



The Voice of the Friends

Creating Plugs from Harvested Seeds

by Emma Stroud, Ecology Manager

Winter is the perfect time on the prairies to plant seeds in preparation for spring. Many native seeds require a period of cold stratification in order to germinate, making this a perfect snow day activity. Several groups have joined us this season to plant seeds like lupine, buffalo bean, blanket flower, and wild bergamot in seed trays that we cover with snow and leave outside until they are ready to wake up in the spring. Some seeds require additional preparation like scarification or soaking in hot water in order to break the protective seed coat and break seed dormancy. Because native species have deep roots, we ensure our seed trays have at least 6-8 inches of soil. We then scatter the seeds on top, and add a light dusting of soil on top to prevent herbivory from rodents and birds. Many native flowers require sunlight to grow, and won't germinate if they are buried too deep. We store our seed plugs in our native plant nursery where they are lovingly cared for by the Friends and Venturers Society until seedlings are large enough to be planted in restoration sites in Fish Creek.



Friends of Fish Creek volunteers have created over 1000 native seed plugs that will be used for restoration in 2025.



Seed packets from our native seed bank ready for a new home!

Do you have a green thumb and want to play a part in creating a sustainable seed source for restoration projects? Join our Grow with Us Program by emailing growwithus@friendsoffishcreek.org to be notified of all upcoming seed and plant giveaways.



Provincial Park Society

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**Thank you for your
commitment to
Fish Creek
Provincial Park!**

Donate today!



or visit: Visit:

<https://friendsoffishcreek.kindful.com/?campaign=349895>

A Note From the Executive Director

It's been an incredible first few months with the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society. The enthusiasm, dedication, and passion of our staff and volunteers is truly something special, and I am so inspired by these amazing folks who make up our team. I hope you enjoy reading about their recent successes in this exciting new newsletter format!

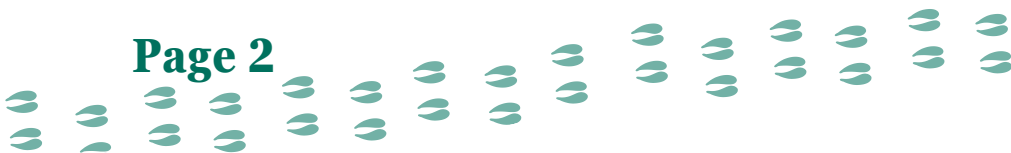
Though we are in the midst of winter, the Friends continue to offer many opportunities for community members to get out and about in the park. Winter birding programs are running daily, and Good Grief walks twice a week. You can also join us for indoor activities, such as stopping by the Bow Valley Ranch Visitor Centre or attending one of our monthly Speaker Series talks. Volunteer recruitment is also beginning shortly – see page 6 for more details on upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Fish Creek Provincial Park will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in June of this year, and the Friends are in the midst of planning a celebratory community event to mark this milestone. This park means so much to the millions of visitors we see every year, and a 50th anniversary is certainly something to celebrate! Keep an eye out for an announcement of our plans coming in the next month.

The Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park relies on the support of many partner organizations and community members to carry out our mission. Whether you are a volunteer, a donor, or simply a park enjoyer, I would like to personally thank you for helping us in our journey to conserve this incredible urban park for all to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Katrina Terrill
Executive Director



