

PATHFINDER

Spring 2024



A NEWSLETTER FROM THE GREAT DIVIDE TRAIL ASSOCIATION



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Letter from Kate

Hello Hiking Enthusiasts,

I hope you have had an enjoyable winter filled with adventure. Here are the updates from GDTA as we ramp up for hiking, trail maintenance, and event season!

Coming up, we have the GDT Film Fest. Last year's event was such a success that we are making it an annual occurrence! Thank you to Wilderland Media for donating last year's film to help raise funds for the GDTA and for initiating this now-annual event. However, this year will be different – it will be a compilation of short films submitted by hikers. After watching all the films, the audience will get to vote for their favourite film! Be sure to mark April 11th in your calendar.

The second big event we have happening on this spring is the First Annual Geartrade Garage Sale in support of the Great Divide Trail Association! This event will take place on May 11th at Geartrade headquarters in Okotoks, Alberta, and is a chance to buy, consign, and donate used gear while helping to raise funds for the GDTA. More details will be coming out shortly about how to consign and donate your gear. Either way, plan to come down to socialize.

Lastly, the Great Divide Trail Association has been working hard on our strategic planning process to conduct a complete environmental scan and hear from all of our stakeholders about where they would like to see the GDTA go and how we can improve. As promised at our last Annual General Meeting, we plan to share the results and our long-term plan at the next AGM in the fall.

As always, thank you all for your support.

See you on the trails,

Kate

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

Great Divide Trail Film Festival

April 11, 2024

6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Globe Cinema

617 8 Ave SW, Calgary, Alberta

[More info here](#)

This event is a GDTA Fundraiser, featuring guest speaker President and chief scientist of Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) Dr. Jodi Hilty, and a silent auction. Come support the GDT!

Shortlisted films include:

The Most Beautiful and Wildest Trail In The World

By Rudy Dalessio. Duration 12 minutes.

A stunning summary of the landscape between Section A and E.

Alone in the Rockies | Great Divide Trail

By Alexandre Beauchamp. Duration 11 minutes.

A captivating journey through the untamed wilderness of the Great Divide Trail during the unprecedented global pandemic of 2020.

Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Traverse

By Alex Godard. Duration 10 minutes.

65km of backpacking through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in Alberta and British Columbia on Section C of the GDT.

Great Divide Trail - Highlight Compilation

By Brigid Scott. Duration 13 minutes.

Some of the filmmaker's favourite moments along the GDT. If you enjoyed the Pathfinder cover photo this edition, you will love Brigid's gorgeous cinematography.

Section Y - From the Great Divide Trail to the Yukon River

By Sam Hooper. Duration 15 minutes.

A couple hike the GDT, then continue north to Alaska on foot, bikes and by packraft.

Hiker Trash

By Clare Tavener-Smith. Duration 4 minutes.

Two Australian women hike from Waterton to Field in this upbeat film.





One Divide, Two Trails

By Eloise "Fun Size" Robbins (CDT 2017, GDT 2021)

The continental divide watershed spans both North and South America, from Patagonia to Alaska. The Continental Divide Trail (CDT) covers 3,100 of these miles (4989 km), from the Mexico-New Mexico border to the Montana-Canada border in Glacier National Park. The Great Divide Trail (GDT) continues from the CDT terminus in Waterton Lakes National Park and follows the divide for another 1095 km (680 miles) along the Alberta-British Columbia border to Kakwa Provincial Park. The trail ends there, but the divide continues, crossing the BC-Yukon Border, and then back into the US, running for thousands of kilometers to finish at the ocean at Cape Prince of Wales in Alaska.

Many trails crisscross the divide on the long journey between Alaska and Patagonia. The CDT and the GDT are two of the longest and most renowned. On paper, they are two entirely different trails: different trail organizations support them, different land managers govern the surrounding areas, and they cross through entirely different countries. However, it's hard to distinguish them when you stand at the end of the CDT at the US-Canada border and the trail continues north, uninterrupted.

Similarities

The CDT and GDT can be very different trails, traversing different countries and ecosystems; however, they have a lot of shared traits.

Scenery

"The GDT and CDT share a lot in common: part trail and part route, challenging terrain, ass-kicking weather, abundant wildlife and beautiful scenery. The biggest difference is that all of these things are exponentially higher on the GDT. The scenery in particular is non-stop awe inspiring, in-your-face kind of gorgeous." Leslie "Tour Guide" Gerein (GDT 2016, CDT 2017)



The three termini: Mexico-New Mexico Border, Montana-Canada Border and Kakwa Lake

Both trails boast world-class scenery. The highlights on the CDT include the desert,

the San Juans, the Wind River Range, Yellowstone, and Glacier National parks. These are some of the prettiest places to hike in the entire US. The GDT keeps the jaw-dropping scenery going, with breathtaking views every single day.

Challenge

The CDT is commonly referred to as the most challenging of the triple crown trails (Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, and the CDT). Remote, wild, and with a full list of hazards that we'll explore in our next paragraph, the CDT's unofficial tag-line is "embrace the brutality." The GDT kicks the difficulty up a notch, with even more wild, remote, and sometimes trail-less routes. Neither trail is easy to hike, but the GDT can feel more like a survival experience than a thru-hike, especially in the northern sections.

Hazards

The CDT and the GDT share several hazards to keep hikers on their toes.

Weather: Thunderstorms characterize summer on the US divide, with Colorado being particularly well-known for afternoon lightning. Hikers will also face hail and lightning on the Canadian divide, although storms often lack the frequency and intensity of the CDT. Hikers on the GDT are more likely to encounter at least one summer snowstorm, especially further north on the trail. Falling snow isn't uncommon on the CDT, especially in early or late season, but it's almost a certainty on the GDT.

Wildlife: Bears are the biggest concern north of the Wind River Range, with most hikers choosing to carry bear spray for grizzly defense. Bears are even more common north of the border, and most thru-hikers on the GDT will see at least one grizzly. Hikers may also encounter mountain lions, moose, elk, lynx, and maybe even a wolf if they are very lucky.



