



# Annual Report 2014-2015

CPAWS Northern Alberta

# Staff and Board, 2014-2015

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Thompson, Interim Chair  
Cathy Cullingham, former Chair  
Alex Lam, Treasurer  
Liv Vors, Secretary  
Ina Lucila, Director  
Caitlin Van Gaal, Director  
Gabriel Clarke, former Vice-Chair  
Nigel Ward, former Interim Director

## CHAPTER STAFF

Alison Ronson, Executive Director  
Danielle Pendlebury, Conservation Coordinator  
Carlos Bautista, Financial Controller

## About CPAWS Northern Alberta

### Overview

CPAWS is a nation-wide, charitable non-profit organization dedicated to gaining greater protection for Canada's public lands and waters. Since 1963, CPAWS has led the way in helping create over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas – an overall area that is larger than the Yukon Territory! CPAWS often works with government, Aboriginal communities, industry representatives and other local conservation organizations to find a conservation solution on the shared landscape. With a chapter in almost every province and territory across the country, CPAWS creates effective national campaigns that draw upon and support regional needs.

CPAWS Northern Alberta was one of CPAWS' first designated regional chapters, founded in 1968. CPAWS Northern Alberta focuses on conservation issues in the northern two-thirds of the province. Our vision is to increase the percentage of federally or provincially protected land in northern Alberta, to encourage the responsible management of our protected areas, and to encourage and promote responsible land use and land use planning.

### Mission

To advance the protection of wilderness and biodiversity in the province of Alberta.

### Vision

Alberta has a large protected wilderness network represented by diverse and healthy ecosystems, landscape-scale conservation zones, and committed land stewardship. The wilderness legacy that has always inspired Albertans is preserved for future generations.



Padding on the North Saskatchewan River (M. Becker)

Cover: Lake Clare (A. Chomica)



# Message from the Chapter

## Annual Report 2014-2015

The 2014-2015 Conservation Year was a big one for CPAWS Northern Alberta. Our work began on the *Conservation Blueprint of Northern Alberta: Prioritizing areas for protected areas planning*, and we launched a legal campaign against the decision to allow commercial overnight accommodations to be built at Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park. We pushed for many new protected areas during the government of Alberta's ongoing North Saskatchewan Region planning process, and we met with Aboriginal and industry groups to discuss protected areas planning in Alberta. Our work also continues within the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement to achieve better on-the-ground caribou conservation in northeastern Alberta.

As part of the land use planning exercises currently underway in Alberta, our chapter focused much of its time and energy on the Bighorn Wildland, a 5000km<sup>2</sup> area of alpine, sub-alpine, and montane wilderness near Nordegg, Alberta. Not only is this Alberta's last unprotected, intact mountain forest, the Bighorn supplies 90% of the water that flows into the North Saskatchewan River, the source of our drinking water here in Edmonton and for much of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This area of the province is under pressure by industrial development (coal, oil and gas, and forestry), and irresponsible recreational usage. Despite promises from the government of Alberta dating back to the 1970s to protect this area, it is still primarily designated as a series of Public Land Use zones, with no formal protection. CPAWS Northern Alberta would like to see the Bighorn designated as a Wildland Provincial Park so that important headwaters habitat and wildlife are protected, but also so that Albertans may continue to visit the area for the hiking, camping, climbing, and paddling opportunities it is known for.

CPAWS Northern Alberta's greatest assets are its members and volunteers. Without the hard work of our dedicated corps of volunteers, and without the ongoing financial support of our members, we could not continue with our important conservation work. Two volunteers in particular have been instrumental during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 years – our past board chairs Amber Nicol and Cathy Cullingham, both of whom have moved on but who have left a legacy of action and inspiration in their wake. Thank you Amber and Cathy, and good luck in your future endeavours.

CPAWS' strength lies in our numbers - there are always important reasons for us to send you an email or an "Action Alert." So, when you receive one, please do sign the petition, or write the suggested letter about a conservation issue you're passionate about – your voice can make a difference for Alberta's wilderness and wildlife!

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours in Conservation,



Interim Board Chair  
Dan Thompson, PhD



Executive Director  
Alison Ronson, MA, JD



Interim Board Chair  
Dan Thompson



Executive Director  
Alison Ronson







Bighorn sheep in the Bighorn Wildland (C. van Rensen)

## Conservation Programs

CPAWS Northern Alberta continues to work for greater protection of public lands and waters in northern Alberta. Public land includes land owned by the federal and provincial government, and in Alberta, this makes up 60% of the land base. To accomplish this, CPAWS Northern Alberta works in two ways: by advocating for the creation of parks and protected areas which are managed with ecological integrity as the number one priority; and by collaborating with government, industry, Aboriginal communities, and other conservation organizations in land use planning exercises designed to achieve conservation or manage the collective impact on public lands. We divide our programs up into National Parks, Provincial Protected Areas and Land Use Planning, and Boreal Forest and Wildlife Protection.

