

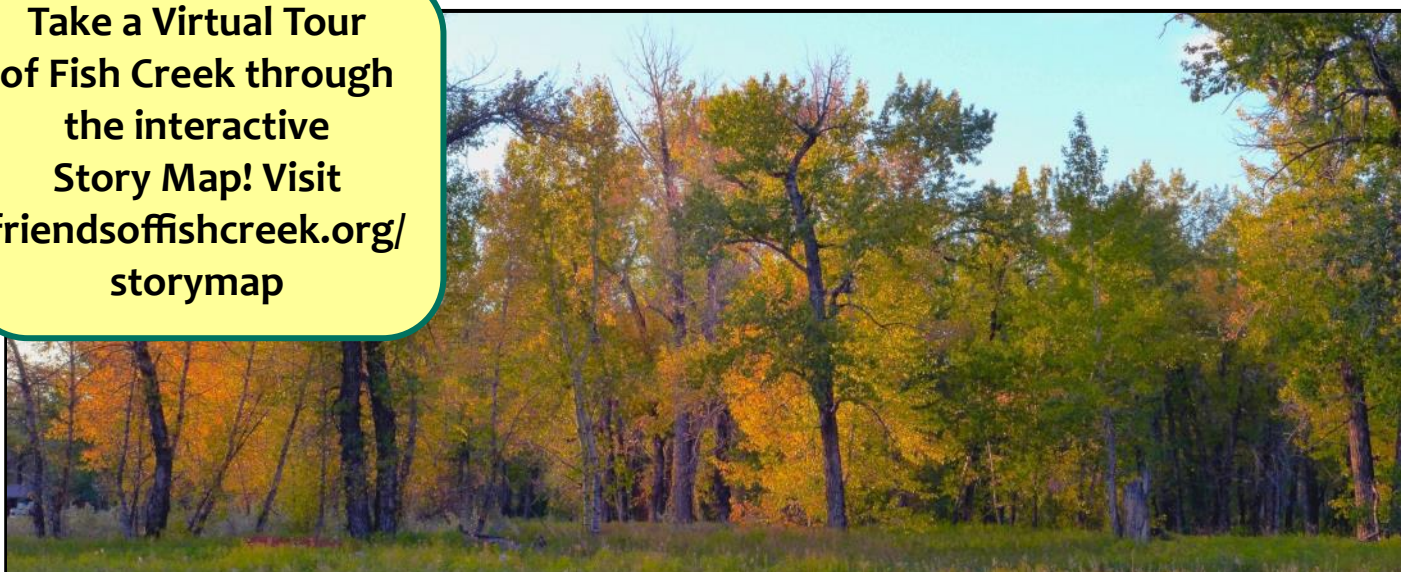
Our mission is: To engage the community through activities and awareness
to conserve a truly unique naturalized urban park.

www.friendsoffishcreek.org

PO Box 2780 Stn M Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M7 403-238-3841

Volume 25, Issue 4
Autumn 2020

Take a Virtual Tour
of Fish Creek through
the interactive
Story Map! Visit
[friendsoffishcreek.org/
storymap](http://friendsoffishcreek.org/storymap)



MEMBERSHIP SHOWS YOU CARE

Now is the Best Time to Renew Your Commitment to Fish Creek!

It is because of our members, donors, volunteers, partners and sponsors that we are able to deliver programs and events in and around Fish Creek Provincial Park. The Friends of Fish Creek invite you to renew your membership or sign up as a member to show your support for Fish Creek Provincial Park. Membership benefits include a discount on the popular Birding Course, admission to Fish Creek Speaker Series presentations, and a discount at select local businesses. The current membership year will run until December 31, 2021. To renew your membership please visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/membership or mail in the form on the back page of this newsletter along with a cheque. Thank you to everyone who has renewed for the 2020-21 season. As an alternative to annual membership, the Park Protector effortless donor program may suite your busy lifestyle a little better. For more info about the Park Protector program, please visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup

Photo courtesy of Stan Kwasniowski



Also in this Issue:

Page 2: *Birdies for Kids*

Fish Creek Speaker Series
Quiz Question

Page 3: *Thank You Alberta Parks*

Page 4: *Creekfest - Reimagined!*

Page 5: *Remembering Gus Yaki*

Page 6: *Capture Nature Photography Contest*

Page 7: *I ♥ Fish Creek*

Page 8: *Beaver Coexistence Project*

Page 9: *Dogs in Fish Creek*

Page 10: *Wellness Wrap-Up*

Page 11: *Evolution of Park Watch*

Page 13: *Fish Creek Community Terrace*

Page 14: *Digital Mapping*

Page 15: *Online Store*

Page 16: *Calgary Captured*

Page 18: *Quiz Answer*

*2020 Executive
Membership Renewal*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of volunteers Mary Zacher and Gus Yaki. Mary volunteered with her husband Syl for many years in a variety of programs including Park Watch and Weed Whackers, and we appreciate her support and involvement over the years. Please see page 5 for an article about Gus.

BIRDIES FOR KIDS UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink program. Your generous contributions support the TD Learning Naturally program in Fish Creek Provincial Park, an essential program that provides outdoor education for children from Calgary schools who otherwise may not have this opportunity. While the Shaw Charity Classic Golf Tournament was unfortunately cancelled this year, Birdies for Kids helped over 200 local charities to provide services for children. While the final numbers are not in yet, the Friends have raised at least \$2,257, which is enough to provide 225 children with a Learning Naturally field trip in this park. Thank you to all donors and the Calgary Shaw Charity Classic Foundation.