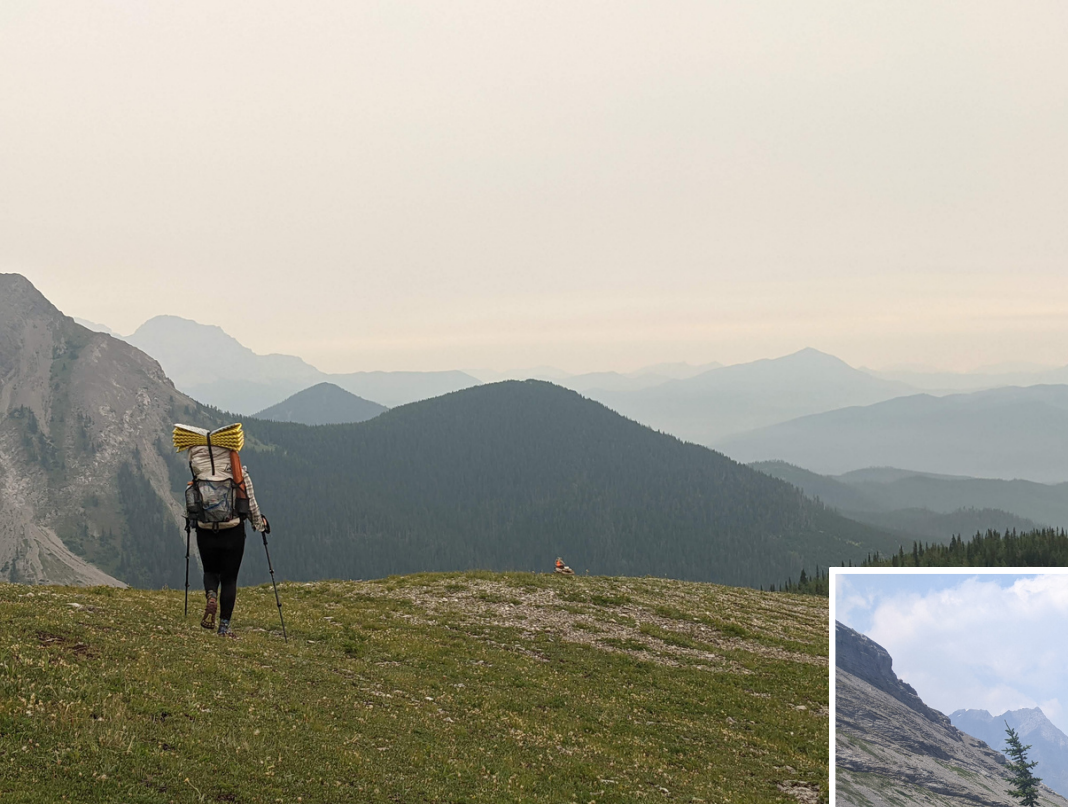
Yellowstone National Park is a CDT Highlight

Water: River crossings on both the CDT and the GDT can challenge hikers. Many crossings on both trails are still unbridged, and glacial-fed streams and snow melt can pose a problem. Hikers on both trails should attempt to cross in the morning when water is lower, or be prepared to turn around if the river is too high.

Differences

Ecosystems

"Regardless of the border, the Divide offers expansive mountain scenery and unpredictable weather on challenging, rugged trail. The GDT grants access to unparalleled remote wilderness at the price of greater navigational demands and more red tape; by virtue of its scale, the CDT provides more diverse landscapes and an established thru-hiking culture."
Nicole "Trash Panda" Dubeta (GDT 2021, CDT 2023)



Scenery along the GDT may have less variety, but is arguably consistently more beautiful. From top to bottom: Racehorse Shoulder, North Kananaskis Pass, Cataract Pass and the Jackpine High Route.



The Great Divide Basin is a landscape unique to the CDT

The CDT traverses diverse ecosystems as it hugs the divide. Northbound hikers start in the New Mexico desert, where water is scarce and spikey desert plants are more common than trees. There's nothing like the magical New Mexico desert anywhere on the GDT. The trail climbs into the pine forests of Northern New Mexico, before cresting high-altitude alpine in Colorado. Wyoming's Great Divide Basin feels like a return to the desert, as water becomes scarce again, and pronghorn antelope run over rolling hills. The trail comes back to snowy peaks in the Wind River Range, and continues over more mountainous terrain to Glacier National Park (with a few breaks for rolling grassland, and the exciting thermal landscape of Yellowstone National Park). Watching the landscape and ecosystems change is one of the most rewarding parts of a CDT thru-hike.

By comparison, changes along the GDT are much more subtle. The trail follows the steep rock walls that constitute the divide in Canada, before scrambling over high passes. Hikers will need a keen eye to spot differences in terrain between Waterton and Jasper. North of Jasper, the weather is a larger indicator than geography that hikers are now crossing an inland rainforest. The GDT does not have the ecological change that characterizes a thru-hike on the CDT, but the landscape is still stunning.

Hiking Season

If you include both the NoBo and SoBo hiking season along the entire CDT, hikers have between April and November when it is feasible to be on trail. The GDT is far more limited due to its northern location. Hikers in the Canadian Rockies only really have July, August, and maybe September to hike without significant snowfall (and a mid-summer snowstorm is almost a certainty for thru-hikers).

Permits/planning

The CDT is an easy trail to plan. Hikers only need worry about permits in a few national parks, which can mostly be obtained just a few days before hikers reach these areas. Reserving a spot on the CDTC's Southern Terminus Shuttle and perhaps mailing a few boxes is about all NoBo thru-hikers have to worry about. Once on trail, it's easy to enjoy freedom with no set itinerary and no reservations.

The GDT isn't so simple. Planning a GDT thru-hike can be more challenging than hiking the trail. The GDT crosses through five national parks, and campsites in each park must be reserved individually for specific dates. While this is necessary to protect the most scenic and popular areas along the entire continental divide, it is a headache for thru-hikers. Prospective hikers

should start planning their trips in January, when reservations normally open. Popular sites along the Rockwall and Skyline trails book in minutes. Sections B, D, F and G can be completed with minimal or easy-to-get permits for hikers who missed the reservation window. Hikers will also want to mail resupply boxes, since many of the resupply towns along the GDT are smaller and more expensive than the CDT options.

Difficulty

"The GDT is the natural progression for a NoBo CDT hike. The southern portions increasingly challenge you physically, mentally, navigationaly, logistically. GDT sections F+G are a final exam, testing you on all that you've learned." Tania "Shamrock" Roenitz and Oliver "Scraps" Roenitz (GDT 2021, CDT 2023)

The CDT is not an easy trail. High elevation, wild weather and animal encounters conspire to challenge even experienced hikers. And while on paper the GDT may not appear more difficult (it is shorter, after all), hikers should not underestimate just how much harder the Canadian divide can be. It can be easy to cover large daily distances on the CDT: the trail gets high, stays high, and features the least elevation gain and loss of the three US triple crown trails. The GDT, on the other hand, can be painfully slow. Bushwhacking, tricky navigation, lack of trail, and steep climbs all conspire to bog hikers down. Add in weather, tricky river crossings, and animals, and the GDT should not be underestimated.

Below: the Wind River Range almost feels like the Canadian Divide

Conclusion

"The Continental Divide Trail Coalition is committed to being a convenor of the communities that live, work, and love the Continental Divide landscape. It's a shared devotion to the protection of this land that brings us together. Working with organizations like the Great Divide Trail Association amplifies awareness of these iconic spaces as vital pathways, ecological reservoirs, and places of deep cultural connection—and that the Continental Divide doesn't stop at the U.S.-Canada border. We might be two trails, but we are united on the Divide," CDTC Executive Director (she/her/ella) Teresa Martinez.

"In this untamed expanse shared by the Great Divide Trail and the Continental Divide Trail, there are no boundaries; we are interconnected at our most primal level. Similar to the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, the Great Divide Trail Association is dedicated to safeguarding not just the trail itself, but also the expansive wilderness that hosts diverse ecosystems, inhabitants, and historical significance. The necessity of collaborating to educate, conserve, and protect these natural attributes of the landscape is unquestionable." GDTA Executive Director (she/her/elle) Kate Hamilton

While the CDT and GDT are separate trails, they are intrinsically linked by the divide. If you love and support the CDT, the GDT should be on your hiking bucket list. If you're a GDT hiker, volunteer, or donor, the CDT should interest you. You can find out more about the CDT on the [Continental Divide Trail Coalition website](#).





