

# CONSERVATION

SPRING/SUMMER 2007, VOLUME 8

The official publication of the Alberta Conservation Association



*Celebrating*  
10 YEARS OF  
CONSERVATION

**Making it Count**  
10 Years of  
Conservation Research

**Ribbons of Green**  
Riparian Conservation  
Milestones

**On the Cover**  
The Hunter

**GECF**  
Leveraging  
Conservation

## Alberta Conservation Association's 10th Anniversary

On behalf of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, I congratulate the Alberta Conservation Association on its 10th anniversary.

Your organization is a valued partner in conserving, protecting and enhancing Alberta's natural resources. Your many contributions include working with my department to publish and distribute reports on the status of wild species in Alberta. You also co-ordinate the highly successful *Report A Poacher* program. My sincere thanks to your members, staff and volunteers for your efforts to promote good stewardship.

Alberta is currently undergoing unprecedented pressures due to growth. With more activity on the land, conservation is more important than ever. The government's Land-use Framework will help to manage growth in a sustainable way. One of my responsibilities is to ensure that good environmental stewardship remains a priority. I look forward to working with the Alberta Conservation Association over the coming months in that important effort.

I share with many of you a deep love of the outdoors. My enthusiasm for fishing and hunting was passed down through my family, as is the case with so many anglers and hunters in Alberta. I am committed to ensuring that these opportunities remain for future generations of Albertans.

Congratulations once again on reaching this milestone anniversary. Best wishes for many more successful years, and I look forward to our continued partnership.

**Ted Morton**, Minister  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development



The Honourable Ted Morton, Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development with Preston Manning and ACA Board of Directors.

## Our First Decade

It's hard to believe that the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) is celebrating its 10th anniversary already. Since its inception in 1997, ACA has participated in a multitude of worthy conservation projects. However, these good works were not accomplished alone. Over the last 10 years, ACA has partnered on many projects with our member group organizations, conservation groups, industry and our senior partner, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD).

These partnerships have provided many benefits to our main stakeholder group, namely Albertans who purchase fishing or hunting licenses. We've been able to leverage our working capital to provide conservation programs such as fish stocking, lake aeration, ungulate surveys, habitat development and enhancement, maintaining recreational access sites, and acquiring recreational land for the use of Albertans.

ACA also provides essential services and programs to ASRD by way of our program agreements. Most folks are familiar with the *Report A Poacher* program, but did you know that the ACA administers it? We also administer the *Shot Wildlife Compensation* program, *Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention* program, and the *Wildlife Predator Compensation* program. As well, we provide data and professional advice to our government partners on a wide variety of fisheries and wildlife programs.

The ACA story doesn't end there. We have a *Grant Eligible Conservation Fund* that has been a roaring success by any standard. Any Albertan may submit a conservation proposal or program to the Grant Eligible Committee for consideration. From the building of bluebird nesting boxes, to aerial surveys of ungulates, these grants have made a real difference on the conservation front. In fact, when you look at the numbers over the years, you get a real sense of the power of the Conservation Fund; for every dollar we've granted, \$6.30 has been matched!

So now that we have our first decade behind us, what's next for the ACA? I foresee a bright future for this organization and a multitude of opportunities on the conservation front. We've just signed a five-year program agreement with ASRD, so our ongoing partnership with them is clearly defined. This leaves us with the flexibility of seeking other partners to work with on conservation projects outside of our commitments to ASRD. These partners will come from other conservation groups, industry, academia and Alberta citizens.

For more information on ACA, I encourage you to check out our website at [www.ab-conservation.com](http://www.ab-conservation.com). In closing, I'd like to extend my congratulations to all our member groups and dedicated staff on this significant milestone in ACA history.

**Brian Bildson**, Chair, ACA Board of Directors

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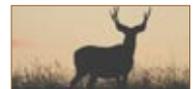
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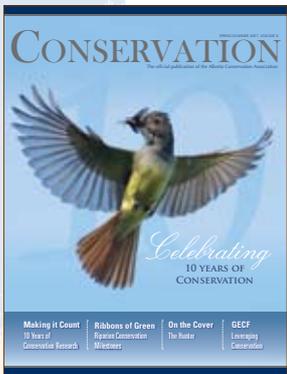
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Sharp-tailed Grouse



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# From the Editor



David Fairless

This decade marks the founding of the Alberta Conservation Association as a private, non-profit organization working in partnership with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development as a Delegated Administrative Organization to deliver and report on conservation efforts undertaken on its behalf.

ACA's achievements in this decade are attributed to individual and collective actions. A dedicated team of 65 employees; 18 of which have been with the organization since its inception, the Board of Directors, our many partners and Alberta's hunters and anglers.

#### Staff Celebrating 10 Years With ACA

Trevor Council • Darren Dorge • Troy Furukawa • Kevin Gardiner • Velma Hudson  
Paul Hvenegaard • Dave Jackson • Ed Kolodychuk • Darryl Kublik • Randy Lee  
Joanne Melzer • Lori Neufeld • Bill Patterson • Jim Potter • Lori Rohde • Diana Rung  
Jay Wieliczko • Ken Wright

In this special issue of *Conservation Magazine*, *Celebrating 10 Years of Conservation* we present you with a retrospective look at our first decade. The feature stories and "stats and facts" found in this issue highlight the results of our work, advances in new science and research, and the conservation impact these programs have on Alberta's wildlife, fisheries and habitat.

In 10 years, ACA has allocated \$72 million towards conservation work in Alberta. This work is critical as Alberta continues to experience unprecedented levels of industrial development, urbanization and land conversion throughout the province. Conservative growth projections for the Edmonton, Calgary corridor are estimated to surge to nine million by 2050. The consequences of this increasing pressure on Alberta's land base may come with potentially high costs to Alberta's rich biodiversity.

Conservation is about working collaboratively for the kind of environment that we all want in the future. ACA will continue to play a valuable role in engaging in the priorities, challenges and opportunities of the next decade to ensure Alberta's wildlife, fisheries and habitat are available for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations of Albertans. - Lisa Monsees

**Letters to the Editor:** Address letters to Conservation Magazine Editor by e-mail, fax or mail. Include your name, address and daytime telephone. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Alberta Conservation  
Association

*Celebrating*  
**10 YEARS OF CONSERVATION**

## CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

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Ed Struzik  
Photo Contest Winners

#### Special Acknowledgement:

A special thank-you to ACA staff for supplying the interesting facts and statistics found throughout the magazine and to those that gave interviews for our special feature, *Making it Count, 10 Years of Conservation Research*. Your support in preparing this anniversary issue provides us all with a greater appreciation for the diverse and important conservation work accomplished by ACA.