FISH CREEK SPEAKER SERIES

The Friends would like to extend our sincere thanks to Servus Credit Union in Bridlewood for providing funding for the Fish Creek Speaker Series program. In light of the current pandemic, the Friends have begun using Zoom video conferencing technology to reach our members and deliver Fish Creek Speaker Series presentations. Thank you again to Servus and we are looking forward to another amazing Fish Creek Speaker Series program. Presentations are free to Friends of Fish Creek members and \$10.00 for non-members. Youth 16 years of age or younger can attend free of charge. Registration is required. For information please stay tuned to <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/speaker-series/>

Once They Were Hats: A Brief History of a Radical Rodent

Thursday, November 19, 2020 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm, online

Presented by Frances Backhouse, Award-Winning Journalist and Author

There is a lot of history behind our present-day dealings with *Castor canadensis*. The beaver conflicts that we are working to manage today are in many ways a legacy of the colonial fur trade. As our relationship with beavers continues to evolve, a historical perspective can help inform the future. Frances Backhouse is an award-winning journalist and author whose two latest books are both about beavers. *Once They Were Hats: In Search of the Mighty Beaver*, and *Beavers: Radical Rodents and Ecosystem Engineers*, written for middle-graders, will be published next spring. Visit www.backhouse.ca to learn more about Frances and her work.

Urban Beaver Co-Existence Project

Thursday, January 21, 2021 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm, online

**Presented by Kirby England,
You Betula Enterprises**



QUIZ QUESTION

In what year, and where in Fish Creek Provincial Park, did the first Riparian Restoration project take place?

The correct answers will be announced in the next issue of Voice of the Friends.

GRANT PROVIDES FRIENDS WITH UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY

On the morning of September 15 the outside of the Cookhouse was transformed into a media centre for a very special announcement. We never thought we would see the day when Premier Jason Kenney, Minister of Environment and Parks Jason Nixon, Minister of Children's Services Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Labour and Immigration Jason Copping, MLA Whitney Issik – Calgary-Glenmore, MLA Tanya Fir – Calgary-Peigan, and MLA Richard Gotfried – Calgary-Fish Creek would be gathered outside our office before the assembled press to make a special announcement. That announcement was the culmination of eighteen months of negotiations and process building to arrive at a grant to support the Friends in developing our partnership role with Alberta Parks and our programs and projects in Fish Creek Provincial Park.

The idea was born during a meeting between Nic Blanchet - Friends Executive Director, Wayne Meikle - one of our Founding Members, and Premier Kenney to discuss the current role of the Friends and its potential if we had more capacity. The Enhanced Partnership agreement was developed by Alberta Parks, Nic, and the Friends Board of Directors, and the Friends have begun planning and delivering new ways to support the park and engage the community. This is the first time in its twenty seven year history that the Friends have received a direct government grant. This grant is in recognition of the importance of the work conducted by volunteers and staff in the park and the potential to harness all of this goodwill, knowledge and experience to do more to preserve the park.

The grant of \$480,000 over 3 years will support additional capacity to allow the Friends to do more of the essential stewardship tasks that need to be tackled to effectively manage the natural resources of the park. This grant will also support new ways the Friends and Alberta Parks can work together to provide a better

service to park users, including the reopening and staffing of the Bow Valley Ranch Visitor Centre, expanding our IT capacity to further support planning and management, developing new education programs, creating new partnerships and developing new ways to engage park users in the future of the park.



MLA Richard Gotfried – Calgary-Fish Creek and Minister of Environment and Parks Jason Nixon at the Cookhouse on September 15.

Long time staff members Katie Bakken, Shana Barbour and Chris Lalonde are now in new managerial roles that allow them to better leverage their experience, contacts and expertise, and we are pleased to have recently hired Emma Stroud and Julia Schneider into coordinating roles. We are grateful for all the support we received from our colleagues in Alberta Parks in helping us bring this proposal to fruition, and for their commitment to working with us over the next few years to ensure its success. We are looking forward to an exciting new chapter in our history and working closely with our volunteers and supporters to make the most of this important opportunity.

REIMAGINING CREEKFEST WITH THE FISH CREEK COMMUNITY

This year would have marked the 10 year anniversary of the Friends *Creekfest* water celebration, however due to the public health and safety situation, the Friends decided to postpone the anniversary celebration and instead presented *Creekfest - Reimagined*. We changed the format of the event while still capturing the essence of *Creekfest* - to raise awareness about conservation, watersheds and nature.

Creekfest - Reimagined kicked off on July 18 with a pop-up event in the park, featuring a few exhibitors set up at the Bow Valley Ranch, Hull's Wood, Bankside and Burnsmead. The Friends and our partners adhered to public health and safety guidelines for an outdoor event. We did not promote the pop-up event or mention it so that we would not draw people into the park.

Community members visiting the park that day were able to meet with, and learn about, the Alberta Community Bat Program, Calgary River Valleys, Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance, Canadian Wildlife Federation - Wild Outside, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Tower Garden by Juice Plus and artist Bettina Seiger.

Community members also learned about the Friends, our digital mapping project and Calgary Captured.

Wellness programs scheduled between July 18 and 24 were also part of *Creekfest - Reimagined* and we would like to thank the instructors who hosted online programs or in person sessions in the park during that week: Divya Singh - Meditation, Karen Salamandick - Forest Bathing, Annette Ng - Invasive Species, Naomi Parker - Wild Yoga, and Diana Young - BungyPump. There were close to 420 engagements during that week in the park.

Creekfest - Reimagined continued throughout the week with a series of both online and pre-recorded segments, mostly through Zoom and YouTube, which had over 730 views during the week. Many of the

participating groups also had a social media component to help raise awareness about their cause and *Creekfest - Reimagined*. We would like to thank children's performer and long-time supporter of the Friends Peter Lenton (Peter Puffin's Whale Tales) for his support and assistance with steering this event in a more virtual way. Peter Puffin's Whale Tales hosted a live concert via Facebook and recorded three videos for the Friends which can be viewed on our website.

We sincerely appreciate the support and participation from the following groups and individuals for hosting online presentations and providing videos; Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Alberta Water Portal Society, Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley - WildSmart, Bow Habitat Station, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta, Cows and Fish, Elbow River Watershed Partnership, Evergreen Theatre, Ghost Watershed Alliance Society, Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation, Little Wonders Learning, author Pamela McDowell, the Miistakis Institute, as well as to Katie Bakken for presenting the Fish Creek Story Map.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped with preparing and delivering the event, and special thanks to David Arnott for helping coordinate *Creekfest - Reimagined*. Thank you to *Creekfest - Reimagined* supporters TD Parks People, the Miistakis Institute, the City of Calgary, Calgary Foundation, Alberta Environment and Parks Watershed Resiliency and Restoration program, Pixel Imaging and LSC. Land Stewardship Centre (LSC) is pleased to contribute to the delivery of *Creekfest - Reimagined* through the Watershed Stewardship Grant Program, funded by Alberta Environment and Parks.