Current Creek Health

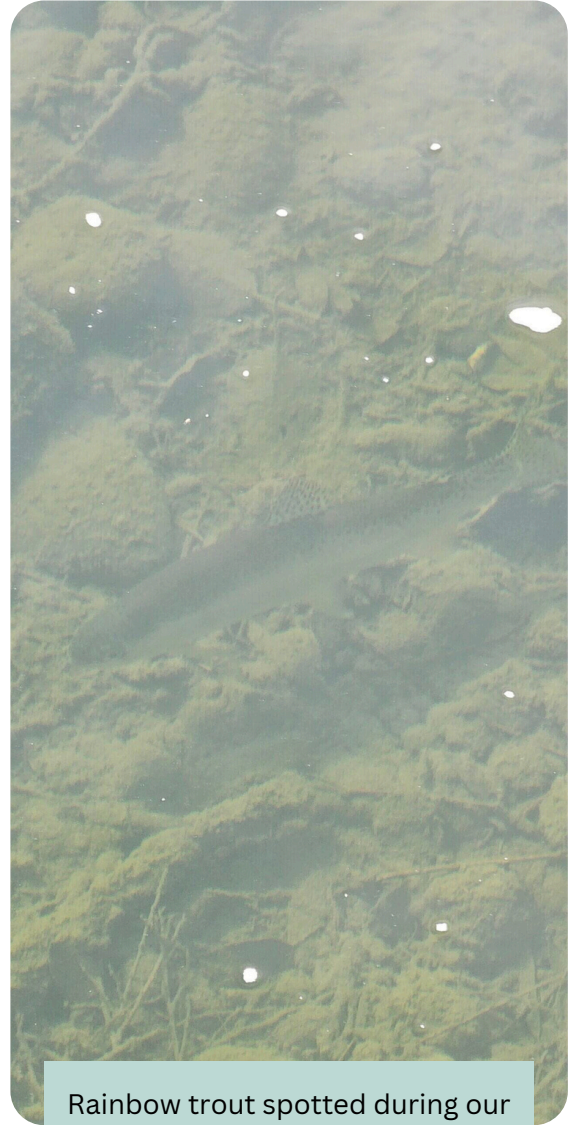
By Ross Anderson, Watershed Field Coordinator

This upcoming field season the Friends plan on expanding the work done involving the creek. This will include increased monitoring and measurement of both water quality and quantity. Over the winter season the Friends have used new and historical data to help understand how the creek is changing and what to focus on in order to keep the creek as healthy as possible.

We also plan to work with Freshwater Conservation Canada (formerly known as Trout Unlimited Canada) to complete a fish inventory and habitat assessment on the creek. This will give us a more complete understanding of current creek health, fish populations and fish diversity. All the information we gather will be used to support the lower Fish Creek state of the watershed report and build the lower Fish Creek section on the Bow River Basin Council website.

A major part of our creek health improvement plan is to have volunteer opportunities to remove the rock dams in the creek. Rock dams can cause issues for fish passage, change the flow of the creek, and cause unfavorable changes in temperature. To minimize disturbance when removing a rock dam, rocks are picked up and placed with care rather than thrown. Rock dam shifts will also be scheduled to avoid fish spawning windows.

Despite their perceived similarities rock dams and beaver dams have very different effects on a stream. Overall effects of rock dams are generally negative whereas beaver dams have many positive effects on a stream. The benefits of beaver dams include but are not limited to; Temperature regulation, providing rearing areas for native fish, ground water recharge and increased riparian area. Beaver dams can act in similar ways to storm water pods to improve water quality by slowing the water and allowing for pollutants to settle out. For this reason, the beaver coexistence program is directly linked to the programs we do in the creek. We can manage beavers strategically to maximize the health benefits in the creek.



Rainbow trout spotted during our 2024 Redd survey.

Good Grief: Nature Walking Through Grief and Loss

By Kumiko Kamiike, Visitor Services Coordinator

Our Good Grief program has grown into something truly special. As our only wellness program right now, it continues to expand and inspire others across Alberta - and beyond! Since its launch in 2017, Good Grief has provided a space for connection with nature, grief and one another. Developed in partnership with Sonya Jakubec, professor at Mount Royal University, the program is rooted in research demonstrating the restorative power of nature. For years, we offered two to three sessions annually, but in response to increasing interest, we expanded to four seasonal sessions. Now, in 2025, we're growing even more—offering two sessions per season!

This program is not therapy or counseling, but a supportive walk accompanied by dedicated volunteers we call companions. Volunteers ensure participants' safety and provide companionship as they explore the park together. Conversations may range from sharing experiences of loss to simply appreciating wildlife, natural landscapes, and the conservation work happening in Fish Creek.

