

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

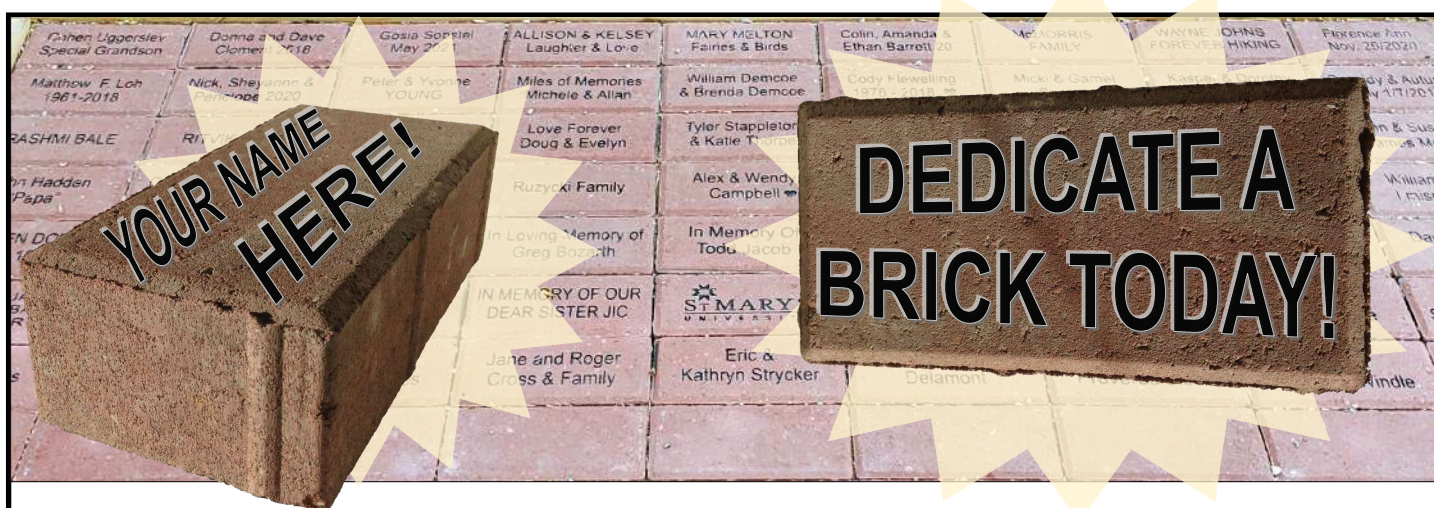
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Volume 28, Issue 1  
Winter 2023

## Happy New Year from the Friends of Fish Creek!

*We would like to thank you for helping to make 2022 a truly memorable year and we are very pleased to embark on a New Year of discovery with you - our dedicated members, donors, volunteers, and supporters. Thank you for all you do for Fish Creek every day and we look forward to collaborating with you in meaningful and exciting ways in 2023. Please contact us any time and stay tuned to our website for updates on all our exciting programs and volunteer opportunities.*



## FISH CREEK COMMUNITY TERRACE

PHASE 3 BRICKS AVAILABLE - RESERVE YOURS BEFORE JUNE 1

Dedicate a brick within the Fish Creek Community Terrace to help support the Friends and our conservation efforts here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. A brick would also make an amazing gift for anyone you know who enjoys visiting this unique and ecologically diverse urban park. If you have a small business near the park, consider dedicating a brick for your company. Bricks are only \$250 each and you will receive a tax receipt for your contribution. There are limited spaces available in the Fish Creek Community Terrace so make sure to dedicate your brick today! For more information, please contact the Friends of Fish Creek or visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/brick>

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## ALBERTA PARKS AND THE FISH CREEK COMMUNITY

## ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP WILL HELP THE FRIENDS EXPAND

CHRIS LALONDE, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

As we approached the end of 2022, a very significant announcement came from the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism. The Friends of Fish Creek will be receiving a grant of \$750 000 over the course of three years to continue and expand our Enhanced Partnership Project here in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Thank you to Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism for this very generous and substantial contribution. This grant will help the Friends to increase our reach within the community, expand our conservation and stewardship activities, and build on the success of the previous Enhanced Partnership Agreement reached in 2020. We will be focusing our efforts in the areas of Ecology & Conservation, Visitor Information, Public Engagement & Communication, Enforcement Support and Formal Education. In 2023 we plan to hire more staff, develop new strategies for engaging visitors and enhance our conservation activities.