The Friends look forward to seeing all of you in the park for the 10th Anniversary of Creekfest in 2021!



TD Park People Grants



Miistakis
Institute



GUS YAKI - A TRUE LEGEND AND AN INSPIRATION

In August the Friends of Fish Creek learned that Gus Yaki passed away at the age of 87. Gus was a dedicated naturalist who spent his life learning about nature, and sharing his knowledge of wildlife, vegetation and conservation with others. The Friends were saddened by his passing and share this sentiment with the thousands of individuals who met with him and learned from him over the years.

Gus was born in Saskatchewan, where he began to identify local bird species with his teacher and a bird book. After moving to Ontario he served in the RCMP, and worked at Trans-Canada Airlines (now Air Canada) and General Motors of Canada.

He started his own eco-tour company, Nature Travel Service and for 19 years he shared his love and knowledge of nature with others through travels around the world, and had travelled to 74 countries. Gus was President of the Victoria County Nature Club, in Lindsay, from 1962-64. He founded the Niagara Falls Nature Club in 1966, and over the years he organized trips for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Nature Ontario) and other local groups.

He retired in 1991 and in 1993, he moved to Calgary with his wife Aileen. In Calgary he was still in demand to organize and lead tours. He served as the editor of the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society (Nature Calgary) quarterly publication PICA, and other publications. Gus has led hundreds and hundreds of trips for Nature Calgary, Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Alberta Wilderness Association, and other local environment-focused groups.

In 1993, Gus conceived, organized and led a 3-month 30,000 km journey around the perimeter of N America collecting wildlife data. On the journey, he was joined by Robert Bateman and Lyn Hancock, who wrote a book Looking for the Wild about it. In addition to wildlife, he has educated thousands of people about invasive



Gus (centre) with Aileen (far left) and friends at the Friends of Fish Creek Volunteer Appreciation Dinner last November.

species through his writing, presentations, tours and even events hosted at his home.

A few of his recent awards and recognition include Nature Calgary President's Award in 2002, Alberta Emerald Award nomination in 2008, Alberta Parks and Tourism Volunteer Recognition Nomination in 2009, Nature Alberta's Lauren Golden award in 2012, AWA's Wilderness Defender's Award in 2014, CTV's "This week's Inspiring Albertan" in Sept 2016, and of course many awards from the Friends of Fish Creek over the years.

Calgary and the Fish Creek Community were immensely fortunate to have known Gus and will cherish his memory. He raised awareness about conservation not only in Calgary, but also on a global scale as he was well informed about environmental issues throughout the world. Gus was always willing to help others identify birds and other wildlife and to provide interviews with local media.

Since 2005 he led the popular Birding Courses with the Friends of Fish Creek, which over the years has provided essential support for our organization. The course originally ran three days per week with a limit of twelve people per course.

Cont'd on next page

GUS YAKI - CONT'D FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Those spots quickly filled up and Gus met the increase in demand by expanding the course to run up to eight different times per week over the winter, spring, and autumn seasons. As the Birding Course expanded he recruited and trained over thirty volunteers to lead groups of students.

Many of the course participants were inspired by Gus over the years and stepped in to help lead the course so that more people could enjoy exploring the world of birds and other wildlife. Through the course he introduced thousands of people to the beauty, mystery and diversity of nature found within the city. He contributed hundreds of volunteer hours each year leading the courses in Fish Creek and other natural areas within the city. He also wrote articles for the Friends, led walking tours for small groups in Fish Creek, and hosted presentations for the Friends and many other groups.

Gus was a true champion of the environment and a

voice for the natural world. He worked tirelessly in calling for change in the interest of conservation. In 2017 he led a walking tour across southern Alberta, which not only helped raise awareness about biodiversity but also helped raise funds for local conservation organizations. In 2019 he was awarded the prestigious Calgary's top 7 over 70 prize.

Connecting youth with nature and conservation was also a passion of his and one result of the Birding Course was the Summer Birding Course for children, which is also run by volunteers. The Friends of Fish Creek would not exist in the same capacity that we do today, and would not have the same reach, without Gus and his tireless efforts. We are currently working with the Birding Community on a variety of programs and events to honour Gus' memory. Please stay tuned for information on these.

Thank you for everything Gus, we will miss you.

CAPTURE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Thank you to everyone who sent in photos for the annual Photo Contest. The 2020 photo contest was our most successful to date and we raised \$425 for our stewardship efforts in the park. Forty-five people sent in over 200 amazing photos of this beautiful park. Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped run the contest, we could not have done it without you.

This year's winners are:

- Olga Osi - Weather or Not theme - Adult Category, Public Vote
- Jeremina Osi - A Bug's Eye View theme - Youth Category, Public Vote
- Tony LePrieur - Power & Grace theme - Adult Category, Juror Vote (*pictured here*)
- Kyla Smith - A Bug's Eye View theme - Youth Category, Juror Vote



Special thanks to contest sponsors MEC, Vistek and RMB Photography.

Take a look at the winning photos at

<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/capturenature>

View all submissions at

<https://capturenature1.shootproof.com/gallery/11604120>





Starting in November, the Friends are presenting the I ❤️ Fish Creek Fundraiser!

2020 has been a year of learning, pivoting and adapting as we all work to navigate the constant change and uncertainty, but there has also been opportunities for creativity, thinking outside of the box and trying new things. Our new and exciting fundraiser is the perfect example of that!

