



# Connections

## Newsletter

A black bear sow with her cub.  
Photo: Neal Herbert/National Park Service

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

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*This newsletter is for special people like you who donate, thoughtfully and generously, to protect and conserve wildlife and wilderness throughout the Y2Y region. Thank you for all you do to help people and nature thrive.*



“Thanks to you, the Yellowstone to Yukon region is a global gem — even with only 15.6% of the region currently protected. Wouldn’t it be fantastic if this gem achieved the 30% protection scientists recommend and communities are asking for?”

“We’ve made immense progress together and yet we still have further to go. I’m calling on all of our donors and partners to help us reach this conservation goal.”

— DR. JODI HILTY, Y2Y PRESIDENT & CHIEF SCIENTIST

## YOU ARE SAVING NATURE

***Study shows Y2Y region is Earth's wildest mountain area, thanks to you***

**W**e’ve believed this for years, and now there’s proof. The Yellowstone to Yukon region is the wildest, most intact mountain area on the planet.

A 2024 paper published in the prestigious journal, *Conservation Biology*, shows this region is one of the few large mountain areas of connected habitat left on Earth.

This cutting-edge research looked at six mountain regions on each continent outside of Antarctica: Africa’s Albertine Rift, Europe’s Alps, South America’s Andes, Australia’s Great Eastern Ranges, Asia’s Himalayas, and North America’s Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Of the study areas, the Yellowstone to Yukon region showed the lowest levels of human change and the highest levels of intact, or “wild” landscapes, with minimal habitat fragmentation. Which means we have a unique, global treasure nearby — and a responsibility to protect it.

It’s not by “luck” that this is the wildest mountain region in the world. It’s thanks to proactive people like you who have supported this initiative for 30 years and counting, alongside the enduring stewardship of Indigenous and other communities, and the conservation efforts of numerous partners over generations.

Because of your generous support for the research, policy and conservation work, this region remains wilder and more intact. Thank you for saving critical wildlife habitat and wilderness in the Rocky Mountains!

***Read more about this groundbreaking study on p. 6.***



An aerial view of Wild River Estates.  
Photo: Scott Rulander/Gem Vision Productions

# You returned a subdivision back to nature!

## *Your gifts provide hope for grizzly bears' long-term survival*

For decades, grizzly bears in the Yellowstone area have been squeezed into protected 'islands' surrounded by mines, railways, highways and houses, where they face potentially fatal threats and ongoing habitat challenges caused by a changing climate.

Isolation is a death sentence for grizzly bears. To have a future in the lower 48 states of the U.S., grizzlies must connect to the populations along the border between the U.S. and Canada.

Thanks to you, a key corridor is now more than 90% secured to provide a permanent pathway to protect grizzly bears.

Your generosity helped Y2Y and our partner Vital Ground secure the final piece of the Wild River Estates subdivision near Troy, Montana. Occupying the largest space in the corridor, purchasing the properties in this subdivision was a decade-long endeavor.

The Wild River area is crucial for connectivity. It acts as a natural funnel for grizzly bears and other animals. Without your help, future development would have blocked their ability to travel through the area. You've safeguarded essential wildlife habitat, and safeguarded land for local communities, outdoor enthusiasts and other groups.

The final land purchase amounts to saving more than 130 adjoining acres in this corridor! This major

undertaking involved landowners, community groups, Indigenous groups, and partner organizations. Conservation takes time and millions of dollars, but we are in it for the long haul!

**It means more U.S. grizzly bears will be able to expand their ranges to protect their long-term survival!**

None of this progress would be possible without the incredible generosity of donors like you, who held the long-term vision and provided critical funding for research, community-building, multiple land purchases, and on-going monitoring. Thank you!

While we celebrate this incredible milestone with you, there's always more to do.

Y2Y and our partners have identified 19 additional key corridors and pinch-points that need your attention and generous support.

The success of the Wild River corridor project was thanks to Y2Y's ability to be nimble and responsive when rare opportunities arose. That's why we've created a special Nimble Private Land Fund to help us act swiftly on new opportunities to conserve land.

If you're curious about contributing to this fund, contact Renée, Director of Donor Relations at [renee@y2y.net](mailto:renee@y2y.net). **Thank you for safeguarding critical wildlife corridors and grizzly bears!**



The rolling foothills and mountains of southwestern Alberta are important economically and ecologically.  
Photo: Connie Simmons

# Thank you for giving nature a seat at the table

## *Help shape a bright future for southwest Alberta*

In southwest Alberta, where the Rockies meet the prairies, the local community faces a unique challenge: how to ensure economic growth while preserving the stunning natural environment that defines their rich heritage. This region isn't just a picturesque backdrop — it's a vital wildlife corridor in the Yellowstone to Yukon region. It was also selected by Destination Canada as a flagship Prairies to Pacific tourism corridor.