As a non-profit organization based here in Fish Creek Provincial Park, we are very proud of our role as the main point of contact between the millions of community members who visit the park and the Provincial Government who manages the park. Fish Creek Provincial Park is an essential public greenspace that is cherished by hundreds of thousands of community members every day, and each year it becomes more evident how important this province's natural areas are in the lives of Albertans. In addition to



Funding Announcement at the Bow Valley Ranch on December 12, 2022. Michael Roycroft - Regional Director Forestry, Parks and Tourism, Andrew Schoepf - Kananaskis East Area Manager Parks Division Alberta Forestry Parks and Tourism, Nic Blanchet - Friends Executive Director, Todd Loewen - Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism, and Richard Gotfried MLA Calgary-Fish Creek

protecting and preserving the park environment for the local community, Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism would like to ensure that Fish Creek remains an attractive and ecologically diverse location for visitors from around the world. Investing in provincial parks and non-profit organizations like the Friends helps protect Alberta's wild spaces for future generations while also driving tourism, supporting local economies and enhancing the quality of life for all who visit these areas.

We are very pleased that Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism recognizes and supports our programs, courses, events and activities. It is because of the support from community members like you - donors, members, supporters,

sponsors and especially our dedicated and hard-working volunteers that we are able to accomplish so much throughout the year. We could not have attained this significant measure of success and achievement without the support from the local community.

Thank you to the Friends' voluntary Board of Directors and our colleagues in Alberta Parks for once again helping to bring this proposal to fruition. As we start the new year, we are looking forward to working closely with our volunteers and supporters to make the most of this unparalleled opportunity.

December 12 press conference available—  
[https://youtu.be/KL8xgw8d\\_60](https://youtu.be/KL8xgw8d_60)

## FAREWELL KATIE

KATIE BAKKEN, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR

In 2010, I moved to Alberta to follow my heart. I had no idea at the time that I would fall in love with an urban park and the people who care for it.

Once I got myself settled, I began looking for work. One of the very first job postings I found seemed perfect for me. It combined my background in geography, ecology and teaching with my love of working with volunteers and members of the public. I remember saying out loud *"This job is made for me!"*

I applied and was lucky enough to be chosen to become the Program Director with the Friends of Fish Creek in November 2010, a full-time position managing a lot of programs, including Amphibian, Beaver, Snake and Water Quality Monitoring Programs, Weed Whackers, Tree Wrapping and more. It quickly became evident that my physical health was being impacted, so I asked the Executive Director at the time, Elena Schacherl, if I could move to part-time and job-share the responsibilities with someone. I am so lucky she approved my request – *thank you Elena!* – as this change allowed me to continue working with the Friends and reduce the impact on my joints.



Over the last 12 years, I have really enjoyed working with the staff team and especially the volunteers who love and care for this amazing wild place, nestled in the city. I have really appreciated the flexibility and creativity that the position has afforded me. I am proud

of being able to be part of carrying multiple ideas to fruition with the support and involvement of the Board of Directors, our colleagues at Alberta Parks and other partners, funders and of course, volunteers.



Although I can see myself enjoying this work until retirement (and this is still true), an amazing career opportunity has presented itself. For years I have been interested in outdoor play and its benefits for young children, and early in 2022 I was invited to start a nature school under a new, fledgling non-profit called the [Diamond Valley Sustainable Living Centre](#).

Together, a good friend and I are taking a leap and starting up *Little Lodge Nature School*, and you guessed it, our mascot will be a beaver! The program will start in September 2023 and will be open to young children, age 3-5.

It is my hope to not only give kids meaningful opportunities to connect with and learn about nature, but also support them in leading their own learning so they can develop their social, emotional and physical literacy skills and resiliency through outdoor play.

I still love the park and the people, and so Theo and I plan to volunteer in 2023, and I look forward to seeing you at the 2023 Volunteer Appreciation Event, this time as a guest! I want to thank everyone, staff and volunteers, for welcoming me and for engaging in the various programs and events we've hosted over the years. I look forward to being on the other side of the equation, and to seeing you on the trails!



## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCH

## BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

KATIE BAKKEN, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR

After two years of online gatherings, we were fortunate enough to be back together again at the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre for our annual Volunteer Appreciation Gathering on Sunday, December 4, 2022.

Thank you to all who shared their feedback around comfort levels gathering in-person through our online survey. We did our best to come up with an event that would accommodate the range of desires expressed. We hosted this year's volunteer appreciation event in the daytime so that an indoor/outdoor event could be offered with a range of small-group activities.

With support from Alberta Environment and Parks, the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program, RBC Tech for Nature, the Alberta Native Plant Council, Alberta EcoTrust, the Harry & Martha Cohen Foundation, Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary we were able to hire EthniCity Catering to provide a delicious variety of hot soups, samosas, buns, veggies and desserts. Thank you to Kumiko for all your work ensuring there was something for everyone at the luncheon, and thank you to Bryan Vithilingem for bringing a fruit tray! It was all so delicious!

After lunch, we presented the 2022 Volunteer Awards – award winners and everyone got to choose which activity to enjoy: outdoor campfire, snowshoeing, making origami Christmas ornaments or puzzling by the fireplace.