Fish Creek Provincial Park offers many diverse opportunities for recreation, solace, and healing, and this year more than ever, it has been a destination for those needing to connect with each other and with nature. For the month of November, our I ❤️ Fish Creek campaign will provide an opportunity for people to share their stories, support the Friends and help protect the park landscape. Whether you are a new or long-time supporter, you can show your love for Fish Creek Provincial Park this November.

In addition to our fundraising efforts we are inviting all community members to share your Fish Creek stories on the website.

These stories will help us all to understand the powerful impact the park has on peoples' lives.

This November, show your love for Fish Creek Provincial Park through one or more of these exciting ways.

- Text GIVE to 587-417-6606
- Make a donation
- Bid on amazing online silent auction items
- Create a fundraising team and invite your family and friends to donate

Even if it is not possible for you to contribute at this time, we invite you to support Fish Creek by helping us spread the word through email, social media and personal contacts.

Show your love for Fish Creek from October 30 to December 1 by helping us to reach our fundraising goal of \$12,500! As always, your dollars will be used to support our education and stewardship initiatives that help to protect and conserve this beloved place.

For more information stay tuned to www.friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/love

THE BEAVER COEXISTENCE PROJECT

LIVING AND WORKING WITH BEAVERS IN FISH CREEK

Today's cities and parks were developed at a time when beaver populations were at an all-time low following a four hundred year span of beaver trapping. The lack of beavers on the landscape meant that roads, pathways and infrastructure were unknowingly built in low-lying areas, perfect for beavers, and Fish Creek Provincial Park is no exception.

Now that these furry critters are recolonizing attractive habitat in the park, human and beaver needs are intersecting on the landscape. Until recently, when beaver and human needs clashed, the beavers got the short end of the stick. At best, dams were pulled apart (or blown up with dynamite) and at worst, beavers were trapped or otherwise killed. Relocation was also tried, however given that beavers are highly territorial, relocation can end in a beaver killing another beaver in an effort to protect its home and family.

Thanks to the inspiration provided by the *Putting Beavers to Work for Watershed Resiliency* symposium hosted last fall by Miistakis Institute and Cows & Fish, and to funding from Alberta Environment and Parks Watershed Resiliency & Restoration Program, the Friends of Fish Creek are spearheading the Fish Creek Beaver Coexistence Project. Involving multiple partnering agencies including Alberta Parks, Humane Solutions, You Betula Environmental, Cows and Fish, Miistakis Institute, Friends of Fish Creek volunteers and the Canadian Conservation Corps

The Beaver Coexistence project has two goals:

1. To balance human and beaver needs in the Marshall Springs area of Fish Creek Provincial Park.
2. To promote the benefits of working with beavers, nature's ecosystem engineers.

The area in question has seen much beaver-related tree felling and flooding/damage of a very popular and well-used section of paved pathway. A three-day workshop



Photo courtesy of Stephen Shikaze

held in September led to the installation of four flow control devices which immediately alleviated the pathway flooding. Now our focus is shifting to outreach, with events in October and two more beaver-related Speaker Series events in November and January.

So far in our outreach efforts, we have engaged over 400 members of the public, only nine of whom had a "bone to pick" about beavers. Looks like the Fish Creek Community is ahead of the curve with regards to viewing beavers in a positive light rather than a negative one!

A big shout out to our amazing Friends of Fish Creek volunteers who will be monitoring the flow control devices and conducting seasonal maintenance to ensure the success of this project moving forward. If you are interested in getting involved, create an online volunteer account and check Beaver Coexistence in your list of Program Interests. Please visit our new Beavers in Fish Creek webpage to learn more, watch cool videos and find out about upcoming walking tours and online presentations about coexisting with beavers.

Did you know... When beavers are getting established in an area, they take down a lot of trees, kind of like people building our homes. But once their home is built, their tree felling behaviour mainly focuses on cutting for food, and for periodic repairs – also like people!

WHY DO I NEED TO KEEP MY DOG ON A LEASH IN THE PARK?

Calgary is a dog-loving city. You may have one or more dogs, have had a dog in the past, or are considering adopting a new furry family member. For thousands of years, dogs and humans have existed together and enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. In an urban setting like Calgary, dogs are used less for work and more for companionship, as well as for home security – even the smallest of dogs can sound the alarm at the first indication of an unwelcome guest. Dogs are truly cherished family members, and like people, each dog has a unique personality. Fish Creek Provincial Park is a vast urban greenspace that experiences over 4 million visits each year, a number that is sure to increase as the city continues to grow. Dog walking is one of the most popular activities in the park, and the extensive pathway system is perfect for going on long walks with your four-legged best friend. Dogs love Fish Creek for the bustling activity, the open spaces and waterways, the smells, the friendly people and the other dogs.



bear or cougar are also possible, bringing risk to everyone.

Off-leash dogs can give chase or attack wildlife or harass and injure park wildlife. There are also different natural hazards that might put your off-leash friend at risk, such as gopher holes and thorny bushes, not to mention hazards associated with busy park

trails, pathways and roadways, which can pose a significant threat to a wandering off-leash dog. Many park visitors may not know that it is illegal to have dogs off-leash in Alberta's provincial parks - such as Fish Creek - while others may be aware of the regulation and simply choose not to follow it. Off-leash dogs represent one of the most common provincial park infractions, and the Friends of Fish Creek increasingly hear stories from park visitors about dogs running wild or visitors being approached by unwelcome dogs. There have even been reports of dog owners responding rudely when asked about keeping their dog on leash. Fines for not having your dog on a leash or not picking up after your dog range from \$115 to \$2000.

We know that dogs love running freely, and pet owners want their dogs to be happy. However, off-leash dogs can be at risk in wild spaces like Fish Creek Provincial Park for several different reasons:

They can surprise or disturb wildlife, inviting potential conflict or injury to your pet. They could be kicked by a protective deer, sprayed by a skunk or be quilled by a porcupine, all of which could lead to costly vet bills, or worse. A small or medium-sized off-leash dog can look like a tasty meal for a coyote, whereas an on-leash dog may encourage the coyote to look elsewhere. And since Fish Creek is a natural wildlife corridor that funnels wildlife from Alberta's eastern slopes, run-ins with a

Keeping your dog on a leash is also an act of respect for other park users, who may not appreciate being approached or jumped on by a dog. Some people are fearful or uncomfortable around dogs, or may be allergic to them, and while most people feel their pets are well-trained and gentle, that is not always the case. Invasive plant species can also be further spread throughout our park by being transported on the fur of an off-leash dog, further compounding the issue we already have with invasive plants. This will not happen if you keep your dog on-leash and stay to the park's pathways.

