

**BRAGG
CREEK**

WILD



wildlife and people living in community

Newsletter

Winter
2024

Wildlife-Safe Christmas Decorations p. 2-3
Why Biodiversity Matters p.4-5
Simple, Everyday Actions To Help Mother
Nature Thrive In Our Backyard p 6
Suggested Reading p.7

About the Cougar Out There p.9

Now That Rutting Season Is Over - It's Winter Driving
Conditions p.10

Safe Wildlife (and human) Access To The River Over the
Berm p. 11

Amazing Bragg Creek Wild Volunteers and Community
Support p.12

Why Becoming A Member Matters p.13

NEWS FROM THE WILD

Garbage Bylaw Proposal p.8



Become
BRAGG CREEK WILD

Your membership will help build a safe and sustainable environment
for both wildlife and humans.

Page 13

Wildlife-Safe Christmas Decorations

The wonderland we create with our Christmas decorations can unknowingly pose risks to the creatures that inhabit our surroundings. As we deck the halls, it's crucial to acknowledge and address the potential hazards that our festive adornments might present to wildlife.

Entanglement remains a significant concern. Loose wires, ribbons, or netting can pose a severe threat to wildlife. Birds, squirrels, and other critters may inadvertently become ensnared, leading to injuries, stress, or even fatalities. Something as simple as a string of lights or a bit of tinsel can become a dangerous trap for unsuspecting animals.

Moreover, the ingestion of decorative items by curious wildlife is a genuine risk. Bright and colourful decorations might resemble tasty morsels to animals. Small, shiny objects such as decorative beads or baubles can be mistaken for food, causing internal injuries or blockages. This can result in digestive problems and severe internal damage, affecting the well-being of the animals.

The disruption of natural behaviours caused by excessive or overly bright lighting can profoundly impact nocturnal animals. These animals, accustomed to the darkness of the night, may find themselves disoriented or unable to carry out their natural activities like feeding or hunting due to the overwhelming brightness.

Furthermore, the risk of electrocution looms when animals perch on power lines or damaged decorations. This threat, particularly to birds, arises when wiring is faulty or exposed, posing a fatal hazard to unsuspecting wildlife.

Finally, we cannot overlook the impact of environmental pollution caused by Christmas decorations. Materials like plastic, glitter, and synthetic elements can find their way into natural habitats, adversely affecting both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. The allure of glittery decorations often results in debris entering ecosystems, causing long-term harm to the environment and its inhabitants.

Let's celebrate the holiday season while being mindful of our impact on the wildlife that we share our environment with. By making conscious choices in our decorations, we can ensure a festive atmosphere that is both joyous for us and safe for our beloved wildlife neighbours.



Wild Safe Outdoor Christmas Decorating



Avoid Excessive Lighting: Minimize outdoor lighting to reduce disruption to nocturnal animals' natural behaviour. **Proper Disposal of Decorations:** Dispose of decorations properly to prevent littering and pollution of natural habitats.



Choose Wildlife-Friendly Materials: Opt for decorations made from natural, biodegradable materials to reduce environmental harm.



Secure Loose Wires and Decorations: Ensure all decorations are securely fastened and free from entanglement risks. Strings of lights should be installed 10' above ground to avoid deer becoming entangled (Parks Canada)



Educate and Encourage Others: Spread awareness about responsible outdoor decorating within our community. Encourage neighbours to follow wildlife-friendly practices and share safety tips.



Choose LED lights, which are energy-efficient and emit less heat, reducing the risk of attracting wildlife



Why Biodiversity Matters

In 1995, park officials introduced thirty-five wolves from Alberta to the Northern range of Yellowstone National Park—their mission - restoring the long-lost biodiversity and rebuilding a thriving ecosystem. Twenty-five years later, wolves' interactions with their environment changed the whole balance of the dying ecosystem, bringing back wildlife diversity throughout the park. Today the area is a rich and vibrant habitat teeming with life and restored waterways. How can that be?

As miraculous as it sounds, this story exemplifies the interconnectedness between all living organisms. Over millions of years, the Earth evolved to establish subtle balances between all life forms, from microbes to large carnivores and from fungi to majestic old-growth trees, ensuring the continuation of life on our planet. However, disruptions to the equilibrium can weaken the relationships between fauna and flora, resulting in ecosystem degradation, loss of lives, and, eventually resulting in inhospitable environments.