#### Thank you and Congratulations to this year's award-winners:

- Bill Hiebert Inspiration Award (Volunteer of the Year) -Will and Rose Ratliffe
- Friendmaking and Fundraising - Ron Deshayes and Peter Haggarty
- Steward in Action - Sheryl Faminow

- New and Noteworthy - Monica Myers and Michele Veldhoen
- Behind the Scenes -Truck Crew: Bruce Mitchell, Angel Spasoff, Ward Sanderson, David Pethrick
- Community Champion - Jennifer Solem
- Staff Choice - Josh Gibbs
- Special Projects - David Arnott
- Birding Course - David Mitchell and Doug Maxwell
- Board of Directors - Phil Greer
- Special Recognition - Benjamin Baragar and Wayne Meikle
- The Venturers



1000 Hours Club Members David Mitchell, Joan Walker and Jennifer Solem, at the Volunteer Appreciation Lunch on December 4.

New for 2022, we started a new exclusive volunteer club - the 1,000 Hour Club for volunteers who have more than 1000 volunteer hours recorded. Each inductee received their very own 1,000 Hour Club enamel mug, and this year's members are David Arnott, Phil Greer, David Mitchell, Stephen Phelps, Jennifer Solem and Wayne Walker.

We do our very best to avoid asking volunteers to work at the Volunteer Appreciation Gathering, but we needed someone to take photos. Thank you David Mitchell, for taking on the Event Photographer role again this year!

## OCTOBER FUNDRAISER



During the month of October we launched the third annual I ❤️ Fish Creek online fundraiser and we would like to thank everyone who supported Fish Creek through this unique campaign. The Friends began this fundraiser in 2020 when it was not possible to host in person fundraising events like A Taste of Autumn.

Community members could support the Friends and the park by bidding on silent auction items donated by local businesses and organizations, purchasing a 50/50 raffle ticket, making a donation, or simply sharing their favourite Fish Creek experience.

Congratulations to Kris Fernet – winner of the 50/50 draw, who will walk away with \$3,510!

The silent auction raised approximately \$4615, the 50/50 raffle brought in \$2770, and we received \$5154 in personal donations. Our goal was to raise \$20,000 this year and although we did not reach our goal, we brought in a total of \$12,540 for this campaign during the month of October. This is close to what we brought in 2020, the first year of this campaign. We are very grateful to everyone who donated outside of the October 1 – 31, I ❤️ Fish Creek Campaign. It is noteworthy that another \$350 was donated to this campaign during November. In October, we also saw a boost to donations made by community members with an additional amount of \$1700.

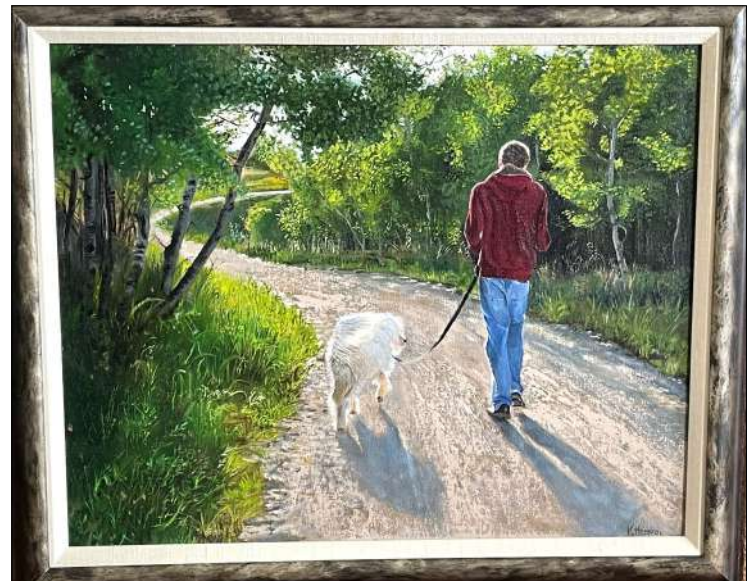
Special thanks to Community Action Team volunteers Angel Spassoff, Ron Deshayes, and Bob Bowman for helping with this important fundraiser by retrieving items and making essential connections with community-focused businesses. Thank you to the following

organizations and individuals for donating auction items:

Active Sports Therapy, Avenida Pet Clinic, Calgary Co-op, Calgary Cycle, Café Jindo, Capital Chevrolet Buick GMC, Calgary Outdoor Yoga, City & Country Urban Winery, Deville Coffee, Drops of Gratitude, Eau Claire Distillery, Fish Tales Fly Shop, Fresh & Local Market & Kitchens, Richard Gotfried MLA, Highwood Golf, Holistic Institute of Health & Fertility, Home Depot, Kensington Art Supply, McKenzie Meadows Golf Club, Milestones, Monogram Coffee, Bob Morrin, Patagonia, Pensak Houghton Dentistry, Rocky Mountain Soap Company, Soffritto, Springbank Cheese Co., and SunnyCider.

Kathy Heenan also shared one of her favourite Fish Creek memories and provided an image of her lovely painting “*Heading Home*,” pictured here.

