

PATHFINDER

Winter 2023/24



A NEWSLETTER FROM THE GREAT DIVIDE TRAIL ASSOCIATION



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Thank you Doug: Letter from Kate

Kate Hamilton is the Executive Director of the Great Divide Trail Association

In November 2023 Doug Borthwick stepped down from his role as GDTA President, and we welcomed Lisa Belanger, the former Vice-President, into the role. Welcome Lisa!

I met Doug 4 years ago on my first trail-building trip with the GDTA. Doug immediately made me and the group of 6 youth that I had with me feel welcome and excited about the week ahead. We all had an excellent week with Doug leading the charge, teaching everyone how to use the tools, assess trails, and empowering everyone to step out of their comfort zone. That week was an unbelievable experience of connection to the landscape, to the other trail builders, the GDTA, and of course, our fearless leader, Doug (Doug was the catalyst for so much of the passion and involvement I and others have found with this organization he helped to build). I can honestly say that I would not be here, and so involved, if it had not been for Doug.

Fast forward over the years, Doug continued to welcome every new person with that same enthusiasm he had for our group. I have no doubt that Doug has inspired them to hike, volunteer, and connect with each other. Over the past year and a half, I worked closely with Doug and witnessed him pour his heart out on the trail and into the organization. He is an unbelievable source of information, passion, and hard work, and I have learned a lot from him. There is one thing we always agreed upon, one thing that gave us both joy—and that was seeing in real-time people connect to each other, the trail, and the landscape. The best meetings always began with something like, “Did you see the email that Karen sent to tell us she is going to hike with Bina this summer?” Two new friends discovered on a trail trip come together. There is nothing more fulfilling than witnessing connection.

Although I won’t be seeing Doug behind the computer so often anymore, I sure hope that I do run into him in his happy place—the trails. Thanks for everything, Doug. Enjoy your empty (or at least less filled) inbox.

Lisa, I look forward to continuing to work with you. Congratulations on your new role!



The Great Divide Trail Association's annual Trail Supporter Campaign is now live. Our goal is to raise \$30,000 by December 31st, 2023. This campaign stands as our most significant and crucial fundraising event of the year, and we're counting on your support.

The year 2023 has been extraordinary for the trail. A remarkable forty-two thru-hikers registered on the Facebook hikers' page to complete the trail, with many others unaccounted for. Thanks to your assistance last year, we achieved significant milestones: fourteen building and maintenance trips, the establishment of a new IT Committee, and the official designation of the GDT as a trail in Alberta Public Lands—and much more!

[Click here to make a donation to the Trail Supporter Campaign!](#)



Tribute to Thor

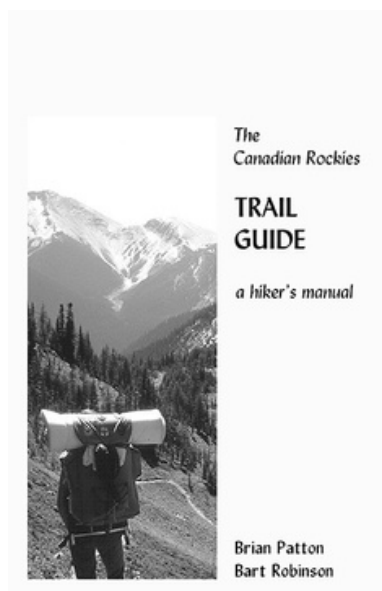
By Jenny Feick, PhD

I felt so sad when I heard from Cliff White that Dr. James Thorsell passed away on August 30 of this year (2023). “Thor”, as he was affectionately known, really kickstarted the idea for Canada’s Great Divide Trail, now the epitome of the world’s long-distance trails. Cliff introduced me to this amazing individual 50 years ago, igniting my interest of the GDT.

In 1966, Parks Canada hired Jim Thorsell to do a trail survey in Waterton Lakes National Park. Earlier that same year, the Girl Guides of Canada proposed the idea of a long distance trail along the length of the Alberta/British Columbia boundary. In 1967-68, Thor and his assistant Jim Green completed a trail survey for Parks Canada in Banff and Yoho National Parks.

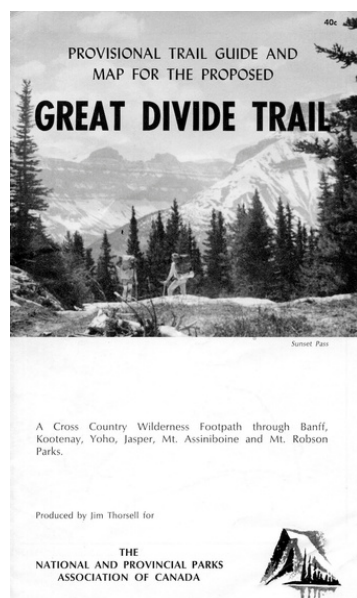
After completing their field work, Thor figured out how best to link existing trails and overland routes from Mount Robson Provincial Park in British Columbia to Palliser Pass at the south end of Banff National Park, Alberta. Aware that Calgary architect and mountaineer Philippe Delesalle had advocated for a Great Divide Trail from Yoho National Park south to the Kananaskis Lakes in April 1967, Thor submitted a detailed internal proposal for the Great Divide Trail through the mountain parks to Parks Canada headquarters in Ottawa in the fall of 1968. While engaged in all this, he completed his Master’s degree at the University of Western Ontario.

Parks Canada endorsed Thor’s proposal that winter of 1968/69. Jean Chrétien, then the federal Minister in charge of National Parks, endorsed the Great Divide Trail concept in an



official public communiqué in early September 1970. Chrétien stated that the National Parks Service would undertake the project with the goal of completing it by 1975. The National & Provincial Parks Association or NPPAC (precursor to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society or CPAWS) promoted Jim Thorsell's GDT concept in 1970, and the route appeared in the very first *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* by Brian Patton and Bart Robinson in 1971. Meanwhile, Thor completed his interdisciplinary PhD at the University of British Columbia that same year.

Thanks to Thor, there was a lot of media coverage across Canada about the GDT proposal from 1968 into the early 1970s. Thor kept a scrapbook on GDT articles throughout his life.



While working for Parks Canada and living in Banff, Jim Thorsell had a big influence on Catharine Whyte, who was co-founder of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, and her nephew Cliff White, exciting them both about the concept of the Great Divide Trail. In the early 1970s, he inspired Cliff, a teenager at the time, to investigate extending the GDT south from Banff National Park across provincial Crown lands to Waterton Lakes National Park.

Above: The NPPAC's provisional map and route for the proposed GDT and Patton and Robinson's first edition of The Canadian Rockies Trail Guide were how many people in the 1970s first learned about the GDT idea.

Thor's influence on Cliff White led to Project: Great Divide Trails in 1974, which saw him, me, and four other young people survey the provincial Crown lands between Banff and Waterton Lakes National Parks on either side of the Great Divide and develop potential routes for the GDT. This work in turn led to the establishment of the Great Divide Trail Association in 1976. Next year (2024) is the 50th anniversary of Project: Great Divide Trails.

By the late 1970s, Dr. James Thorsell moved on to his academic career at the University of Alberta, followed by his international career in park conservation.¹ However, his GDT legacy continued, the work now being carried out by others.

