



Connections

Newsletter

Standing in the shadows of giants in southeastern British Columbia.
Photo: Alex Kuczera

Connecting and protecting habitat from
Yellowstone to Yukon
so people and nature can thrive.

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The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative is a trans-border, non-profit organization that connects and protects some 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) of landscape, to support the health of people and wildlife. It's no simple task, but together with our supporters and more than 450 partners over our history we're making it happen.

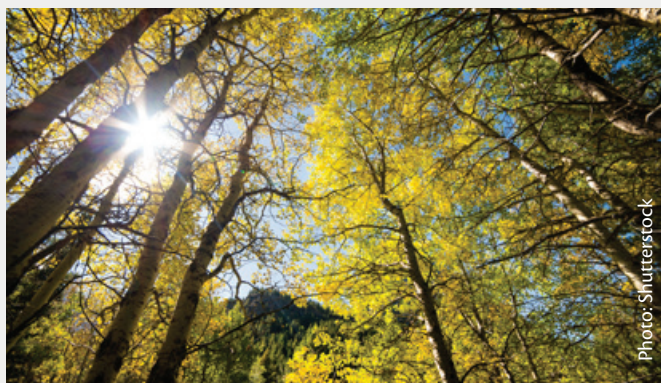


Photo: Shutterstock

Your gift can be 'Forever Wild'

Especially striking in autumn, aspen trees grow throughout the Rockies and provide nourishment for wildlife. The extensive root systems that connect them underground make them resilient, even in the face of challenges. That's why aspens are the emblem for Y2Y's legacy giving program, *Forever Wild*. A gift to Y2Y in your will or estate plan connects and protects the wild landscapes and wildlife that you love, forever. Find out more at y2y.net/foreverwild or reach out to us at legacies@y2y.net

GROWING HOPE

Working on our big mission during challenging times

It is a system of water, nourishing soil and sunlight that establishes a tree's roots and enables it to reach skyward. Trees and their surrounding ecosystem rely on this intricate network of support, much like the conservation movement. Your support — like the roots that underpin the tree's growth — is essential in all that we do at Y2Y.

As a tree grows stronger, it can accomplish even more for the plants, animals and landscapes around it. When we think of trees, we are reminded of the stability you provide as we push up and onward for wildlife and people, seeing great successes along the way.

Sometimes, these positive outcomes aren't immediately apparent. Beneath the surface, there is much more to a forest than meets the eye. For instance, the inland temperate rainforest of southeastern British Columbia captures, or 'sequesters' and stores carbon in the forest floor and inside ancient trees. The larger the tree, the more carbon it holds. Old growth trees continue to sequester carbon as long as they live.

Conservation can take time, but as with a tree's growth, something vital is accomplished at each stage — from new branches all the way to incredible ecosystem services that support people.

This year has especially shown how important it is to grasp onto hope, grow and keep pushing to make the world a better place. From keeping wildlife moving across safe passages, to global conservation, we honor all kinds of momentum, progress and growth in this newsletter. At the root of it all is your support.

During especially challenging times, you are helping us keep the momentum for nature and people. Thank you for being with us on this journey, giving life to our work along the way.

Home ranges for birds, such as the Calliope hummingbird, will shift and contract as global temperatures increase due to climate change.

A Calliope hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*) in Wyoming.
Photo: Kati Fleming

Winds of change clipping birds' flight

A birds-eye view of healthy habitats and climate change

Most animals on the ground, in the air and in water need healthy habitats to move within and across in order to survive and thrive. When it comes to safeguarding wildlife movement corridors, we often talk about keeping larger land mammals moving — grizzly bears, wolves and lynx to name a few — because they have huge ranges.

But what about...birds? These graceful creatures are naturally emblematic of momentum. Picture a scene where you look to the treeline and watch a bird take flight, catch the breeze beneath its wings and soar across the sky. Depending on the time of year and species, its destination could be nearby or thousands of miles away.

While our winged friends don't require continuous land corridors, they do need "stepping-stones" along their journey, such as seasonal habitat. Like other animals, many birds need large areas of native habitat for feeding, breeding and nesting.

However, humans are steadily destroying and fragmenting natural wildlife habitat. On top of that, climate change is increasingly affecting how, where and when some birds and other species move and migrate.

Climate change and its impacts — from rampant, hotter wildfires to vanishing permafrost — affects entire ecosystems. This means a bird's food sources, predators and resilience to disease could change, too.

Not all birds respond the same. Some are more likely to adapt by finding other places to live, while more vulnerable migratory birds may need urgent conserva-

tion action taken for their specialized environments.

How are birds trying to adapt to changing ecosystems and loss of their habitats? Birds' ranges, such as for the Calliope hummingbird, will shift and contract as global temperatures increase.

Sadly, other bird species are seeing steep declines. New research shows bird populations have continued to plummet in the past five decades, dropping by nearly three billion across North America.