### NATIONAL PARKS

#### Stand Up for Jasper!

In August of 2014, CPAWS Northern Alberta and the Jasper Environmental Association, working with EcoJustice, applied to the federal court for a review of the decision made by Parks Canada to approve the proposal for 10-15 tent cabins at the north end of Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park. This decision in favour of the tent cabins, proposed by a private commercial operator within the park, contradicts Parks Canada's own Management Plan, 2010, Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks, and Guiding Principles and Operational Policies. In addition, the development could have negative impacts on grizzly bear, moose, and the struggling Maligne herd of southern mountain woodland caribou, all of whom call the Maligne Valley home. CPAWS Northern Alberta sees the approval of the tent cabins as the slippery slope to further inappropriate development.

#### Caribou Conservation in Jasper National Park

CPAWS Northern Alberta supported Parks Canada's decision to close access to much of the Maligne Valley over the winter of 2014-2015 as a measure to protect the Maligne caribou herd. Trail closures after snowfall allow caribou much-needed time to forage, without the threat of excess predation by wolves, during the winter months. This past winter Jasper National Park welcomed a caribou celebrity – "Frankie Thunder," a caribou of the Tonquin herd, who was seen many times traversing the ski runs at Marmot Basin, illustrating that caribou do indeed use that area on a frequent basis.



## Wood Buffalo National Park

In December of 2014, the Mikisew Cree First Nation submitted a petition to the United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (“UNESCO”) asking that Wood Buffalo National Park be placed on the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger. Wood Buffalo National Park’s famed Peace-Athabasca Delta, the largest inland freshwater delta in the world, is suffering due to damming along the Peace River in British Columbia, and water usage through the oil sands along the Athabasca River in Alberta. The Mikisew Cree First Nation has noticed changes in wildlife behaviour due to changes in the delta and a loss of some of their historical cultural practices as well. In July, 2015, UNESCO recommended that Canada conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the park and not allow decisions to be made on development outside the park that would have irreversible consequences. As the last remaining nesting ground for the endangered whooping crane, and the last place in Alberta where bison and wolves interact in a natural predator-prey system, CPAWS is passionate about Wood Buffalo National Park deserving protection.

## PROVINCIAL PROTECTED AREAS AND LAND USE PLANNING

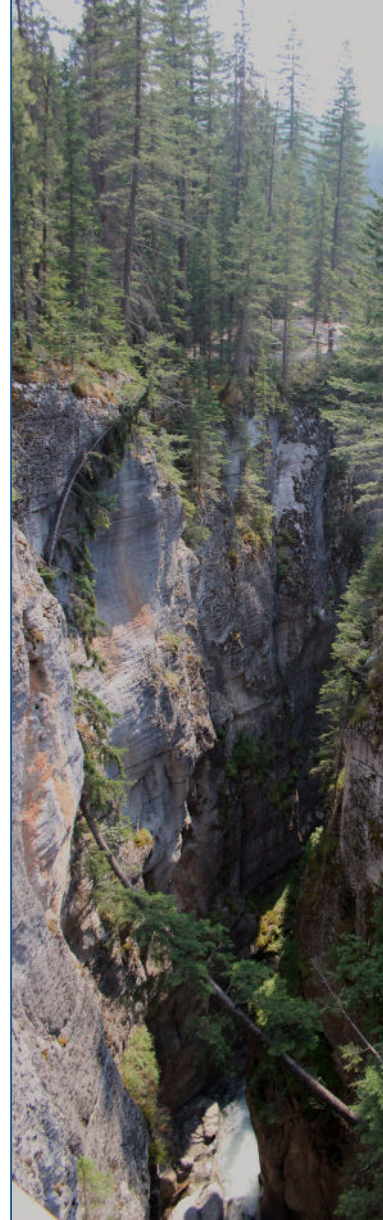
### *The Conservation Blueprint of Northern Alberta: Prioritizing areas for protected areas planning*

CPAWS Northern Alberta’s major project of 2014-2015 was to map high priority conservation areas in northern Alberta using spatial analysis and Maxent and Marxan mapping software. The result, the Conservation Blueprint, is a series of maps that can be used to inform protected areas planning across the north, with targets set at 20%, 50%, and 80% protection of biodiversity on the landscape. The Conservation Blueprint is a living document, and can be used by CPAWS Northern Alberta going forward to (1) inform work with the government on protected areas and land use planning, (2) work with industry partners seeking to find conservation solutions on a working landscape, and (3) support Aboriginal communities to ensure protection of traditional territories for both ecological and cultural values. The science is telling us that Alberta needs to protect at least half of its land base in order to safeguard biodiversity and healthy ecological processes. The Conservation Blueprint can be the tool that gets us there.