Even though Parks Canada rescinded its support for the GDT concept by 1980, Brian Patton and Bart Robinson included Thor's provisional GDT route through the mountain parks in subsequent editions. The GDT was featured in all of the editions of their trail guide until 2000 when they gave up on Parks Canada ever supporting the idea. The authors may need to rethink that given recent progress with the GDT Association's cooperative ventures with the Friends of Jasper National Park and Parks Canada to restore the GDT route in the Maligne Lake area of Jasper National Park.

Thor remained interested in the GDT idea no matter where in the world he lived. Besides staying in touch with Cliff White and me, he assisted Dustin Lynx with the National Park portion of his book, the first trail guide focused solely on the GDT, which was published in 2000. Thor had mostly retired by the time Dustin published the 2nd edition of the GDT trail guide and was dividing his time between Wilmer, Banff, and Baja California. Every subsequent issue of *Hiking Canada's Great Divide Trail* incorporated elements of Thor's original enduring route.

Between 2018 and 2021, Thor also contributed material for both the Collector's edition and the Second Edition of *Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins and Early History of Canada's Great Divide Trail and Great Divide Trail Association*. Chapter Two contains an interview with him about his contributions to the origin of the GDT concept (see "Thor's Pioneering Proposal" in the October 22, 2022 issue of the GDTA's Pathfinder Newsletter). At the time we were working on the book, he was very proud of the fact that he backpacked his favourite section of the GDT, the Rockwall Trail in Kootenay National Park, with his friend Lyle Wilson in 2016, when he was 76 years old.



Thor's provisional route for the GDT through the contiguous mountain parks as it first appeared in The Globe & Mail newspaper in November 1968.

¹ Thor's academic and international conservation careers and other aspects of his amazing life are commemorated well in Brian Patton's blog post entitled "[Jim Thorsell, 1940-2023](#)" as well as in his [official obituary in the Rocky Mountain Outlook newspaper](#), and on the [IUCN website](#). Thor reflects on his contributions to the World Heritage Site Program as part of the [oral archives of UNESCO](#).



A Celebration of Life for Dr. Jim Thorsell took place at the Banff Centre on October 3, 2023.

In the official interview to go in *Tales from the Great Divide*, Thor left out an amusing story about how a love affair with a beautiful woman led to his love affair with long distance trails. In Chapter Two of *Tales*, Thor briefly mentions a girlfriend from Atlanta, Georgia, who was a keen hiker on the Appalachian Trail. In the story he told me at his picturesque cabin in Wilmer a month before Valerie Larsen interviewed him for *Tales*, that girlfriend played an important role in kindling his support for long-distance trails by enticing him to backpack a section of the Appalachian Trail with her in 1964. His 1970 proposal put forward a similar model for the GDT, complete with hikers' shelters at strategic intervals, an aspect Parks Canada never supported.

Thor was a great believer in documenting community heritage, having written a hiking guide to the Storm Mountain Lodge area that included some local history. He continued to provide me with additional material to put in the next edition of *Tales from the Great Divide*, most recently in 2022. That year, after Alzheimer's curtailed his right to drive and he moved from Wilmer back to his cottage in Banff, he started going through his personal effects, donating what are now considered heritage photographs to the Whyte Museum's Archives of the Canadian Rockies.

I hope his GDT files end up in those same archives or the GDTA Archives at the University of Calgary.

On the evening of October 3, 2023, on the second floor of the Kinnear Building at the Banff Centre, family and friends gathered to honour Thor. The reception began at 5:00p.m. with the lovely autumn light streaming in through the windows, the panorama of the Bow Valley, and Mount Bourgeau framed by the golden trembling aspens.

About 120 people mingled and reminisced while looking at pictures, listening to a harpist, and eating appetizers. At first we gravitated toward others we knew, Pat and Biba Morrow from Wilmer, Cliff and Johanne White and Bob Sandford from Canmore, Harvey Locke from Banff. However, seating for the dinner was pre-arranged. My husband Ian and I had the good fortune to share a table with Thor's sister Corinne, his cousin Alan and his wife Val, Jim Green (Thor's assistant from the GDT trail survey days), the emcee Marty and his wife Marie, and Thor's step-daughter Anya and her husband Marlo. We shared an excellent buffet dinner and informal conversation.

Marty then went up to the podium and opened the official sharing of recollections, from teasing to tributes. Another 50 or more people joined via Zoom to watch a slide show about Thor's vibrant life and listen to the speakers. The next hour or so flew by as we heard from Thor's family, business partners, colleagues, protégés, neighbours, and friends. Anya's heartfelt remembrances of her mom and Thor's relationship made us smile and sigh. Glen Sather and Graham MacDonald, Thor's former business partners at Storm Mountain Lodge, told stories and recited poetry that made us all laugh. Corinne sang a poignant song so beautifully, she had everyone in tears. Harold Eidsvik, a colleague from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature added up all of the areas around the world that Thor had gotten protected, announcing that it was larger than the entire extent of the Province of Alberta, which he added, was bigger than all of Europe.



We listened to many amusing stories from the distant past about Thor's passion for recreating in the outdoors on foot, horseback, or in a canoe, his overseas adventures, his zany sense of humour, and his tendency to trust that others would take care of him, either by paying for a bill at a restaurant, providing clothes made to measure when he landed in a far off country for a meeting, or having his horse saddled and ready for him when he arrived at Nipika. We also heard moving accounts of Thor's deep love for his late long-term partner Nancy Knechtel, who passed away in 2020, and wistful anecdotes about his recent transition to residing in an assisted living facility in Canmore. We all felt very grateful to take the time to gather in person or attend virtually to mark the passing of a truly great man.

Cliff White, Bart Robinson, Jim Green, and I were there to relay our memories of Thor's contribution to the origin of the GDT. During his speech, Cliff White suggested that several of Thor's close friends partner with the GDTA in the summer of 2024 to find and informally name an area along the GDT in Thor's honour. It could be something as simple as posting a small wooden sign with "Thor's Prospect" or marking a site as "Thor's Viewpoint" on the GDT trail map app. Maybe someday there could even be a memorial bench. All of us in the GDT community owe so much to Thor's vision, hard work, and charisma. I truly hope the GDTA can help to honour his memory in this way.

Left: Jim Thorsell in the Lake O'Hara area in the late 1960s.



SECTION B: Coleman to Peter Lougheed

By Barb Lauer

With only two sections left to complete, the mighty Linnie Wonfor and I chose to hike Section B NOBO–Coleman to Peter Lougheed–this summer. And this year we were joined by Tyra Carleton, an uber-experienced GDT thru-hiker.

Section B stands out among all the GDT sections for the work of the volunteers of the Great Divide Trail Association (GDTA). Most of the trail in Section B was built by volunteers. It is amazing to think about the power of volunteerism and what it can achieve. The GDTA is one amazing community of volunteers!

Have to say that I was surprised how hard the section was to complete; it kicked my butt! With



Barb, Tyra and Linnie

about 194 km of undulating terrain, it is one of the longer sections of the GDT. For the most part, there is trail, the route is very obvious (lots of orange markers), and the ups and downs are at a very nice grade (except of course Tornado Pass). But do not underestimate it – of the five thru-hikers we met, two left early, one with an achilles tendon problem and the other with blisters.

In total, we took 10 days and 9 nights to complete the section. It is, however, one of the easiest sections to plan – no campsite bookings required. Whoohoo!

We left Coleman on July 16 and opted for the alternate route to avoid the march down the

very busy, very dangerous Crowsnest Highway. The alternate is lovely! Definitely take this route and avoid the highway! It was the nicest section of our walk to Atlas Staging area, our first stop.