We need YOU to build and maintain the GDT this summer!

Dust off your camping gear because the dates and locations for our 2024 trail building and maintenance trips have been set and we invite YOU to join us!

Last year's endeavors were made possible by the support of the Government of Alberta, Columbia Basin Trust, the Alberta Equestrian Federation, BC Parks, Athletic Brewing, and the generous individual and corporate donors from our Trail Supporter Campaign. A sincere thank you to all who make our initiatives possible! We look forward to another productive year.

1. June 23 - 29 [COLLIE-ENSIGN CREEK TRAIL](#) – Self-Supported Trip
2. June 23 - 29 [DAVID THOMPSON TRAIL](#) – Self-Supported Trip
3. July 4 - 8 [WOMEN'S TRIP](#) – Backcountry Walking Trip (FULL!)
4. July 5 - 9 [HRT ERRIS A](#) – Base Camp Trip
5. July 10 - 15 [HRT ERRIS B](#) – Base Camp Trip
6. July 10 - 15 [SOUTH HIDDEN CREEK](#) – Bridge Building Trip
7. July 12 - 16 [HEIGHT OF THE ROCKIES](#) – Backcountry Walking Trip (FULL!)
8. July 16 - 21 [HRT ERRIS C](#) – Base Camp Trip
9. July 22 - 27 [HRT ERRIS D](#) – Base Camp Trip



How to Join:

To register online, please click on the links provided in the Trip Schedule above. You can sign into your members account and register for the trip directly through the website.

Alternatively, you can email us at trailbuilding@greatdividetrail.com

Spring's First Bloom Along the GDT

By Jenny L. Feick, PhD

The onset of spring in the Canadian Rockies occurs long after the Vernal Equinox. This gives hikers who live at lower elevations the experience of welcoming springtime more than once each year. In the vicinity of the Great Divide, bears will be out and about as early as mid-March or early April, searching for food in the valleys and on south-facing slopes. Hoary marmots and golden mantled ground squirrels emerge after their winter sleep under the snow as late as mid-May when more plants have sprouted. Fresh green growth pushes up through lingering snow patches in the alpine tundra as late as June and even July, extending the spring experience. I feel a special delight when I catch sight of the first wild bloom of spring. That initial wildflower embodies the hope and promise of the season of growth ahead. After months of snowy white slopes, the muted shades of dark green conifers, windswept golden grasses, grey rocks, and brown soils, seeing new colours appear on the alpine landscape soothes the soul.

A Fuzzy Purple Beauty with Many Names

Along low elevation portions of the Great Divide Trail (GDT), places like Waterton townsite, the Crowsnest Pass, and Old Fort Point in Jasper National Park, the first wildflower to open is usually the prairie pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla nuttalliana*), often colloquially called the prairie crocus. This purple perennial is not a true crocus in the lily family, but an anemone belonging to the buttercup family. "Anemone" comes from the Greek word for "wind". Prairie pasqueflowers typically grow in dry, windswept places, hence another common name, windflower. In Ktunaxa, it is known as ?inqum (pronounced "in-qwaum", with a brief intake of air at the start).

Look closely. These delicate looking flowers can withstand wind as well as cold temperatures and snow because tiny woolly-white "hairs" called trichomes cover and protect them. The term "pasque" refers to Easter. Often the first prairie pasqueflowers appear on south-facing slopes at lower elevations in late March and early to mid-April. At first, a hairy flower bud pokes out of the ground. The furry leaves are hard to see initially. When the purple sepals open, they reveal bright yellow stamens inside. The flowers open in sunshine, track the sun as it crosses the sky, and close in the evening or during cloudy weather. Spring snowstorms can



Left: The so called prairie crocus is not a true crocus

Above: A glacier lily flower showing its petals, sepals, stamens, anthers, and style.

cover them and yet, as the snow melts or sublimates, they resiliently show their faces again.

Pasqueflower petals range from a deep blue-purple through lavender to a very pale mauve, almost white, with a bright yellow centre mound of 150–200 stamens surrounding the many styles. The prairie pasqueflower relies on natural pollination, primarily by wind as well as bees. When the plants finish flowering, they develop a seed head comprised of a shaggy starburst of threads. The fuzzy leaves unfurl and begin their summer photosynthesizing work. This species grows slowly, investing energy in developing a deep, extensive, woody taproot system over three or four years before producing its first few blooms.

Caution: Prairie Pasqueflowers look pretty, but don't touch them. All parts of these plants contain protoanemonin, which is poisonous if eaten, and causes skin rashes, especially on sensitive mucous membranes. Indigenous Peoples perfected many medicinal uses for this plant. However, anyone lacking the special training of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers should observe and appreciate the beauty of prairie pasqueflowers without handling them.



Prairie pasqueflowers are among the first spring wildflowers to emerge in low dry windwept valleys near the GDT

A High Altitude Lemon Yellow Delicacy

In higher altitude subalpine mountain meadows, on avalanche slopes, and within streamside clearings along the GDT, the first wildflower to bloom is usually the glacier lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*), also called the yellow avalanche lily. The Ktunaxa name for glacier lily is maxa (pronounced "maugh-hai") and the Secwepemc know it as scwicw. Seeing a field covered in these delightful bright lemon yellow blooms always makes me smile.

Like all true lilies, this perennial herb grows from a deep bulb-like underground stem called a corm that is three to five centimeters wide. The plant's two bright green leaves are wavy-edged and up to 20 centimeters long. The stalk may reach 30 centimeters tall and bears one to three graceful showy flowers. Each flower nods toward the ground with three bright yellow petals and three bright yellow sepals all curled up toward the sky. Inside that, six white stamens with large white to yellow to red anthers and a white style, point down.

Although tough, in that they can push up through the melting snow, glacier lilies are ephemeral. They live just two to ten weeks between their initial emergence and when the leaves wither, dry up, and disintegrate. So, it is a special treat if you happen to be in the right place at the right time to see a cheery field of them in full bloom. Elk, deer, bighorn sheep and mountain goats readily devour the elliptical-shaped leaves, as well as the stems and seed pods of glacier lilies. These parts of the plant can also be eaten raw or cooked by human beings. Sampling an occasional leaf along the GDT will bring a bright, gently sweet, slightly lemony burst of flavour into your mouth. The leaves and seed pods contain proteins, sugars and vitamin C. They are also edible when cooked, tasting a bit like green beans.

Even when you cannot see the flowers and leaves, the corm, a rounded, underground food storage organ consisting of a swollen stem base covered with scale leaves, lays dormant underground. Marmots and bears excavate and consume the corms of glacier lilies. Grizzly bears especially depend on eating the corms in the early spring following hibernation. Few other foods are available then and the corms have higher content of nutrients and a complex hard to digest sugar called inulin than later in the summer. After digging up glacier lilies, bears have been seen to leave the bulbs for a few days to dry and “cook” in the sun, making them sweeter and easier to digest. Indigenous Peoples learned to dry and cook glacier lily corms by copying the grizzly. Secwepemc Elders tell a story of how the grizzly taught them how to harvest and prepare scwicw.