Thank you to everyone who supported this essential fundraiser! We appreciate your support and dedication to Fish Creek Provincial Park.



## CONSERVATION IN FISH CREEK

## 2022 STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

DYLAN BARNES, CITIZEN SCIENCE &amp; STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR

The fall season was a time of year that expanded on all the work that was done during the summer. This year saw the continuation of both our restoration site construction and willow staking programs. The end of the season wrapped up when we picked up our poplars grown all summer at Ken Wright Nurseries, and finished the maintenance on our equipment.

Restoration sites are a large undertaking to construct, requiring dozens of people to work over the period of a couple of days. It began with the installation of fencing around the periphery, pounding in posts and tying on the stucco wire. Next, each plant going into the site gets flagged and an ID tag is made. At the same time, each planting gets assigned a point in ArcGIS to track its health. Finally, the digging begins. Volunteers all work together to plant the vegetation, mulch the sites, and water the new plants.

This year for our restoration sites, we also added willow stakes. A miraculous process that includes harvesting living branches from existing willow stands and planting the cut ends right in the ground. These plantings can go on to form a net of roots that can hold a creek bank in place, helping to prevent slumping and erosion. Circumstances this year lead us to the decision to do twice the number of willows staking sites than normal. Thanks to some luck with the weather in October, we successfully planted all of them.

Maintenance and preparation are some of the most important tasks we undertake. As soon as the planting for one season is done, prep for the next begins. This year we started prepping for the next all the way back in April, taking cuttings from the park and propagating them all summer at Wright Nurseries.

Thanks to Ken Wright, we picked up 300 saplings and homed them in our native plant nursery with help from the Venturers. With enough time, these poplars will end up back in the park to lift the health of our beautiful poplar forests.



Partnerships with others like Ken Wright Nurseries, The Venturers Society, and especially our volunteers, are critical in the work we do.

We would like to thank the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation for supporting the Friends Vegetation Management in Fish Creek through their Alberta Ecotrust Major Project Grant with a contribution of \$26,036. Thank you also to The City of Calgary which supported the Friends' stewardship activities this year through Poplar Forest Stewardship Project for \$21,370 as well as contributing \$500 to the recent Stormpond Debris Removal Pilot Project (*see page 11*) We would like to extend our gratitude to Alberta Environment and Parks for supporting Ecology and Conservation projects in Fish Creek through the Enhanced Partnership Project. Thank you again to all donors, partners, supporters and granting organizations for making sure we have the funding to continue to do the work that we do.



# INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND GRASSLANDS RESTORATION IN FISH CREEK

EMMA STROUD, CITIZEN SCIENCE & STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR



## Weed Watchers Volunteer Program

Through support from the [Alberta Invasive Species Council](#), [RBC Tech for Nature](#), the [Alberta Government](#), and [Alberta Ecotrust](#) the Weed Watcher volunteer program trained another 20 volunteers to map, remove and dispose of 40+ invasive species in Fish Creek. Weed Watchers ran from June-October 29th with volunteers pulling/disposing of over 70 bags (400+ kg) of weeds independently throughout the park, without the need for staff supervision!

One of the highlights of this year's Weed Watchers volunteer program was working with a group of Calgary geocachers (pictured above, photo by Joyce Ritsco). Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity where participants use a GPS to hide and seek containers called "caches" at specific locations marked by coordinates. These Calgary based geocachers have helped out in Fish Creek in the past, using their knack for finding small hidden objects in park clean-ups and weed whacking outings.

This year, we teamed up to create a Yellow Clematis search and destroy mission, sending them coordinates for 40 locations in Shannon Terrace where the invasive weed has been documented on our map-based app. The geocachers were fruitful in their mission, collecting over

13 bags or 28 kg of yellow clematis! Without groups like this, we would not be able to make the impact we do in Fish Creek. Thank you geocachers and all other groups for showing up and helping out this season!

## Weed Whackers – Bridge 14 Highlights

The Weed Whackers program refers to invasive weed pull outings that are open to all Friends volunteers. Weed Whackers pulled a record 1500kg of weeds in 2022, with weekly weed pulls focused at ATCO Heritage Grassland as well as at Bridge 14 (The Mackenzie footbridge over the Bow River). Since the 2013 floods, the riparian area surrounding the east side of the bridge has been increasingly infested with common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) reaching heights of over 6 feet tall with optimal growing conditions. Luckily, this gravel floodplain also provides ideal growing conditions for native poplar trees and willows, which come back in abundance after weed pulls and beaver coexistence management.

## ATCO Heritage Grassland Restoration Expansion

The size of our invasive vegetation management plot has increased in size from 0.5ha to 6ha, as we have begun to target agricultural invasive smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) in the whole area surrounding the ATCO Heritage Grassland. Smooth brome encroachment was identified as the leading risk to the health of the ATCO Heritage Grassland in a rangeland health assessment conducted by the [Riparian Habitat Management Society \(Cows & Fish\)](#) in 2021. Several techniques were added to our integrated pest management toolbox to tackle smooth brome in 2022.