### Protect Alberta’s Headwaters and Land Use Planning

In 2014-15, the government of Alberta’s land use planning exercises continued across the province. The North Saskatchewan Region planning process began, and CPAWS Northern Alberta submitted comments recommending the protection of the Bighorn Wildland, a corridor along the North Saskatchewan River from Nordegg to Edmonton, the Ministik Lake Bird Sanctuary, the Bodo Hills, and the Parkland Dunes. In particular, CPAWS Northern Alberta began a focused campaign on the Bighorn Wildland.

At 5000km<sup>2</sup> in area, the Bighorn Wildland west of Nordegg contains the headwaters for 90% of the North Saskatchewan River. Free from roads, seismic lines, pipelines, well pads, cut blocks, and mining activities, the Bighorn is home to some spectacular mountain wilderness. This makes it a popular area with recreationalists, who use the area for hiking, camping, climbing, and paddling. However, it is also a popular area for random camping (camping outside designated campsites) and motorized off-highway vehicles, two activities which do significant damage to the natural environment.



Maligne Canyon,  
Jasper National Park  
(D. Pendlebury)







Moose in Jasper National Park  
(K.Hasson)

Currently, the Bighorn Wildland is not formally protected. As a series of Public Land Use Zones, the Bighorn is therefore threatened by the possibility of industrial development, and by the continued, un-checked irresponsible recreational activities which pollute our headwaters and lead to habitat fragmentation. Working with the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, CPAWS Northern Alberta's "Protect Alberta's Headwaters" campaign encourages the government to live up to old promises and designate the Bighorn as a Wildland Provincial Park, thereby protecting this important area for the benefit of both current and future Albertans.

## BOREAL FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION

### Caribou & You: Featuring the Little Smoky Caribou Herd

Boreal woodland caribou herds in Alberta are struggling and listed as "Threatened" under both Canada's Species at Risk Act and Alberta's Wildlife Act. This year, to draw attention to one herd in particular, CPAWS Northern Alberta asked members and the interested public to write postcards to the government of Alberta asking it to create robust, scientifically-sound herd range plans in accordance with their legal obligation to do so. CPAWS Northern Alberta focused on the Little Smoky herd, located near Grande Prairie and Grande Cache, Alberta; this herd's habitat is at least 95% disturbed by roads and industrial activities, and the caribou population in the area is only being sustained through a long-term, controversial wolf cull. Now is the time for Alberta to stand up to its responsibilities and protect this herd!

### Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA)

CPAWS Northern Alberta worked with fellow signatories from the forest industry on the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement this year to continue work on the Northeast Plan, a land use plan designed to protect caribou herds in Alberta's northeast. Together with representatives from the CBFA and Albert-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., CPAWS Northern Alberta met with government, oil and gas representatives, and Aboriginal communities to discuss the possibility of collaboration for caribou conservation in the province. The chapter continues to work with the CBFA on caribou conservation in other regions of the province, and on protected areas planning.



# Outreach and Operations

## Educational Presentations

CPAWS Northern Alberta was busy over the year providing educational presentations and workshops to a variety of groups on topics as wide-ranging as Headwaters Protection, Caribou Conservation, and Connecting to Nature. Our chapter hosted a workshop at the Edmonton Resilience Festival on Connecting to Nature in and around Edmonton, spoke at two seminars during the University of Alberta's ENCS Week, and presented on Headwaters Protection to city councillors, municipal groups, and recreational groups. CPAWS Northern Alberta always welcomes the opportunity to present on current conservation issues to any interested groups.

## Outreach and Events

The 2014-2015 year included the inaugural MEC Big Wild Challenge – Trail Run, which saw over 80 participants out to Elk Island to participate in a three-stage adventure race. This event was a great success for the chapter by creating awareness about CPAWS and also as a fundraiser. The chapter was present at many other events over the year, including MEC's BikeFest and PaddleFest, Track N Trail's Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival and Banff Mountain Film Festival, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance's Headwaters Forum, and the Edmonton Resilience Festival.

## Volunteer Program

CPAWS Northern Alberta has a dedicated corps of volunteers who helped out with outreach events over 2014-2015, or conducted research for the organization. Volunteers joined our Conservation, Outreach and Events, and Fund Development committees, reviewed different volunteer management software, researched outreach opportunities for the organization, and provided graphic design over the past year.

## Board of Directors' Activities

For the first five months of 2015, CPAWS Northern Alberta's board of directors engaged in monthly professional development workshops aimed at increasing board members' understanding and capacity. These workshops focused on issues such as legal and fiduciary roles of board members, recruitment and retention, fund development, social media strategies, and financial issues for non-profits.