Indigenous Peoples prized glacier lily corms in their diet and for medicine. Dried corms became a popular trade item among various First Nations whose traditional territories include the lands through which the GDT crosses. Inulin becomes highly digestible when steamed. The Ktunaxa and Secwepemc cooked glacier lily corms along with other root vegetables in underground steam pits. Crushing the corm and mixing it with water gave them a poultice for boils, blisters and burns. The Blackfoot ate glacier lily corms fresh or with soup. The corms become sweeter and tastier when roasted, boiled or glazed.

Soil disturbance by bears and forest fires favors the establishment of glacier lilies, which need open areas. When bears “till” the soil, they turn over chunks of earth to access the tasty corms. Scientists in Glacier National Park in Montana learned that this “tilling” creates important side effects. Areas with recent bear diggings end up with less plant diversity and higher nitrogen levels than undisturbed parts of the landscape. With less competition from other plants, glacier lily corms can regenerate quickly. The nitrogen-rich soil allows the new lilies to produce double the usual number of seeds. Glacier lilies have thus adapted to a periodic, moderate disturbance regime.

Traditional Indigenous practices including landscape burning, soil tilling, and the thinning, dividing, and replanting of corms and their vegetative propagules, mimicked the natural disturbance regime. First Nations thus practiced active management of glacier lilies to conserve the populations. Today’s hikers along the GDT should refrain from harvesting corms as that kills the plants. Modern unregulated collection of glacier lily corms has decimated certain populations outside of parks and other protected areas.



Glacier lilies emerge as the snow melts



1. Few things are more delightful than seeing the first spring alpine wildflowers
2. Glacier lily plants do not bloom until they are 8+ years old
3. Purple clematis (left) and hookedspur violet (right)

4. Glacier lilies covering avalanche slope
5. Prairie pasqueflowers rely on bees and the wind for pollination
6. Prairie pasqueflowers produce shaggy seedheads

Glacier lilies reproduce sexually from seed and asexually by sprouting from the corm. Glacier lilies are cross-pollinated by bumblebees, other bees and even hummingbirds. They form green seed pods that dry out and open once the seeds ripen. They drop their seeds gradually and slowly as the wind or animals disturb the plants. Glacier lily seeds need one hundred days of cold weather before they can germinate. It can take as long as eight years for an individual glacier lily plant to reach full reproductive maturity.

After rufous hummingbirds migrate up to 6,000 kilometres each year from Mexico to Canada's Rocky Mountains, they depend on getting energy from the nectar of glacier lilies and any other early blooming flowers. Tragically, rising temperatures from increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is causing glacier lily flowers to bloom and wither earlier each year. In 2023, biologists warned that 20 years from now, these tiny birds could arrive after their long migration to find this usually reliable food source unavailable due to premature withering.

Other Contenders

Early season GDT hikers travelling up through the montane and subalpine forests en route to the alpine may also see the hookedspur violet, sometimes called the early blue violet (*Viola adunca*) on the ground, and purple clematis, (*Clematis occidentalis* var. *grosseserrata*) clinging to shrubs and trees. Other contenders for the first wildflower of spring along the GDT include Western pasqueflowers (*Pulsatilla occidentalis*), Western spring beauties (*Claytonia lanceolata*), alpine buttercups (*Ranunculus eschscholtzii*), and mountain

marsh-marigolds (*Caltha leptosepala*). Lovely and interesting in their own right, these species also display the cold-hardiness, resilience, and tenacity necessary for life in the vicinity of the Great Divide.

Report Your Floral Findings

As you hike the GDT, consider identifying, photographing and reporting some of the wildflowers you see along the trail. By documenting when certain species of plants bloom, leaf out, and set seed on the [iNaturalist app](#), or on websites such as [E-Flora BC](#), and [Alberta Plant Watch](#), GDT hikers can contribute vital information on how climate change affects phenology and species' ranges. Temperature affects the speed of spring plant development. Correlating the dates of plant sightings with weather data will reveal if warming winter and spring temperatures result in earlier appearances of spring's first bloom along the GDT.



Clockwise - Western pasqueflower, Western spring beauty, mountain marsh marigold, alpine buttercup

Field Arrival

By Megan Paolini



Hiking the Great Divide Trail, you can plan everything to run as smoothly as possible, and still end up having to improvise. As we got to McArthur Creek campground at the end of Section C, it was 2:30PM. Our friends were due to arrive in Field that day, and I really wanted to be off trail.

“So, are we really going to do this?”

I asked my partner Allan. We had discussed early that day potentially ending the trail early, hiking out and taking two rest days. It'd be another 15km to get to Field. So far on our journey our longest day has been 32km. Hiking into Field would bring us to 40km and 50km if we didn't have a ride. I was eager to get off trail. Waking up at Floe Lake two days ago I had a throat infection and didn't feel great, and the Rockwall had so many ups, and steep downs. I managed to sweat out whatever virus was ailing me but was still eager to leave the trail. I knew from McArthur Creek the trail was going to be easy, a road essentially, so why wait around?

“Yep, message Suzanne let's do this”. I couldn't be happier hearing Allan say this. Thank goodness she wanted to come in a day early. The months I spent planning were paying off in this moment.

“Decided to head into town, will you be all set up and able to pick us up around 6PM?”

Allan and I were in high spirits as we ventured another 5km past the camp, as our InReach dinged. I was excited: that would be Suzanne confirming she can come get us and there will be real food ready for us. Allan glanced: “It's Suzanne. It's long we should quickly read it.” He pulled off the InReach and his face dropped.

“Oh no, I'm not there. I phoned the campground - they know, we just got put on evacuation alert at the house, so we are getting stuff out now. I wasn't planning on arriving until tomorrow.”

My heart sank, evac alert? I didn't know there was a fire close to home, only of the Bruce Mountain fire in Invermere. She had our resupply, but more importantly her house might burn down, so who cares about two hiker trash stuck in Field? This is the first time something hadn't gone to plan; everything was running so smoothly. Yet here we were, a fire spreading through Wasa and Ta Ta Creek potentially about to burn down our friend's home.

“Oh no, I'm so sorry to hear that. Can you please let the campground know we will be arriving tonight; we can hitch into Field.”

With that, we put our heads down and started hiking. We put on a podcast to distract our minds as we hurried along. Hitch... we have to hitch. I've never had to hitch in my life. All the propaganda of never getting into a stranger's car flashed before me as I realized that is exactly what I'm going to be doing now. I remembered my dad telling me it was illegal to hitch on Highway 1. Is that still true? Would we be breaking the law? Would I get arrested? I realized that can't be true: everyone on the GDT hitches this section - usually to Golden. We didn't want to have to hitch too late either. Allan worried the highway wouldn't be busy, so we needed to get to the trailhead fast. As the kms started counting down, my anxiety increased, and the pain in Allan's feet hit a new high. As Allan led us on, 8km away from the trailhead he turned around and in desperation said “Why are we doing this? Why are we hiking so fast?” I personally didn't know. My left front ankle was killing me on the downhills, and boy was there a downhill from Goodsir Pass to McArthur creek. As Allan is set to explode I, as calmly as I can, said “We can slow down, it'll be okay” He looked unconvinced. “Why don't you get mad? How are you not mad?”