Window Lake was our second stop and it's lovely. We were surprised to meet up with day hikers and fishermen here!



Window Mountain Lake

The hike from Window Lake to Dutch Creek HRT had great views down the valley. Our third night was at Dutch Creek HRT, which was just across a stream from where we had camped as GDTA volunteers working on the HRT a few years ago.

Heading over Tornado Saddle was exciting and one of my favourite days! There is a fair bit written about it being the toughest section of the GDT ... I'm not sure. It's a bit of a grind and the rock can be loose but if you take your time and zig zag up it, you'll be fine. The trail thins out between Tornado Pass and Tornado Saddle. There is a lovely traverse with great views before you start going up. Down the north side, the trail is pretty thin... but it's easy enough to pick your way down and you can see the trail at the bottom so you know where you're aiming for.



Crossing Tornado Saddle

We ran into a few GDTA volunteers who were clearing trail enroute to South Hidden Creek (thank you!) and then at Hidden Creek campsite, we saw Joan Peddleston. What a coincidence! Last time we ran into Joan was at Poboktan Creek campsite in 2018! It was wonderful to run into her!



Lynnie, Tyra and Joan at Hidden Creek



The Beehive and a few surprise ridge walks were the high points of day five.



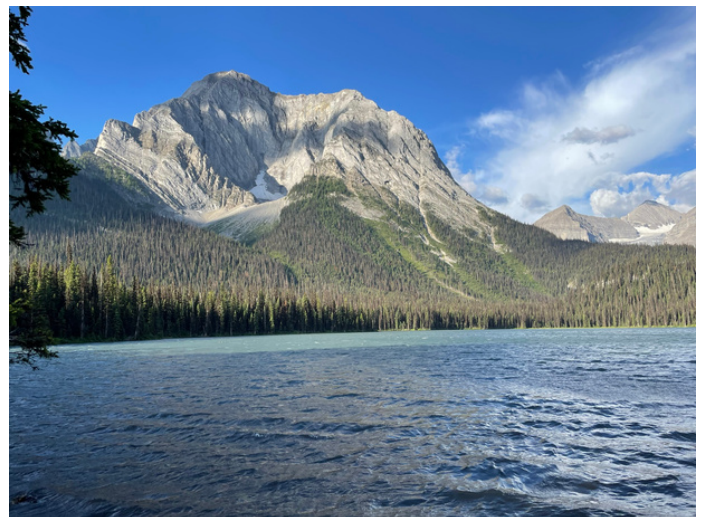
There was quite a bit of walking in the trees between Lyall Creek and Lost Creek. It was nice to be out of the sun!

Then after Lost Creek and enroute to James Lake, we had a number of very wide, very open ridge walks. They were lovely. We camped at James Lake and loved it! We were surprised how warm and dry the air was, despite the proximity of the lake. Maybe it was because we were slightly above the lake?

The day we went from James Lake to Weary Creek was another favourite day for me. It had it all: a hike up to sub-alpine and alpine (magical), route finding along Aldridge Creek, water crossings, and then a final push to get into camp before dark. Tips for Aldridge Creek—although the trail is washed out in parts, it's worth finding the trail. It starts out very thin, we had to search around for it. And then at one point you cross back over Aldridge Creek and you'll see that the trail is washed out. Head back to the creek and pick your way along watching for the trail. It will re-emerge.

We opted for the 30k road walk and not the Coral Pass Alternate. We'd heard reports of difficult scrambling and serious bushwacking. At some point, I'd like to try the Coral Pass Alternate but from the north side, so if it gets too difficult, I can turn around. I know, where's the fun in that!

The mountains get more and more dramatic as you get closer to Elk Lake. Lower Elk Lake campground is my new favourite campsite—right by the lake, very nice tent pads, all the usual amenities (bear lockers, etc.) and no reservation required—pay when you get there (cash only). It is fantastic!



Top to bottom: crossing Fording River Pass; a hiker silhouetted against the sky on Fording River Pass; and the view from Lower Elk Lake campground



Heading up towards Tornado Saddle

Top tips from the trip:

- Leukotape P for blisters. This is different to Leukotape without the P. The P version is much tougher.
- Precut Leukotape P and put it onto the wax paper that you find labels attached to. Same for any duct tape that you might want to bring. Soooo easy then!
- Ziplock bag to be used as a washing bowl, so you can move soapy water away from water source.
- 5 Signs You Aren't Eating Enough on Your Hike. Not sure if Tyra sent this article because I had trouble sleeping in the backcountry or I was irritable!

Overall, Section B is spectacular, a clear demonstration of what volunteerism can achieve! Thank you GDTA!



Great Divide Trail Association Annual Report 2022/23

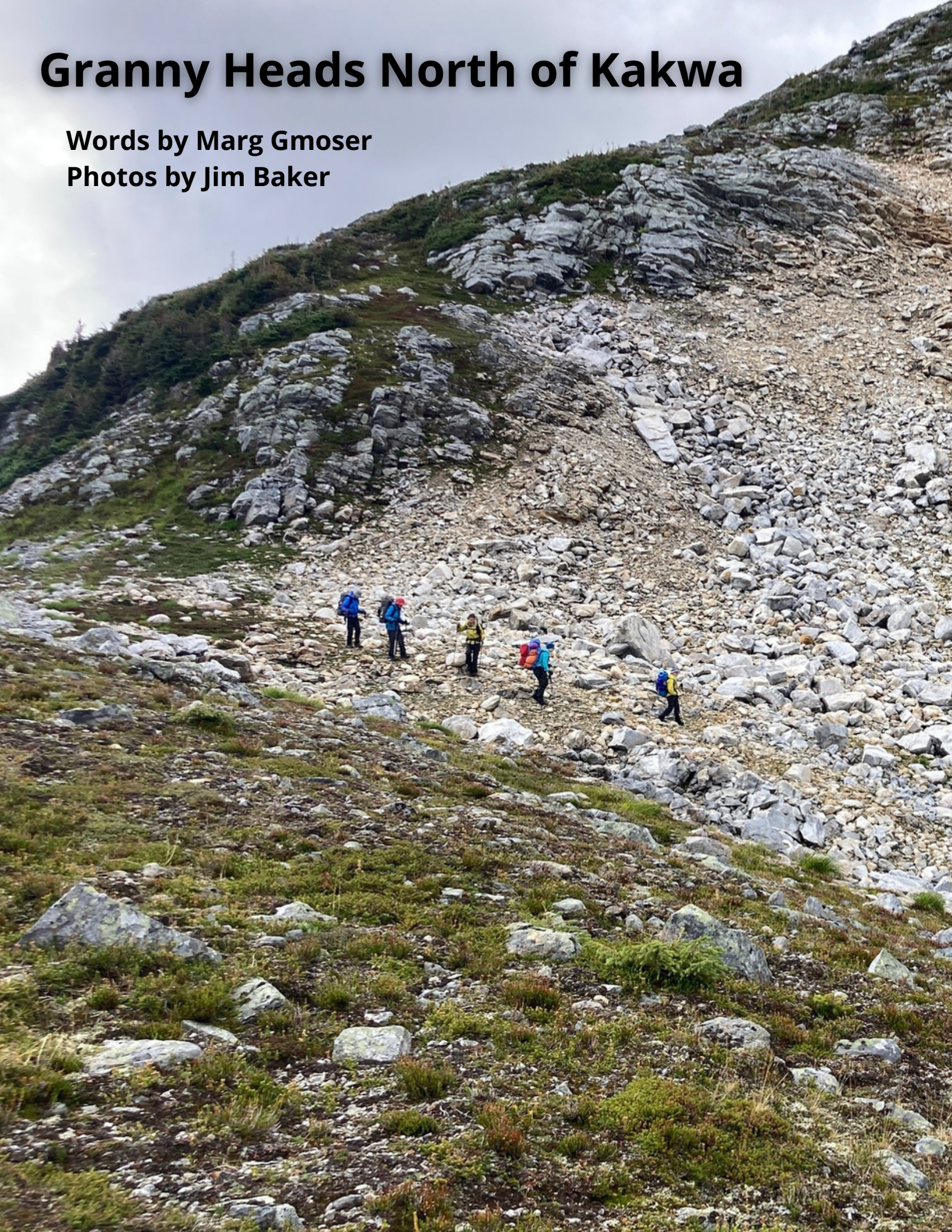
Here are a few highlights from the [GDTA's 2022/23 Annual Report](#). The entire report, including updates from committees, plans for the future and the GDTA's financial report, is available [online](#).

