



Yoho
National Park

Management Plan Implementation Report 2015

Photo © Tourism BC/Dave Heath



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Superintendent's Message

Once again I am pleased to present to Canadians this annual report highlighting some recent achievements of Parks Canada in implementing the Yoho National Park Management Plan. Now in year-five of this management plan, Parks Canada continues to make progress on meeting the goals and objectives set out for Yoho National Park. Highlights include visitor facility upgrades, significant highway improvements, work to engage new visitors inside the park and reach out to Canadians where they live, and species-at-risk recovery efforts.

The highlights described in this report reflect local initiatives to implement Parks Canada's national objectives to conserve and restore Canada's national parks, to connect Canadians with their natural treasures, and to bring Parks Canada places to Canadians where they live. As you reflect on these achievements you can be assured that Parks Canada remains committed to the very important responsibility of protecting the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of all Canadians.

Melanie Kwong

Field Unit Superintendent

Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay

Photo © Tourism BC/Dave Heath

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Park Management Implementation Reporting

This annual report highlights progress and accomplishments for the 2015 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 National Park. Highlights are presented for each of the six key strategies outlined in the park management plan.

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.



Photo © Parks Canada

Parks Canada - Canadian Pacific Grizzly Bear Research Project

Parks Canada and Canadian Pacific are nearing completion of a 5-year project to study grizzly bear use of lower valley bottoms near the Canadian Pacific right-of-way. Data collection is being completed and analysis is underway. More information on this program will be available once research studies have concluded.

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 continue to be the source of exciting new scientific discoveries. Several peer-reviewed scientific papers were published in 2015 based on fossils collected from Yoho and Kootenay. These included descriptions of new species discovered near Marble Canyon, and a re-examination of one of the most unusual species from the Burgess Shale in Yoho, *Hallucigenia* which resolved a long-standing puzzle about the exact nature of this organism. Parks Canada continues to showcase this fascinating story through our program of guided hikes, website content, and other outreach efforts aimed at connecting Canadians with Yoho National Park. Guided hikes to the Walcott Quarry and the Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds continued to be increasingly popular in 2015. Parks Canada offered a total of 94 guided public hikes in Yoho, which were attended by 842 visitors. The Burgess Shale Geoscience Foundation also offers guided hikes to the Walcott Quarry and Mount Stephen Trilobite Beds.

Experiencing the Authentic and the Spectacular

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 increased significantly in fiscal year 2014-15¹, rising by 10.1% from the previous year. The trend continued throughout the year, with visitation between April and December 2015 increasing 7.1% over the same period the previous year.

¹ Parks Canada's fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31.

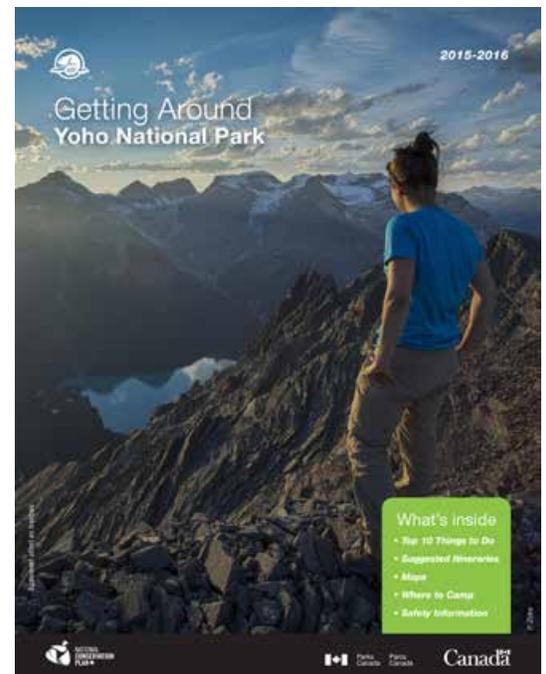
Fiscal Year	Visitation	% change from Previous Year
2014-15	609,451	10.1
2013-14	553,711	-1.2
2012-13	560,201	1.7
2011-12	550,832	0.6
2010-11	547,436	3.8