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## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE CONT'D

These techniques included solarisation and brome wicking, along with continued weed-whipping, manual pulling, spot spraying, and native seed harvesting and spreading.

**Solarisation** (involves using clear heavy plastic sheets to create a greenhouse effect that suffocates and kills weed and turf species. This procedure also works against



seeds that survive years in the soil, by forcing them to germinate and then killing them under 60°C temperatures. Four solarisation beds were prepared in the spring 2022, leaving smooth brome and other invasives to suffocate for the rest of the season. These four solarisation patches total 457m<sup>2</sup> and will be replanted in the spring with foothills fescue grassland community grasses and forbs. (Pictured here, Friends Executive Director Nic Blanchet and volunteer Will Ratliffe beside solarisation patch by ATCO Heritage Grasslands.)



Brome wicking involves the use of an ATV mounted with a boom to apply herbicide through direct contact with a rope wick. Brome wicking is applied in spring, when smooth brome is at its largest height

difference to warm-season native grasses, allowing native grasses to evade herbicide and continue to grow while smooth brome growth is stunted. Around 5.5ha of brome was wicked in 2022, and will also be re-planted in spring 2023 with foothills fescue community native grass and forb plugs and seeds.

## Biological Control Release and Monitoring Program

Biological control insects are used in Fish Creek to target invasive weeds. There have been dozens of historical releases within the park and along the park boundary by the [Alberta Invasive Species Council](#) (AISC) in partnership with the City of Calgary and Alberta Environment and Parks, and through the national weed biological control program through [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lethbridge Research & Development Centre](#). However, the majority of these release sites have not been monitored. Biocontrol populations must be monitored after their initial release to determine efficacy and ensure the weed population is not decimated below levels required to sustain the insect population; translocating the biocontrol agents before population collapse is key. Pictured here, Will Ratliffe using a sweep net to monitor leafy spurge beetles above Annie's Café

This year, the Friends coordinated the dispersal of 11 additional biocontrol releases including



leafy spurge beetles, spotted knapweed seed-head weevils and yellow toadflax stem-galling weevils. We trained a group of volunteers lead by Will Ratliffe to monitor and map native and invasive vegetation at historical release sites and to use insect sweep nets to collect and estimate insect populations. The Friends monitored 16 biocontrol release sites in the park in 2022, dating back to the nineties! One toadflax weevil release site from 2015 was so successful that we harvested and translocated it to two other yellow toadflax infestations, with the eggs expected to hatch in the spring.

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## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE CONT'D

**Lafarge Meadows**

The Friends initially planned to tackle a large infestation of spotted knapweed in Lafarge Meadows in 2020, but discovered the whole area was infested with noxious weeds and required a broader management plan. Luckily, there are several remnant native grassland areas within Lafarge that play important ecological functions in Fish Creek and can be used as a native seed source for grassland restoration in surrounding areas.



Fish Creek and the Bow River in Mallard Point, Bankside, the Bridge 14 riparian area, Sikome Lake, and the Burnsmead, west Midnapore and Votier's Flats storm ponds. We also unwrapped 90 trees; of these some were re-wrapped and others were left unwrapped to encourage beavers to remove dead trees. Logs that fall into the creek, as well as beaver dams, can help slow water in high flow times, raising the wa-

ter table and making it more available to plants growing in the riparian zone.

One of the highlights of the summer was working closely with [Tannas Conservation Services Ltd.](#) to map ecosystem health by performing rangeland and riparian health assessments, native plant transects and mapping native and invasive species. Baseline ecosystem health surveys are extremely helpful when evaluating our management



performance and capturing ecosystem changes that may not be reflected in weed inventories. This data will be used in the future to compare and coordinate management strategies in Lafarge. (Photos: Tannas performing rangeland health surveys with the Friends in Lafarge Meadows. Photo credit Emma Stroud)

**Tree Wrapping Update**

In 2022 the Friends wrapped a record 520 trees along

Increasingly, we are observing a positive relationship between beaver activity such as damming, channelization and tree-felling to native poplar and willow regeneration, with both species having evolved to produce shoots and regrow after being cut. Healthy regeneration of native species is vital to watershed and flood resiliency, and coexisting with beavers through management strategies like tree cages and pond levellers plays an important role in this process.

Protecting important park infrastructure like roads, bridges, and powerlines while maintaining beaver populations in the park helps maintain ecosystem functions. We would not have been able to wrap so many trees without [Tree Island](#) who gave the Friends a huge discount on tree wrapping wire this season. Pictured here hundreds of native poplar saplings sprouting beside Votier's Flats storm pond with very active beaver damming and felling.