Biodiversity, meaning all the different kinds of lives found in one area, works together to create healthy environments that, in turn, we use to sustain our lives. Microorganisms enrich our soil to grow food, while pollinators give us fruits and

nuts, while other larger animals eat those fruits and deposit their seeds in new areas to grow into new plants. Meanwhile, trees and shrubs protect our water, slowing evaporation and erosion while protecting our fish or they give us wind and sun protection. Finally, we make many medicines from plants and fungi, and countless recreate or seek nature for mental health and spiritual purposes. The relationship between fauna, flora, land, air, water, and, yes, fire is a lot more complex, but you get the idea.


Despite all the evidence of our interconnectedness to nature's wide web, we often (and often inadvertently) cause irreparable harm. Pollution, overgrazing, trophy hunting, poor agricultural and logging practices, damaging industrial practices, ill-advised wildlife management practices, and over-tourism; all these human activities can and often do weaken our environment's resilience and capacity to manage change. We end up with degraded habitat, loss of biodiversity and ultimately, an environment unable to provide humans with the benefits they seek in the first place.

Of course, we can make a difference and affect change. We can act globally; however, it may be easier to start locally by reducing our footprint and rebuilding biodiversity in our backyard. Please check out our sidebar for ideas to accomplish this. On a larger scale, one can become involved in conservation and restoration efforts and invite others to do the same. For example, we can ask our leaders to consider better land use practices when logging, farming, extracting resources and recreating. After all, everyone would gain if land users were to plan and work together to understand their collective footprint and find

ways to preserve and protect the health of the land for the long haul.

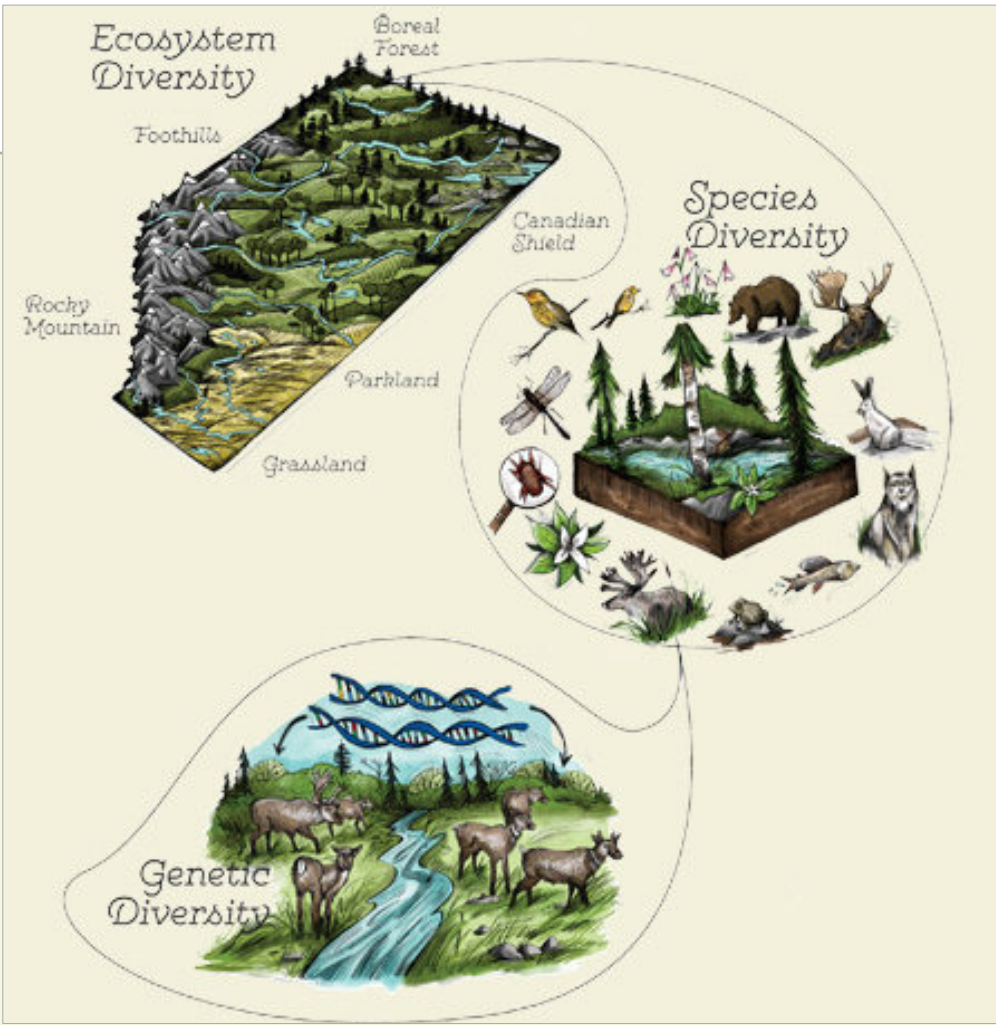
Fauna and flora's gifts make our life both possible and worth living. This is why so many of us have chosen to live in a little piece of paradise we call Bragg Creek and the area. Doing our bit and inviting others to do the same, including visitors, will help preserve what we hold dear for generations and avoid repeating the Yellowstone National Park experience.

Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute



Ecosystem Services

Without biodiversity, we don't have ecosystems—each a community of living things (plants, animals, and more) and their interactions with the environment (e.g. water, air, soil, minerals). These ecosystems are critical to our health and well-being. They provide us a number of benefits—also known as Ecosystem services—that we often take for granted, such as clean drinking water, protection from floods, and the raw materials for food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. These benefits are often supplied by healthy, functioning ecosystems at no cost to us!



Simple, everyday actions to help mother nature thrive in our backyard

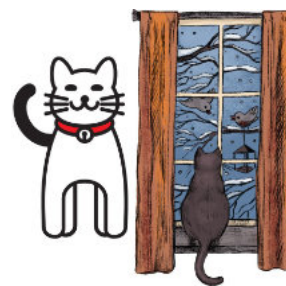
- Drive cars defensively to avoid wildlife collisions
- Protect wildlife from predatory cats and dogs
- Pick up garbage in your area along roads and parks
- Remove food attractants to large wildlife such as bears and angulates (e.g. deer, moose, etc.)
- Eliminate the use of harmful chemicals on your lawn and garden.
- Garden for pollinators
- Plant trees and install bird houses for migratory birds
- Install bat houses
- Build or repair fences to allow wildlife and their young to move through unharmed.
- Stick decoys in your windows to prevent birds from hitting them.
- Reduce the use of artificial night light
- Avoid using fireworks
- Place Christmas lights out of reach of deer antlers
- Give wildlife the space and time they need to move, feed, reproduce and thrive



Pick up garbage in your area along roads and parks



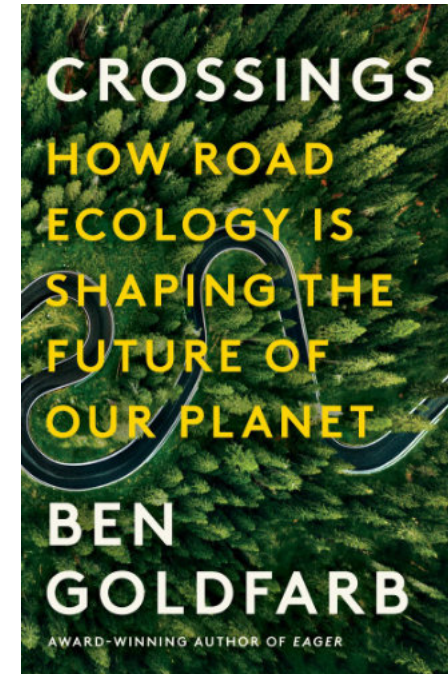
Protect wildlife from predatory cats and dogs



Stick decoys in your windows to prevent birds from hitting them.



Suggested Reading



An eye-opening and witty account of the global ecological transformations wrought by roads, from the award-winning author of Eager.

Some 40 million miles of roadways encircle the earth, yet we tend to regard them only as infrastructure for human convenience. While roads are so ubiquitous they're practically invisible to us, wild animals experience them as entirely alien forces of death and disruption. In *Crossings*, environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb travels throughout the United States and around the world to investigate how roads have transformed our planet. A million animals are killed by cars each day in the U.S. alone, but as the new science of road ecology shows, the harms of highways extend far beyond roadkill. Creatures from antelope to salmon are losing their ability to migrate in search of food and mates; invasive plants hitch rides in tire treads; road salt contaminates lakes and rivers; and the very noise of traffic chases songbirds from vast swaths of habitat.