Table 1: Visitation Statistics – Yoho National Park



Federal Infrastructure Investments

In July 2015, federal funding of \$62.8 million to address deferred maintenance of park infrastructure was announced for Yoho National Park. Projects funded during this first phase of work include paving and rock slope stabilization on the Trans-Canada Highway, rock scaling on the Yoho Valley Road, replacement of way-finding signage, and paving of the Emerald Lake road (to be completed in 2016). Rock scaling on the Yoho Valley Road was completed during the fall. Rock work was completed on the most westerly rock exposure in the park, near the west gate, and significant progress was made on the first of several major rock cuts on the Field Hill, just west of Wapta Lake. This work will continue in 2016.



Photos © Parks Canada

New Visitor Guides

Parks Canada has developed a new visitor orientation guide called Getting Around Yoho National Park. This 12-page guide is distributed at the park gates and visitor centres throughout the mountain parks. The guide includes a large park map, as well as a map of the Town of Field. The new guide also features a “Top-Ten” list of activities to do in the park, provides camping, hiking and safety information, and includes suggested itineraries for full and half day adventures.



Learn to Camp

For several years, Parks Canada has been providing a Learn-To-Camp program for visitors unfamiliar with traditional camping. The program was initially based on a guided overnight experience, and although participants enjoyed the program, considerable staff time was dedicated to reaching 50-60 people. In the spring and summer of 2015, Parks Canada developed and launched a re-designed Learn-To-Camp program using a mock campsite set up at different locations, including Emerald Lake in Yoho National Park. Planning for the program began in May and delivery was launched in mid-July. Five interactive programs were offered on a drop-in basis at the campsite: How to Set Up/Take Down a Tent; Sniff Out The Problem (How to camp Bear Safe); What to Pack for Camping; Where Can We Camp in Banff, Yoho, and Kootenay National Parks?; and Camp Right & Have a Good Night. Programs ran from July 17th 2015 through August 30th 2015 and a total of 1349 visitors took part in the three parks.

Facility Upgrades

New way-finding signage was designed, manufactured and installed along the Yoho Valley road from the Monarch Campground to Takakkaw Falls Day Use Area. New signage for the parking lot, campground and the Takakkaw Falls day use area has been manufactured and will be installed in 2016. New self-registration kiosks were built and installed at Takakkaw Falls, Monarch and Hoodoo Creek campgrounds. A new self-registration kiosk was built for Kicking Horse Campground and will be installed in 2016.



Lake O'Hara Bus Shelter

On June 18, 2015 the new Lake O'Hara bus shelter was officially launched for the 2015 operating season. In a ceremony that included partners, stakeholders and friends, participants were invited to view the four newly installed interpretive panels and attend the annual general meeting for the Lake O'Hara stakeholders. The interpretive panels provide visitors with an overview of the Lake O'Hara area and its unique features. This new shelter is a result of the collaborative efforts of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, Lake O'Hara Lodge, the Alpine Club of Canada, and Parks Canada.

Photo © Parks Canada

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important way for Canadians and international visitors to connect with Canada's national parks. Over the past 28 years, volunteers from the Friends of Yoho National Park have contributed significant time and resources to broaden awareness and understanding of Yoho National Park's natural and cultural heritage. During the winter, volunteers with the Kicking Horse Cross-Country Ski Club maintained and groomed the Nordic ski trails in the Field-Emerald Lake area, providing a great winter skiing experience for locals and visitors.

Volunteers working with Parks Canada in Yoho National Park also contributed hundreds of hours throughout the year including: assisting guides on Burgess Shale hikes, as campground hosts, and assisting with litter pickups, invasive plant control, ecological monitoring, trail maintenance, and special events.

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.