Climate change reinforces why we need connectivity. Research shows that connected, protected habitats — the core of Y2Y's mission — support wildlife's ability to adapt to changing landscapes. By supporting Y2Y, you are helping ensure birds have a landing pad of safe, healthy habitat to depend on.

Conservation at a continental scale requires many partners and ongoing support from people like you. Our successes mean you and future generations can continue to gaze up and see your favorite bird soaring onward.

Want to learn more about connectivity, corridors and climate change? Here are some resources, co-authored by Dr. Jodi Hilty, Y2Y's president and chief scientist:

- *Corridor Ecology, Second Edition: Linking Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Adaptation* (book)
- IUCN guidelines for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors (open access)

Next stop, safe passages for wildlife

Reconnecting severed habitats under and over roads

Roads are one of the biggest human-created barriers to wildlife movement. That's why, thanks to your support, Y2Y and partners are working to normalize measures that meet wildlife's connectivity needs at every level of decision-making for roads. Safe passages for wildlife keep people safer on our roads, too. The Yellowstone-to-Yukon re-

gion has 116 wildlife crossing structures (more than anywhere else in the world!) Because of your generous donations during this year's September Match, we'll have even more in the future. We are excited to advance shovel-ready transportation projects in 2021, including those featured below. Thank you for the boost!

Reconnection for wildlife in the Rockies



While Highway 3 in British Columbia's Elk Valley leads to beautiful places, it cuts through a critical wildlife corridor for grizzly bears and other animals trying to navigate the Rocky Mountain corridors locally and continentally. At almost 200 collisions with large mammals on Highway 3 annually, it's a source of mortality and fragmentation.

Over five years, the 'Reconnecting the Rockies' project with Y2Y, Wildsight, Miistakis, researchers, government and industry aims to make this stretch of highway safer for wildlife and people through a system of nine safe passages — including B.C.'s largest wildlife overpass — all connected with fencing.

Indigenous filmmakers tell the story of wildlife crossings



The Alberta Government's funding commitment for wildlife infrastructure on Highway 3 in Crowsnest Pass and Highway 1 outside of Banff National Park is a great step forward in Y2Y's work to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve connectivity.

Now, a new short film by the youth-led Nakoda AV Club helps make the case for more wildlife crossings like the one proposed at Bow Valley Gap, a high-collision spot on Highway 1 near Stoney Nakoda First Nation.

"Roads aren't natural to (animals), and it's only right we do our part to protect animals from the harm we cause," says Amber Twyoungmen, film writer and voice actor.

Watch now to see wildlife crossings through the eyes of animals: y2y.net/helpingfriends.

New crossings in Idaho



With your help Y2Y supported the advancement of two wildlife crossings in Idaho: the nearly completed design of an underpass and fencing on US-95 near McArthur Lake, and Idaho's first-ever wildlife overpass on State Highway 21, north of Boise. Thousands of mule deer and elk cross this highway each fall to reach winter range. These projects' construction will be underway by 2022.

Want more? Our new video series, Room to Roam, highlights transportation projects that have successfully helped Idaho's wildlife and motorists stay safe and keep moving. Look for it on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/y2yinitiative.



Y2Y conservation scientist Dr. Aerin Jacob advocates for Alberta's treasured parks. Photo: Kirsten Reid

Concerned voices for conservation

How to have your voice heard by your elected representatives

If you have ever contacted your elected officials on a timely conservation issue, you may have encountered the (dreaded) automatic response. Let's be honest; generalized answers can feel like a dead-end. Has a thought like this ever crossed your mind?

"I've emailed, I've called, I've signed the petition, I've exhausted my Twitter feed, and nothing seems to have changed for the better. How am I supposed to make a difference!"

We want you to know that taking action matters. Concerned voices can be the difference between a proposed solution becoming reality and a promising policy change getting squashed.

Wherever you live in the Yellowstone-to-Yukon region, elected officials are there to hear from people like you and make decisions that benefit their constituency. Your input helps inform those decisions behind-the-scenes.

We asked Y2Y's conservation scientist, Dr. Aerin Jacob, about her experience advocating for change. Her main takeaways? Be brave, have compassion for yourself and others, and don't get discouraged if change doesn't happen immediately.

"You don't need to be a subject-matter expert or have perfect solutions to speak up for things you care about," says Aerin. "There's a reason that you care about these places and issues — go with that intuition and use your voice. And ask friends, family and colleagues to join you."

What else should you consider if you want to be heard by your elected representative? Good question!

- Empower yourself by doing research. Gather key points and find the best person to contact about your concerns.
- Take how you feel, what you know and what you want to happen, and put it in your own words.
- Want to maximize your impact? A phone call is one of the best ways to be heard.
- Ask clear questions of your representative, talking with them instead of "at" them.
- Start somewhere and keep the momentum. If this is your first time contacting a government official, begin with a letter template from an organization like Y2Y and build up to a phone call (or even request a virtual meeting!)

When it comes to effecting change for wildlife, wild places and people in the Yellowstone-to-Yukon region and beyond, it starts with one person: you.