When you're on trail with someone you realize at one point someone is going to have a freak out. Allan picked up so much of my slack since Waterton. He did most of the Ursack hangs, got me out of bed, taped up my feet, and encouraged me when I was feeling low. I realized in this moment it was my turn, my turn to finally step up for him. I took a deep breath: most importantly Allan needed me to be calm. Hiking with your partner, I noticed you take turns needing to be the stable person. If one is having a moment, the other can't join in. At least one person needs to keep their cool in these situations, and I realized now it's my turn.

"I am mad," I said, putting my arms around him, "But that's not going to get us to the end. We need to keep going. I promise I will probably be in tears by the time we get to camp. Let's keep going, it's going to be okay" We set off again, I would like to say at a slower pace, but Allan's natural pace is faster than he'd like right now and can't seem to go slower. While he was swearing in his head, and cursing us for pushing to Field, I started a mantra to myself:

You have to get the hitch. You have to get the hitch. You HAVE to do this for him.

I knew by the time we got to the highway Allan would probably throw his bag down and want nothing to do with hitching. I knew this was going to be my responsibility. I had to stick my thumb out, I had to look non threatening in order to get a ride to our campground for the night. This was completely out of my wheelhouse, but I suddenly had to make it a part of it. We didn't have another 10+km in us. We were dependent on a ride. We were getting closer. 5km, 4km, 3km. My panic set in at 2 - here I was, 2km away from doing something I'm incredibly uncomfortable with. Would there be people at the trailhead so I don't have to stick my thumb out on the highway? We haven't seen anyone since Goodsir Pass so I highly doubted we'd suddenly run into hikers who are more than happy to drive two GDTers.

I heard a bell behind me.

I turned. There was a girl on her bike. It was such a surreal moment for me. Here I was, desperate for someone to come rescue me from sticking my thumb out on the highway and she was right here. As I got out of the way, I blurted out "ARE YOU PARKED AT THE TRAILHEAD?" She looked a bit startled as she said "Yes, are you guys GDTers?" I didn't even say hello, just immediately accosted her and begged for a ride. Luckily for us, this wonderful human had done the GDT 3 years ago and told us she'd meet us at her car as she rode past us. We were less than 1km by that point. As we walked on, we passed a water source and Allan looked me dead in the eye. "If she hadn't come by, we'd be camping right here for the night."

This lovely human took us to our campground. A bear greeted us where we would put our tent, and another came an hour after we scared the first one off. Our friends showed up the next day, the house safe and sound from the fires. We got our resupply and two full days of rest. The Wasa fire did engulf some houses unfortunately, but Suzanne's survived.

We would eventually have to hitch from Saskatchewan Crossing to the Owen creek trailhead, and it wasn't bad at all. The trail is getting a good name for itself as the first thing our ride asked was "Great Divide Hikers?" and my anxiety from Field seemed almost silly. However, on the hike into Field we learned so many things. First, that communication is vital; InReach was our best friend this day. Second, you can plan everything down to the last detail and yet, fires and life in general can mess it all up. Third, be the support for your partner and let them freak out. Lastly, maybe say Hello before jumping on someone for a ride.

Trail Community Spotlight: Field



Photo courtesy [Historic Place Days](#)

Many thru-hikers will hitch directly to Golden or Lake Louise from Field. However, this tiny town has fantastic food, loads of charm, and a friendly local community. It should not be skipped! Food, resupply and lodging options are scarce, but the ones that exist are a highlight of the entire trail. This community is entirely in Yoho National Park and marks the end of GDT Section C and the beginning of Section D.

GDT Kilometer marker: 544

Town Population: 195 year-round residents

Lodging options: Field has several B&Bs, and the Truffle Pigs Bistro + Lodge offers accommodation.

Dining options: [Truffle Pigs Bistro](#) and [the Siding Cafe](#)

Resupply Options: Mail a box to the [Post Office](#). There is a gas station next to the highway with extremely limited options.

Ottawa Outdoor and Adventure Travel Show



Are you in the Ottawa area? The GDTA will have a booth at the [Ottawa Outdoor and Adventure Travel Show!](#)

April 20-21 at the Nepean Sportsplex.

Free admission and parking.

Come say hi and help support Canada's wildest thru-hikeable trail!

The GDTA depends on volunteers like you to run events or booths in your local community. If you'd like to participate in an outdoor show or other event in your area, reach out to Kate at kate.hamilton@greatdividetrail.com



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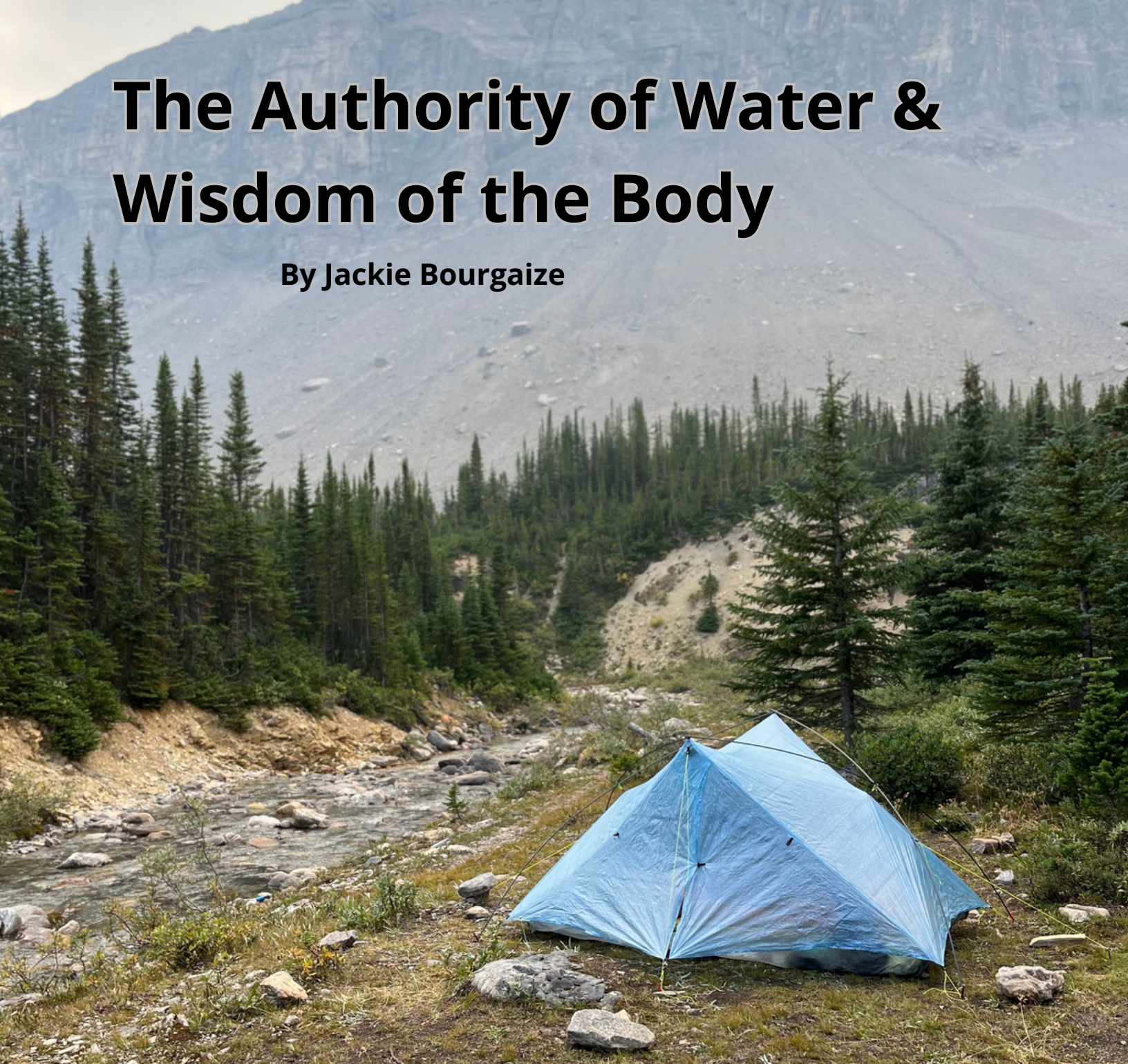
Join us at the Geartrade Gear Sale on May 11th, 2024, from 10 AM to 3 PM – a Garage Sale event where the camping community comes together to buy, sell, and trade their high-quality gear!