Get Into The Wild

The "Get into the Wild" outreach program highlighted mountain park stories at the Calgary Zoo from mid-June to Labour Day. Student interpreters engaged young families (44,000 total contacts) in learning activities and prop talks that focused on species at risk found both in the zoo and in our western and northern national parks (e.g. caribou, grizzly bears, black tailed prairie dog, whooping crane and bison). A new activities booklet also highlighted a variety of recreational activities available in the national parks.

Wings Over The Rockies

Burgess Shale fossils were integral to the "Fossils and Feathers" theme for the 2015 Wings Over the Rockies event in Invermere. Palaeontologist Jean-Bernard Caron from the Royal Ontario Museum was the keynote speaker and highlighted the importance of the Burgess Shale in Yoho and Kootenay national parks. Caron was also involved in several other fossil-related programs and events, including school presentations offered with the support of Parks Canada staff to over 700 Columbia Valley school children.

Urban Outreach

2015 marks the third year of the Parks Canada urban outreach program in the Vancouver area. In addition to scheduled programming at the Vancouver Aquarium and Science World, the outreach program targets several special events throughout the Lower Mainland. Yoho National Park stories related to wildlife monitoring were profiled at Science World with 16,119 visitor contacts, and for the first time, stories of the Burgess Shale were profiled at the Vancouver Aquarium for a total of 65,567 contacts. Outreach activities at special events throughout the Vancouver area featured general park information and resulted in approximately 17,000 additional contacts.

In Toronto, the Burgess Shale fossils were highlighted as part of Parks Canada programming at the Royal Ontario Museum during March Break. For seven days, Parks Canada staff engaged young families (4,000 contacts) with interactive programs related to Burgess Shale fossils. Other Parks Canada take-away activities, including spray-on tattoos, green screen postcards, fossil rubbings, social media posts and news media coverage ensured that this Yoho National Park story and visitor information reached additional audiences in Toronto and beyond.

Local School Trips

School field trips to Emerald Lake were offered to Columbia Valley elementary schools in Spring 2015 and reached 33 children, teachers and parent-volunteers.





Celebrating History, Culture and the World Heritage Site

Cultural history is an important element of the heritage of Yoho National Park, which includes within its border three national historic sites, numerous historic structures and other cultural resources. In 2015 Parks Canada staff devoted time to assessing some of these important features.

Archeological and Cultural Resource Assessments

In 2015 a new national Cultural Resource Impact Assessment process was developed to assess the presence of archeological and cultural resources related to land use and development projects, and mitigate any potential negative impacts. Local park staff were assisted by Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Advisors and Archeologists from Parks Canada's national team to complete this work for several projects.

The national CRM team also worked with specialists from Public Services and Procurement Canada to deliver a workshop to local CRM advisors and trades specialists on conducting cultural resource assessments and recordings of heritage buildings. As part of the training workshop, the Takakkaw Falls patrol cabin and Yoho Ranch buildings were assessed and recorded. These assessments will be used to guide future restoration projects for these sites.



Managing Development

New Alpine Hut

In July of 2015, after nearly 20 years of discussion and planning, the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) started construction on the Richard and Louise Guy Hut located near Mont Des Poilus in Yoho National Park. The construction of this hut fulfils commitments in the 2010 Yoho National Park Management Plan to consider one additional hut on the Wapta Icefield, and will contribute significantly to improved ski touring opportunities in the park and surrounding region.

The hut will be part of the Wapta – Yoho Traverse providing the ‘missing link’ between the Stanley Mitchell hut in the Yoho Valley and the Bow, Balfour and Peyto huts on the Wapta Icefield. Despite numerous challenges faced by the building crew due to poor weather, elevation and the remote location, the ACC anticipates the hut will be open for use in March 2016. The hut will sleep 18 people and will be available for winter use only in order to protect important summer habitat in the upper Yoho Valley for sensitive species such as grizzly bear.

The advanced design and construction techniques used in building the hut will improve energy efficiency, and reduce the environmental footprint of the hut while improving health and safety of users.