And remember, nature can't speak for itself; we have to do the talking. Keep trying, keep learning and keep pushing forward. You've got this!

An ongoing issue needing your voice:

#LoveAlbertaParks: 175 of Alberta's parks are slated for closure or privatization, threatening biodiversity and access to wild places. Our precious parks are also available for open-pit coal mining for the first time since 1976.

Sign the petition and write your MLA and Alberta's Environment Minister: y2y.net/lovealbertaparks.



One of the Klinse-za mountain caribou.
Photo: David Moskowitz

Marking milestones in mountain caribou recovery

You are supporting Indigenous leaders in conservation efforts

It was a rainy August day in British Columbia's Peace Region — one representing the next chapter of mountain caribou recovery.

Standing in the newly expanded Klinse-za Indigenous Protected Area, Councilor Ken Cameron, former chief of Sauteau First Nations, and Tim Burkhart, Y2Y's B.C. program manager, placed a fallen caribou antler to rest near the base of the sacred Twin Sisters ('Klinse-za') Mountains, nestled below a tree holding a prayer flag. This antler once belonged to a member of the now locally extinct Burnt Pine herd. In 2017, Tim found and borrowed the antler from the land to help tell the story of challenges faced by caribou across B.C.

Much has happened since the caribou partnership agreement was signed in February 2020 — the reason for Tim's summer visit. West Moberly First Nations, Sauteau First Nations and many others have been working tirelessly to restore mountain caribou habitat in this landscape, culminating in February's agreement, which covers two million acres (809,372 hectares). This is the largest conservation agreement in B.C. since the Great Bear Rainforest!

"To see and feel the landscape supporting mountain caribou recovery was an injection of hope," says Tim. "What Sauteau and West Moberly First Nations have accomplished is incredibly inspiring."

New protections have given ecosystems, mountain caribou and local Indigenous Nations the space to breathe. Now, degraded land is being restored so an abundant diversity of plants and animals can recover and thrive. One day, this will allow First Nations to hunt caribou again — a treaty right put on hold nearly 50 years ago.

While out on the landscape this summer, Tim saw the roads, coal mines and logging cut blocks that have pushed caribou to the brink; but he also saw lands being reclaimed. He visited an innovative First Nations-owned

native plant nursery and a new wetland restoration pilot project. He also joined members of Sauteau First Nations to pack bags full of lichen, a food source for caribou.

"The story of caribou and our work in the Peace is a human story," says Tim. "First Nations in the region have faced decades of government inaction, loss of culturally important plants and animals, and degradation of the land — yet they have always looked forward, steadfast in their determination to save caribou and safeguard traditions for future generations."

During interviews with Indigenous leaders in the Peace, elders were asked if there was hope of caribou returning to the landscape, to which each individual responded, "I know they will."

In 2014, the Klinse-za herd had only 16 animals. Today, this herd is almost 100 caribou. In June 2021, the protected area will be expanded to over 509,000 acres (206,000 hectares) further helping these caribou recover over the long term.

All you have done to stand up for caribou has built great momentum. Your letters expressing thanks for habitat protection were especially noted by First Nations and decision-makers.

Now, funding from organizations like Y2Y will be critical to push forward.

Your donation will support continued caribou recovery work such as an Indigenous Guardians program, upholding the maternal caribou pen, and restoring the impacts of industrial extraction on the land.

Thank you

Your gifts help bring mountain caribou and age-old traditions back to these landscapes.

For that, we thank you. Make your gift at y2y.net/donate.

Planning for a connected future

See the global impact of your support

There's no two ways about it: we need nature. Society is realizing this now more than ever. Not only that, there is a huge interest in connectivity conservation — this according to Y2Y's president and chief scientist, Dr. Jodi Hilty, also lead author on the new International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Guidelines for Conserving Connectivity through Ecological Networks and Corridors. The IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and how to safeguard it.

"You, our amazing supporters, have made it possible for Y2Y to engage on these global guidelines with scientists around the world," says Jodi. "Not only do these guidelines help Y2Y and partners advance conservation, you are helping so many efforts around the world keep nature — and therefore people — healthy and thriving."

Since releasing the Guidelines in July, it is already in the top five percent of all published research and IUCN's number one research publication.

"Over 6,500 people around the world downloaded the Guidelines from just one website in the first two months," she says. "This is an incredible indication of how, despite the challenges facing humanity, people around the world know that ecological corridors are needed and are seeking to advance connectivity conservation."

No matter where you live, supporting Y2Y means you are making a difference locally and at a global scale. We need your continued support to sustain momentum for wildlife and people in the Yellowstone-to-Yukon region. Please consider becoming a monthly donor to Y2Y; it means the world!

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



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Monthly donors are the cornerstone of our work.

Your consistent and dependable support ensures we can continue to connect and protect essential habitat, and supports on-the-ground co-existence projects that keep our wild places wild, communities healthy and our water and air clean and pure.

Contact information

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

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☐ Yes, I would like to donate \$ _____ / month, applied to my credit card on the first (1st) of each month.

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