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Yoho

National Park of Canada

Management Plan Implementation Report

2014



Superintendent's Message

It is with pleasure that I present to Canadians this annual report highlighting some recent achievements of Parks Canada in implementing the Yoho National Park Management Plan. Progress this year has been made on many diverse projects, including: further research into grizzly bear behaviour near transportation corridors; new insights into Burgess Shale fossils; visitor facility improvements; engaging new visitors inside the park and reaching out to Canadians where they live and work; ecosystem restoration and species-at-risk recovery efforts.

The highlights described in this report reflect our efforts locally to implement Parks Canada's national objectives to conserve and restore Canada's national parks, to connect Canadians with nature, and to bring Parks Canada places to Canadians where they live. By focussing on these key objectives, we will work toward Parks Canada's Strategic Outcome: Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

Ifan Thomas,
Acting Field Unit Superintendent,
Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay Field Unit

Park Management Plan Implementation Reporting

This annual report highlights progress and accomplishments for the 2014 calendar year. It provides an opportunity for Canadians to review and provide feedback on the progress and priorities established for the implementation of the Yoho National Park Management Plan. The park management plan is the guide to how the national objectives of Parks Canada are delivered through on the ground initiatives in Yoho. These initiatives support the goals of Canada's National Conservation Plan by taking action to conserve Canada's lands and waters, restore Canada's ecosystems, and connect Canadians to nature. Highlights are presented for each of the six key strategies outlined in the park management plan.

Cover photos clockwise from top left: Deer Lodge cabin (© Parks Canada / T. Keith), avalanche slope in Emerald Basin (© Parks Canada / T. Keith), ice climber (© Parks Canada / A. Dibb), hiker on Mt Burgess (© Parks Canada / P. Zizka)

Annual reports from previous years can be found on-line at:

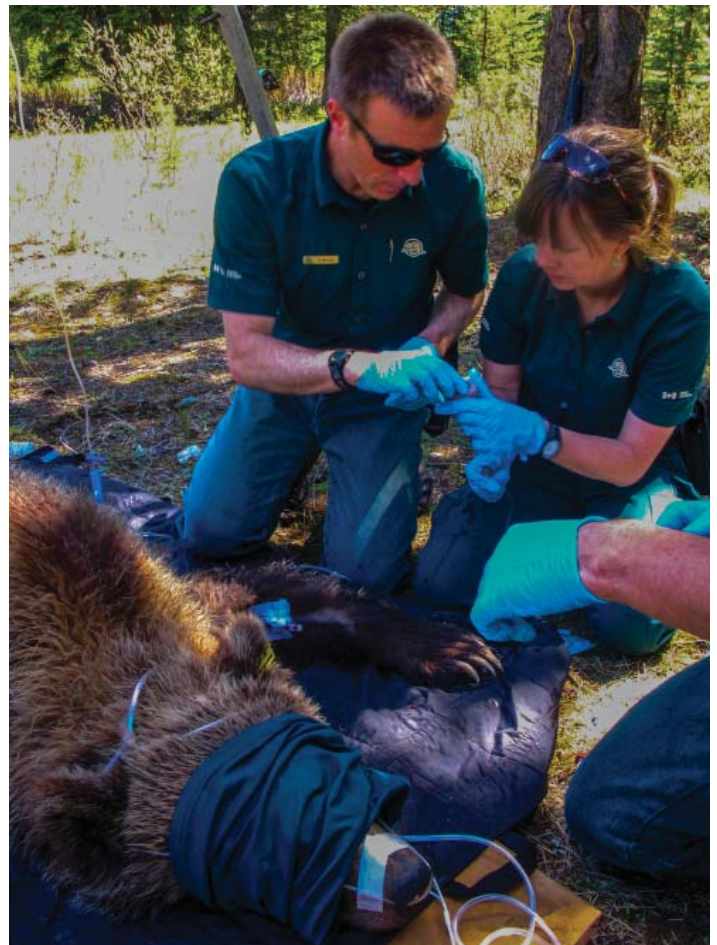
<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/yoho/plan/gestion-management/plandirecteur-mgmtplan.aspx>

A Showcase of National Park Stewardship

Parks Canada is a world leader in natural and cultural heritage conservation and restoration. This leadership is demonstrated through innovative scientific research and active ecosystem restoration projects conducted within Parks Canada's protected areas. Significant research on grizzly bears continued in Yoho National Park throughout 2014.