Photo © Parks Canada

Ensuring Healthy Park Ecosystems

Aquatic Ecosystem Connectivity

Improving aquatic connectivity for fish in park waterways is one of the key ecological objectives of the management plan. Installation of two new culverts on Monarch Creek was completed in March 2015 to replace the existing poorly-designed culverts that impeded fish passage. The new culverts were designed to allow fish passage and to better accommodate peak water flows to reduce flood risk. In September 2015 fish sampling determined that fish are now able to access the creek above a previously existing fish barrier culvert. Work continues this winter and will include replacing a third culvert on this stream as well as undertaking bank stabilization and fish habitat improvements.

Water Quality Monitoring

The Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) is an aquatic biomonitoring program for assessing the health of fresh water ecosystems in Canada (www.ec.gc.ca/rcba-cabin/). The CABIN monitoring protocol relies on the abundance and diversity of aquatic bugs to assess water quality. These bugs are known to be sensitive to environmental conditions. Eight randomly selected sites have been sampled with another seven scheduled for next year. The CABIN results will be reported in the next State of the Park Report.



Photo © Parks Canada



Photo © Parks Canada

Species at Risk – Bats - Little Brown Myotis and Northern Myotis

In December 2014, little brown myotis and northern myotis bats were listed as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act*. Eastern populations of these bat species are facing rapid population declines that are the result of ‘white-nose syndrome’, a disease caused by a non-native fungus thought to have originated in Europe. It first appeared in North America in New York State in 2006, and has rapidly spread throughout eastern North America. The disease continues to spread westward and may eventually threaten bat populations here.

Very little is known about bats in the mountain national parks. Confirmation of species presence, and knowledge of species distribution, abundance, roosting sites, maternity sites and hibernacula is lacking. Gaining an understanding of bat populations and distribution will be important to protecting them should white-nose syndrome spread to this region.

In 2015 park staff initiated bat surveys to address this need. In July, two pilot survey transects were completed in Yoho National Park using the North American bat monitoring protocol (NABat). Seven of nine bat species known to occur throughout the region were documented at the pilot sites in Yoho National Park, including the endangered little brown myotis. Staff also placed bat roost loggers in two caves in Banff National Park and one abandoned mine in Yoho National Park. Acoustic data from these roost loggers will be used to confirm whether or not there are any hibernating bats in these areas.



Photo © Parks Canada

Species-At-Risk – Whitebark Pine

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 ten whitebark pine trees that show some potential to be resistant to blister rust. The trees were found in the Paget Peak, Mount Hunter, and Ice River areas of the park. In mid-summer, these trees have their cones protected with cages to prevent the seeds from being eaten by Clark's nutcrackers. The cones are collected in the fall and the seeds are extracted and sent to nurseries to test for resistance to white pine blister rust. Disease resistant trees, if identified, will be used in future restoration efforts.

Managing Human–Bear Conflict

Parks Canada staff expend considerable effort to keep both people and bears safe while they share the same space within the park. Several warnings and closures were issued in 2015 due to bears frequenting areas also used by park visitors and residents. A large black bear approached several hikers in the Yoho Valley, but no other significant bear-human encounters were reported.



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 are still being tabulated, but from January to mid-November there were a total of 21 confirmed mortalities of large and medium-sized mammals on the roads 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 continues to implement measures to reduce road-related wildlife mortality, such as deploying wildlife alert signs when animals are frequenting roadside areas, implementing reduced speed zones, and using roadside light boards to warn drivers to slow down when wildlife is present.

Looking Forward

Some things to watch for in 2016 include:

- Official opening of the Richard and Louise Guy Hut near Mont Des Poilus in the upper Yoho Valley.
- Continued improvements to the Trans-Canada Highway, including additional re-profiling and rock scaling of road cuts.
- Re-paving of the Emerald Lake road.

For more information, please contact us at:

Yoho National Park of Canada

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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)

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