- The GDT is now officially a designated trail in Alberta Public Lands, under the Alberta Trails Act.
- We have a trail management agreement in Height of the Rockies Provincial Park allowing long-term trail maintenance.
- New online membership platform.
- New IT Solutions and Security Committee.
- Kakwa Lake officially became the Northern GDT Terminus, and sign was placed.
- Agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC for a resupply management system operated by Robson Valley Backcountry Adventures at the Blueberry Lake Trailhead on the Holmes Forest Service Road.
- Increasing the Executive Directors hours from part-time to full-time.
- New partnership with Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society (PGBRS), and management agreement with Kakwa Provincial Park through PGBRS.
- Continuing partnerships with Wild Rockies Field Institute, Crowsnest Bible Camp, the Jr. Forest Rangers, Backcountry Horseman of BC, and Alberta Equestrian Federation.
- We are continuing to see interest, knowledge, and support for the GDT grow. This past year our Instagram followers increased by 486, Facebook followers increased by 300, and our Facebook hikers page increased by 1,757 followers.

Granny Heads North of Kakwa

Words by Marg Gmoser

Photos by Jim Baker



When I read Dan Durston's account of his trip on the Great Divide Route (GDR) north of Kakwa, I sent out an email to my hardy Kakwa team of 2022. The quick response was "Let's do it!" Our group consisted of Jim Baker, Marg Gmoser, Helen Sovdat, Marg Saul, Gretchen Whetham, and Heather Ware.

Jim arranged our helicopter flight with Ridge Rotors of Tumbler Ridge, BC and booked our accommodations for the long drive north via Dawson Creek. August 9th was our drive date and the flight in to Belcourt Creek was on the 11th.

After two flights we arrived in the drizzle and started our first bushwhacking up to Amisk Lake. Wet feet would be the theme for the next ten days. There are either bogs or creeks or wet vegetation every day. We became intimate with deadfall, willows, rhododendron, alder, and devil's club. Jim was nicknamed "Stompin' Jim". We would send him ahead to tramp down the waist high hellebore and fireweed. Our reward was unlimited huckleberries and blueberries. Loaded signatures from grizzly bears indicated a rich habitat. Caribou, moose, and elk droppings were abundant and we had two caribou sightings.





Teamwork for navigation was key and adequate battery power paramount. Paper maps were our backup. InReach devices were mandatory: this is wild country. Our most gnarly day involved our descent into Framstead Creek where we walked in the calf-deep water for about 500 meters. Refreshing, but not a recommended route. Bashing our way out of that valley was taxing, however, the reward was the entry into the moody “Valley of Mordor” between the towering cliffs of Weaver and Limestone peaks. Patagonia-style winds were whipping the many waterfalls from the north face of Weaver into a fantastic display. The sight of the azure waters of Limestone Lakes the next day was breathtaking.



Northern Limestone Lake: note the high water line encountered by Dan Durston in 2022

We were fortunate to have excellent weather with very little smoke and best of all—no bugs. The GDR is a tough bushwhack and takes perseverance. Some days our geriatric team only covered ten kilometres in eight or ten hours. However, we still managed to cover some new ground. Our exit became easy once we arrived at the tarns in Monkman Provincial Park. We followed a trail to the beautiful Cascades campsite for our last night of camping. A visit to the magnificent Kinuseo Falls topped off the trip. Distance travelled was 103.89 km.

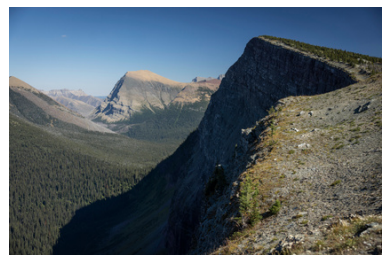
Our team would like to extend a huge thanks to all who explored this area before us. This includes Dan Durston, Ben Millen, Kevin Sharman, and Walkin' Jim—an early pioneer. Our track will be added to the excellent information compiled by Kasy Kaczanowski.

[You can view more of Jim's photos here.](#)

Editor's Note: The route described here is not part of the GDT or currently endorsed by the GDTA. Hikers attempting this route do so at their own risk and should be adequately prepared for a route that is significantly more challenging than any part of the GDT.

LA COULOTTE

WORK TRIP



Photographer [Mike Hopkins](#) joined volunteers working on notoriously challenging La Coulotte ridge in Section A in August 2023. Volunteers improved tread, trimmed trees, and flagged trail.



You Never Know Who is Out There in the Audience

By Jenny Feick, PhD

Following the publication of the *Second Edition of Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins and Early History of the Great Divide Trail and the Great Divide Trail Association*, I have given many presentations on the history of the Great Divide Trail for various groups. People in the audience always pose interesting questions at the end about the past, present, and future of the GDT. I do my best to answer them, sometimes ably assisted by the vivacious Kate Hamilton, the Executive Director of the Great Divide Trail Association, who fields questions on the current status and upcoming plans.

On September 23, 2023, I delivered one such presentation to a group of over 100 Rotarians at the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park Assembly (WGIPPA) in Waterton, Alberta. David Savage, who I met on a GDTA Signature Trip in 2018, invited Kate and I to this annual event. The first such gathering was in 1931, an event that led directly to the establishment of the World's first International Peace Park at Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks.



Title photo: Dave Higgins noting observations on a clipboard in the Vicary Creek valley in Alberta while working on the Project: Great Divide Trails crew in the summer of 1974; Inset photo: Jenny Feick leading a guided walk on the GDT for Rotarians, Waterton Lakes National Park on Sept. 22, 2023 (Photo by Ian Hatter)

The previous day, I led a dozen of the assembly participants on a guided walk from Goat Haunt in Glacier National Park along the shores of Upper Waterton Lake on the Continental Divide Trail while we were in the U.S.A. and then onto the Great Divide Trail after we entered Canada. We had a great time despite the cool misty weather, so I knew at least ten percent of the audience would be keen to hear about the GDT and its history.