This is an in-person event, held in the Geartrade.ca parking lot located at 6 Fisher Cres in Okotoks, AB.

FREE to attend. All funds raised by Geartrade by this event go directly to the GDTA.

The Authority of Water & Wisdom of the Body

By Jackie Bourgaize



I watched my arm shaking uncontrollably. My feet pacing. My breath pushing out in pants. My body's reaction to the cold and wet momentarily held me rapt. I pulled my attention away to study my maps.

Two things impressed me on Sections D & E of the GDT: the authority of water and the ability of the human body to take care of itself—independent of the mind.

As I had lain in my tent the night before, planning my strategy for the multiple creek crossings in the morning, I heard the first tick, tick of a developing storm.

I had spent the night beside the Cataract tributary on a small patch of level ground. During my last pee of the evening I had walked down to the confluence and studied possible crossing points. The storm was building. The creek was swelling.

Back inside my blue Duplex, I could hear boulders tumbling in the creek. Thunder and lightning exploded simultaneously. Each incredible crack of thunder grumbled on and on and on. The next strike flooded the inside of my tent ORANGE and I smelled fire. I peeked out. I saw nothing but a translucent curtain of rain and a raging creek opaque with rock flour and debris.

By 6 a.m. it hadn't let up. I started to execute my plan. I dressed warmly above the waist, but below I only wore shorts and Xero sandals. I stashed my socks and boots in a dry bag. After a warm breakfast, I headed for my first crossing.

The flow was terrific. At 70, 4'11", 94 pounds, and solo, I was extremely cautious. I carefully placed each step, steadying myself with my one carbon fibre pole. Miraculously I was across! Unscathed. Paralleling the turbulent stream, I edged over rocks along the narrow slippery trail. With each crossing I could feel my warmth ebbing. As the trail finally pulled away from the Creek heading up to the pass, I was shivering uncontrollably and puffing weirdly. I stopped to boot up in the rain and mud. Pulling my dry socks and tights over my damp skin was a Herculean effort. That's when I realized I could be in trouble.

I recalled my mountain climbing brother, Ted, telling me about a taxing climb made much more difficult by weather. He was very close to the summit but reminded himself that he didn't have to do this. When it stops being fun, go home. He turned around. I was still lacking 3 out of 5 campsite bookings ahead anyway. So exhausted and hypothermic, I decided discretion is the better part of valour. I made a plan to exit in two days time at Poboktan.

I wasn't sure where the trail ahead went exactly. No point in hurrying on without a clear direction. I sighted my objective: Cataract Pass. But what hidden cliffs, marshes, or raging creeks lay between? Perhaps others had made their way along the drainage below but now it was a swamp. I exposed my hands to compare my little annotated waterproof maps to my downloaded ones on Far Out. That's when I noticed my body taking care of itself—shaking, panting, pacing—leaving my mind to concentrate on wayfinding. I picked my way over the rocks toward the pass. I made out a lighter line of rocks swinging up to a dip in the mountainscape and soon I was on a legit route.

I made out a couple of men ahead in the mist. One looked spry and confident. The other followed as best he could, stopping to rest often. I greeted them at the crest, 'Hey boys, helluva day!' They complimented me on my ascent as they chugged water. It reminded me to do the same. Then I started my shaky descent into the White Goat Wilderness.

These guys had come up the Nigel trail, camped at Cline Pass, and were on their way out. We leapfrogged a bit and then I tagged along as they retraced their course through magnificent russet-coloured boulders. Some of their previous routes were now under water. The rain continued and the men became increasingly concerned about recrossing the Brazeau to take Nigel down to their vehicle.

As the trail rose, we watched torrents crashing against the canyon walls far below. Then our trail descended to the Brazeau floodplains.

The rushing main channel of the Brazeau was about 30 metres wide at this point with a second narrower channel before the opposite bank. I had seen the younger man's emergency device, and as he hopped strongly and fluidly from boulder to boulder. I knew his hesitant trail mate could do no such thing. I said I would wait with my InReach on until they were safe. Hiker number two mostly waded and that's when I realized the opaque and engorged Brazeau, although unrelentingly forceful, was not very deep. The men waved when they were safe and I continued.

Now out of the White Goat Wilderness and in Jasper Park, the trail was easier and the first campsite, Boulder, very civilized. A camp sign! Bear lockers! Toilet! Level tent pads! Tables! Equally outfitted, Four Point was at the next junction, a very popular campground, supposedly full but I found it deserted. I was cold, wet, heavy, and stiff. I decided to call it a day.

First priority was to put up my shelter. I staggered to the highest pad for the best chance of drainage. Thank goodness the Duplex is a simple set up—my hands were icy and clumsy.

It started to snow. Throwing my pack and myself inside, I started unpacking my kitchen. 'Must have hot food.' Then the authority of the water hit me. The water gives and it takes, but we can't do without it. All around was dripping and my gear was sodden but that didn't quench the body. Damn! I had to leave my sanctuary to gather water. With no clear streams, I hurried to the banks of the river. They were overflowing. In addition to rock flour, the swirling, raging Brazeau was laden with mud. It's all I had. My deep chill made me so uncoordinated it's a wonder I didn't fall in.

Back in my shelter I dropped a half packet of Ichiban and a dollop of olive oil into my pot. As soon as I lit my PocketRocket, I was immediately enveloped in a warm moist cloud.

I gobbled the noodles and drank the broth, feeling the heat move into my extremities. My toes were still little wooden blocks but my fingers soaked up the saturated warmth as they encircled the titanium pot. I managed to text Dale to meet me on the Poboktan Trail two days hence.

Between bouts of deep shivering, I puffed up my mattress, pulled on my dry Unightie, and wriggled into my damp -12 down bag.

[Only one photo survived because my phone got hydrolocked!]



Title image: Jenny Feick trying to find Tornado Pass historic trail despite the deep snow in late June (Photo by Dave Higgins)

The Mission and Accomplishments of Project: Great Divide Trails

Excerpts from Chapter Three: Project Great Divide Trails in *Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins & Early History of Canada's Great Divide Trail & the Great Divide Trail Association* by Jenny L. Feick, PhD,

Fifty years ago this spring, I, along with five other young people, began the adventure of a lifetime surveying trails that would eventually become the Great Divide Trail between Waterton Lakes and Banff national parks. In September 2024, the crew of Project: Great Divide Trails, also known as the "original six", plan to celebrate their 50th anniversary by meeting in person for the first time since their last reunion 14 years ago. The following excerpts from Chapter Three of *Tales from the Great Divide, Vignettes on the Origins & Early History of Canada's Great Divide Trail & the Great Divide Trail Association* provide insight into the background research, as well as some of the logistics, for the mission and accomplishments of Project: Great Divide Trails.