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## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE CONT'D

## Sun Valley Drive

Residents along Sun Valley Drive in the community of Sundance continued to mow a 1ha area of grassland to suppress invasive weeds including leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*). The Friends continue to monitor leafy spurge beetle and yellow toadflax stem-galling weevil populations in the site, as well as spot spraying herbicide.



are commonly used as ornamentals in people's backyards. Our Native Plant Exchange pilot project in June was funded by the [Alberta Native Plant Council's](#) small grant program, and targeted the communities of Midnapore and Sundance, inviting them to trade a bag of weeds for three native plant plugs provided by [Wild About Flowers](#). We hope to expand this event next year, targeting additional communities bordering the park and

encouraging them to use native plants in their backyard gardens.

A new endeavor this year was inspired by the Alberta Invasive Species Council's "[Grow me Instead](#)" brochure, which highlights "backyard invasive" weed species that

(Photo: Native Plant Exchange booth set up along Sun Valley Drive in June. Photo credit Emma Stroud)

# PARK PROTECTORS NEEDED

## Start the New Year by becoming a Fish Creek Provincial Park Protector!

Fish Creek Provincial Park is a cherished natural green space we are fortunate to have in the city, and all of the Friends' programs and activities are designed to help preserve biodiversity and ensure a sustainable park environment. We rely on personal donations from community members like you to support our conservation, stewardship, and engagement activities here in this park. Through the Park Protector program, a monthly donation will be effortlessly withdrawn from a credit card of your choosing and you will receive a valuable tax receipt for your contribution. The Park Protector monthly donor program is the most convenient way to support Fish Creek Provincial Park everyday. Choose to donate \$10, \$30 or even \$50 each month, and rest assured that your hard-earned donation will be used effectively and efficiently right here in Fish Creek. For more information please visit [friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup](http://friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup)



Photo: White-tailed deer, Ken Wright



## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY POPLAR GROVE

To celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Friends of Fish Creek planted 35 poplar trees in the park along the Stream Changes Trail on Saturday, September 17. We would like to thank the volunteers who came out on this very special day to help plant the poplars. To view map to 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Poplar Grove visit <https://bit.ly/3UEZMh3>

Thank you 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dedication Tree donors: Niels and Marion Andreasen, Bob and Marie Bakker, Alan Barrett, Karen Sloan-Beitzel and Robert Beitzel - In Memory of William J. Beitzel, Robert Bowman, Wendy and Alex Campbell, Ron and Karen Chow, Monique Dagenais, Ron, Shawn and Nadine Deshayes - In Memory of Florence Deshayes, Kari Horn, George McBride, Susan McWilliams, Bruce and Diana Mitchell, Elizabeth La and Kellen Molsberry, Bob and Louise Morrin, Brian Moule, Larry and Marilyn Patterson, Patricia Prevey, Dave Reid, Colleen Renchko, Martin Scanlon and family, Joan and David Tetrault, Claudia Tiefisher, and Teresa Zajac.

## A NEW KIND OF CLEAN-UP IN FISH CREEK

WILL RATLIFFE, STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEER

Friends of Fish Creek volunteers and staff recently took clean-ups in the park to a new level. Approved as part of the 2022 Special Projects Submission process, a pilot project to clean up microplastic around a storm pond near Votier's Flats went ahead on October 29.



potato rakes, lots of hands, and shop vacs. Yes, we vacuumed the shore.

The project was a huge success. It wasn't fast, but the entire east shore was thoroughly cleaned along with parts of the south shore where the debris had accumulated.

Organized by Friends volunteers Natalie Chan and Will Ratliffe (with lots of staff support), the project tackled a problem first noted in the spring. Ground up litter, much of it microplastic (defined as plastic fragments smaller than 5mm) was observed to have washed in with the stormwater. Microplastic can leach contamination into soil and water, be eaten by many different animals, and is ugly. The project proposed to try a simple, cheap, volunteer-driven cleanup.

The project became more complicated when debris was found embedded in the grass up to the high water line of the pond rather than just floating. How do you remove thousands of tiny bits of plastic tangled up in grass? Municipalities apparently use huge hydrovac trucks, which cost hundreds of dollars per hour and can't access sensitive areas. Together, we came up with a plan to use string trimmers (aka weed whippers), grass and

The upwind (west and north) shores didn't need to be cleaned.

The process proved to be simple and effective, as long as the area involved isn't huge. We are currently preparing a report which to be shared with The City of Calgary who enthusiastically supported and helped fund the project. The next steps include trying to learn why this pond has a microplastic problem, checking other storm ponds in the park, and hopefully working with The City to decrease the amount of plastics ending up in storm ponds and being washed downstream to the world's oceans.

From the Friends of Fish Creek: Thank you to Will, Natalie and all the volunteers who spent the day cleaning up the shoreline of the Votier's storm pond with us!