**Photo Credits:** Gordon Court, Darren Dorge, Dave Fairless, Marco Fontana, Kevin Gardiner, Paul Jones, Kris Kendell, Archie Landals, Jim Potter

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10 YEARS OF CONSERVATION RESEARCH

# MAKING IT COUNT

by Eric Outram



David Fairless

## Bull Trout

The following articles are part of the series, *Celebrating 10 Years of Conservation Research with Michael Short on Let's Go Outdoors.*

The Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) has, for 10 years, been directly involved in studying bull trout, piping plover and pronghorn antelope with plans for long-term monitoring for the survival of these species.

The bull trout is the official fish of Alberta, yet its range is shrinking and for many years, its population has been in serious decline. The ACA has been studying this native trout for 10 years to help understand the reasons for its decline.

When a person builds a road over bull trout streams, installs a culvert, dams a stream or river, or diverts a natural waterway, the obstacles to maintaining healthy fish populations grow exponentially. The negative effects of these developments are two fold as roads may impede, harm or alter critical habitat as well as facilitate access for anglers to previously inaccessible areas.

Bull trout are found throughout the province in rivers and streams from the Kakwa River around Grande Prairie in the north, to the Belly River near Lethbridge in the south. Data suggests that there is a relatively healthy population of bull trout in the North Saskatchewan River above Abraham Lake. Kevin Gardiner, Eastern Slopes Business Unit Leader believes that the health of the population in this area may be due to the lack of pressure on bull trout habitat. In a study set to commence in 2008, ACA will look at the river below the dam to assess bull trout population, spawning and home range.

A provincial catch and release program in effect since 1997 was introduced after it was noticed that bull trout were no longer to be found in some of their historical habitat. Historically, bull trout were common downstream of Edmonton and at Peace River. Although not all bull trout populations are thriving and growing, ACA plays a major role in monitoring the population response to catch and release, which is seen as a positive step towards a healthy fish population.

The introduction of exotic or non-native species into bull trout habitat is having a negative impact on bull trout populations. When non-native lake, brook and brown trout are introduced into bull trout waters, they tend to out-reproduce and out-compete for food, putting additional pressure on the habitat and impeding the growth of the native species.

The process of counting stocks of bull trout has been aided immensely by technology. Accurate population counts are made

possible by sampling the many diverse areas of known bull trout range using fish traps, angling and electrofishing technology from jet boats and inflatable rafts. Radio telemetry has aided in determining bull trout home range, critical spawning, rearing and overwintering areas.

One of the key strategies ACA implements is to raise the profile of the species and its plight by offering investment opportunities to partners by bringing current knowledge into the planning and mitigation processes. This, in turn, elevates the corporate stewardship profile.

Mike Rodtka, Fisheries Coordinator for the Eastern Slopes Business Unit based in Rocky Mountain House says that the ACA is careful to take advantage of work being done in other jurisdictions, including the United States. The ACA is providing sound science to aid in planning for the survival of the species. If future generations of anglers are to experience the pleasure of coaxing a bull trout to swallow a fly and then wrestle it to

shore, any plans and regulations that are implemented now have to put the fish first.

The work ACA is doing with bull trout will continue while they remain a species at risk.

### **Provincial Bull Trout Findings**

#### *Upper North Saskatchewan River Bull Trout Study*

Interesting information learned about the timing of fall spawning migrations of bull trout:

- Peak spawning occurs in the third week of September.
- Migrations towards spawning areas were detected as early as June 6.
- All migrations to spawning areas were completed by September 18.
- Migrations out of spawning tributaries were completed by October 6.
- In early fall of 2002, tracking efforts revealed that a hanging culvert located where Highway 11 intersects Owen Creek was impeding bull trout passage to upstream spawning areas. This information was brought to the attention of Parks Canada who mitigated the problem the following summer. Without the study, it is likely that this problem would have continued to limit bull trout spawning.

#### *Clearwater Bull Trout Study 2004*

Evidence of renewed use of a Clearwater tributary by spawning bull trout was observed in 2004. Prior redd surveys (dating back to the 1970s) had found little evidence of bull trout spawning, but interviews with long-time area residents indicated that historically, the stream supported a substantial bull trout spawning run.

Despite backpack electrofishing at 12 locations within the drainage (over two kilometers of stream electrofished in total), no bull trout were captured in the Tay River (tributary to the Clearwater River) in 2004, although bull trout were known to occur within the drainage as late as the 1950s.

#### *Waiparous Bull Trout Study 2006*

A 35 centimetre bull trout captured on July 5, 2006 in Meadow Creek was recaptured on September 13, 2006 in an unnamed tributary 23.5 kilometres upstream. This fish was likely feeding in Meadow Creek and traveled to the unnamed creek to spawn. Numerous young bull trout were also captured in the stream.



Kevin Gardiner

## CONSERVATION IMPACT

- Through movement studies in some fish management areas, the timing window for in-stream industrial activities has been adjusted as it was learned that bull trout enter spawning tributaries much earlier than previously thought.
- Also through movement studies, areas particularly essential for fish production have been identified and, in turn, received higher habitat protection and specific angling closures for further protection.
- Information from ACA studies has identified many anthropogenic obstructions to upstream bull trout spawning migrations. Some key obstructions have been mitigated (Owen Creek).
- Through population assessments, ACA has gauged the effectiveness of catch and release management applications.
- All information obtained through industrial partnerships has, in turn, been incorporated into land-use planning exercises.



## BULL TROUT CONSERVATION IN THE FUTURE

- Long-term monitoring of bull trout populations are required to update or determine the status of the species in many East Slope drainages and also to aid in directing bull trout conservation and management in the future.
- If human disturbance continues to expand, bull trout may only persist in the upper reaches of undeveloped watersheds. If human disturbance eliminates these refuges, bull trout may become completely extirpated.
- In the immediate future, ACA will be involved in bull trout population assessments in both the Oldman and Castle drainages of southern Alberta, as well as assessments in other drainages in Alberta.
- The bull trout population assessments in the Oldman and Castle drainages will focus on the density and abundance of adult and juvenile bull trout.
- It is anticipated that the information collected will provide a better understanding of the bull trout populations and status in these drainages and provide the fishery manager with a greater ability to protect and conserve this species.