## Edmonton Community Foundation: Endowment Sustainability Program 2015

Also during the first five months of 2015, the staff, board of directors and key volunteers of CPAWS Northern Alberta took part in the Edmonton Community Foundation's Endowment Sustainability Program. This program educated the organization about endowments, and has inspired CPAWS Northern Alberta to launch a new endowment fund: the CPAWS Conservation Fund. This fund will be established with monies from the chapter's 2015-2016 Big Wild Challenge. Other donors and foundations may also donate to this endowment fund and may be recognized as a named donor. If you are interested in leaving a legacy for conservation, please contact the Edmonton Community Foundation today.



Volunteers and partners at some of the numerous events attended by CPAWS Northern Alberta (A. Ronson)



# Financial Overview 2014-2015

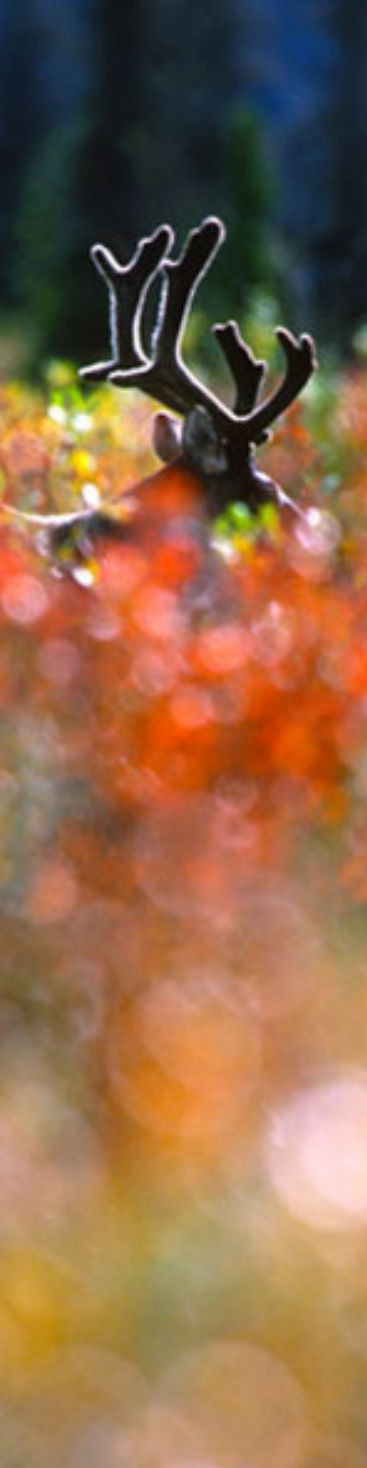
Statement of Operations	2014-15	2013-14
<b>Revenue</b>		
Grants	\$ 25,840	\$ 26,573
Gaming	67,710	31,436
Donors and Supporters	35,678	48,482
Interest	2,033	1,754
Other	-	702
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>131,261</b>	<b>108,947</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Salaries and Benefits	106,500	54,799
Sub-contracts	9,048	22,650
Professional Fees	4,305	4,371
Rent	5,662	7,261
Office	8,665	4,857
Telephone	136	333
Travel	3,042	5,725
Insurance	418	837
Advertising and Promotion	33	300
Amortization	1,261	613
Interest and Bank Charges	306	38
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>139,376</b>	<b>101,784</b>
<b>Revenue Under Expenses</b>	<b>\$ (8,115)</b>	<b>\$ 7,163</b>

## Funding Sources

CPAWS received funding in 2014-2015 primarily from supportive individual members, through contracts with the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Protect Alberta's Headwaters), a grant from Alberta Ecotrust (the Conservation Blueprint of Northern Alberta), and through the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. We continue to look for avenues through which to diversify our funding, and have set up the CPAWS Conservation Fund at the Edmonton Community Foundation to encourage a lasting legacy for the chapter.

## Other Financial Information

CPAWS Northern Alberta's administrative costs include professional fees, a percentage of the Executive Director's salary, office rent, equipment, and bank fees. Administrative costs represent approximately 30% of CPAWS Northern Alberta's expenses. The remaining 70% of our funds are used for conservation programming and educational outreach. The chapter experienced a deficit this year due to increased staffing costs resulting from two new full time employees being taken on in May/June of 2014.



Caribou (P. Mather)

Over: Children on a hike  
(R. Shier)

Back Cover: Paintbrush  
(A. Ronson)







# What Will Your Legacy Be?

**Donate to the CPAWS Conservation Fund at the  
Edmonton Community Foundation today.**

**Make your legacy a lasting one.**







*Keeping Alberta Wild since 1968*



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