During the talk, I described the trail survey work I did in 1974 as part of the six-person Project: Great Divide Trails team. We were following in the footsteps of “Thor”, or Jim Thorsell, who while working for Parks Canada in the mid-to-late 1960s, surveyed trails in Waterton Lakes, Banff, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks and proposed the development of a Great Divide Trail similar to the Appalachian Trail in the U.S.A. In 1970, Parks Canada officials in Ottawa and Jean Chrétien, then the Minister in charge of National Parks, all approved Thor’s proposal. While Thor moved on to an international career in protected areas with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, he inspired Cliff White in Banff to try to find a GDT route between Waterton Lakes National Park in the south and Banff National Park in the north. Cliff got me and Mary Jane Cox, another one of our University of Calgary colleagues, interested in the idea. After we secured federal funding through an “Opportunities for Youth” (OFY) grant, our crew surveyed a 5,250 sq km study area in the Alberta and British Columbia provincial Crown land on either side of the Great Divide between Waterton Lakes and Banff national parks, and then pieced together potential routes for a Great Divide Trail. Besides mapping and classifying each trail, we itemized natural and cultural features, and described any land use activities.

During my illustrated talk to the Rotarians, I said, “In his trail survey reports, Jim Thorsell defined a trail as a marked route for non-motorized travel”. However, it became obvious within days of starting our field work that if we stuck with this definition, we would survey few real trails. In almost every valley, the old tracks of Indigenous peoples, trappers, and outfitters had been superseded by bulldozer and rugged vehicle tracks. Consequently, the study crew

redefined “trail” as “a marked route not passable to standard automobiles”. While showing pictures taken in the summer of 1974, I went on, “We were exploring headwaters of the major rivers of western Canada; places that we thought had been designated as being important for watershed protection. Places like the Elk and Flathead rivers that flow into the Columbia River system that ends up in the Pacific Ocean, and the Oldman and Castle rivers in Alberta that flow into the Bow River, whose waters eventually reach the Atlantic. Our crew discovered that both provincial governments were shirking their stewardship responsibility for watershed protection in these vital headwater areas. The policy of multiple resource use was in effect on both sides of the divide. Roads associated with powerlines and resource extraction industries, along with seismic lines, were obliterating historic trails.”

Later in the talk, I described the founding of the Great Divide Trail Association and the work of their first trail crew in 1976. “During that summer of 1976, the GDTA trail crew endured working in 32 consecutive days of rain. Nevertheless, they scouted, flagged, and cleared 19 km of the GDT. This picture shows Dianne drying out all of the crew’s gear on day 33 when the rainstorms stopped and it finally cleared up. That trail crew was extremely dedicated. Not only did they work in the rain, but they worked all summer without getting paid. In June, the GDTA received an initial sum of around \$5,000 to cover basic expenses like food, flagging tape, and vehicle fuel, but the salary funds did not arrive until December.”

Following the talk, a guy dashed up to me after I left the podium. He explained that in the summer of 1976 he worked on the trail crew in Glacier National Park, Montana. "You brought it all back for me: the physical labour, and the camaraderie, but most of all, that summer, the rain. I was out there working on the park trails in the same 32 consecutive days of rain as that Great Divide Trail crew! I felt re-traumatized remembering it. My feet weren't dry for over a month. I got trench foot. It was horrible. I remember distinctly all of us around a campfire one night that summer affirming that this forest would never burn. It was too wet. It rained all the time in Glacier National Park. And now look at it." I nodded. That morning, we had heard Jeff Mow, former Superintendent of Glacier National Park, give a disturbing talk about the changing nature of forest fires in Glacier National Park given climate change, with examples of recent catastrophic fires. "Anyway", he added as he shook my hand, "Great talk. I really enjoyed it. And your trail crew really was extremely dedicated. It was tough for us here in Glacier, but at least we got paid well."

The next morning, an older fellow came up to me and asked if he could buy a copy of *Tales from the Great Divide*. As I was getting a book out and signing it, he smiled, "I really enjoyed your talk. It brought back so many memories. I know all that country you showed us yesterday. All them passes, every one of them you mentioned, I've been there. Incredible country." He sighed and looked down at his feet. Then he looked right at me. "I used to work for Shell Canada in the early 70s, in the exploration division." He paused as I straightened up with realization flooding through my brain. "I was the guy who drove the bulldozer over



The Shell Canada seismic line as it looked in 1976 with ATVs using it to access the alpine. (Photo by Lani Smith)

Fording River Pass to make that seismic line that destroyed the historic trail," he confessed. He went on. "You know, we knew it was wrong. We knew it was wrong at the time. But that was our mandate, you see, from the company, from Shell Canada."

I was speechless. He continued. "My orders were and what I did was, we started at Kananaskis, drove up and over Elk Pass along the hydro line road down into B.C., into the Elk Valley, down the Elk Valley to the Aldridge Creek seismic camp. From there, I drove the D6 DoubleWide cat beside Aldridge Creek, up and over Fording Pass, cutting across the alpine, and then with the blade still down I went down the other side, all the way down by Baril Creek there, and out to Highwood House on the Alberta Forestry Trunk Road." I thought it must have been amazing to see that country before the blade of that machine tore up the earth, casting bushes and trees to the side. He continued, musing. "And later on, I think, the higher ups in the company knew it was wrong, too. And Shell tried to fix things up and that".



Top left: One of the formerly impassable places where the GDT now easily crosses the old bulldozer cut on the way up Fording Pass in August 2023. Top right: In August 2023, the scar from the bulldozer across the alpine in Fording Pass looks much as it did in 1974.



I thought, "Wow. That took courage to say." I reassured him that in 1976 Shell Canada sent one of their employees and equipment to help the GDTA volunteers fix up the damage to the Fording Pass historic trail from the Shell Canada seismic line. "In 1974, during Project: Great Divide Trails, we knew it was Shell that made the seismic line." I said. "They left their little Shell Canada scallop shell symbols along the route." He smiled visualizing the old symbols. I wondered if he was the one who posted them.

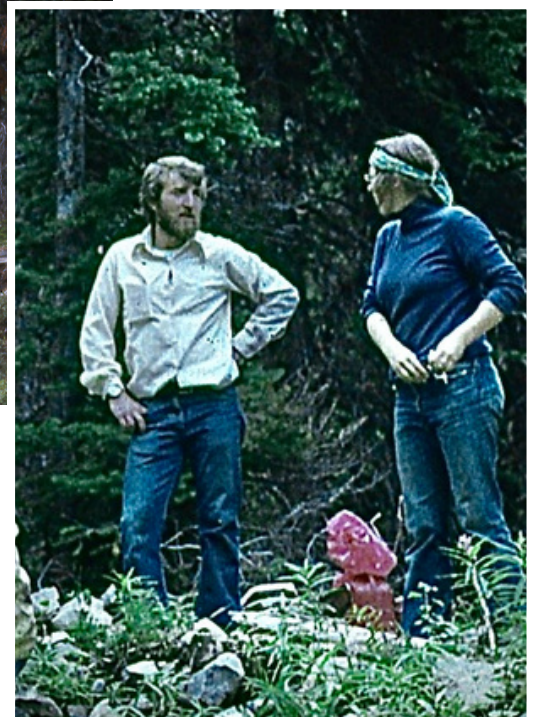
As I handed him his autographed copy of *Tales from the Great Divide*, I told him "It's all written up in the book, with pictures of the guy from Shell who helped repair the damage." He handed me \$65.00 cash. "In fact", I said, "my husband Ian and I were just at Fording Pass this summer. We hiked in on the old historic trail and the areas repaired in 1976 have grown back in really well." I could see Ian eyeing me from where he was sitting nearby. He must have heard his name mentioned. Or maybe it was to catch my attention so I knew it was time to wrap it up soon. I smiled at him and then turned back to the guy from Shell.