## Fish Stats

### Since 1997

The Northeast region:

- conducted 33 creel angler assessments (creel surveys)
- collected data from 92,900 angler-trips
- collected data from 270,000 hours of fishing

The Northwest region:

- conducted 79 creel angler assessments (creel surveys)
- interviewed 97,811 anglers
- conducted 282 test netting inventories
- processed 76,246 fish

ACA **electrofishing** inventories solo or in conjunction with ASRD, ARC, and U of A:

- inventory projects = 87
- fish inventories = 4,875
- total km stream shocked = over 8,942 km
- time shocked (effort) = 1,848 hours
- species captured = 47
- total fish captured = 121,433

### Enhanced Fish Stocking

Summary of ACA Rainbow Trout stocking from 1998 to 2007.

Year	# of waterbodies	# of stockings	# of rainbow trout (20 cm)
1998	81	100	144,000
1999	74	93	132,650
2000	68	86	131,300
2001	71	85	131,300
2002	67	84	132,100
2003	68	84	131,300
2004	67	85	131,300
2005	66	78	122,100
2006	64	85	131,100
2007	64	87	131,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1,318,250</b>
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>131,825</b>

## Fish Fact

From telemetry data on Calling Lake, ACA determined that walleye move about 1.1 kilometres per day and have home ranges of about 4,280 hectares.



## Pronghorn Antelope

Paul Jones

An adult pronghorn can sprint as fast as 100 kilometres per hour and run for a great distance maintaining speeds up to 50 kilometres per hour.

The use of new GPS tracking collars has led to some interesting discoveries about pronghorn antelope in Alberta. Pronghorn antelope have traditionally been thought of as inhabitants of native prairie habitat, but current studies are requiring a rethink of this position. Where agricultural operations have encroached on native prairie, it has not necessarily driven out the pronghorn. There are now herds that remain on their home range even though it is within agricultural lands.

In addition, ACA is also gaining an understanding of migration patterns of pronghorn. With a position report transmitted every four hours and an unlimited range, it is possible to fully track individual animals. It was previously thought that migration was quite limited unless the herds were driven by winter storms, and then it was more likely to be in a southerly direction. New data from better tracking collars revealed one adult pronghorn paralleling the Trans-Canada Highway east of Medicine Hat for almost four days looking

for a place to cross. Her full migration trek covered over 400 kilometres one way. ACA is also discovering a regular spring migration north of animals living in native prairie, with a return trip in the fall to the wintering area.

Partnerships with the University of Calgary, Canadian Forces Base Suffield, Safari Club International, Alberta Fish and Game and Alberta Professional Outfitters Society have aided in data collection. The ACA has data on 64 animals totaling over 100,000 data points that, when analyzed later this year, will help in determining selection of habitat by pronghorn.

Paul Jones, Wildlife Biologist with the Southern Business Unit of ACA, is optimistic about the future growth and health of the pronghorn population whose numbers are estimated at 15,500.

Future studies include looking at herd movements; the connectedness of grasslands in Montana, Alberta and Saskatchewan; and initiating a larger study of the Northern Sage Steppe.

### CONSERVATION IMPACT

ACA is gaining great insights into the ecology and movement patterns of pronghorn antelope in Alberta and an understanding that their management is not just within Alberta, but also relies on other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan and Montana. ACA is also learning that a significant portion of the population is migratory and ensuring these routes are maintained is critical to their conservation.

The information on the ecology, habitat use and movements of pronghorn are provided to Fish and Wildlife to assist in the revision of the management plan and management of antelope. For example, knowing that a portion of the population is in Saskatchewan when Alberta is conducting their annual survey has implications for population levels and harvest levels.

## Nest Boxes Keep Waterfowl Coming Home



Jim Potter

The Cavity Nesting Waterfowl Program has been running since 1989. Through public education, creating awareness of the importance of preserving "old growth" woodlands, nest boxes are used as a tool to promote land stewardship. Partners in this project include Ducks Unlimited Canada, Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Windsor Plywood, Red Deer Co-op Home Improvement Center and participating land managers.

- ACA nest boxes are used in Saskatchewan, BC, Quebec and the Yukon.
- 250 boxes are monitored annually.
- Nest box use - 10 per cent use first year, up to 74 per cent in Year 4. Ninety-five per cent of all nest boxes are used by waterfowl. Of these, about 80 per cent are successful in hatching a brood of ducklings.
- 54,476 young fledged (flight stage) from 1,247 nest boxes.
- Cost per duck was estimated at \$1.04 in 1999.
- 206 pre-cut nest boxes were given away in 2006 and 2007 alone.



David Fairless

# Piping Plover

10 YEARS OF CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Ask Lance Engley, Wildlife Biologist with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) about his work with the piping plover, and you will find an unbridled enthusiasm for his 10-year association with this endangered shorebird. Piping plovers have been on the endangered species list in Alberta since 1987.

An adult piping plover is approximately six inches long, about the size of a bluebird. It is a migratory bird that spends its summers in parts of Canada and the northern United States. The majority of piping plovers that spend their summers in Alberta also spend their winters along the Gulf Coast of Texas.

To highlight how close this species has come to being extirpated from Alberta, the 2001 International Piping Plover Census counted only 150 adult birds in the province. These low numbers were one of the catalysts behind the Alberta government's decision to form the Alberta Piping Plover Recovery Team in 2001. This team, made up of a number of different stakeholders, completed the first Alberta Piping Plover Recovery Plan in 2002. With the implementation of recovery actions by ACA and numerous other

groups, the number of piping plovers in Alberta increased to 274 in 2006, the highest numbers seen in Alberta in 10 years.

This small shorebird nests on open, barren gravelly patches along the shoreline of alkali



lakes, where they have little protection against predators other than their colouring as camouflage. Its natural enemies include gulls, crows, and an increasing coyote population.

Field workers for ACA place wire cages, called predator exclosures, over any nests that they find. The steel mesh is wide enough to allow the adult birds to pass through, but small

enough to keep predators from getting to the eggs.

Unlike other endangered species, pressure on habitat from major industry is less of a factor with the piping plover. Livestock operations are a problem when animals churn up the shoreline where birds need to nest, but stewardship programs with ranchers to fence some sensitive habitat and to provide off-site watering stations have proven very successful. Drought conditions that have eliminated some lakes and shrunk others, cannot be dealt with so easily.

ACA is playing a major role in speeding the recovery of the piping plover. It has gained a reputation for its expertise on this species because of its intensive work with enhancing breeding habitat and productivity. As a result, ACA is a member of the Alberta Piping Plover Recovery Team as well as the federal Prairie Piping Plover Recovery Team.