Yet road ecologists are also seeking to blunt the destruction through innovative solutions. Goldfarb meets with conservationists building bridges for California's mountain lions and tunnels for English toads, engineers deconstructing the labyrinth of logging roads that web national forests, animal rehabbers caring for Tasmania's car-orphaned wallabies, and community organizers working to undo the havoc highways have wreaked upon American cities.

Today, as our planet's road network continues to grow exponentially, the science of road ecology has become increasingly vital. Written with passion and curiosity, *Crossings* is a sweeping, spirited, and timely investigation into how humans have altered the natural world—and how we can create a better future for all living beings.

"Wide-ranging and absorbing...Brilliant."
— Bill McKibben, New York Review of Books

Bringing your kitchen scraps to the transfer site is a great way to reduce wildlife attractant around home.

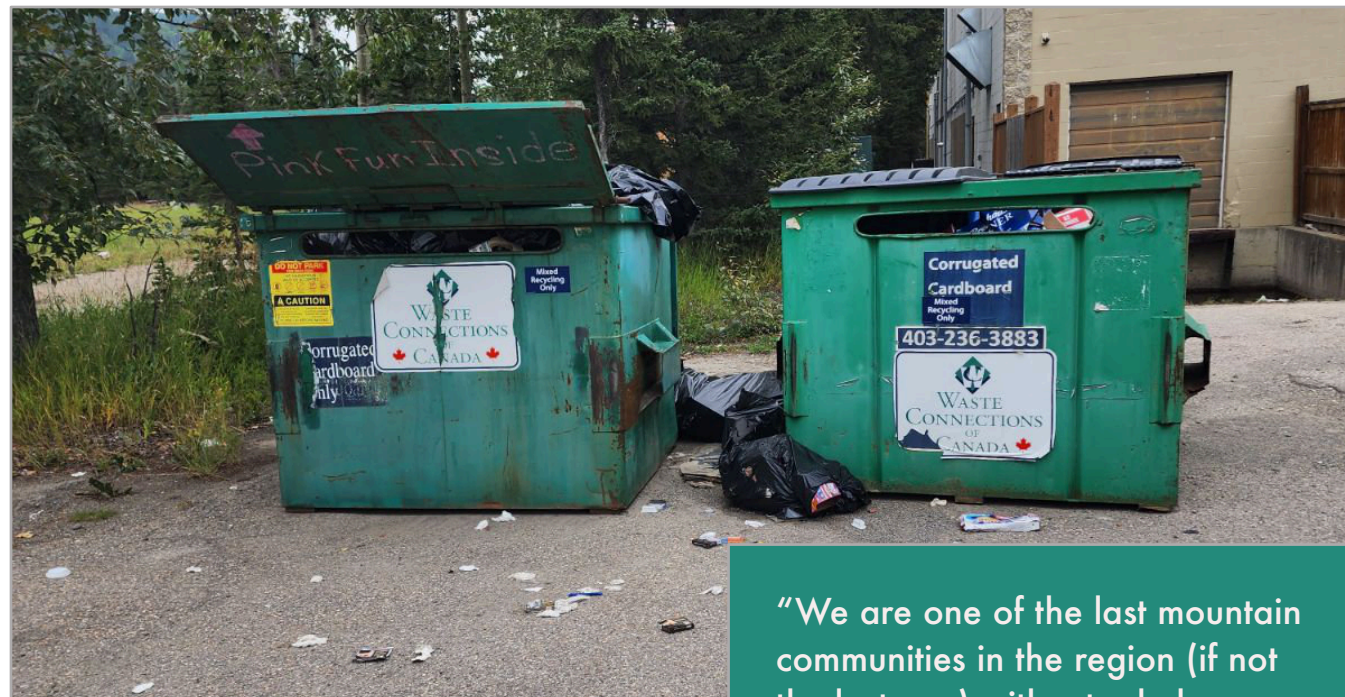




Garbage Bylaw Proposal

This year numerous sightings of bears visiting our trash cans were reported - Again. They made the news and we pleaded to all to keep garbage and food attractants out of reach of our hungry neighbours. We are one of the last mountain communities in the region (if not the last one) without a bylaw regulating the management and disposal of our refuse.