Parks Canada – Canadian Pacific Grizzly Bear Research Project

Parks Canada and Canadian Pacific are just completing the fourth year of this 5-year project to study grizzly bear use of lower valley bottoms near the Canadian Pacific Railway right-of-way. This research program continues to keep approximately 10 bears in



Parks Canada staff preparing to install a GPS collar on a grizzly bear (© Parks Canada / E. Knight)

Experiencing the Authentic and the Spectacular

Banff and Yoho national parks monitored with GPS satellite collars. Two of these bears were captured and collared in Yoho in 2014. GPS data is provided to several research teams working on various aspects of bear behaviour and ecology. For example, one research team is now analyzing data to investigate how bears use various types of habitat, as well as to identify which foods are available to them at different stages of forest succession.

Another aspect of this research is investigating the potential of electro-mats to deter bears from entering the railway at fence-end locations. Off-site trials have been established in Yoho and Banff. One of the challenges that arose with this technology was the tendency for accumulating snow to prevent the electro-mats from functioning in the winter. The electro-mats being tested in the off-site trials have recently been replaced with updated units that have built-in heating coils to melt snow. Trials will continue this winter.



Trilobite from the Burgess Shale (Walcott Quarry)
(© Parks Canada / T. Keith)

Burgess Shale Research

Yoho National Park, within the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site, provides outstanding opportunities for ongoing natural science research and discovery. The world famous Burgess Shale fossil sites in Yoho and Kootenay national parks have been the subject of active research projects in recent years, with efforts in 2014 focussing on the Marble Canyon site in Kootenay National Park. Parks Canada showcases this fascinating story through our program of guided hikes, website content, and other outreach efforts. Guided hikes to the Walcott Quarry and the Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds continued to be increasingly popular in 2014. A total of 94 guided public hikes were offered in Yoho, which were attended by 842 visitors.

Connecting Canadians to their national parks and national historic sites is one of the main objectives of Parks Canada. Providing infrastructure and services that facilitate meaningful engagement with nature is critical to establishing these lasting connections.

Visitation

Visitation declined slightly in fiscal year 2013-14, down 1.2% from the previous year. The trend reversed this year, with visitation between April and September 2014 increasing 8.2% over the same period the previous year.

Fiscal Year	Visitation	% Change from Previous Year
2013-14	553,711	-1.2
2012-13	560,201	1.7
2011-12	550,832	-0.6
2010-11	547,436	3.8
2009-10	527,501	

Table 1: Visitation Statistics – Yoho National Park

West Gate Re-Opening

The Parks Canada kiosk at the west entrance to Yoho National Park re-opened for the summer of 2014. The gate had been closed for several years due to poor telecommunication capability at the site. This issue has been rectified allowing the re-establishment of a welcome station for visitors entering the mountain parks from the west. The kiosk operated throughout the summer season, from June 23, 2014 to October 13, 2014, providing an improved welcome to the park, and an opportunity to buy a park pass for those visitors entering from British Columbia.

Facility Upgrades

Significant upgrades were made to the washroom buildings in Kicking Horse Campground in 2014 to enhance the camping experience in Yoho's busiest campground. New highway signs were also installed on the Trans-Canada Highway providing direction to the Yoho Valley Road and the Kicking Horse and Monarch campgrounds. The new highway signs are part of a multi-year sign replacement program to significantly enhance way-finding for visitors.

Learn to Camp

The Learn to Camp program is a national initiative held at national parks and national historic sites across Canada. It is designed to introduce a new generation of Canadians to the pleasures of camping in the great outdoors. A Learn to Camp event was held in Kicking Horse Campground on June 20 and 21, 2014, and was attended by 53 participants. This program is held in partnership with Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC). Parks Canada and MEC staff worked together to teach visitors how to set up tents, pack for hikes and be “bear aware”. Other activities offered to the participants included a Learn to Geocache program, a self-guided ‘Get to Know Yoho’ challenge, and a guided hike.