While many people may never see a piping plover, the concept of losing a species from Alberta's landscape simply does not sit well with Albertans. The ACA and other organizations are working together to ensure that this does not happen.



David Fairless

## Waterfowl Crop Damage Control Program



Since 1997 the Waterfowl Crop Damage Control Program (CDC) has:

- Operated more than 110 duck feeding stations using 214,786 bushels of barley. This has provided an estimated 20,548,454 days of duck use, helping to keep these ducks away from commercial cereal crops.
- Responded to 2,618 requests by Alberta producers for waterfowl crop damage prevention assistance by providing more than 5,000 scare cannons.

ACA has been monitoring waterfowl populations on the Hay-Zama Lakes complex during spring and fall migrations since 1997. In that time, a cumulative total of 3,226,313 ducks, 185,136 geese and 12,011 swans have been observed. This information is helpful in determining the timing of oil and gas industry activities in the area.

### PIPING PLOVER STUDY STATS

- Since 1998, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) have applied predator exclosures to 561 piping plover nests. When compared with nests that were not exclosed over the same time period, hatching success of exclosed nests is more than double that of nests which were never exclosed.
- Since ACA and other partners began working intensively with piping plovers in 1998, the provincial population has increased from a low of 134 adults to a high of 274 achieved in the summer of 2006.
- Application of predator exclosures has resulted in an estimated 297 additional young, piping plover fledging beyond what would have fledged “naturally.”

## Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program



Currently there are 800 volunteers signed up for the Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program (AVAMP). Volunteers are from nature centers, schools and naturalist clubs; however a majority are members of the general public.

Since 1997, volunteers from AVAMP have reported 7,553 reptile and amphibian observations that have been entered into a provincial database. The information volunteers provide assists wildlife managers in conserving local amphibian populations and help in determining the general status of some amphibian species.

ACA has assisted in the production of 61 Alberta Wildlife Status reports. These reports are a critical step in helping to assess which species in the province are endangered, threatened, data deficient or of special concern.



David Fairless

# Ungulate Winter Range Habitat Restoration



David Fairless

## 10 YEARS OF CONSERVATION RESEARCH

**U**ngulate winter range habitat restoration and enhancement work has been undertaken in Alberta for more than 30 years by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) and the preceding *Buck For Wildlife* program. As part of a continual improvement approach, ACA has been exploring ways to utilize the best available science and program management techniques to ensure that conservation levy dollars are being maximized through project efficiency and effectiveness. After looking at cutting-edge work being done throughout North America—most notably in Wyoming, southeastern British Columbia, and Canada's National Parks—ACA is adopting a new approach to addressing the problem of disappearing ungulate habitat.

ACA is taking an ecosystem approach and looking at the province as a whole. Computer analysis is helping to reveal areas where habitat is most in need of restoration and where the greatest impact can be achieved. This unique approach is being used to identify and prioritize watersheds that are particularly important for ungulate winter range. Restoration objectives are being established for landscape, ecosystem, and species values. Planning can then be done

at a provincial level, with multiple projects working towards the achievement of common objectives.

A prime example of how this approach is being put into practice can be found in the Bighorn Backcountry, west of Rocky Mountain House. This area, also known as the R11 Forest Management Unit, contains five of the watershed sub-basins identified by ACA as candidates for ungulate habitat restoration work. ACA biologist Robert Anderson has been working with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development biologists and forestry staff to develop a plan that uses ecosystem, social and economic values to design and implement prescribed burns; and mechanical treatments that emulate natural disturbance patterns and promote ecosystem health. During ACA's first 10 years, conservation levy funds contributed to restoring approximately 4,000 hectares of habitat across the province through prescribed burning. Within the next 10 years, the target for prescribed burning within the Bighorn Backcountry alone is over 10,000 hectares. This is expected to have significant long-term benefits for elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer, moose and many other young, forest-dependent species in the Bighorn area.

**ACA has been exploring ways to utilize the best available science and program management techniques to ensure that conservation levy dollars are being maximized through project efficiency and effectiveness.**

ACA is trying to restore natural patterns by making use of the best available science as a way to guide its work. Working with industry, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and other conservation partners such as the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Alberta Fish and Game Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Safari Club International; ACA is identifying ungulate habitat within the province that has moved outside of the natural disturbance range that the ecosystem is adapted to. They are using this information to plan habitat restoration activities to restore the natural patterns needed to support not only productive ungulate populations, but also functioning ecosystems that represent natural capital for the province as a whole. In prioritizing areas and projects at the provincial level, their aim is to maximize conservation levy funds and the on-the-ground habitat work that Alberta's hunters support through these fees. ■



Darren Dorge

## ▶ Interesting Stewardship Facts



David Fairless



David Fairless



Kris Kendall



David Fairless

ACA Program	Program Dates	Delivered By	# of Landholders	Acres
<b>Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Program</b> Developing and using mathematical models to describe the relationship between land use and sharp-tailed grouse breeding habitat.	1997 - 2000	ACA	18	300,373
<b>Native Prairie Stewardship Program</b> Ensuring conservation of native prairie habitat within the Special Areas boundary for listed species at risk.	2000 - 2004	ACA	4	75,870
<b>Western Blue Flag Conservation Program</b> Delivering stewardship activities to conserve western blue flag and the habitat where they are located.	2001 - 2005	ACA and ASRD	9	9,801
<b>MULTISAR</b> Helping landowners continue to maintain habitat for species at risk.	2002 - present	ACA and ASRD	6	176,000
<b>Total:</b>			<b>37</b>	<b>562,044</b>

### Wildlife Sightings in Fish and Wildlife Management Information System (FWMIS): 9,487

#### Status Breakdown

391 endangered  
 191 threatened  
 1,063 sensitive  
 7,842 secure

#### Species Breakdown

1,057 mammals  
 24 reptiles  
 2,179 amphibians  
 6,227 birds

**MULTISAR** is a cooperative initiative between landowners, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, Alberta Conservation Association, and Alberta Public Lands and Forestry Division to facilitate conservation of multiple species across the landscape.

# Partners in Conservation

# PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

On the Cover



Gerald Romanchuk - Great Crested Flycatcher

In the fall of 2006, ACA announced the first-ever photo contest as part of the 2007 Partners in Conservation (PIC) Conference. The aim of the contest was to find the best wildlife photographs in Alberta. The winners and runners-up were announced by the judges on January 24 at the PIC reception.