"Thanks again, for your talk, I really enjoyed it and I'm going to enjoy this", he said, leafing through the book. "I know all these places you have pictures of in here. And this is the way I remember them looking. My name's Ernie, by the way." as he shook my hand. "Thanks, Ernie."

I said. "I really appreciate you taking the time to come up and talk with me. I'd actually like to chat with you again about this sometime. If there ever is a third edition of the book, it would be interesting to include your story." Ernie smiled. "Well, sure. That would be nice. Here's my card. He handed me a white business card with the catch-phrase "RETIRED – CATCH US IF YOU CAN" and the contact information for him and his wife. He hugged his book to his chest, smiled, and walked away.

"Wow. That was interesting" I said to Ian, as I went over to sit beside him. "Who was that?" he asked. I explained. "Did you tell him about the old bulldozer track that we saw this summer going across the alpine tundra way down below the Great Divide Trail, the one that will likely never grow back?" I shook my head no. "I thought about it, but decided not to. He will see the picture of it in the book." "It is an amazing coincidence that the very guy who made that seismic line that you showed in your presentation would be here in the audience," Ian said. "Yes," I agreed. "One never knows who is going to be in the audience."

But there is more to the story. David Savage, who invited me and Kate to the event and who had introduced us at the WGIPPA, told us on September 27 that, "A major goal for my asking you both to participate in the Assembly was to highlight you both, the Great Divide Trail, and to advance my resolution that the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park Association formally support, and encourage thousands of Rotarians in Alberta, BC, Montana, Washington, Idaho ... to appreciate and support the protection and resourcing of the GDT. At the Saturday morning board meeting (on September 23), I got a further yes. At that evening's Conservation and Environment Action Team meeting, we all agreed to forward a resolution to the board, a letter to the GDT, to Rotarians ... We, also, crafted an idea for the GDT, WGIPPA, and Rotaractors (young Rotarians) ... to collaborate to have a trail-building week next summer with sponsorship ... You both made a very positive impact for the participants including the two National Park Superintendents and a former Superintendent. We have further momentum in the collaboration between the GDT and WGIPPA." So, you never do know who is in the audience and how talking about the GDT and its history can end up helping the GDT further its mission.



*Top: Dave Higgins backpacking in 1974 on the Shell Canada exploration road/seismic line that obliterated parts of the historic Fording Pass trail.
Right: Alex Kinsella from Shell Canada with Pat Olsen from the GDTA during the 1976 work bee to restore the Fording Pass historic trail. (Photo by Lani Smith).*



Erris Lake

By Eloise Robbins

Erris is the best lake you've never heard of. In fact, it's so under the radar that it's technically nameless: Erris is the mountain towering overhead, and the closest major landmark. So, why should you care about a pristine alpine lake that's not even on the Great Divide Trail?

In October 2023, the GDTA Board of Directors voted to reroute the trail to visit Erris Lake in Section B.

This summer, I was lucky enough to join two of the many scouting trips to the lake. We bushwhacked through thick spruce and skirted massive boulderfields where mountain goats watched us from a distance. We spent hours searching for the best route, sometimes backtracking to try again when we came up against steep side slopes or impenetrable brush.

By the end of my work trip with Jim Schieck and Steve Harvey, we had a passable GPX track from Fred Creek Bridge to Erris Lake. Jim went back a few more times over the summer with different volunteers to fine-tune the route.

The new route is a long way from being built. It will take months of negotiating with land managers, permit applications, and countless trail building trips before the route becomes a trail. However, once completed, it will add two gorgeous alpine lakes to the High Rock Trail, and reroute the GDT from a boggy and boring disused road to flowing singletrack right alongside the towering rockwall that characterizes the divide in Section B.





GDTA Reunions Past and Future

By Jenny Feick, PhD

Above: Great Divide Trails crew 36th reunion hike, Burstall Pass, Alta. L – R: Dave Higgins, Walter (Cliff's dog), Jenny Feick, Cliff White, and Dave Zevick. (Photo by Ian Hatter)

On pages 253-256 in Chapter Six of *Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins and Early History of the Great Divide Trail and the Great Divide Trail Association*, there's a section on reunions of the Project: Great Divide Trails crew. This seems especially relevant to read because 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Project: Great Divide Trails. It's amazing to realize that 50 years ago in the fall of 1973, Cliff White, Mary Jane Cox (now Kreisel) and I were busy preparing our application for a federal Opportunities For Youth (OFY) grant, one of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's initiatives to bolster meaningful youth employment. Our proposal appears in Appendix F in the Second Edition of *Tales from the Great Divide*. We were successful in obtaining the grant, completed the trail survey between Banff and Waterton, and devised potential routes for the GDT. That work formed the basis for the establishment of the GDTA (first incorporated in April 1976) and the establishment of over 100 km of volunteer-built trail

between Fording Pass and Tornado Pass. Plans are in the works for a reunion of the "original six" in the Crowsnest Pass around the same time as the GDTA's AGM in September 2024. Below are a few excerpts from "Reunions and the Next Generation of GDTers" in Chapter Six of *Tales from the Great Divide*.

"In the years since 1974, the Project Great Divide Trails crew members remained in contact with one another. Several maintained friendships despite being separated by thousands of kilometres as career choices took them far apart and work and family obligations absorbed their time. Cliff White and Jenny Feick also stayed in touch with Jim Thorsell. Members of Project: Great Divide Trails have held a few reunions (1994, 1999, and 2010). However, the only time when all six of them got together took place in August 2010 in Canmore, Alta at Cliff White's house. One reunion for all past and present members of the GDTA was held in 1995, to mark twenty years since the first gathering

to form the organization. Individuals brought their significant others and their children, the next generation of GDTers, to the events in the 1990s.”...

“Cliff and Johanne White hosted the 36-Year Reunion of Project Great Divide Trails in August 2010 in Canmore, Alta. To get there, Jenny Feick and her husband Ian Hatter travelled from Victoria, B.C., Chris Hart from Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., Dave Higgins from Calgary, Alta., Mary Jane Kreisel (née Cox) from Edmonton, Alta., and Dave Zevick from Kimberley, B.C. This event was the only one that Chris Hart and Dave Zevick were able to attend and thus the only time that all six of the Project: Great Divide Trails crew got together since they dispersed in early September 1974. GDT guidebook author Dustin Lynx of Canmore, Alta. also popped by to meet the group.”



Great Divide Trails group photo at 36th reunion. This is the only picture ever taken showing all six members of Project: Great Divide Trails! L – R: Mary Jane Kreisel (née Cox), Chris Hart, Jenny Feick, Cliff White, Dave Zevick and Dave Higgins. (Photo by Ian Hatter)



Project: Great Divide Trails crew members' 36th reunion breakfast, Canmore, Alta. L – R: Mary Jane Kreisel (née Cox), Cliff White (in the shadow), Dave Higgins, Jenny Feick and Chris Hart. Dave Zevick had already left. (Photo by Ian Hatter)

What is *Tales from the Great Divide* and How Can I Get a Copy?

Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins and Early History of Canada's Great Divide Trail and Great Divide Trail Association is a self-published compendium of stories from individuals involved firsthand in the start and development of the GDT and the GDTA.

Tales from the Great Divide is available on Amazon, from independent bookstores, or through Jenny Feick's [website](#).