Cont'd on next page

DOGS IN FISH CREEK - CONT'D

And while we are on the subject of dogs, please be sure to pick up after your pet, and properly dispose of their waste in garbage bins. We have learned that one of peoples' biggest "pet" peeves is bags of dog waste left along the park pathways. And while most people would agree that this is unsightly, there is also an associated safety risk, as dog waste can act as an attractant to large carnivores, such as bears.

Many officially-designated off-leash dog parks exist in our city, and these are the best and safest places for

dogs to run wild, play fetch and socialize with others in their special dog way. A list of off-leash areas can be found at <https://www.calgary.ca/csps/parks/locations/off-leash-area-locations.html>

Thank you for keeping your dog on a leash less than 6 feet in length in Fish Creek Provincial Park, as this is the best way to protect them and others. Consider sharing your awareness of responsible pet ownership with others when you visit.

WELLNESS PROGRAM WRAP UP

The Friends' Wellness program has been running since 2013, and is one of our favourite ways to engage the public in programming that supports mind, body, spirit and recreation in Fish Creek Provincial Park. There was a time at the beginning of the year where we were concerned the whole program might not happen, but thanks to our amazing volunteers and instructors, we were still able to offer an incredible season of wellness, enjoyed by many participants, both in person and for the first time - online!

The program this year included weekly BungyPump sessions, a Wild Yoga Meditation series, a Forest Bathing webinar and in-person session, a 5-week online self-care meditation series called "Reset, Renew and Recharge,"

and online webinars developed to help people learn the basics of both hiking and map



and compass navigation. In total, 24 sessions were held, with over 350 registrations throughout the season!

We would like to express our gratitude to instructors Naomi Parker, Divya Singh, Diana Young, Annette Ng and Karen Salamandick, for their hard work, dedication and expertise, and to the other program volunteers who support the instructors and participants, ensuring the sessions are well-organized, safe and enjoyable for everyone.

We already have many great ideas for Wellness 2021, and look forward to planning another great season for next year!



PARK WATCH

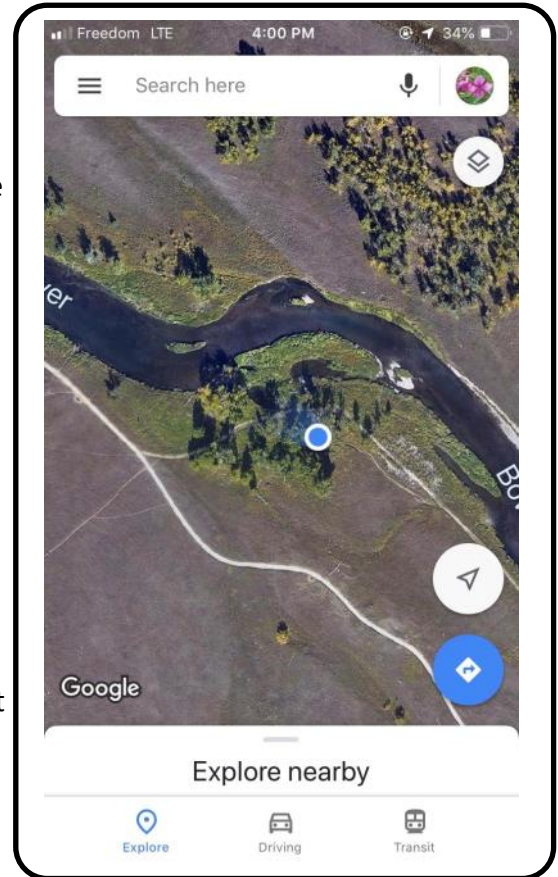
THE EVOLUTION OF STEWARDSHIP IN FISH CREEK

Park Watch is considered the Friends' flagship program, running more years than any of us can remember. Truly, it has its roots in the beginning of the Friends - over 27 years ago - when the Friends first partnered with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) to help fill gaps in reporting and communication about issues related to park regulations, maintenance, infrastructure and public safety in this park. As always, volunteers have been the key to this program. With such a large urban park landscape, it takes over 50 dedicated volunteers to fill this supportive role each year. Park Watch volunteers help to ensure that issues are reported and addressed so that the park remains a safe and enjoyable place for all visitors. Park Watch Stewards are often referred to as "the eyes and ears of the park," and play an important public outreach role by supporting park users and sharing public messaging with them.

As you can well imagine, after 27 years, there have been many changes to this program, as we continue to work with AEP staff and Friends' volunteers to adapt to changing needs, feedback and issues that arise over time. Last year some significant changes made a big difference to our volunteers and staff, a collaborative team that we continue to develop this year.

In the past, there were three equipment depots in the park where Park Watch Steward teams would pick up their equipment for their shifts. Their kits included first aid kits, dog waste bags, gloves, litter pickers, garbage bags, hand sanitizer, sunscreen, bug spray, dog treats, and public outreach materials. Coordinating the equipment and collecting all of the volunteers' paper reports was a huge job that could only be done once a week. For this reason there was always a significant delay between the time that the reports were completed, when they reached the Friends, and when issues were finally reported to AEP.

Park Watch Stewards had access to two digital cameras at the different locations that they used to photograph their observations. Unfortunately these cameras eventually broke down and the Friends did not have the means to replace them. In addition to that, because there were only



Map indicating location of a fort near Mallard Point.

three locations to pick up equipment and a limited amount of equipment available, Stewards were restricted to the areas of the park they could monitor, how far they could go, and when. It was not a perfect system, and although it was functional for many years, we knew there was room for improvement.