The photo contest featured five categories with the Overall Winner chosen from the winners in each category:

1. **People and Wildlife: Consumptive and Non-Consumptive Use**
2. **Industry & Conservation: Bridging the Gap**  
(Urban/Industrial Wildlife, Landscape and Plant Life)
3. **Landscapes**
4. **Plant Life**
5. **Wildlife**

Featured here are the photos and stories behind each winning photo.

#### *About our judges:*

In addition to his life's work as a bird expert, Gord Court is a keen amateur photographer who has enjoyed recognition in a number of nature photography competitions in North America and has contributed prize-winning entries in the prestigious *BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year* competition on three occasions.

Ed Struzik is a photo-journalist whose work has been published in various magazines including *Canadian Geographic*, *Equinox*, *Borealis*, *Merien (Germany)*, *Report on Business*, *Geo* and newspapers similar to the *Edmonton Journal*.

## OVERALL WINNER

### Gerald Romanchuk

#### *The Hunter - Great Crested Flycatcher*

This photo was taken at Elk Island National Park in the summer of 2004. These birds aren't very common in Alberta; they're more of an eastern bird, but a few show up at Elk Island every year. A pair of them was hanging around one of the trailheads, and eventually a friend and I noticed the tree cavity that they were nesting in. The male always hovered in front of the nest before delivering some food. I set up nearby and was able to get this shot.

Canon 10D, a Canon 300mm f4 lens, & a 1.4x teleconverter.

### The Judges

This is a very difficult bird species to find in Alberta, much less photograph! Gerald has done an outstanding job capturing the bird doing what it does best... "flycatching"! The hard work and patience needed to deliver such an image is hard to imagine; the skill in delivering the appropriate exposure and in freezing the action is obvious.

What can I say? You know he worked hard for this one! And the detail is so perfectly captured, it wouldn't be hard to identify the prey in its beak. It's so good, it almost doesn't look real.

*The Overall Winner was awarded the opportunity to have his photograph published on the cover of this special issue of Conservation Magazine.*



Darwin Chambers - Young Conservationist with Bull Trout



Mike Jokinen - Evening Cast



Jerry Clement - High Octane

## PEOPLE & WILDLIFE

### Winner: Darwin Chambers

#### *Young Conservationist with Bull Trout*

Great friends; long, summer days and amazing fishing all played a part in this photo taken in the summer of 2005. Fly fishing on southern Alberta's small streams is something that I look forward to every year. In July 2005, Hunter Curran, his father Trevor and I departed on what turned out to be one of my most memorable days of fishing.

After a couple hours of fishing spent catching numerous cutthroat trout, Hunter spotted a couple of shadows lurking in a pool at the base of a small set of falls. After assessing the situation, Trevor tied a large steamer pattern on the end of his fly rod and proceeded to strip the fly across the pool, not really knowing what to expect. In a flash, there was a flurry of action as one of the bull trout latched onto the fly. After a hard-fought battle, which lasted a couple minutes while the fish made many runs up and down the stream, Hunter was able to get a net on the fish.

We snapped some quick photos and released the fish safely back into the pool. This image now hangs on my wall as a constant reminder as to why I love the great outdoors.

Olympus C5060, 1/250 at f4.5.

### Runner up: Mike Jokinen

#### *Evening Cast*

On this particular evening, I was on a quest for a unique trout species that can be found in select, high-altitude lakes of southern Alberta. I was after the golden trout, a beautiful, vibrantly colored trout species that originated from the California's high Sierras, but was introduced to Alberta during the 1950s and 1960s.

As I was floating around the lake enjoying the evening fishing, it was difficult not to notice how calm and still my surroundings were and, in particular, the reflection of my surroundings in the water. Since I always carry a camera with me, I found this to be the perfect opportunity to capture my visual experience on film—or should I say, on a memory card. It took several attempts to get the picture I was hoping for, but eventually I was able to capture this one. Now, as I sit through the winter months wishing it were summer again, I can always picture myself back in this esthetic, high-mountain wilderness, casting for the elusive golden trout.

No photo equipment specified.

## INDUSTRY & CONSERVATION

### Winner: Jerry Clement

#### *High Octane (Tank Farm & Wetlands)*

I shot this image in the late afternoon of September 8, 2006 in a very smoke-filled sky due to the Tatoosh forest fires in Manning Park of southern British Columbia.

I have shot photos around these wetlands located near the Calgary airport in the past. On this particular evening, I had intentions of shooting photos that had the harvest moon hanging over these wetlands. This would prove to be a bust due to clouds obscuring the horizon. As the sun settled over the western horizon, I captured a series of images, as well as this photograph of the wetlands that includes this tank farm for jet fuel storage. I was fortunate enough to find the blue heron standing on the island in this wetland, patiently waiting while I set up my tripod. The photo speaks for itself as to my intentions for the composition of the photo. I shot the image one stop underexposed to keep the sun from over-exposing the highlights of the image.

Canon EOS 20D with Canon 70-200mm @ 200mm ISO100.

**Runner-up: No prize was awarded in this category.**

## LANDSCAPES

### Winner: Gary Drake

#### *Farmstead Shelterbelt*

While on one of my field trips, I came across this old homestead. I spent quite a while looking at it and trying to imagine how families lived in such remoteness with just the basics. I like to record them with my camera, since many of these will disappear due to the weather, lack of upkeep and other events. This homestead was quite a ways from the road, and the shelter of the windrows of trees led me right to the house while on one of my trips with my fellow photographer, Thane Vanderaegen.

Nikon D70, 24-120 VR lens. Settings focal length 24mm, f10 @ 1/400.

### Runner up: Thane Vanderaegen

#### *Porcupine Hills*

While on a photo field trip in the Porcupine Hills with Gary Drake, I came across this scene. I saw the contrast between the lively green of the hills, the once-living limbs of the tree, and the ancient mountain range on the horizon. Adding to the overall effect was the scent of the green forest and the sounds of the birds and insects anchoring me in the present. I just had to take the shot.

Canon 20D w/Tamron 35-105mm f7.1 1/320 sec.



Gary Drake - Farmstead Shelterbelt



Thane Vanderaegen - Porcupine Hills

## PLANT LIFE

### Winner: Theresa Hannah

#### *Pine Burn*

The Chisholm fire of 2001 was a large one, spreading to 100,000 hectares, and burning hotter than most. The following spring, my husband and I decided to wander through it in a spirit of exploration. We were lucky enough to see some of the burn-dependent wildlife that lives in Alberta, including the black-backed woodpecker. We also came across a moose as well as a dead vole cached in a shrub by a northern shrike. But what fascinated us the most was the incredible visual display of the burn patterns on the trees. The design of the bark peeling off the trunks was almost too perfect, producing an unusual abstract scene. When I came upon an area of high density of trees, the image it created almost took my breath away.