Great Divide Trail Finishers 2023

Congratulations to all hikers who completed the trail in 2023!

If you have completed the GDT please visit the [Trail Completion](#) page and fill out the Trail Completion Form to add your name to the GDT Alumni list. This data helps the GDTA gain valuable insight into the remarkable feat you have accomplished and supports our work to protect the trail. Additionally, a complimentary GDT Finisher's Certificate and information on how to purchase a GDT Finisher's Patch are available after you submit on the [Trail Completion](#) page. Hikers who submit their names before the end of October every year will be included in the Winter edition of Pathfinder.

Name	Trail Name	Completion Date
Leo Androne	Nugget	08/27/2023
Tim Apedaile		08/15/2023
Duco Bijleveld		08/16/2023
Tyra Carleton		08/23/2023
Franziska Fischer		08/22/2023
Fabian Fischer		08/22/2023
Rebecca Frasca	Legs	08/27/2023
James Hoher	Jupiter	09/01/2023
Frederique Horwood		08/15/2023
Lucie Hromková		08/19/2023
Una Jermilova	Itchy	08/12/2023
Allan Kaizer	Blueberry	08/19/2023
Laurianne Lamontagne		08/15/2023
Ryan Lenting	It's not that bad	08/25/2023
Alex MacKinnon		05/31/2023
Erin Miller	Hummingbird	08/17/2023
Bryn Mooney	Spunky Tits	09/08/2023
Megan Paolini	Huckleberry	08/20/2023
Hailey Rempel		09/18/2023
Lydia Ringle-Harris		08/25/2023
Mayeul Robert	Fernie-Robson	08/09/2023
Jo Robinson	Sprocket	09/01/2023
Peter Whitehead	Lucky Popa	08/27/2023
Meghan Whyte	Tiptoes	08/21/2023

Supporters

We are proud to be funded by these companies, organizations, and government agencies. Their generous support provides funds to build and maintain the GDT; feed, train and equip our volunteers; protect the trail; and make all our work possible. Each contribution sustains our efforts to build and preserve the Great Divide Trail.

\$100,000+



Want to support the GDTA?

Contact us at
greatdividetrail@gmail.com

\$50,000+



\$5,000+



\$1,000+



\$500+





Call for FILM FESTIVAL Submissions

The GDTA is soliciting submissions for our second annual Film Festival. We are excited to showcase your experiences on the GDT during our upcoming film fest. Whether you hiked the GDT as a thru-hiker, section hiker, weekend adventurer, or participated in trail building, we want to see all things GDT! All filmmakers who have explored the Great Divide Trail are invited to submit their films, regardless of the type or duration of their journey. Whether you captured a thru-hike, section hike, weekend adventure, or trail building experiences, we welcome your films.

Films should have a maximum duration of 15 minutes, including credits.

We kindly request that you submit your film as a private YouTube link. Email the private YouTube link to events@greatdividetrail.com.

Ensure that the video is not publicly accessible and can only be viewed by those with the link.

Along with your submission, please provide an accompanying Film Information Sheet that includes the following details:

- Film title
- Filmmakers' name and contact information (email address and phone number)
- Brief synopsis (maximum 200 words) of the film's content
- Duration of the film
- Type of journey captured (thru-hike, section hike, weekend adventure, trailbuilding, etc.)
- Any additional information or considerations you would like to share

For a full list of rules and more detail about the submission process, please contact us at events@greatdividetrail.com

Deadline is February 1st.

The festival will take place online, and in-person in Calgary AB, on Thursday April 11th, 2024



Preparing for a Great Divide Winter

By Jenny Feick, PhD

Relatively few intrepid souls traverse the vicinity of the Great Divide during the winter months. Most thru-hikers spend from November to March planning and preparing for their trekking expeditions. Humans, if they travel on the Great Divide Trail (GDT), visit it by choice. But what about the wildlife who live near the Great Divide? How do they prepare for winter? How do they even know that winter is coming?

In wild animals, seasonal changes are tracked by the photo-neuroendocrine system, a sensitive collection of glands, hormones, and neurons that are wired to adjust an organism's internal chemistry as the length of a day changes. Wildlife notice when the photoperiod (day length) begins to shorten in the fall. This triggers their preparatory behavior. Their choices are to leave, sleep through it, change in some way, store or cache food, or simply endure it! Then there are those who, like the grasshopper in the Aesop's Fable "The Ants and the Grasshopper", don't prepare for winter at all, and have to count on the next generation to perpetuate the species.

Leave!

Some creatures (besides people), migrate away from the Great Divide area to avoid the harsh winter conditions. Many birds travel south great distances while others migrate to the B.C. coast, and a few just travel to nearby mountain valleys. In summer, a GDT hiker wearing a bright red or pink hat might hear a buzz and a chip sound as a rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) dives close and hovers to see if the colourful object is a giant flower full of nectar and then dashes off in disappointment. As the short alpine

flowering season ends, these tiny, fast-flying birds head south, flying over 6,400 km to southern Mexico. Starting in mid-August, MacGillivray's warblers (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) leave the shrub thickets of the upper subalpine to migrate even further south, all the way to Central America.

One of the most amazing long distance bird migration phenomena in the Rocky Mountains involves golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and up to 17 other birds of prey. Starting in September, hundreds of eagles leave their breeding areas in Alaska, Yukon, northern British Columbia, and Alberta. They use thermal wind currents to efficiently fly south over the Rockies to reach their wintering areas in the southern United States and Mexico. They travel along specific corridors along the



RMERF volunteers at the eagle watch site near Mount Lorette in Don Getty Provincial Park documenting migrating raptors in October 2022, the 30th year of the count.

Eastern Slopes and the Rocky Mountain Trench. Citizen scientists with the Rocky Mountain Eagle Research Foundation have been tracking this extraordinary migration ever since it was noticed by naturalist Des Allen and international bird expert Peter Sherrington on March 20, 1992 at the Mount Lorette Natural Area in Kananaskis where Des was the Natural Area Steward. Telemetry data shows that these eagles fly from 1,900 km to over 6,400 km to reach their wintering sites. Quite the thru-fly!

Other birds sometimes seen by summer hikers in alpine tarns such as goldeneye ducks (*Bucephala sp.*) or in fast flowing mountain streams like harlequin ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*), do not migrate as far. Like many who enjoy the mountains in the summer, they winter on the west coast. Actually, the males head for the coast as soon as mid-June to early July shortly after the females begin to incubate their eggs. Their mates leave the mountain streams to join them in the early autumn after the ducklings have fledged and learned to survive on their own.

Certain other birds move to lower altitudes as winter approaches. As invertebrates die out with the first frosts in high elevation areas, Townsend's solitaires (*Myadestes townsendi*) head for valleys plentiful in junipers, including the upper Columbia Valley in B.C. Here they subsist primarily on the fleshy cones of Rocky Mountain, common, and creeping junipers for the entire winter until insects and spiders hatch the following spring.

If its local alpine rivulet freezes, American dippers will also make a slight altitudinal shift to a part of their territory where they can find mountain streams that still flow quickly, enabling them to seek out the aquatic invertebrates that sustain them year-round.

