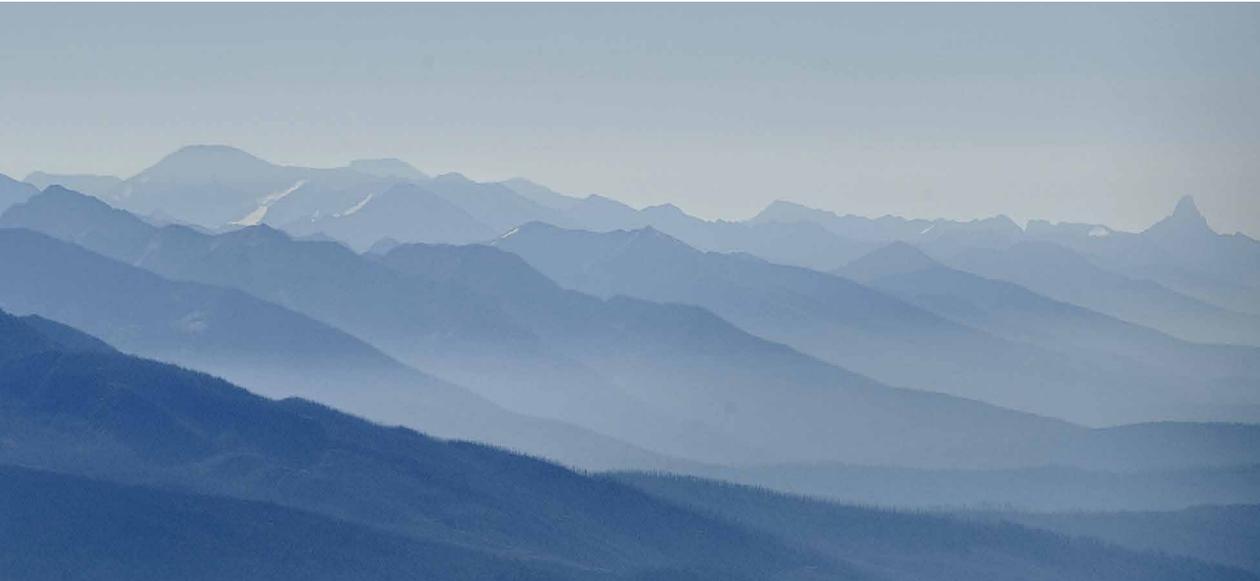




WILD TIMES

2016



Flathead Valley, Photo: Garth Lenz, ILCP

SPECIAL PLACES: MT. HEFTY LOOKOUT, FLATHEAD VALLEY

Looking east from the fire lookout on top of Mt. Hefty, the mountains of Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park are breathtaking. The Crevice fire lookout, built in 1930, is no longer in use, but the view is timeless. Looking down at the wild and remote Flathead Valley, the Canada/US border stretches out before you as a double line cut through the trees. On the American side of the line, the Flathead Valley enjoys the highest protections, while on the Canadian side, logging and other industrial activity is common.

**“TIME SPENT BEING A LOOKOUT
ISN'T SPENT AT ALL. EVERY DAY IN A
LOOKOUT IS A DAY NOT SUBTRACTED
FROM THE SUM OF ONE'S LIFE.”**

Phil Connors, Fire Season

If you walk up to the lookout at the right time of year, you'll see tall bear grass swaying in the wind

and you might just happen upon a grizzly—the Flathead Valley has the highest grizzly density in the interior. The Flathead Wild coalition has been working for decades to make sure this important landscape gets the protection it deserves. And it's easy to see why from here. The lush valley bottom spreads out on either side, fed by the crystal clear Flathead River. Animals, like grizzly, moose and goats, roam freely through this valley, connecting to the Canadian National Parks in the north and Glacier park in the south. But the valley is more than just an animal highway, it's a meeting place—of two countries, of four directions, of thousands of wildflower species, of different worldviews. If we don't work together to protect the wild legacy of the Flathead Valley, the view from Mt. Hefty will look very different in the future.

Distance: 15.6 km round-trip (3 hours). **Find out more about how you can help protect the Flathead Valley at flatheadwild.ca.**



Go Wild students at Earl Grey Pass, Photos: Dave Quinn

EARL GREY PASS: PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

During a visit to BC in 1908, Earl Grey (Canada's Governor General at the time—not to be confused with the Earl Grey of the famous tea, his great-uncle) crossed the Purcells on a trail that connected the East and West Kootenays. He travelled up Toby Creek, over a 2,256 meter pass, and then down Hamill Creek to Argentina. Earl Grey (who was also a supporter of Canadian football and established the coveted Grey Cup) loved the Purcells so much that he had a cabin built for his family's vacation the following summer. The shell of this cabin still stands on Toby Creek, 1 km from the eastern trailhead of the rugged hike over the pass named for, you guessed it, Earl Grey, lover of wilderness, champion of the Purcells.

**“IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE,
ONE RECEIVES FAR MORE THAN HE
SEEKS.”**

John Muir

This 61 kilometer, five-day hike is in the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, Southern Canada's largest protected wilderness area. Thanks to people fighting to protect the place they love, the rugged landscape that Earl Grey walked is still intact. Far from any roads, your experience on the trail today may not be so different from what it would have been a hundred years ago. Sure, the cable car creek crossings are more recent, but you would have heard similar sounds, camped in the same places and seen the ancestors of the grizzlies and mountain goats you see today.