No photo equipment specified.

### Runner up: Sam Wirzba

#### *Prairie Crocus*

I often travel with my photo equipment in southwestern Alberta in search of agricultural subject matter. On one such trip, after photographing beef cattle on Alberta's scenic rangelands in spring, my eye noticed prairie crocus plants at their peak on some pasture lands to the north of Waterton Lakes National Park. The intense color of the crocuses stood out amongst the dry, brown vegetation in the pasture. While waiting for the sun to drop on the western horizon (to produce better side lighting), I spent time looking for the 'perfect' plants and making decisions on photo perspective. The photo taken depicts the beauty of this hardy spring flower. The 'hairy' plant stems add to appeal of this particular wildflower. This shot could not have been possible without a tripod, cable release and mirror lock-up feature."

Canon EOS 3; 70-200 mm lens; tripod; Velvia 50.



Theresa Hannah - Pine Burn



Sam Wirzba - Prairie Crocus



Gerald Romanchuk - Short-eared Owl



Dustin Jensen - Bluebird



Julia Burgess - Caterpillar

## WILDLIFE

**Winner: Gerald Romanchuk**

*The Hunter - Great Crested Flycatcher*

**Runner-up: Gerald Romanchuk**

*Short-eared Owl – Species of Concern*

The winter of 2005/2006 was notable for the large number of short-eared owls at Beaverhill Lake near Tofield. Birdwatchers were seeing as many as 90 of these owls flying around and hunting over the grassland that used to be lakebed. I made several trips out there to photograph them. One day, this particular owl flew up from the ground when I drove past. It circled around a bit, and then came back to the patch of grass where it had been roosting. The owl backed into its spot, wiggling its tail until it was tucked back into place.

Canon 20D & a Sigma 500mm f4.5 lens.

## JUNIOR

**Winner: Dustin Jensen**

*Bluebird*

I took this picture of a female bluebird flying into its nest box while we were on our way to do some bird watching. We were near some private land by the Oldman River near Lethbridge, Alberta. I was riding in the back seat of the car, and while we were driving, we saw a few bluebirds. We then noticed a male and female bluebird close to their nest box. I asked my dad for his camera and decided to take a couple of pictures; luckily one of them turned out. While we were in this same area, we also saw a few other birds, including a kestrel that looked as if it was choking on something that it had just eaten.

Canon 20D 300 f4 L IS lens with 1.4 teleconverter; ISO 100, 1/320 sec @ f6.3.

**Runner up: Julia Burgess**

*Caterpillar*

Walking along the trails at Chicakoo Lake Recreation Area, north of Stony Plain, Alberta, I was able to see something everyone else walked by — a caterpillar under a leaf.

Nikon D70 with 18-70 mm lens.

**Visit [www.ab-conservation.com](http://www.ab-conservation.com) to read all of the judges comments. ■**



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A partnership initiative between:





# REPORT A POACHER



In Alberta Dial Toll Free : 1-800-642-3800

*Report A Poacher* (RAP) was created in 1990 as a community-based program that provides the hunting and fishing community and the public who witness a wildlife or fish offence with the opportunity to report it.

ACA administers the program as one of its Delegated Administrative Organization responsibilities within the RAP and Compensation Programs Agreement. ACA works closely with the Fish and Wildlife Division of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) who investigates each report.

## Program Highlights

- The *Report A Poacher* logo won a national award for its design and is printed on more than 8,000 *Rural Crime Watch* signs.
- *Report A Poacher* has paid out more than \$388,000 in rewards over the last 10 years and more than \$712,000 since inception.
- There are more than 1,200 *Report A Poacher* highway signs throughout the province.
- Each year, hundreds of school children draw pictures featuring *Report A Poacher* for the Alberta Provincial Rural Crime Watch calendar contest.
- Concerned hunters, outfitters and anglers account for 80 per cent of *Report A Poacher* calls; landowners, 10 per cent; and other persons, 10 per cent.
- More than 38,000 calls have been received reporting suspected violations to the 1-800-642-3800 line or to Fish and Wildlife offices. During the past three years, more rewards have been paid out for fisheries offences than for wildlife offences.
- Approximately 14,000 prosecutions and warnings have been issued from *Report A Poacher* calls received during the past 10 years.
- In 2002, ACA's *Report A Poacher* program, in partnership with the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society (APOS), initiated *Guides Reporting Poachers* (GRiP).
- The *Report A Poacher* educational trailer has won numerous first place awards for best display at town fairs and sportsmen's shows.
- *Report A Poacher* has reached two million people at events, organizational meetings, town fairs and sportsmen's shows promoting the program.

Help protect Alberta's wildlife and fish! If you have witnessed or suspect a violation call the *Report A Poacher* 24-hour, toll-free number at 1-800-642-3800. Your report can make a difference. If the information you provide leads to a charge, you become eligible for a cash reward. Find out more by visiting [www.reportapoacher.com](http://www.reportapoacher.com). ■



David Fairless



David Fairless



# Ribbons of Green

## Riparian Conservation Milestones

*The Riparian Conservation Program focuses on developing new, on-the-ground riparian habitat conservation projects at priority waterbodies.*

It's a critical but sometimes unnoticed part of our Alberta landscape: the land adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands. In Alberta, approximately 80 per cent of wildlife uses these areas—called riparian zones—for all or part of their life cycle requirements. It's also an area that, in most of Alberta, falls primarily on private land.

A riparian area is the ribbon of green around any waterbody. It's the transition zone between wet and dry habitats where water, soil and vegetation interact; they are amazingly productive habitats that provide shelter, clean water and lush vegetation for fish, wildlife and livestock. These areas are also important to people, because of their contribution to water quality and quantity, and the way they provide recreational and esthetic value.

Riparian conservation started under a provincial program called *Buck for Wildlife* (BFW) in the 1970s, where landowners in Alberta with riparian areas on their properties negotiated conservation

agreements with the Province to construct and maintain stream bank fencing and livestock crossings. The goal was to create riparian corridors protected from livestock grazing.