## SHAW BIRDIES FOR KIDS PRESENTED BY ALTALINK

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

CHRIS LALONDE, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Since 2015 the Friends of Fish Creek have been fortunate to be part of the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink program. This fundraiser supports over 200 local charities focused on children in Alberta and is run in conjunction with the Shaw Charity Classic presented by Suncor in August.



enabling us to ensure that more children can experience the magic and wonder of nature here in Fish Creek Provincial Park each year. It costs approximately \$10 to provide a student with a field trip in Fish Creek and in 2022 the Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink

program raised \$24,760 – enough support a field trip for 2,476 students!

The Friends of Fish Creek Learning Naturally program provides over 5,000 students from economically disadvantaged Calgary schools with a unforgettable field trip in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Through Learning Naturally, students between grades K – 6 enjoy programs like Insect Intrigue, Wildlife Cycles, Plant Communities, Wetlands, Tree Tales, the Fish Creek Family, Fish Creek Land Histories and Stories and more. Many of the students in the Learning Naturally program are from families that are new to Canada and their field trip acts as both their first visit to Fish Creek but also their first real experience in nature in this country.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Greenfield Foundation for donating \$15,000 towards Learning Naturally this year. Thank you also to everyone who donated towards Birdies for Kids this year. To commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Shaw Charity Classic, Shaw Communications, Suncor and the Shaw Charity Classic Foundation donated an additional \$1000. Through Birdies for Kids, donations are matched up to 50% by the Shaw Charity Classic Foundation

Chip in for Kids is another exciting aspect of this annual fundraiser by which donors can text in to donate \$10. This initial donation is matched 50%, then matched 100%, enabling \$10 to increase to \$30! Chip in for Kids text-to-donate is a truly amazing program made possible by Shaw Communications and the Birdies for Kids program. Thank you to Shaw for featuring the Friends' Learning Naturally program on their social media channels leading up to the Shaw Charity classic. The Friends would like to thank Shaw Communications for developing a customized social media post for the Friends relating to the Chip in for Kids program.

Thank you to the Shaw Charity Classic Foundation, the Patron Group, Shaw Communications, Suncor and Shaw Birdies for Kids presented by AltaLink for hosting this amazing program. Special thanks to the Greenfield Foundation and to everyone who donated in support of the Learning Naturally program in Fish Creek Provincial Park.



## FISH CREEK SPEAKER SERIES

## SPEAKER SERIES RETURNS TO THE ELC IN THE SPRING

KATIE BAKKEN, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR

We are so happy to announce that the Fish Creek Speaker Series is returning to the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre for the 2023 season, and in an even more accessible format!

For over 15 years, the Fish Creek Speaker Series (FCSS) program has been bringing in professionals from a variety of fields to share their knowledge and experiences. Although education is a key goal, the original intention of the series was to bring Friends members together regularly to build relationships and community.

The pandemic showed us the power of the internet to bring people together who might not otherwise be able to gather. Now we are putting technology to work to increase accessibility for audience members who may not be able to attend in-person, and so we can bring in presenters from further afield.

Presentations from January to March will take place virtually through Zoom. Online presentations may also be provided if presenters are located in a distant region.

**Winter 2023 presentations -**

**Thursday, February 9** – Wild Wolf Watching in Yellowstone National Park, presented by Kelly Hazen

**Thursday, March 9** – Environmental Impacts of Effluent Release, presented by Matthew Bogard, University of Lethbridge

**April, May, June** – TBD

Stay tuned to the Friends website for more information about Fish Creek Speaker Series talks.

We are working to maximize accessibility for all,



Wild Wolf Watching in Yellowstone, February 9 online. Presented by Kelly Hazen, pictured here with husband Bruce and Ben. Photo courtesy of Kelly Hazen. Bottom, ELC

whether attending in-person or online.

For those who choose to attend in-person at the Environmental Learning Centre (ELC), hand sanitizer and masks will be available and chairs will be spaced a bit further apart than usual. Feel free to move chairs to be closer to those you came with.

The ELC facility is quite accessible, with low thresholds, push button doors and accessible washrooms, large screen, audio sound system and no stairs. Reserved seating will be available for those with visual, hearing and/or other challenges – please request at registration. There is plenty of Visitor Parking near the new

public washroom building up the hill. Please reserve the accessible parking stalls in the staff parking area west of the ELC for those who need it.

We understand that for many, the option of tuning in online from home may continue to be the most accessible option. With support from the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association's Calgary Chapter, the Spring 2022 Fish Creek Speaker Series online events featured live captioning to improve accessibility for all, including those who are hard of hearing or deaf, and also for those who prefer visual stimuli. We are in the process of determining whether or not we are able to provide this service moving forward.



*-Cont'd on next page*

## FISH CREEK SPEAKER SERIES CONT'D

We are seeking community feedback to increase accessibility of Fish Creek Speaker Series events - either in-person at the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre or online via Zoom – for those who experience either visual or hearing challenges including deafness, hard of hearing, blindness or partial sight. Check out our survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FCSSaccessibility>

For the 2023 Fish Creek Speaker Series season, refreshments will be supported through donations. If

you feel refreshments are an important part of these events, please consider making a donation at the refreshments table, either via cash, cheque, debit or credit.