The trail travels through a narrow valley up to the pass, where you're surrounded by rugged ice-capped peaks and glaciers like the Toby and Lady Macbeth. It takes you through moose meadows, past waterfalls and into old-growth hemlock and cedar forests along Hamill Creek, the kind of trees you wouldn't expect to see in the interior—trees more typically found on the moist coast.

This rugged hike traverses rivers and avalanche paths, goes over and under slippery logs and bridges, has five cable car creek crossings and eight wilderness campsites. It's not always well marked and requires map reading and route finding skills. In other words, it's for those who are comfortable in and love the wild.

Last summer, Wildsight took a group of teenagers over the pass through our Go Wild program. Their passion for the mountains, as seen through their photos and heard through their stories, gives us serious hope for the future of the Purcells.





Photos: Pat Morrow

COLUMBIA WETLANDS: CANAL FLATS TO GOLDEN

It's early morning and the sun is just peeking up over the Rocky Mountains. The day is new and you are at Columbia Lake, the source of the mighty Columbia River. Your boat is packed, your favourite paddling partner is on board and you push off towards the east shore of Columbia Lake. After a few hours of paddling, you float onto the Columbia River, still small at this point. There's an old weir right before Fairmont—be careful!

180 KM LONG, THE COLUMBIA WETLANDS ARE NORTH AMERICA'S LONGEST INTACT WETLANDS.

You paddle through rip-rap on the Fairmont golf course, waving to the golfers as you glide under their bridges. The river widens out gradually as you get closer to windy Windermere Lake. You paddle along the west shore of the lake and eventually arrive at Invermere's municipal beach. You stop and take a swim.

Refreshed, you leave the open waters of the lake and arrive at the Columbia Wetlands in Wilmer. A bald eagle soars overhead, a great blue heron balances in the shallows and you feel like you've gone back in time to a place with more stillness, more wildness. The train passes by and you see an old shack that used to serve as a whistle stop.

There is a proposed boating regulation for the upper Columbia River that would limit boats to 20 hp. The regulation aims to protect the ecological values of this internationally significant ecosystem.

Surrounded by a stunning variety of waterfowl and a delicate system of sloughs, banks and channels, it's easy to see why the regulation is important.

You pick your route carefully as you continue north on the river. You don't want to get lured off the main channel and have to backtrack. You choose campsites as you go, based on the tiredness of your muscles and the water level. Flanked by the Purcell Mountains to the west and the Rockies to the east, you paddle past huge osprey nests. You listen to loons in the evening and are awakened by a cacophony of geese each morning.

As you approach the confluence of the Kicking Horse and Columbia Rivers in Golden five days after your trip began, the pace of the river quickens. You are covered in mosquito bites but the huge smile spread across your face tells the real story: this is a special place.



I LOVE JUMBO WILD: LEAH EVANS



Born and raised in Rossland, BC, Leah Evans is a pro skier, Patagonia ambassador and founder of Girls Do Ski, a company focused on empowering girls to get out in the mountains and be leaders. Leah can usually be found ready to drop a chute that would make your stomach turn, her tell-tale smile lighting up her face. For Leah, being in the Jumbo Wild film was a dream come true. "It made me realize that everything you do sets you up for some stage," she said, "and to be on the Jumbo stage was such a honour. I've got an *I Love Jumbo Wild* sticker on my skis and people ask me about it all the time." Leah, Jumbo is lucky to have you on her side! Read all about Leah and other Jumbo lovers at keepitwild.ca.

ROADWATCH BC



Photo: Joe Riis, ILCP

Anyone who drives Highway 3 between Elko and Alberta sees plenty of wildlife. If you're lucky, they're alive. But sometimes we see dead wildlife too, or even experience a wildlife-vehicle collision. Wildsight Elk Valley is launching RoadWatchBC, a citizen-science initiative that puts increased highway safety for both people and wildlife into the hands of anyone with a smartphone or a computer. The RoadWatchBC app lets passengers log wildlife sightings. Anyone can submit sightings on an online map from their computer. RoadWatchBC will use this data to determine where animals cross the highway or are struck by vehicles so that we can make our roads safer. Get involved by downloading the app or at roadwatchbc.ca.

PAINTING TURTLES



Through our EcoStewards program, students from Salmo Elementary have designed and illustrated six interpretive panels on the Western Painted Turtle population at Champion Lakes Provincial Park, where visitors have been harrasing them. Students learned about the Western Painted Turtle through readings, puppets, skits and games and learned design principles and painting techniques from local artists. There will be celebration, featuring the students' art, at the end of June and the beautiful and informative signs will be installed in the park in July. As visitors enjoy the beauty of the park this summer, we hope the students' efforts will make a difference in the lives of these endangered turtles.

WILDSIGHT IS PEOPLE LIKE YOU

Being a member of Wildsight means being part of our team. Valuing wilderness, wildlife and healthy communities. Believing that by taking care of the things we love, collectively, through action, we can change the world.

Become a lifetime member for \$20!

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