Today, the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) continues to manage riparian conservation initiatives through the Provincial Conservation Site Maintenance and Riparian Conservation Programs. Conservation Site Maintenance ensures obligations to manage the inherited BFW assets are met. Stream bank fencing agreements on private and Crown land make up the bulk of these BFW investments. The Provincial Riparian Conservation Program focuses on developing new, on-the-ground riparian habitat conservation projects along priority waterbodies, working with community-based watershed stewardship groups and riparian action teams. Together they build partnerships with other riparian conservation agencies, as well as serve as a resource for public information and education.

## Conservation Site Maintenance Milestones

### History:

**1970** – Alberta Government Fish and Wildlife started the Buck For Wildlife (BFW) Stream Bank Fencing Program with trust fund dollars.

**1973** – Raven River Stream Bank Fencing Project, a partnership with the Dickson Fish and Game Association was one of the first major riparian restoration projects in Alberta.

**1980** – Dogpound Creek Rehabilitation Project was initiated and included stream bank fencing and construction of instream reclamation structures.

**1989** – Todd Creek Stream Bank Fencing Project was initiated.

**1997** – ACA was created as a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO) with responsibilities to deliver the above projects.

**2007** – The *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and ACA was updated and the Program name changed to Conservation Site Maintenance under the new Land Management Program Agreement.

### Highlights:

- BFW riparian projects are managed and maintained on more than 30 waterbodies, the largest of which are Dogpound Creek (45 participating properties), the Raven River (26 participating properties) and the North Raven River (24 participating properties) to name a few. One hundred and twenty-four Private Landowner Agreements = 131.3 kilometres of stream protected.
- **Over 200 private and Crown agreements protect more than 220 kilometres of banks and shores of Alberta's streams and lakes through maintenance of BFW projects.**

## Riparian Conservation Program Milestones

### History:

**1997** – ACA initiated new riparian conservation initiatives funded through the Fisheries Habitat Development Program.

**1997-present** – ACA continues to promote and support riparian initiatives along priority waterbodies.

### Highlights:

- Approximately eight to 10 new riparian improvement projects on selected waterbodies are funded each year. These projects are cost shared with participating landowners, watershed groups or other riparian conservation agencies and include the installation of stream bank fencing, construction of off-site watering facilities and implementation of other Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs).
- Each year, an estimated 30 to 40 additional kilometres of stream banks and lake shoreline are protected and enhanced with the help of ACA's Riparian Conservation Program.
- ACA staff has been actively involved with a number of watershed stewardship groups, riparian action teams, and Watershed Protection and Advisory Councils (WPACs). A few examples include: Little Red Deer River Watershed Initiative and the Beaver Creek Watershed Group (both Emerald Awards recipients), the Bow Basin Council, Oldman Watershed Council, High Prairie Riparian Action Team (HPRAT), and Grande Prairie Riparian Action Team (GPRAT).
- In recent years, six bioengineering bank stabilization demonstration projects have been organised and constructed in the ESBU.
- In 2005, a watershed scale riparian restoration project was initiated on Bearberry Creek west of Sundre. Project work to date has focussed on making stakeholder agency contacts, collecting baseline fisheries data, completing an aerial videography assessment of the watershed's riparian habitat condition and developing a GIS presentation to generate stakeholder and public interest in project participation. Plans for future work involve initiating the formation of a community-led riparian stewardship group and establishing demonstration riparian protection and improvement projects with amenable landowners.
- The Beaverlodge Drainage Conservation project was initiated in 2004, wherein four on-the-ground riparian projects were completed by ACA, the Grande Prairie Riparian Action Team (GPRAT) and landowners. In 2005 and 2006 five additional riparian projects were completed. The GPRAT is comprised of government and non-government representatives providing support to landowners wishing to improve the health of riparian habitat on their land. Many of the participating landowners are members of the West County Watershed Group, an organization consisting of farmers, ranchers and general public concerned about the water quality, wildlife, fish and riparian health within this watershed. Several riparian conservation project initiatives are in place for the summer of 2007.
- In 2006, an aerial videography assessment was completed on Lesser Slave Lake and the lower portion of South Heart River. ACA has been actively pursuing riparian conservation projects in this watershed since 2004 working closely with landowners, the High Prairie Riparian Action Team (HPRAT) and the Lesser Slave Lake Watershed Committee (LSLWC). Over a dozen projects have been completed by the joint efforts of ACA and other members of the HPRAT. Several new projects will be completed in 2007 as the momentum to conserve these important wildlife habitat areas in this watershed grows.

**Contact ACA to find out more about these programs and how you can enhance your property. ■**



# GECF

## Leveraging Conservation

*by David Fairless*

### Funding Milestones: 2002-2007

- \$6.3 million awarded for conservation work.
- \$39.75 million leveraged.
- Range in project funding allocation: \$300 to \$60,000.
- Average grant: \$18,000.
- 347 conservation projects were funded.
- Total number of applications received: 659.

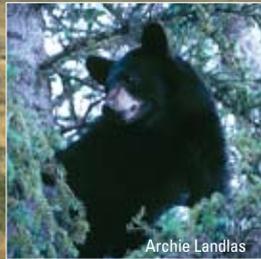
It's no secret that Alberta's natural advantages have helped form the foundation of our province's thriving economy. The current economic climate encourages investment, creates diversity, and enables Albertans to prosper. By-products of this prosperity are competing pressures placed on our wildlife, fish and habitat resources. Through its granting program, Alberta Conservation Association is playing a key role in helping meet the challenges created by these pressures by providing vital funding for conservation projects that meet and address current conservation needs.

ACA has been awarding environmental conservation grants for a decade. To date, through a streamlined funding program, 347 conservation projects have been funded, resulting in significant and lasting benefits to Alberta's wildlife, fish and the habitat on which they depend. Applications are received from a diverse cross-section of the population from all corners of the province.

Furthering conservation efforts in Alberta by providing financial support and building upon the widest possible partnerships to deliver projects is just one of the benefits of these important conservation ventures. By combining the skills and resources of grant recipients, ACA has observed a six-fold return on its investment in six years. In other words, \$6.3 million leveraged another \$39.75 million in conservation work across Alberta. Learning to manage pressures on our environment and investing in conservation today will determine the options our children and grandchildren have for the future.



David Fairless



Archie Landlas



David Fairless

Gordon Court

## Conservation Funding Impacts

### Effects of Access and Hunting on the Behaviour and Demographics of Black Bears

*The University of Alberta*

This project contributes to black bear conservation by assessing effects of access and hunting on black bear population dynamics. The results give resource managers a better understanding of black bear populations and aid in management decisions.