Our lead volunteer, Rose Ratliffe, attended several Alberta Parks meetings across the province with Sonya to share her experiences leading Good Grief. The program's success has inspired other parks and organizations across Alberta (from St. Albert, Rocky Mountain House/Crimson Lake to Camrose/Miquelon Park, and Brooks/Dinosaur Provincial Park and beyond) to implement their own versions.

Fish Creek Provincial Park holds more than just beautiful landscapes—it offers a space for reflection, healing, and connection. None of this would be possible without our incredible volunteers, who make this program a reality. They are the true heroes of Good Grief - companions along the walk of life!

Spring 2025 Session:

Our next Good Grief program will run from early April to May for eight weeks. Registration opens in early March—stay tuned by visiting our website or following us on Eventbrite to receive notifications.



Are you interested in joining one of our programs or meeting new friends? Do you enjoy learning new things or sharing your experiences with others?

Become a volunteer!

Visit: <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/volunteering-basics/>

An amazing time with Prospect Human Services:

By John Timonera (TJ), Restoration Stewardship Coordinator



Prospect during our native garden replant in July

Collaboration between The Friends and others is always a pleasure. Since the summer of 2024 we have been working with Prospect, a not-for-profit registered charity much like us. They welcome people experiencing hardships whether it be homelessness, mental health conditions or otherwise, working with them to find employment.

Some of the opportunities we have provided to our participants at Prospect involve us sharing our knowledge about the importance of native plants, how to plant them, and grasslands management by cleaning up leftover solarization plastic and pulling out noxious invasive plants which compete with the newly established native plants.

Our collaboration does not end in the summer. Throughout the fall and currently winter they have come to do events with us. You might ask what kinds of events we do with them in the winter? Well, grassland management does not end once the frost starts, it keeps on going! With the Grow With Us project we started last year at The Friends; we collected native plants seeds from our participants. Grow With Us is an initiative we started to be able to create a native plant seed bank that creates a cycle of gaining native seeds from the plants we planted or give away. With those seeds we need to be able to get them ready for planting. So, we have our participants at Prospect help with seed processing as well as seed planting to get the plugs ready for germination. Throughout the winter season, the Participants at Prospect have been able to process hundreds of seeds and plant them into pots. This collaboration has been such an amazing experience, there is so much gratitude that comes from these experiences we have shared.

Upcoming Events

Volunteer Open House:

We will take place at two locations this year:

1. Tuesday, March 11, from 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm at the Visitor Centre, Bow Valley Ranch.
2. Sunday, March 16, from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm at the Environmental Learning Centre, Shannon Terrace.

We will offer some free tours and snacks. Please join us with your family, friends or neighbours to find out what we do for the park and find the best interest to volunteer in Fish Creek!



Fish Creek Speaker Series

On March 13, 2025 we will have Jill Bloor and Mandeep Dhaliwal presenting:
Air Quality 101 with the Calgary Regional Airshed Zone

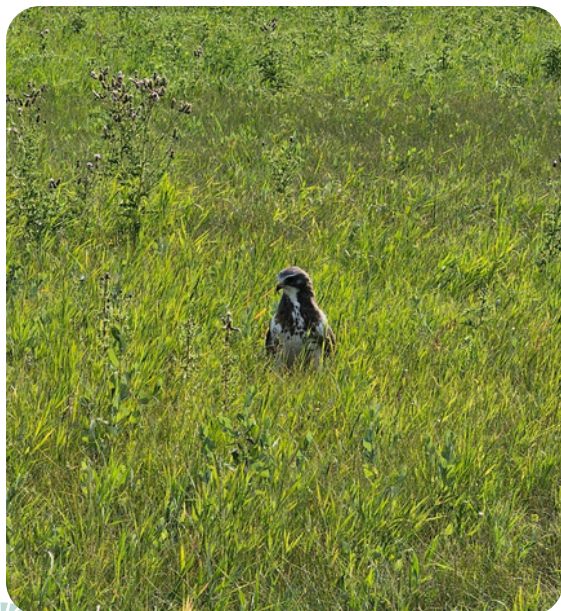


On April 17, 2025 we have Lesley Peterson presenting:
Nature Based Solutions - Adapting to Climate Change

For more information, visit: <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/speaker-series/>

Presentations are free to Friends members!