As wintertime approaches in the mountains, North American porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*) descend the slopes along well-defined routes marked by debarked trees. They will either build a nest or find an overhanging rock outcrop, a hollow log, an abandoned burrow, or a stump to protect them from

severe weather. They reduce the size of their home range to 80-90% of the area they use in the summer. Porcupines turn into snowplows in winter, creating deep troughs between their dens and favorite feeding areas, which tend to be within 100 metres of their winter dens. Usually nocturnal, in winter when the weather is dry, they will feed at any time of the day or night. They focus on eating the needles and inner bark of conifers, especially pine, in the winter months. When precipitation falls (snow, sleet or rain), porcupines prefer to stay in their dens. If caught outside feeding when a storm hits, a porcupine will sit hunched in a tree until the storm stops. Even though porcupines are usually solitary, several porcupines will den together to stay warm in winter. In the spring, they return up the mountainside to their summer feeding areas.



In winter, porcupines eat the nutritious inner bark of pines, like this lodgepole pine near Lake Louise, Alberta, Feb. 2023.

Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus canadensis*) also follow a similar pattern, moving out of the high country and into the valleys in the fall, as snow accumulates in the mountains. A sure sign of the transition from late summer to autumn is the bugling of bull elk. By congregating in the valleys, elk are more likely to find open water for drinking and places where the lighter snow pack has blown off, melted, or sublimated (gone from solid snow to water vapour), revealing nourishing dry grasses and forbs to supplement browsing of shrubs. The ever watchful timber wolves (*Canis lupus*) mimic this migration, following their prey.



Rocky Mountain elk carcass in February 2022 along the Columbia River near Brisco, B.C.

From Jasper National Park north in the area of the Great Divide, the remaining endangered mountain caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) still follows a unique movement pattern. Initially, as snow starts falling, individuals and small groups of mountain caribou move down into areas with less snow. Once the snowpack in the dense old subalpine forests has firmed up enough for them to stand on with their large snowshoe-like feet, they go back up into the high country. Here, they can now access arboreal lichens hanging from subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce, which sustain them until spring.

Sleep through it

The term for when animals “sleep” through the winter is called “hibernation”. The verb “to hibernate” comes from the Latin verb “hībernāre”, which means “to pass the winter.” Certain wild animals hibernate to survive the season of prolonged frigid temperatures and scarce food that typifies the months of November to March in the high altitudes and latitudes of Canada’s GDT. While hibernating, an animal’s body temperature, heart rate and breathing rate all drop to significantly lower levels (90% in the case of ground squirrels). These animals put themselves into a sort of suspended animation state for weeks at a time rather than try and survive tough weather conditions.

Hibernating animals can significantly lower their heart rate and body temperature when they “sleep”. For example, least chipmunks (*Neotamias minimus*) can reduce their heartbeat from 350 beats per minute to just four beats per minute during their periods of

hibernation. True hibernators only fully wake every few weeks to eat small amounts of stored food and to pass waste. These animals dramatically drop their body temperature to below freezing, aided by their salty body fluids, which prevent tissue crystallization.

There are different degrees of hibernation with certain species employing a deep state of dormancy and others being easily aroused from a light torpid state. The main difference between hibernation and torpor is that during torpor, an animal is able to wake up easily if hurt or threatened by predators. Generally, smaller animals can more easily make the metabolic changes necessary for hibernation. Certain animal bodies are too big to get rid of the body heat required to hibernate.

Rapidly gaining weight and then lying still for several months is not generally considered a recipe for fitness, yet most hibernators that do this remain healthy during hibernation. Medical researchers study hibernation in the hopes of preventing osteoporosis and Type II diabetes, helping those suffering from kidney failure, and prolonging the viability of human organs for transplant. Other scientists are exploring how to put astronauts into “hibernation” for long space voyages.

Finding the Right Place to Sleep

In October, as temperatures plummet, deciduous trees shed their leaves, snow starts to fall in the high country near the Great Divide, and Western toads (*Anaxyrus boreas*) seek hibernacula (sheltered places occupied in the winter by a dormant animal). Toads are cold-blooded, meaning their body temperatures take on the temperature of the environment around them. This puts them at great risk of freezing to death during a Rocky Mountain winter. A suitable spot for a toad to “hole-up” in for the winter could be a cozy small mammal burrow, a well-insulated niche in a beaver dam, or a rock chamber near a fast-moving stream that doesn’t freeze. The proximity of running water to stream-side hibernacula provides an environment that stays above 0 degrees C. Hibernacula in burrows or beaver dams must be sufficiently insulated and deep enough to stay below the frost line (up to 1.3 metres underground) to prevent the toads from freezing solid.



Western toad at 1,890 metres asl in Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta.

Overwintering in these terrestrial cavities minimizes the risk of predation. These sites also safeguard the toads from hypoxia (failure of oxygen to be utilized by body tissues), and anoxia (physiologically inadequate supply of oxygen), both likely fates for any amphibians trying to hibernate in the muck at the bottom of ponds where the pond freezes and also gets blanketed by snow. Toads must find hibernacula that are moist and yet do not freeze. In addition to providing protection against predators and maintaining adequate oxygen levels, a good toad hibernaculum must not get too dry or cold. Plus, it has to supply cues to trigger emergence from hibernation in March/April.

Once closeted away in their hibernaculum, Western toads lower their metabolism to the point where they use very little energy. Their heart rate and body temperature drops and they typically do not eat. Like other amphibians, Western toads breathe through their skin while hibernating, albeit at a slow rate.

Western toads in the Canadian Rocky Mountains can spend over half of their lives (six to seven years out of their ~13-year lifespan) hibernating. Unfortunately, scientists know very little about the wintertime behavior of Western toads or the microclimate of their hibernacula. Occasionally, people have seen

Western toads basking in the sunshine outside their burrows on warm, sunny days during the winter months, suggesting that toads may be able to come out of and return back into a state of hibernation.

Most butterflies in the Rockies either migrate south during winter or spend winter as a larvae. This is not the case for the mourning cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*). This large long-lived butterfly (wingspan up to 9 cm) stays in the Rockies all winter long. These tough butterflies find a hole in a tree or crawl under some bark and rest all winter long in their adult form. They enter a state of dormancy similar to hibernation called "diapause" where they rest and remain very inactive.

In the spring, the overwintering adult mourning cloaks emerge. They may look a little tattered or ragged. But they have a head start over all those other butterfly species migrating back north or emerging as larvae or pupae.

As with many other native bees and wasps, once the first frosts begin, newly mated bumble bee queens locate a safe location for their diapause. Only the queen bee or wasp survives the winter, emerging from dormancy in spring.

This is an excerpt from a longer article. To find out all of the ways that animals prepare for winter, [click here](#).

Want to help the Great Divide Trail?

Here's a few ways to help:

Become a Member

Joining the GDTA is one of the most important things you can do to protect the trail. Membership numbers help in negotiations with land managers and allow us to advocate for the trail. Did you know you can become a lifetime member for only \$100?

Join a Committee

Committees form the backbone of the GDTA and are a great way to volunteer your time. There's a full list of committees on our website, and with everything from trailbuilding to outreach to IT, there's sure to be something that interests you.

Join a Trail Building Trip

Trail building and maintenance is essential for hikers to be able to access the divide safely. However, these trips are also **fun!** Volunteers can participate in everything from bridge building to flagging trail and scouting new routes. Trips are announced in the spring- make sure you're signed up to our email list to find out about next year's trips.

Donate

Your donation is essential to help us maintain, promote, and protect the Great Divide Trail and preserve its wilderness experience for generations to come. You can also donate in honour of a loved one: a perfect gift for the hiker in your life.