Thanks to the generous support of the Land Stewardship Centre Watershed Stewardship Grant (LSC) in 2019, we were able to make significant changes to the program - such as finding ways to increase efficiencies in reporting and response times to issues, allowing for better and more frequent coverage of the park, and providing volunteers with more flexibility regarding the time and location of their shift.

Cont'd on next page

PARK WATCH CONT'D

LSC funding allowed us to purchase enough equipment for each team to keep a full kit at home for the duration of the 6-month program, allowing them more flexibility for where and when they could conduct their shifts. We heard from many volunteers at the end of the season last year that this was a huge improvement to the program - they liked being able to go to different areas, and many chose to explore corners of the park they had never been to before. They were also provided with a laminated report form which they took a photo of on their own cell phone at the end of their shifts and emailed to the Friends, so there was no longer a need to use paper forms and less of a time lag for receiving reports.

2019 was also the beginning of serious discussions about the possibility of creating a Park Watch mobile app on the ArcGIS Collector platform. With the generous

support from a variety of funders, we were able to pursue this project in earnest early in 2020. Primarily through planning discussions with Alberta Environment and Parks, and then through the Digital App Project, whereby we focused on moving all of our stewardship programs to this digital platform. In May, Emma Stroud was hired as the Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator through the UN Canada Green Corps wage subsidy program to lead this project. For the first time, Stewards were able to enter the field with the ability to report their observations in real time on a user-friendly app.

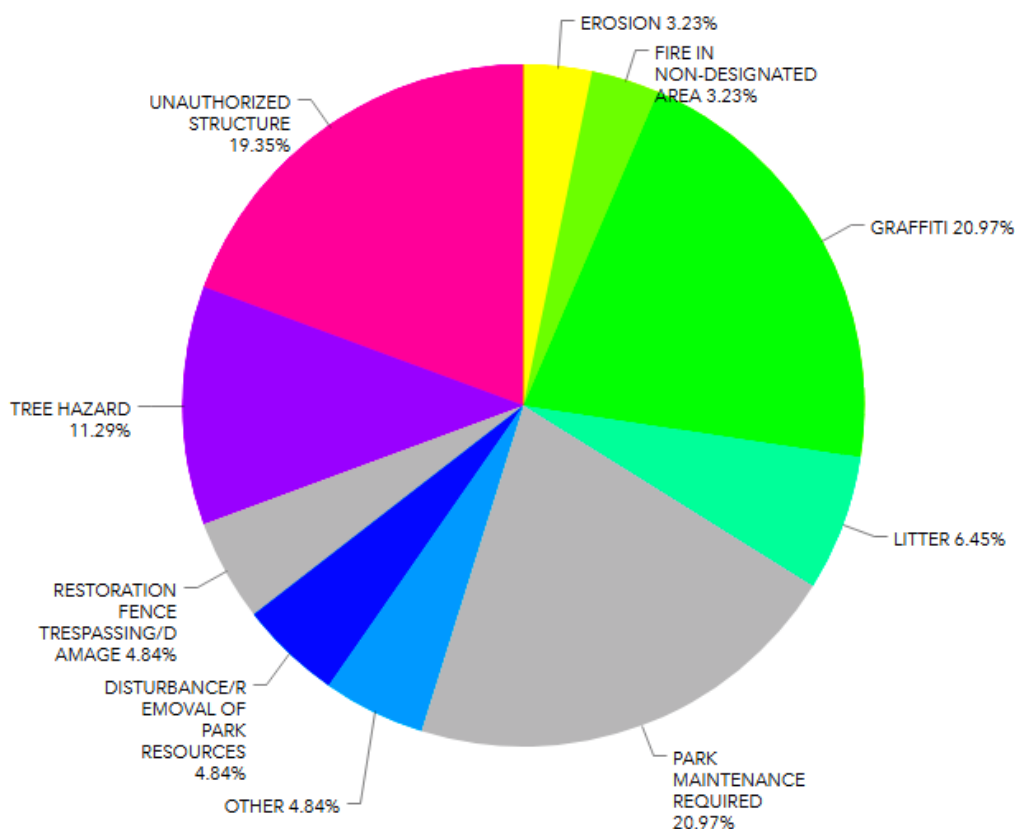
The use of the Digital App has lead to three main improvements:

- Stewards are able to see the observations that each team has made on the digital map, which has helped them to decide where to complete their shifts (as

they may choose to go to places with fewer or no observations, leading to better coverage of less-travelled places in the park);

- Being able to see the observations of other teams has also resulted in a significant decrease in the duplication of reports;
- Friend's staff have had immediate access to observations and the ability to filter them from the app based on those that need immediate action, leading to the quicker resolution of issues and a significant decrease in staff time previously necessary to read through and transcribe paper reports.

2020 Park Watch Season Observations recorded on ArcGIS Dashboard



Cont'd on next page

PARK WATCH CONT'D

The Dashboard on the ArcGIS online platform has allowed Friends staff to have a visual representation of how many observations still need to be resolved; including information such as the team that reported it, the location of the observation, an area for notes between AEP and the Friends, and whether or not it has been resolved. In addition, the Dashboard also provides a pie chart, illustrating the percentage and type of observations that have been collected over the season. Throughout the year, as more observations are submitted, this pie chart becomes more complex showing the variety of data submitted.

Overall, the app has increased the ability of volunteers, Friends and AEP staff to communicate about the issues as they arise and provide updates when they are resolved. Even though there has been a learning curve

for all of us related to the app, we are confident that these changes will continue to lead to a more efficiently-run program and increased volunteer enjoyment and satisfaction.

Land Stewardship Centre (LSC) is pleased to contribute to the delivery of Park Watch through the Watershed Stewardship Grant Program, funded by Alberta Environment and Parks. This project was funded in part by the AEP Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Grant, in addition to the City of Calgary, the Kinsmen Club of Calgary and the RBC Tech for Nature grant. We are grateful to have received such massive support for this project, and for the ongoing supportive partnership with Alberta Environment and Parks.

Thank you to all supporters and to all Park Watch Stewards!