In the dialogue below, JENNY refers to me, Jenny Feick, MARY JANE to Mary Jane Kreisel (née Cox), CLIFF to Cliff White (the project leader), DAVE to Dave Higgins, and LANI to Lani Smith. There are also excerpts from phone interviews with Chris Hart (CHRIS) and Dave Zevick (DAVEY). Cliff, Chris, Dave, Davey, Mary Jane and I are the so-called "original six" who worked on Project: Great Divide Trails in 1974. Lani, along with Dave, Mary Jane and I were among the founding members of the GDTA in 1975/76, and Lani was on the first GDTA trail crew in 1976. References to appendices or citations are the ones in the Second Edition of *Tales*.

Research and Groundtruthing

Excerpt from page 58

MARY JANE: "We should mention this: we did air photo reconnaissance before we started.. We took our topo maps in and then looked at the potential passes and things like that."

JENNY: "That was at the Institute of Sedimentary and Petroleum Geology just north of the University of Calgary. We were in there for five days. It was almost like you can imagine you're flying over the mountains."

CLIFF: "It was the first Google Earth."

JENNY: "It was. It was incredible."

DAVE: "It's better because it's 3D then."

Logistics

Excerpt from page 26

MARY JANE: "So, when did we start?"

CLIFF: "June the 17th."

DAVE: "Seventeenth of June."

CLIFF: "It was a Monday. It was all broke into weeks from there on. That better be a Monday, because that was our schedule, wasn't it?"

JENNY: "It was. Monday to Friday, weekends off, when we thought a lot of people would be out in the bush anyway, and then that was our weekend. Even though it was a weekend, that was when we had to fix the cars and get the food organized and get prepared for the next workweek. So, it's not like we really had a lot of time off."

MARY JANE: "So, we had two days 'off' and we would work five."

Excerpt from page 24

MARY JANE: "Dave, somewhere in there, we had to make this plan about how far we were going to hike every day. Remember we got that map? Lani, maybe you remember going into Jenny's apartment or wherever" [and seeing the project's study area map on the wall]. (Lani nods.)

DAVE: "I do remember the statistics. There were 3,000 miles of hiking that had to be done, so that would be 500 miles per person, basically, was our [hiking] budget for the summer."

CLIFF: "You pretty well had to do it. It was all scribed out where your assignment was every day, rain or shine." [see Appendix F, pages 347-348]

MARY JANE: "We called them, I think, 'study areas.' Normally, we would be paired up. Two people would be assigned a study area, and so, oftentimes we'd have to hike separately as well, enough to be able to cover everything."

JENNY: "Logistically."

MARY JANE: "Some of us were more attuned to the backcountry than others, I being one of the less attuned. But by the end of the summer, I was, definitely."

CLIFF: "You were hiking solo. If you hiked solo, you could cut your mileage down by half each week, right? You wouldn't have to do huge mileage, just because your partner would do half. You'd do half and somehow you'd get it done."

JENNY: "Yes."

Excerpt from page 67

CHRIS: "We would go out every week, either on Sunday [night] or Monday [morning]. We went out to areas that had to be explored. So, we divided up the work into three teams. They usually had me with Mary Jane Cox. Cliff White and Davey Zevick were on their own. Jenny [Feick] and David [Higgins] preferred to work together. We'd divide up a study area into different sections to be covered off in fieldwork to go out and check the conditions, such as slope, or whether the trail actually existed. In some cases, we were exploring game trails. And, in other cases, we were looking for outfitter trails that we might have previously known about through research that we did for the project at the University of Calgary, and checking [archival] records, or making connections with people in the area that worked for [provincial] Forestry Services [in Alta. And B.C.]. We could either use outfitters' trails where they had horses, or we might accidentally discover like an 'elk highway' in the forest, which would be great for hiking on."

Excerpt from page 25

CLIFF: "We had to base ourselves out of the south half for the first part of the summer. Some of the cars [we had] wouldn't be able to make that commute." [from Calgary]

JENNY: "Right, or from Sunshine." [Ski Area]

DAVE: [Coleman was] "The perfect jumping off point for all of our study areas for the first two-thirds of the summer."

LANI: "That's where you started from?"

JENNY: "Yes. We were going south to north, with the idea that the snow would be less in the south."

CLIFF: "As it turned out, that year was a horrific snow year. We had a heck of a time!"

JENNY: (Looking at Dave) "When we were in Tornado Pass, we had so much snow."

DAVE: "There was still about two to three metres of snow on the ground in the Tornado Pass, and we were trying to find trails! So, this is not really going too well."

CLIFF: "Of course, the rivers were hard to cross because there's not many bridges down there in those days."

JENNY: "That's right; we did a lot of fording."



In 1974, crew members mapped heritage trails like this leading to Fording Pass (Photo by Dave H)

Excerpt from page 82

DAVEY: "The first day, I was a little bit confused there with the mapping. Some of them say, 'here to there and map this, and here's the scales you're going to be using. And this [symbol] means this [natural or cultural feature], and this [symbol] means that [natural or cultural feature], and away you go.' As we did our hikes, we had to map out things. But we got it all figured out after a while and then we just kind of got started. We were starting in and around Coleman [Alta.] and then working south and then working north.

So, we would work five days a week. It was roughly, I think we worked it out, 15 miles a day. That was back in the days it was miles not kilometres, so I still remember it that way."

"Most of the time we'd be out, we'd be with someone. A lot of times during the day, you might be by yourself, but quite often on the longer trips, you would have someone with you."

Excerpt from page 58

CLIFF: "I think we had a kind of simple system where you thought there was a trail and then, if you thought you could get over the pass, you did some loose circles. Because the drill was, of course, not to go back down the same trail you were just on, because that's a waste of time. It was to get over the pass, get somewhere else and come out another valley so you could "kill" two valleys in one day. That's when we had really good days is when that worked out."

MARY JANE: "Some passes weren't really passable."

JENNY: "Coral Pass."

Project: Great Divide Trails Mission

Excerpt from pages 39-40

JENNY: "I feel we should step back for just a moment to lay out our mission, because we didn't really do that. On this Project: Great Divide Trails, our mission was to survey every trail, seismic line, road, within this 2,000squaremile study area on either side of the Continental or Great Divide, both in British Columbia and Alberta. And then, to document historic trails, to inventory all of the natural and cultural historical features along these trails and to get them mapped, and then to piece together some alternative potentially suitable routes for a Great Divide Trail, with options. We didn't ever, in our report, say it had to be exactly here."

CLIFF: "It was the preferred option when we were done. It's [the preferred route] probably in there (pointing to the document that Jenny brought called The Great Divide Trail – Banff to Waterton: Its Concept and Future, Second Edition 1977, hereafter called 'the GDTA policy paper'), but it [the final project report for the OFY Program] did show other alternatives."