In an attempt to space our Speaker Series events out from partnering agencies offering similar events, we are now aiming to schedule FCSS events on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month, however actual dates are, as always, dependent on presenter availability. There is lots to look forward to this year!

*FCSS events are FREE for Friends Members, \$10 for non-members, and free for youth 16 and under with a registered adult. For those tuning in online, only one ticket is required per device.*



## MEMBERSHIP SHOWS YOU CARE!

Now is the best time of year to renew your Friends of Fish Creek membership or to become a member. We are now providing memberships, which will be good until December 31 of this year. The Friends of Fish Creek enjoy our role as the link between the community, partnering organizations, local business, and Park Management. Membership fees are: \$35 - individual, \$45 - family, \$25 - senior individual, \$30 - senior family. Your membership contribution will go a long way in helping us to create a community of informed park users and in turn benefit the park landscape. Friends members receive benefits like admission to our Fish Creek Speaker Series programs, a discount on the popular Birding Courses, a discount at select local businesses, and the ability to vote at our Annual General Meeting. To renew your commitment to Fish Creek Provincial Park please mail in the membership form on the last page of this newsletter or visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/membership>



The Friends are pleased to partner with Tru Earth, a Canadian company that focuses on creating eco-friendly household goods. Tru Earth's products are designed to function the same - or better - than traditional products, but without all the plastic and other chemicals that are harmful for the planet. Order your Tru Earth household products today and the Friends of Fish Creek will earn at least 20% profit on every sale made through this exciting ongoing fundraiser. Check out Tru Earth and make a purchase to support the Friends of Fish Creek today. Visit the Friends' Tru Earth page at <https://bit.ly/37kyppt>

## QUIZ QUESTION

In what year did the Friends of Fish Creek begin managing the Learning Naturally program?

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



## CAPTURE NATURE 2023

## WINTER PHOTOGRAPHY IN FISH CREEK



The Friends' Capture Nature photo contest as a fun and creative opportunity for park users to engage with their natural surroundings, and search and explore for the best images of the year. Take your cameras out now and start capturing the wonder of nature in Fish Creek Provincial Park. This contest is also part of the Friends' Social Enterprise program with all proceeds contributing to our ongoing stewardship and education projects in Fish Creek Provincial Park. Photo credits, clockwise from top left Stan Kwasniowski, Stan Kwasniowski, Korban Schwab, Chris Lalonde, David Buzacott

**The themes for the 2023 contest are**

- Winter Wonderland
- The Elements
- As Above So Below

Registration opens May 1, 2023 and all submissions must be images taken in Fish Creek Provincial Park.



- Would you like to be a sponsor for this unique program? Please email to Kumiko Kamiike, Visitor Services Coordinator, at [kumiko@friendsoffishcreek.org](mailto:kumiko@friendsoffishcreek.org)
- To view the 2022 Capture Nature Photos, visit <https://capturenature1.shootproof.com/gallery/11604120>
- For more information about Capture Nature visit <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/capturenature/>

## QUIZ ANSWER - AUTUMN ISSUE

During the autumn season you may see moose with their young out in the park. How many calves do moose typically birth each year?

**Answer:** Moose have 1 or 2 young per year. Moose are the largest members of the deer family and the largest animal you are likely to see in Fish Creek or within the city. Make sure to give these members of the park's wildlife community lots of space as they will respond defensively if they feel threatened by people or dogs., especially if they have their calves with them.

Mistakiis Institute, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/species-information/mammals/moose.html>

## STAFF

## Executive Director

Nic Blanchet

## Communications Manager

Chris Lalonde

## Citizen Science &amp; Stewardship Coordinator

Emma Stroud

## Citizen Science &amp; Stewardship Coordinator

Dylan Barnes

## Visitor Services Coordinator

Kumiko Kamiike

Staff contact information available at

<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/contact-2>

## 2023 EXECUTIVE

Chair - Bob Morrin

Vice-Chair - David Mitchell

Treasurer - Phil Greer

Governance Chair - Henry Villanueva

Secretary - Kari Horn

Director at Large - Christina Steed

Director at Large - Neil Groeneveld

Director at Large - Michael McCreadie

Park Liaison - Andrew Schoepf

Learn more about our Board of Directors  
on the new web page

<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/board>

## Membership Form -

The Friends of Fish Creek, PO Box 2780 Stn M Calgary, AB T2P 2M7  
403-238-3841 [info@friendsoffishcreek.org](mailto:info@friendsoffishcreek.org) [www.friendsoffishcreek.org](http://www.friendsoffishcreek.org)

For info about the Park Protector program visit [www.friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup](http://www.friendsoffishcreek.org/park-protector-signup)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_ Address and postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 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: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

To pay online: [www.friendsoffishcreek.org/membership](http://www.friendsoffishcreek.org/membership) or donate on [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)

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

(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.