Visitors at the Learn to Camp event in Kicking Horse Campground (© Parks Canada)

Red Chair Program

The Red Chair Program is a new national initiative recently launched by Parks Canada. The program involves the placement of a pair of Adirondack chairs at scenic viewpoints with the aim of having visitors sit, relax and appreciate the view. It is hoped that these visitors will post pictures of themselves in the chairs on social media sites. Two sets of chairs were installed in Yoho in the fall – one set at Takakkaw Falls and one set at Yoho Lake. Interpretive panels will be installed near the chairs in 2015.

Trails

Parks Canada trail crews completed several small trail upgrades in 2014. A re-alignment of a portion of the All Soul’s alpine route was completed near Lake O’Hara. This new alignment was proposed by the Lake O’Hara Trails Club in order to move this section of trail away from an area of snow accumulation that often kept the trail inaccessible into the early summer. The new alignment is also further away from the cliffs of Mount Schaefer, thereby reducing exposure to overhead rock-fall hazard. This project was made

possible through funding provided by the Lake O’Hara Trails Club under a partnering agreement with Parks Canada.

Another re-alignment was completed on a portion of the Little Yoho Valley trail to avoid an old dysfunctional stair section of the trail. Also in the Yoho Valley area, a new footbridge was constructed on the trail between Takakkaw Falls and the Whiskey Jack Hostel.

Volunteering

Volunteering in hands-on projects is an important way for Canadians and international visitors to connect with national parks. During the past year volunteers participated in several activities in Yoho, including roadside and trailside litter clean-ups, assistant guiding on Burgess Shale hikes, and acting as campground hosts in Kicking Horse Campground.



Red Chairs at Takakkaw Falls (© Parks Canada)

Bringing the Mountains to People Where They Live

Bringing Parks Canada stories to Canadians where they live and work is an important element of Parks Canada’s effort to connect Canadians to their national parks and national historic sites. Parks Canada pursues this objective through various avenues, such

as participating in outreach education activities in urban centres, and providing engaging content on internet and social media sites.

In 2011 the Royal Ontario Museum and Parks Canada partnered with the Department of Canadian Heritage Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) to create the definitive online Burgess Shale website. The Burgess Shale VMC continues to attract new visitors, providing an opportunity for Canadians and people from around the world to learn about these globally significant fossils. As of late October, approximately 61,000 users had visited the site in 2014; 77% of these visitors were new.

Two Burgess Shale teacher resource kits developed by Parks Canada were distributed to teachers by the Royal Ontario Museum as part of a 2013 partnering agreement. A third kit is used on-site at the museum, helping to raise awareness of Parks Canada's role in protecting and presenting these internationally significant fossils in Yoho and Kootenay national parks.

Also in 2014 the Burgess Shale was profiled to 30 members of the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication, who learned about the Burgess Shale and related educational resources, including the VMC Burgess Shale website, through a display at their four-day leadership clinic held near Kootenay National Park.

Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site

Cultural history is an important element of the protected heritage of Yoho National Park, which includes within its border three national historic sites. One of these sites – Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin – was the site of critical conservation work during the summer of 2014.

Stone masons from the Parks Canada Heritage Restoration Workshop crew spent a week at the Abbott Pass Refuge Cabin National Historic Site repointing the masonry on the high-elevation stone structure. This project to repair and stabilise the 92-year-old Swiss designed refuge hut was a collaborative effort between Parks Canada and the Alpine Club of Canada facility maintenance team. The project received high public profile and interest, with over 22,000 people learning about the project on Facebook and Twitter.



Re-pointing work underway at Abbot Pass Refuge Cabin (© Parks Canada / R. Pennell)

Managing Development

Proposed Alpine Hut

The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) continued preparation for the construction of a new alpine hut in the upper Yoho Valley, near the Des Poilus Glacier. Efforts in 2014 included refining the ventilation and environmental performance aspects of the building design, and installing the grey-water disposal field at the new hut location. A preliminary rare plant survey was also conducted at the high alpine site. In October, the ACC announced that the new hut will be named the Richard and Louise Guy Hut, in honour of long-time members and friends of the organisation.