Foundation



THE FISH CREEK COMMUNITY TERRACE

The Friends would like express our thanks to everyone who dedicated a brick along the 25th Anniversary brick pathway in front of the Cookhouse. There are close to 300 bricks here, that are engraved with the names of community members and positive messages to park visitors. People have dedicated bricks to show their support for Fish Creek, and to commemorate milestones like weddings, anniversaries, new family members, or memorials for those who have passed on.

Now that all of the bricks are installed along the pathway, we have begun planning the next area - the Fish Creek Community Terrace. The terrace will be installed in front of the Cookhouse near the kiosk and all who visit our office or pass by will see the bricks. Every brick tells a story and we invite you to leave a lasting legacy in Fish Creek Provincial Park by dedicating a brick

along the Fish Creek Community Terrace.

If you have a local business, consider

having a brick inscribed for your business, its great advertising in a very busy area and you will receive a tax receipt. Inscriptions can have 2 lines of text with 16 characters per line, and simple shapes like hearts and circles can be accomplished. Bricks are only \$250 and you will receive a tax receipt for your contribution. For more information contact the Friends or visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/brick



DIGITIZING DATA COLLECTION WITH OUR NEW APP

You may have seen volunteers in the park this season looking down at their phones, but they were certainly not looking at TikTok or Instagram. Starting in April volunteers traded in their pencils and clipboards for mobile devices, battery packs, and GPS receivers to work with our newly developed digital app. Using ArcGIS software, this digital app aims to increase efficiencies in field data collection through the use of icons that represent observational data on a map background. This data is automatically uploaded to our database, and is being used throughout the season to coordinate and prioritize volunteer fieldwork and target a variety of needs throughout the park.

As part of a larger vegetation management plan, volunteers were trained in the field to mark the locations of either individual or patches of invasive species. We documented a very long list of invasive plants that have made their way into the park, including Orange Hawkweed, Thesium, Spotted Knapweed and Black Henbane. Data was monitored throughout the season, and Weed Whacker volunteers were dispatched to problem areas to bag and remove the offenders. We are very excited for the potential to grow this new weed mapping program, and hope to launch a wider-reaching team of volunteers next season.

An important step in successfully revegetating our riparian restoration sites is ensuring they are continually monitored and maintained for at least three years. While there have been many valiant efforts in the past to do so, the Digital App has been instrumental in designing a monitoring and maintenance program that finally works. Each of the native shrubs and trees planted by volunteers are outfitted with a labelled metal washer, with a number that is entered into the app. Then, the restoration monitoring volunteer makes their way through the restoration site, updating the app to reflect any health concerns or maintenance needs associated with each tree or shrub. Restoration Monitors are also responsible for taking photos at marked locations through the app to showcase the impact of our restoration work over time, checking the integrity of the fence surrounding the site, and mapping any invasive species that need to be managed.

Observations are automatically updated onto the Restoration Monitoring dashboard, which can then be easily scanned to address specific maintenance needs in each of our restoration sites.

Cont'd on next page

The Tree Mapping program has guided the coordination of Tree Wrapping volunteer outings this season, leading to 400 trees being wrapped along Fish Creek and the Bow River. Outings are prioritized in areas that have a high number of “girdled” trees (when previous wire cages have become too tight, restricting the tree’s growth), or in areas that have active beavers that may negatively impact park infrastructure. Each red dot on the map (right) represents a new tree that has been wrapped this year, so we can better track beaver activity and volunteer efforts.



DIGITAL MAP CONT'D

Not only does this greatly improve the efficiency of the monitoring process, but it also enables volunteers to be increasingly more independent as they will be able to scan the dashboard and address maintenance concerns independently once baseline data is collected.

The digital app has also brought our Park Watch program into the 21st century; you can find out more in the article The Evolution of Stewardship in Fish Creek on page 11.

We look forward to evaluating the progress of this project over the winter months and to making necessary tweaks and changes to ensure we can collect the best data possible, shape and guide our stewardship efforts in the park and engage volunteers in this important citizen science work. This digital platform has literally changed the way we operate, and we are grateful to all of our project supporters.

The Digital Mapping project was funded in part through the Watershed Stewardship Grant, a program of Land Stewardship Centre financed by Alberta Environment and Parks. Thank you to Alberta Environment and Parks the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Grant, City of Calgary, the Kinsmen Club of Calgary and the RBC Tech for Nature grant.



Data recorded on new plantings like this dogwood include species, location, condition, and whether conservation action is required.



Foundation



FRIENDS OF FISH CREEK ONLINE STORE

- New Friends of Fish Creek t-shirts, \$20.00 each



\$20.00

- New Friends hats, \$20.00 each
- Capture Nature framed photos, \$45.00
- Friends of Fish Creek Bike Bells, \$6.00 each or 2 for \$10.00
- Friends Travel Mugs - 14 oz, Stainless Steel with foam insulation and swivel lid,

- 25th Anniversary Signature Artwork, Limited Edition Print by Jim Pescott, \$275.00
- Keating Family Portraits - Certificate for Portrait Capture Session and 12" painted portrait with local artist Keating, \$3000.00 Value for only \$1020.00



And much more! For more information visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/store

CALGARY CAPTURED



Citizens engaged in
urban wildlife monitoring

I'M A CALGARIAN!

Calgary Captured is a citizen-science based wildlife monitoring and awareness program that is being conducted by the Miistakis Institute in partnership with The City of Calgary Parks. Wildlife cameras through Fish Creek Provincial Park and the city record wildlife sightings and help city planners and community members understand their movement and behaviour. This program receives funding through the Calgary Foundation and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, and partnering organizations include Alberta EcoTrust, Alberta Environment and Parks, the Friends of Fish Creek, and the Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society. Through Calgary Captured's newest campaign - I'm a Calgarian, we would like to introduce you to, and provide information about, some of our wild neighbours in and around Fish Creek Provincial Park.

I'm a Calgarian series - issue 2 of 2



MOOSE

*Can you point
me towards the
Bow?*

Moose are a part of Calgary's rich biodiversity.

Despite many

urban obstacles like roads, we still regularly spot them moving around YYC.

