



Connections

Newsletter

Prairie crocus blooms early in the Rockies.
Photo: Jason Headley

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.

Deep roots of a wildflower

Ki'piaapi or "soon old man" in Blackfoot language, makes a brief appearance in the spring and "represents the warmth and beauty of the yellow sun at its heart, the grace of the purple mountains all around and a heavy fur robe to keep warm."

This description of the prairie crocus (pictured above) stems from a new native plant guide pamphlet that is part of the Blood Tribe Land Management's Land Conservation Relationships project on Blackfoot Territory in Alberta's Eastern Slopes.

Naapi's Garden brochure shares information about plants that are key to Blackfoot peoples' food systems, and that have deep relationships with grizzly bears and bison.

Learn more about this 2020 partner project:
y2y.net/ListenToTheLand.

LEARNING TOGETHER, GROWING TOGETHER: *The importance of growth*

What does growth mean to you? Maybe it's an increase in size, development of knowledge, better understanding of oneself, or the evolution of a movement.

As we thought about all the ways you make an impact, the idea of growth showed up in a few ways throughout this newsletter.

With the arrival of spring, new life is abundant across the Yellowstone to Yukon region. Young animals — from cubs, calves, and kits, to fawns and fingerlings — emerge into the big, wide world. They depend on their parents and safe surroundings to survive. By supporting our work to connect and protect habitat, you are giving these little ones a chance to grow and thrive into adulthood.

Growth is also part of our individual journeys to become better stewards of nature. When was the first time you learned the importance of safely securing food in bear country? Or why some recreation areas are closed at certain times of year? What we learn evolves into how we act; and these individual actions can snowball into a greater impact.

Working together to achieve our vision also helps Y2Y learn and grow. From partnering on coexistence projects, to supporting rewilding efforts, conservation is collaborative.

As you discover more about the projects that move conservation forward on the ground, remember that we can't reach new heights without you.

Happy reading!



Certain Montana campgrounds will have new bear-proof storage lockers this season (top right). Photo: Jason Brooks; Inset: Shutterstock

Food for thought

Coexistence benefits people and wildlife

Ahh, springtime. Right now, many animals are active and in search of a good meal and maybe even a mate. In fact, grizzly bears started waking up in Yellowstone as early as March!

After a long winter being stuck in our “dens”, we also have our sights set on a summer of hiking, biking, paddling and so much more. We need some quality time with nature. Can you relate?

If you recreate in Montana, you know there are some incredible opportunities here. For residents and folks exploring locally, the area along the Big Hole River in southwest Montana is a great go-to, especially for camping and fishing.

This area falls within the High Divide, which is a critical part of the Yellowstone to Yukon region and connects the three biggest blocks of protected wildlife habitat in the Lower 48 states: The Greater Yellowstone,

Salmon-Selway-Bitterroot, and Crown of the Continent ecosystems. Ensuring wildlife can move through this landscape to nearby protected habitats is key to their ability to survive and thrive.

Grizzly bears are a focus of our work to connect and protect landscapes because they are an “umbrella” species. When their populations are healthy, generally other species in that same ecosystem are, too.

But what happens when these iconic (and often misunderstood) creatures are returning to your community and the places you recreate in for the first time in many decades? We see it as an opportunity to learn and grow together.

In summer 2020, we worked with the Bureau of Land Management to get 10 food storage lockers installed in busy campgrounds along the Big Hole River. This year, we are excited that 17 more are planned!



Dandelions are a favorite early season food for grizzly bears.
Photo: Shutterstock

In Alberta

Through Y2Y's 2020 partner grants, we supported the Waterton Biosphere Reserve's Carnivores and Communities program.

The program addresses increasing conflicts between large carnivores and people in southern Alberta, where farmers and ranchers share the landscape with wolves, cougars and bears.

Last year, they completed projects including six grain bin door replacements, two electric fence installations, distribution of bear-proof garbage bins, and workshops on bear safety.

Your gifts help advance on-the-ground work just like this and are important to maintain grizzly bear connectivity at the Yellowstone to Yukon scale.

When bears are enticed by human food in busy places, they can become habituated. Often, this can result in the bear's death — or relocation, which isn't always positive either. Awareness-building that encourages preventative actions like storing food is key for everyone's safety.

"We brought our knowledge and tried-and-true practices from other places here. It's exciting to be part of this partnership with the Bureau and bring these food storage lockers to this part of the landscape," says Nick Clarke, Y2Y's senior U.S. program co-ordinator.

"These user-friendly, convenient lockers make it more likely that people will use them, resulting in a positive experience for people and bears."

These lockers are much more than a big hunk of metal. They are one of the tools critical to helping bears stay wild, reconnect with neighboring populations, and thrive into the future.

You help make this partnership possible; and with your continued support, we hope to make a difference for wildlife and people one project at a time!

Consider becoming a monthly donor to help get these food lockers on the ground and enable other important projects to come to fruition.

Learn how at [**y2y.net/lynx**](https://y2y.net/lynx).

Growing through hope and heartbreak



We're in this together

The Peace Region in northern British Columbia (B.C.) is home to many ecosystems and is the narrowest point in the Yellowstone to Yukon region. Here, we work with partners, including West Moberly First Nations and Saulteau First Nations, to connect and protect wildlife habitat.

Industrial development has been expanding in this region for years. Speaking out in various ways has been an important role, and we appreciate your help in taking a stand and making human rights and wildlife a key focus.

About the art

Saulteau First Nations artist Brandon Cameron digitally painted this caribou of the Klinse-za herd in front of the Twin Sisters mountains in Treaty 8 territory.