These incidents renewed our resolve to request a refuse by-law for our community including how to keep garbage safely out of reach of wildlife and, in particular, bears. BCW presented a proposal to Rockyview staff in October. The initial reception was positive. We are now waiting to find out what are the next steps towards the approval and implementation process.



"We are one of the last mountain communities in the region (if not the last one) without a bylaw regulating the management and disposal of our refuse."

Cougar sightings in Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadow area, including disturbing encounters with attacks and fatalities on dogs, were widely shared and discussed on social media and mainstream media for about a month. The cougar was evidently exhibiting unusual behaviours. He was not fearful of pets or humans and appeared to become bolder by the day. Was he sick? Was he injured or too old to hunt other wildlife and desperate for easy prey? Did he become habituated to eating pets? We will likely never know. No one has reported sightings in a while now and one can only presume it has either moved on, been killed or died of natural causes. Then again, it may come back another time. We simply do not know. What we know is that we are living in cougar country and sightings of these magnificent animals are common and, the vast majority of the time, a none issue. Still, these events are stern reminders that we are living in wild-country meaning that the privilege of being so close to nature comes with the realization that we have to do things a bit differently. Each and everyone one of us has to be wild smart to ensure our collective safety. Remember, bear spray is also an effective deterrent against cougars.



[Click here](#) to find out more about cougars and the do's and dont's living in their territory.



Thank you!
Bragg Creek Distillery for your support
www.braggcreekdistillers.ca

Now that rutting Season Is Over It's Winter Driving Conditions



Thank you!



It's no fun to see a deer right in front of you, unable to stop. These deadly scenarios are most prevalent during fawning season and rutting seasons but occur year-round. Thank you all for keeping an eye in the ditch and expecting the unexpected. Driving defensively is a first step. Knowing where the collision hotspots are (and being extra careful) include:

- The stretch of highway between Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadow up to the Paintball area is deadly.
- Between Bragg Creek T intersection and Priddis along Highway 22X
- Along Highway 762.
- The West Bragg Creek road (TWP Road 232), which has a notorious reputation. At least 7 deaths, including one moose were observed between October and December this year.



Winter
 Slippery roads
 Short days
 Driving in the dark
 Inevitable
 Take your time
 Practice mindfulness
 It hurts less, costs less and
 you'll be home
 Nonetheless



Safe wildlife (and human) access to the river over the berm

The Bragg Creek berm is finally completed except for wildlife access. Volunteers with Bragg Creek Wild walked the berm with Rockyview to discuss the issue of safe passage. Interestingly, during that walk wildlife and people with leashed dogs could be observed negotiating the treacherous boulders to access the river. Clearly there are safety issues at hand. BCW presented a proposal to build a few simple,



natural-looking wildlife access points in the most critical areas of the berm. The proposal was submitted complete with quotes, photos, locations and sound justification. Interestingly, Redwood Meadows currently have access points along the berm in their area, which we find agreeable. We hope to have a timely resolution to the access issues, with an end to seeing wildlife with broken legs.



Redwood Meadows already enjoy similar access over their berm which we view as the way to go.

Amazing Bragg Creek Wild Volunteers



All this work could not have happened without the thoughtful, careful work of dedicated volunteers committed to making a difference in our community. Each and everyone of them brought skills, expertise and time to address our complex issues. Some are experts in environmental matters, others have legal expertise and there are those with skills in communication and coordination. To all of you, thank you! Thank you for keeping our community safe and wild.

Amazing Community Support

Thank you for your support and thoughtful commentaries. Keeping the conversation going and learning from each other is a must. New residents are moving in, visitation is increasing and finding ways to share our knowledge and maintaining a healthy environment for our wild neighbours is an ongoing labour of love. Together is better.



At last count, 1,284 people are following BCW on social media including Facebook and Instagram.

Read our monthly articles in the celebrated monthly newsletter



Be a Wild Member

Please consider becoming a member of Bragg Creek Wild. Membership is free and demonstrates the support of our community. Help build a safe and sustainable environment for both wildlife and humans. Join Bragg Creek Wild and become a wildlife hero today.

To join, click the image below



Why becoming a member matters

1. Learn more about wildlife challenges and how to support them
2. Support conservation efforts
3. Meet like-minded individuals and build a sense of community
4. Access to resources like educational materials, training programs, and volunteer opportunities

Visit www.braggcreekwild.ca