Held at the Environmental Learning Centre in Shannon Terrace (15931 Woodpath Road SW, Calgary AB) and online via Zoom!



Discovery Days at Bow Habitat Station

Discovery Days fosters awareness and appreciation of Alberta's air, land, water, and biodiversity. Each themed event connects to Alberta's environment and its people. We have been invited to host interactive booths, where visitors can explore at their own pace.

The first event of 2025 took place on January 3, engaging 134 children and adults. We will be at Bow Habitat Station in March, April, and May:

- March 21: Water Wonders
- April 25: Spring Spectacular
- May 16: Wings Over Water

Hope to see you there!

Restoration Work Updates

By Dylan Barnes, Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator

Winter is a time for reflection and planning. This year, our focus is on restoring native grasslands in Fish Creek Provincial Park, particularly in the Bow Valley Ranch area, where small but crucial remnants remain. The most recent Tannas report indicated that native grasslands make up only a fraction of the park's landscape, making their restoration a priority for improving the park's ecological health.

Native grasslands provide vital habitat for wildlife, offering shelter for small mammals and food sources for hawks, coyotes, and deer. Unlike non-native grasses, they support a balanced ecosystem, reducing pressure on riparian vegetation and helping prevent the spread of invasive species. By strengthening these grasslands, we can enhance biodiversity and improve the park's overall resilience.

In addition to grassland restoration, riparian areas along the creek will also be set to flourish anew. Protective fencing, in place for the past five years, has helped tremendously with the effort to revitalize the vegetation community along the creek and protect it from human activity. While nature takes its course, we will also take ours; removing what weeds we can and informing everyone we meet in the community about the importance of maintaining the sites.

A major advantage of focusing our efforts in one area is the ability to maximize plant salvaging efforts. Through our partnership with the Alberta Plant Rescue Society, we can relocate rescued plants to the most suitable environments, ensuring they thrive rather than being left behind.

By consolidating restoration efforts in one location, we can work more efficiently—lowering costs, improving coordination, and streamlining planting and salvaging efforts. These steps will contribute to a stronger, healthier Fish Creek Park, benefiting both present and future generations.





Provincial Park Society

MISSION:

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

VISION:

A sustainable Fish Creek Provincial Park that improves the quality of life for present and future generations.

Become a Member Today!

By purchasing an annual membership, you join our endeavors to deliver carefully targeted community stewardship events to preserve the ecological integrity of this park.

Benefits Include:

- 10% discount on the Wild Bird Store
- 10% discount at Kensington Art Supply
- Free entry to Fish Creek Speaker Series
- Discounts on Birding
- More!



or visit:

<https://friendsoffishcreek.org/membership/>

Group Stewardship

Every year, the Friends partners with Calgary-based organizations to restore and maintain Fish Creek Provincial Park. We offer outdoor experiences to corporate and civic groups looking to give back to the city we call home.

Whether you want to experience this naturalized area for the first time or join us again in 2025, we offer opportunities to get messy and have fun! Together, we improve the quality of life for present and future generations.

Volunteering Benefits:

- Knowledge Sharing - lending your expertise helps increase the capacity of charitable organizations
- Mental and Physical Wellbeing – acts of kindness can reduce workplace stress, improve employee productivity, and create a more supportive work environment
- Skills Development – investing in a novel experience empowers natural leaders and provides professional development to improve team collaboration, creativity, and communication
- Teambuilding – group activities facilitate camaraderie and remove systemic barriers
- Accomplishment – completing a tangible activity cultivates a sense of individual pride, while representing your organization

Get Involved!

visit: <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/groups/>