Please give me space. Moose are the largest members of the deer family, weighing as much as 1200 pounds! They will respond defensively if you or your dog get too close, especially if they have their calves with them. Keep pets on a leash.

Enjoy your City parks! Please stay on trails and respect park closures. Living in a big city can leave you itching for more space. Stepping off trails and entering parks after hours even further reduce space available for animals.

Support City efforts to maintain nature. To continue to see a thriving urban biodiversity, we need to ensure animals can move around the City – this means protecting existing green spaces, creating new ones, and investing in development that is more animal-friendly.

WOOD FROG

I brave Calgary winters too!

Although we all feel like we freeze during winter and thaw in spring, wood frogs literally do just that.

Antifreeze-like properties allow wood frogs to survive being frozen.

Where am I? Wood frogs prefer wetlands in YYC that are near forests and natural grasslands, and away from roads and paved areas. Listen closely: you may hear wood frogs calling in the spring. Their call sounds like a series of sharp quacks.

Keep me safe. Amphibians are very sensitive to urban contaminants. Please pick up pet waste, properly dispose of household chemicals, and consider reducing the use of salt on sidewalks in winter.

Support City efforts to maintain nature.

To continue to see a thriving urban biodiversity, including wood frog, we need to protect and restore habitat, refrain from

mowing grass near wetland edges, and ensure amphibians are able to move between wetlands.



CALGARY CAPTURED CONT'D

GREAT HORNED OWL

So famous, the paparazzi follow me everywhere I go!

Owls are beautiful birds that draw the interest of many Calgarians. To ensure they can continue to live in Calgary, please resist crowding near them.

Did you know? Great horned owls have large eyes and the ability to turn their head over 180 degrees, superb hearing and silent flight – making them excellent hunters. They prey primarily on small mammals like hares, mice, and even skunk.

Artificial light can be confusing. Lighting up the night disrupts owls' nighttime feeding and daytime sleeping habits. Consider turning off your porch lights.

Enjoy your City parks! Please stay on trails and respect park closures. Living in a big city can leave you itching for more space. Stepping off trails and entering parks after hours even further reduce space available for animals.

Support City efforts to maintain nature. To continue to see a thriving urban biodiversity, including owls and deer, we



need to ensure animals can move around the City – this means protecting existing green spaces, creating new ones, and investing in development that is more animal-friendly.

WE USE A TRANSIT SYSTEM TOO!

- Instead of using Sarcee Trail or the CTrain, animals use small natural areas (such as neighborhood green belts and strips of habitat near the river) to get from park to park.
- Animal-friendly development can take many forms. Wildlife overpasses and underpasses (such as the iconic examples in Banff National Park), denser communities that set aside ample natural space, and avoidance of rivers and wetlands are tried and true strategies to maintaining animal movement, even in a big city.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

*I also deal with Crowchild Trail!*

White-tailed and mule deer are a part of Calgary's rich biodiversity; roads are just one of the obstacles they face every day.

Please give me space. Although big-city deer may not seem too fussed at your presence, they are still wild animals. When people or dogs come close, it stresses them out. Please keep dogs on leash.

I will return for my baby. Deer often leave their fawns alone for long periods of time. Please do not attempt to relocate fawns; the mom will return.

Slow down! Animal-vehicle collisions occur in our City – drive the speed limit and if a deer runs in front of your vehicle, brake firmly, and do not swerve.

Stay on trails and respect park closures. Living in a big city can leave you itching for more space. Stepping off trails and entering parks after hours reduce space available for animals.

Photos courtesy of Marcy Stader and Ken Wright

QUIZ ANSWER - SUMMER ISSUE

What natural event took place in the early summer fifteen years ago and had a drastic impact on the park landscape?

The flood of June 2005 had a very significant effect on Fish Creek Provincial Park. While most people remember the floods of 2013, which deeply affected the city and the Bow River, the flooding of 2005 had more of an effect on the creek and the park. In 2005, the bridges that crossed the creek were damaged, and in some cases, were washed away. In the years following the flood, these bridges were replaced by state of the art flood resistant bridges of a European design. These new bridges successfully withstood potential damages by the floods of 2013. The flooding in 2005 helped to herald in a rebirth of the park in some ways, which included the construction of the paved pathway that extends through the southern end of park, and the construction of the engineered wetlands.

STAFF

Executive Director	Nic Blanchet nic@friendsoffishcreek.org
Community Engagement Manager	Katie Bakken katie@friendsoffishcreek.org
Stewardship & Social Enterprise Manager	Shana Barbour shana@friendsoffishcreek.org
Communications Manager	Chris Lalonde chris@friendsoffishcreek.org
Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator	Emma Stroud emma@friendsoffishcreek.org
Program & Stewardship Coordinator	Julia Schneider julia@friendsoffishcreek.org

2020 EXECUTIVE

Chair	Bob Morrin
Vice-Chair	David Mitchell
Treasurer	Phil Greer
Governance Chair	Henry Villanueva
Director at Large	Kari Horn
Director at Large	Naomi Parker
Director at Large	Christina Steed
Director at Large	David Breckon
Director at Large	Neil Groeneveld
Park Liaison	Jennell Rempel

Membership Form -

The Friends of Fish Creek, PO Box 2780 Stn M Calgary, AB T2P 2M7
403-238-3841 info@friendsoffishcreek.org www.friendsoffishcreek.org

For info about the Park Protector program visit www.friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup

Name: _____ Phone: _____

email: _____ Address: _____

City and Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Work place (optional): _____

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my will

Membership: Individual ☐ \$35.00 Family ☐ \$45.00

Senior (+60 years of age) Individual ☐ \$25.00 Family ☐ \$30.00

Donation: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other:\$ _____

Please Fill out: Membership \$ _____ Donation \$ _____ Total \$ _____

To pay online: www.friendsoffishcreek.org/membership or donate on CanadaHelps.org

(Charitable Registration #891199747 RR0001)

Signature of donor or member: _____

Applicants must be 18 years of age or older to become members. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more or if requested.