Parks Canada and ACC staff at the site of the proposed alpine hut near Des Poilus Glacier (© Parks Canada / G. Kubian)

Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Conserving and restoring natural ecosystems is critical to ensuring Parks Canada meets its obligation to maintain the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks. Maintaining healthy, intact ecosystems also ensures that Canadians have opportunities to experience and learn about Canada's native biodiversity and ecological processes. Some highlights of ecosystem management initiatives in Yoho National Park are outlined below.

Aquatic Ecosystem Connectivity

Improving aquatic connectivity for fish in park waterways is one of the key ecological objectives of the management plan. In 2014, planning and preparation work was completed for the installation of two new culverts on Monarch Creek in Kicking Horse Campground that will replace the existing poorly-designed culverts that are blocking fish passage. This multi-phase project to restore and stabilise Monarch Creek will begin in December 2014, and will include installation of a third culvert and bank stabilisation work in future years. In addition to improving fish passage, these efforts will reduce the potential for future flooding and flood-related damage in the campground and access road.



New arch culvert being installed on frozen Monarch Creek to restore aquatic connectivity (© Parks Canada / D. McNamara)



Parks Canada staff prepare to place cages over whitebark pine cones on Paget Peak (© Parks Canada)

Species-at-Risk – whitebark pine recovery

Whitebark pine is a characteristic tree species of high alpine habitats in the western cordillera. In 2012, this species was designated as endangered under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. The principal threats to its survival are: white pine blister rust – a fungus introduced from Europe; mountain pine beetle; and climate change. As part of the recovery effort for this species, Parks Canada vegetation specialists collected seed from whitebark pine trees from Paget Peak, near the Continental Divide in Yoho National Park. These seeds will be grown into seedlings to test for resistance to white pine blister rust. If rust-resistant trees are identified, their seeds will be used to grow nursery stock for eventual transplanting into the wild.

To determine the long-term health and changes in white pine blister rust infection rates, vegetation specialists also visited 11 whitebark pine monitoring plots in Yoho. At each plot, 50 trees were assessed for signs of blister rust infection. Infection rates will be compared to the previous 10-years of sampled data to determine if there is any discernible trend.

Managing Bear – Human Conflict

A heavy winter snowpack followed by a late spring made 2014 a challenging year for bear management. The persistence of snow at higher elevations kept lots of bears active in the valley bottoms well into the summer. Parks Canada staff were kept busy dealing with higher than usual numbers of both black and grizzly bears feeding along the road side. At the Yoho/Banff boundary, staff were actively managing two collared grizzly bears and two un-marked black bears who were foraging along the roadside just outside the end of the fenced highway through Banff until the July long weekend. In October there was an unfortunate loss to the park grizzly bear population

when a sub-adult male grizzly bear (tagged, #128) was struck and killed on the Trans-Canada Highway near the Ottertail viewpoint.

Reducing Unnatural Wildlife Mortality

Reducing the impact of transportation corridors on wildlife is one of the important goals of the management plan. Data on wildlife mortalities for the year is still being tabulated, but from January to early October there were a total of 21 confirmed mortalities of large and medium-sized mammals on the Trans-Canada Highway in Yoho. The 10-year average annual mortality is 27. During the same period there were no confirmed mortalities on the Canadian Pacific Railway through the park, compared to a 10-year average annual total of 3. Parks Canada has implemented measures aimed at reducing road-related wildlife mortality, such as designing and deploying new wildlife alert signs when animals are frequenting roadside areas, and using roadside light boards to warn drivers to slow down when wildlife is present.

For More Information,
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<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/yoho/index.aspx>

Yoho National Park Visitor Centre
(Open from May until early October)
Phone: 250-343-6783
Email: yoho.info@pc.gc.ca

Looking Forward...

Some things to watch for in 2015 include:

- Construction of the Richard and Louise Guy Hut near Glacier Des Poilus in the upper Yoho Valley, scheduled for July 2015.
- Completion of the field research component of the Parks Canada–Canadian Pacific Grizzly Bear Research Project.
- Completion of new culverts on Monarch Creek to improve aquatic connectivity and reduce the likelihood of future flooding in Kicking Horse Campground.



Hiker above Emerald Lake in autumn
(© Parks Canada / T. Keith)