### Recreation and Wildlife in the Rockies of Southwestern Alberta

*The Miistakis Institute for the Rockies*

The Livingstone Range of southwestern Alberta is comprised of multiple-use public lands wherein a wide range of opportunities for recreational and industrial activities is available. The area is ecologically critical in providing landscape connectivity between the protected area complexes of Waterton/Glacier to the south and Kananaskis/Banff to the north. The area is characterized by features that are particularly attractive to Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) users, and random access campers and anglers. These activities all have the potential to impact wildlife use of the area, especially in riparian, montane, and subalpine areas with features necessary for meeting critical habitat requirements for many species, including large carnivores.

The study aims to analyze the relationships between human use of trails with a particular emphasis on OHV use and wildlife movement, by employing innovative technology to collect valuable data without significant disturbance to animals or people. By determining acceptable human use along access roads and recreation trails, planning

initiatives can integrate this information and formulate sustainable access management plans.

### Operation Grassland Community

*Alberta Fish and Game Association*

Developed in 1989, Operation Grassland Community (OGC) is a grassroots stewardship and education program that works with landowners and managers to secure and enhance prairie wildlife habitats for a sustainable prairie landscape.

The grassland region of Alberta is among the most intensively developed landscapes in the world. In the past century, human land uses have caused the loss and

degradation of more than 75 per cent of native mixed grass prairie. Seventy-seven per cent or 24 of the 31 species at risk in Alberta rely on grassland habitats. Sustainable land management applied on a broad scale is crucial to address the long-term protection of species at risk and prevent the decline of multiple game and non-game species.

*ACA is a member of the Canadian Environmental Grantmaker's Network.*

*Applications are accepted for the Grant Eligible Conservation Fund once per year throughout the month of January. A complete listing and description of funded projects is available at [www.ab-conservation.com](http://www.ab-conservation.com). ■*



Gordon Court

# CONSERVATION in ACTION

**Dr. Todd Zimmerling**  
**Managing Director, Alberta Conservation Association**

As a registered professional biologist who has worked in BC, Alberta, Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, undertaking projects ranging from habitat assessment and small mammal inventories to working with industry to reduce impacts to species at risk, Todd Zimmerling is taking his expertise to new heights as Managing Director of the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA).

Entering ACA as it celebrates its 10th Anniversary, Todd views this position as a unique opportunity to be more directly involved in conservation in Alberta while hoping to influence change in the process.

One of Todd's first priorities is to increase the profile of ACA and its valuable conservation work among hunters and anglers whose levies support a wide range of programs as well as to the general public and industry. "Harnessing the support of these audiences is critical to achieving conservation on a grander scale – it is not something that can be done by just one organization, it has to be done in partnership and with public support."

Looking at the growth and sustainability opportunities combined with the impressive level of expertise within ACA, Todd is confident about the possibilities that lie ahead.

One of the avenues Todd is tapping into involves his connection with industry through the creation of the *Corporate Partners in Conservation Program*. Understanding how industry thinks about conservation issues coupled by their concern for the environment is an area where ACA can assist with upfront planning and mitigation processes.

Realizing the long-term impacts of conservation today and what that means is going to influence the direction of ACA's conservation efforts in the future. ■





David Fairless

# Acknowledging 10 Years of Dedication to Conservation

## Alberta Fish and Game Association: *Founding Member Group*



Effective and open communication between the Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA) and the Alberta Conservation Association has gone a long way to strengthening the relationship that we have today.

Since 1997, ACA has supported AFGA with over \$2 million for approximately 117 valuable conservation projects. These projects include worthy undertakings such as the Walleye Feasibility Study, the Tide Creek Beaver Control Project, the Ring-necked Pheasant Project, the Spedden Fish and Game Birdhouse Project, plus many more club initiated projects. The projects promote the co-operative efforts of the ACA and AFGA within communities throughout Alberta.

Over the years, our associations have partnered on various land acquisitions. In the recent past, AFGA and ACA jointly purchased critical habitats in the Slave Lake, Peace River and Buffalo Lake Moraine areas. Along with other partners, both organizations have also recently helped purchase a quarter-section of the Murdoch Property and the Kneehill Property. Beyond funding, joint efforts are also made towards the overall management of these lands.

The AGFA owes many of its accomplishments to the assistance of the Alberta Conservation Association; together we have made a positive impact on our fish and wildlife resources, our environment and thus the quality of life for all Albertans.

Maurice Nadeau, President  
Alberta Fish & Game Association

## The Alberta Trappers' Association: *Founding Member Group*



The Alberta Trappers' Association (ATA) and its 2,500 members are delighted to congratulate the Alberta Conservation Association on its 10th anniversary. The Alberta Trappers' Association (ATA) vision is of an Alberta where the

harvesting of wild furbearers is an ongoing, respected management activity that helps to ensure the continuation of this part of Alberta's heritage, culture and identity. With over 230 years of continuous fur harvesting in Alberta and with all species of furbearer populations at very healthy levels, it is Alberta's longest standing example of wise wildlife management. As partners in conservation, the members of the ATA have benefitted greatly from its association with the Alberta Conservation Association. ACA's many scientific studies of fur bearers and other Alberta flora and fauna, and their relationships and effects on furbearers carries tremendous value. In addition, ACA's support of our school program has been enormous and greatly appreciated. The ATA education department delivers a program for Grade Four and Five Social Studies of the fur trade. In the past 24 months, we have been invited into 84 urban schools to deliver an exciting 80-minute presentation. We have presented to 2,826 students with another 36 schools pending before the end of the 2006-07 school year. This positive outcome could only have been done with the support of the Alberta Conservation Association and Sustainable Resource Development. As a founding member, the Alberta Trappers' Association extends its deepest respect to the Alberta Conservation Association and wishes it all the best in the future.

Gordy Klassen, President  
Alberta Trappers' Association

*Read more letters from ACA member groups in the next issue of Conservation Magazine.*



## Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

The sharp-tailed grouse is one of seven species of grouse that occur in Alberta. Most often found in the prairie and parkland regions, these grouse prefer open grasslands with shrub cover. In early spring, a group of males come together on a lek, a flat open area used as a communal “dancing ground.” Here they perform elaborate mating displays, a combination of intense foot stomping and tail shaking designed to attract the attention of females. Hens then establish nests on the ground in taller, dead grass, often next to a low-lying shrub.

Loss of habitat suitable for nesting and rearing broods can be a limiting factor for sharp-tailed grouse and other prairie grouse species. Since its inception in 1997, Alberta Conservation Association has been involved with population monitoring and habitat conservation for sharp-tailed grouse.

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