bathe elephants and taste an abundance of fresh & flavourful foods. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai & the River Kwai - all part of this incredible journey.



ANDALUCÍA, SPAIN

April 19 to May 2, 2009

The Spanish passion for living is deliciously contagious! Hike the picturesque Andalucía region with its "white villages" nestled in the mountains and bottomless gorges where vultures nest. Experience the history of the Alhambra Palace & let Ronda charm you.



CORFU, GREECE

May 10 to 23, 2009

This Greek island is the perfect combination of European flare and tranquil sea-side living. Hike to the

heavens to visit holy monasteries and trek in shade of ancient olive groves.

We promise - you will never tire of the deep, deep blue of the sea that surrounds you. Opal!



INDULGE IN FRANCE

June 6 - 20, 2009, 2009

Hike with us in SW France from the medieval town of Sarlat. The honey-coloured stone of the 1000 year-old buildings, gas lighting and complete lack of overhead wires make it a photographer's paradise. Included in our hikes are guided tours of chateaux, visits to magnificent sculptured gardens, a leisurely boat ride on the Dordogne and winery tours, of course!



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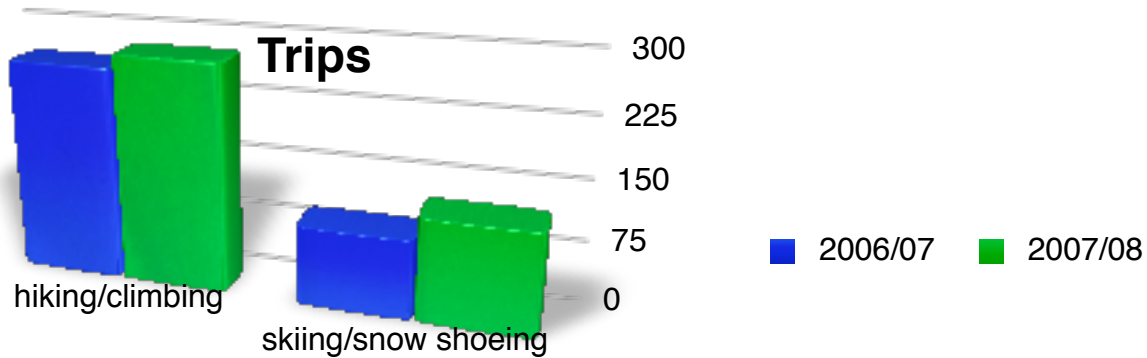
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Here's what we did...

Trip Stats - Over 3000 Participant Days

	Hiking					X-C Skiing				Sno Shu	DH Ski	
Trips	TL	OT	SC	MN	Other	TS	TL	OT	MN			Total
2006-07	105	91	49	9	7	17	25	28	4	17	5	357
2007-08	106	100	58	6	8	29	31	39	2	21	2	402
+ / -	1	9	9	-3	1	12	6	11	-2	4	-3	45
Dif	17					28						

	Hiking					X-C Skiing				Sno Shu	DH Ski	
PDays	TL	OT	SC	MN	Other	TS	TL	OT	MN			Total
2006-07	1027	819	442	78	51	115	158	187	48	93	23	3041
2007-08	1034	870	331	57	50	151	158	251	27	96	7	3031
+ / -	7	51	-112	-21	-1	36	0	64	-21	3	-16	-10
Dif	-76					66						



Membership

2006 - 2007 367
 2007 - 2008 348