Caribou protections: a real win for people and wildlife

February 21 marked one year of new protections for mountain caribou habitat in the Peace. Thanks to West Moberly First Nations' (WMFN) and Saulteau First Nations' (SFN) leadership, two million acres will be protected. The expanded Twin Sisters/Klinse-za Park will be the third-largest protected area in B.C. This is the biggest conservation gain in the province since the Great Bear Rainforest! By protecting and restoring this landscape, West Moberly First Nations and Saulteau First Nations have given caribou a fighting chance, and taken an important step towards restoring a right guaranteed under Treaty 8.

"WMFN's and SFN reached an important milestone today in our caribou recovery program. Eight years ago, we had 16 remaining caribou (in this herd), today we counted 101," said West Moberly First Nations' Chief Roland Willson in a March 10 tweet.

Your gifts and words of encouragement have helped greatly in making this project a success. Keep your support growing: y2y.net/CelebrateCaribou.

Site C dam continuation: a loss felt by many

An incredibly important feature of the Peace region is the easterly flowing Peace River. This valley is habitat and sanctuary for vulnerable species, and contains rich soil that could grow food for a million people. It is also a landscape of cultural significance for Indigenous Peoples.

We and many others were devastated when, in early March, the B.C. government announced its decision to continue the controversial Site C dam project, which will flood up to 62 miles (100 kilometers) of traditional Treaty 8 territory and wildlife habitat in the Peace River valley.

Many of you have been with us through this decades-long movement to stop Site C. We can't thank you enough. Y2Y stands in solidarity with West Moberly First Nations, who in spring 2022 will present a court challenge based on treaty rights. Learn more: y2y.net/SiteC.



Riding Muskwa-Kechika Management Area's Gataga River in northern British Columbia. This area is an example of decision-making that benefits our economies and ecosystems. Wayne Sawchuk photo.

Nature is our greatest asset

You are supporting a long-term vision for nature, people and economies

Long-time nature conservation supporter and Alberta-based Y2Y donor, John Mitchell, has spent countless hours in and around the mountains hiking, camping and fishing.

To him, the mountains are a place to rejuvenate, and can speak volumes to our spirits even in their silence. For these reasons, John considers mountain ecosystems to be one of the greatest resources of all. However, with human populations growing steadily, nature's limits are being increasingly tested.

In its 2021 Global Risks Report, the World Economic Forum ranks biodiversity loss as the world's fourth greatest risk by impact. The report also estimates that \$44 trillion of economic value generation — more than half of global Gross Domestic Product — is moderately to highly dependent on nature and the services it provides to people.

Proposed coal mines in Alberta's iconic Rocky Mountains, foothills, and life-giving headwaters regions, are yet another layer threatening nature's inherent value to both people and wildlife.

"Trading modest employment growth and a small royalty stream for permanent damage to one of the world's majestic but fragile mountain ecosystems, and the waters that flow from there, is simply an unwise decision," says John.

Having spent much of his business career working in Alberta's oil and gas industry, John is used to weighing risk and return — and with coal mines in the Eastern Slopes, it's clear there's more to lose than to gain.

"With these coal mines, we have to look at the impact they'll have not just hundreds, but thousands of years down the road. The cumulative effects this would have on the integrity of the Yellowstone to Yukon region is serious and irreversible," says John.

From the large carnivores right down to the smallest of insects that rely on these ecosystems, we must place more value on not taking from, but preserving nature.

"We'll continue to need resources, but more and more, the 'engine of growth' will turn to solutions that are not all resource-based," adds John. "A big part of progressing and having thriving economies moving forward is preserving these wonderful, special places far into the future."

Now is a time to look into the more sustainable economic opportunities that can come into play around protected areas — and to explore more deeply how to preserve outstanding natural features of the region for all people and uses, while supporting a strong local economy.

Y2Y's research in Alberta and B.C. draws from the various perspectives, experiences and knowledge of people across the community. These projects help us to better understand the opportunities and challenges in providing for both a strong local economy and healthy ecosystems.

With your help, we can continue to protect valuable wild places from Alberta's Rockies, to the Upper Columbia in B.C. and beyond. It is through projects of this kind that we can not only preserve our memories and experiences in them, but also support a long-term vision for people and nature. Flip to the back of this newsletter to see how you can give a lasting gift today.

Many moments of sunshine

Your words of support are brighter than ever

You know the notes you sometimes include when you donate to Y2Y — kind of like these?

Even though I live in Ontario, I support this mission because my love for animals all over the country and world doesn't have boundaries.

We are impressed with Y2Y's mission of community involvement and its work connecting fragmented forests and the safe passage of wildlife over busy highways throughout the U.S. and Canada.

If you have ever wondered if your messages get read, we are here to tell you that absolutely, they do!

Growing a conservation movement isn't always sunshine and butterflies. A few years ago, when our staff were facing some challenging projects, we turned to you and our community, to (anonymously) share your words of encouragement with the Y2Y team. These are read at our biweekly staff meeting during "a moment of sunshine."

Robin Forsyth, our donor relations co-ordinator, has the fortune of reading these comments. She collects your stories, reasons for supporting Y2Y, and passions for nature, to read and share aloud to remind us that we are not alone.

"I wanted to share the love with our team across the region, so they know how many people are out there rooting for us and believing in Y2Y's vision and mission. It is one of the best parts of my job, so thank you for bringing the sunshine!" says Robin.

This newsletter is about us sharing with you how your gift makes a difference on the ground. We also thought you should know you make a difference in our hearts. Thank you for sharing, and we hope you keep the messages coming!



Photo: NPS

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



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Photo: Pixabay

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 projects that keep our wild places wild, communities healthy and our water and air clean and pure.

Contact information

First 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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