JENNY: "Exactly. That was what we were doing. We had clipboards when we were out there and were documenting things on maps and that. So, when you (looking at Mary Jane) talked about a study area, then each crew of two had to do that work in that block of land."

MARY JANE: "Just for the map, what we do is almost like an overlay, if I'm not mistaken. We took the topo map and either we put a piece of paper over top of it or we actually wrote symbols on the map itself."

JENNY: (Nodding) "On the map."



Jenny backpacking on a Monday into base camp Fording River area Henretta Ck 1974 (Photo by Dave Higgins)

Excerpt from pages 40-41

MARY JANE: "Basically, if you came across a feature of some sort, you would note that. And you would certainly note what level of trail it was; if it was an animal path, or a fullfledged path, or a road or seismic road, or things like that. And probably historical elements."

JENNY: (Nodding) "Like old trappers' cabins. We would note if it was a historic trail, a heritage trail."

MARY JANE: "I mean, a lot of our mandate [in Project: Great Divide Trails] as I understood it, was to survey the area for all these various things they potentially had between Banff and Waterton [Lakes national parks]. So, we were looking at history, we were looking at natural history; we were looking at geomorphology; we were looking at the element of outdoor recreation and what would be the highlight areas going through that."

JENNY: "Aesthetic."

MARY JANE: "Aesthetic. And, also, this challenge. This is one thing I want you guys to verify as well. We didn't just crisscross the Great Divide. We were looking at outside areas. I was sent across the highway [Alberta Highway #40], and I don't know if it was just to try and get rid of me or whatever, but I was across the Kananaskis Highway doing the Sheep and Elbow area. So, that must have meant that we were also looking at the recreational value of a very wide corridor."

CLIFF: "I was at Junction Creek and you might have been south or north of there. We were looking at the Elbow/Sheep, I guess. That was a way that we could get through with a GDT, would have been over that way."

MARY JANE: "That was certainly a wide area."

CLIFF: "That was our widest piece."

MARY JANE: "I think we were also trying to survey trails that could be of value and put the mark on them that these were valuable areas, too. So, we had all sorts of things going on here."

Excerpt from pages 41-42

DAVE: (Turning to face Cliff) "But [in August] you did task Chris [Hart] and myself just to look for trail opportunities in a spot that you called the Highwood Highline. And you said, 'I really want to do this, but I can't, I'm working [elsewhere].'"

CLIFF: (Chuckling) "My days off. I'm going to scoop this; it might be a bit better."

DAVE: "You must have had a lot of faith in me at that point, because you said, 'You do this one.' (Turning to everyone else in the room) He actually sent us out to actually find a usable route through the upper Highwood [River] country. That was the key thing."

CLIFF: "It pulled it all together."

DAVE: "It really pulled it all together. (Turning to Jenny and Mary Jane) And I think it was you two..."

JENNY: [Meanwhile] "We were doing Carnarvon [Creek and Lake area in Alta]."

DAVE: "Yes, you dropped Chris and I off around Cataract Creek, and we hiked all the way up to the headwaters of Cataract, Lost Creek, actually, and began working our way north. And, immediately, it was the 'Ah ha' moment because, 'Wow! This is about the best terrain we have seen yet.' There were usable game trails, a few usable outfitter trails, and they all went exactly where we wanted to go. The viewscape was spectacular. At that time, the forest cover was intact all through that country, and it had the advantage of being very accessible from Calgary."

CLIFF: "It's a classic hike."

DAVE: "Because of that, we had spectacular weather, of course, so we could fully explore that [area]. So, that was the basis of our [later] push to start building the [Great Divide] Trail. Here [in the Highwood], we have a place we could work that we could get to [from Calgary]. Even on a weekend, you could go in and get a reasonable amount of work done. And it was just painfully obvious [in the mid-1970s] that this is where you want to be. Partially, also, because on the B.C. side, it was a scene of devastation with the Fording River [coal mining] operation."

CLIFF: "We knew we were going to have to get around that [coal mining area]. We probably thought we wanted to get into Elk Lakes Provincial Park [in B.C.] but we knew we had to get back [into Alberta]."

DAVE: "So, this was really good, and the area had everything going for it. So, with that there, it was just so convenient and obvious that we would start our [trail] work in that location."

Excerpt from pages 85-86

DAVEY: "I was blazing the trails, more or less, and I remember, at the end, it was fall time, Cliffy kind of pulling [together] all the reports. Everyone was doing all the mapping and where they had hiked and reports and stuff like that. He kind of looked at my stuff and says, 'Well, Dave, maybe I'll just do yours.' It wasn't quite as detailed as Cliffy liked when he worked it all up. It went fairly well."

Excerpt from page 58

CLIFF: "You know what's neat? I don't think we ever missed anything. Of all the trails we had to cover, there was nothing we had to fake. These days, if it was Google Earth, we wouldn't have even gone out. If we had to do it now, it would just take us a couple of days. Just draw some lines and zoom in. I don't think we missed anything. I can't remember saying, 'We can't write the report,' or anything like that. We had enough [field work] done to say, 'This is roughly what should happen.'"

Project: Great Divide Trails Accomplishments

By Jenny Feick – November 30, 2019, Victoria, British Columbia

Excerpt from pages 93-94

"Within their study area of 2,000 sq. mi. (5,180 sq km), depicted in Figure 304 on page 324 in Appendix D, each two-person team surveyed approximately 83 sq. mi. (250 sq km)/week for nine weeks. Study crew members collectively hiked 3,106 mi. (5,000) km in their nine week field season (June 17 - Aug. 16, 1974). The crew described and mapped 166 trails and routes totaling 869 mi. (1,400 km). Of this, 39% were true trails by Jim Thorsell's definition, 33% were routes that would require major clearing and/or tread work to make them passable to hikers and horseback riders; and 37% were passable by high-clearance vehicles, ATVs or ORVs.

The crew documented extensive environmental damage from resource extraction industries on Crown land in both provinces. The crew described, mapped and recommended a preferred route for the GDT: Banff to Waterton from Palliser Pass, Banff National Park in the north to Sage Pass, Waterton Lakes National Park in the south. Sections included: Wapiti, Palliser Pass to Elk River, 62 mi. (100 km); High Rock,

Elk River to Dutch Creek, 53 mi. (86 km); Hanging Valley, Dutch Creek to Crowsnest Hwy#3, 28 mi. (46.5 km); Flathead (Crowsnest Hwy#3 to Flathead River, 37 mi. (59.5 km); and Red Rock, Flathead River to Sage Pass, 52 mi. (85 km).

The proposed GDT route went along, adjacent to and across the Great Divide with 50% in Alta.; 50% in B.C. The length was 233 mi. or 376.5 km. Of this, 61 mi. (98.5 km) needed clearing and/or tread work, bridge construction, etc., 103 mi. (166.5 km) required access restrictions to prevent damage from ATVs and ORVs, and 69 mi. (111.5 km) used existing trails passable to hikers and horseback riders. Cliff White's thesis (See White 1977 in Appendix C) contains detailed descriptions of all of the trails and GDT sections.

Project: Great Divide Trails led directly to the formation of the GDTA. The project results informed the trail work carried out by the GDTA."

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](#).



Chris Hart on Highwood Highline, Alta. in August 1974 (Photo by Dave Higgins)

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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.

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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.