The local community of ranchers, business owners, tourism operators, and Indigenous Nations have big dreams for their region. They want jobs that make sense for their future without giving up the great outdoors they love so much. Opinions vary on how to get there. Some worry about existing jobs and losing their way of life. Others are eager to explore new, sustainable ways to grow. As the local community navigates ongoing socioeconomic and climate challenges, there's a unique opportunity to bring nature into the conversation.

Recently, donors like you supported an initiative that gathered local community members for discussions on fostering economic growth and long-term prosperity, especially as the traditional coal mining industry declines. Led by an independent consultant, these crucial conversations focused on balancing economic development with environmental stewardship. The aim was to explore nature-positive economic development strategies that benefit both the community and the environment.

A prime example is the Káínawa, or Blood Tribe's initiative to reintroduce plains bison to their historical habitats in southern

Alberta, territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Justin Bruised Head, who leads the Kainai Buffalo Rematriation Project, sees the long-term economic potential of this ecological restoration project. Hopes are for this eco-cultural herd to be expanded into an economic herd where bison harvest offers a nature-positive means of economic diversification for the Nation.

"We're raising a herd of plains bison for cultural and ecological restoration. If everything goes right, it'll be a way for us to sustain ourselves economically on a reserve."

Local business owners, like Heather Davis of UpLift Adventures, echo the sentiment that including nature in development plans is crucial.

"A lot of people came to Canada and settled in this area, seeking prosperity. And there is this natural beauty here that also has prosperity. It's important to create a plan for development that honors both and participate in the decision-making process."

For southwest Alberta, the journey toward nature-positive economic development continues. As this process unfolds, your ongoing support will provide the resources and platform for this community, and others facing similar challenges, to explore and create home-grown solutions that reflect and protect their economic, environmental and cultural values.

Thank you for supporting community-led work to forge a future that celebrates diversity, encourages sustainable decisions, and safeguards our rich wildlife, heritage and nature throughout the region. ***Learn more at [y2y.net/NaturePositive](https://y2y.net/NaturePositive).***



Remote cameras record a group of mule deer using a new wildlife underpass on Highway 3.  
Photo: Dr. Clayton Lamb

# Reconnecting the Rockies

## *You're keeping highways safer for wildlife and people*

Wildlife, like elk, grizzly bears and deer will travel more safely through southeast British Columbia's Elk Valley, thanks to you.

Highway 3, which stretches from the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta, through industry and tourist hotspots of Sparwood and Fernie, is one of the deadliest stretches of highway in North America for wildlife.

Thousands of wildlife collisions occur every year along Highway 3, creating safety concerns for motorists, not to mention millions of dollars in repair, recovery and highway maintenance costs, every year. Research shows these costs to society are \$2.8 million CAD, annually.

A heartbreaking study published in Conservation Science and Practice also found the Elk Valley has the highest mortality rate for young grizzly bears in North America. But thanks to you, there's a plan in place to reverse this trend, so grizzly bears and other wildlife can travel safely into Glacier National Park in Montana.

Y2Y is one of the partners in the Reconnecting the Rockies Project, which is in the process of building at least 10 overpasses and underpasses, fencing, and wildlife detection systems along Highway 3.

Twelve key sites were identified along Highway 3 in Alberta and B.C. by stakeholders, including local government, Indigenous nations, industry, conservation organizations, and scientists. Wildlife tracking data, road kills, and local

knowledge helped identify the key sites.

Several wildlife crossings and fencing projects have already been built, which includes five bridges along Highway 3 turned into underpasses, with more than 3 miles (5km) of fencing. This will create big wins for the critters and commuters in the region.

In Banff National Park, where crossing structures and fencing have been installed for years now, we saw an 80 per cent decrease in wildlife-vehicle collisions, meaning fewer animal deaths.

"Wildlife species thrive when they can move freely and safely across the landscape, staying connected to each other. Highways make it harder for them to move. Here we're working to make highways safer for people and wildlife," says Dr. Clayton Lamb, wildlife scientist with our partner, Biodiversity Pathways.

The fencing and crossing structures will help wildlife move safely and give drivers peace of mind when traveling this busy route through the mountains. That's a big win for wildlife and for people.

Thank you for generously supporting the work to keep Highway 3 from being a barrier to wildlife connectivity in the Yellowstone to Yukon region. Your ongoing monthly giving ensures we can continue moving this project forward and save more wildlife along this busy stretch of highway.



Y2Y donor Samantha Hauser has a special fondness for Wyoming's Snake River.  
Photo: Bonney/National Park Service

# Samantha is building a better future with Y2Y — and so can you

## *How feeling “uncomfortable” fuels this donor’s generosity*

It’s easy to see why people who live, work and play in the Yellowstone to Yukon region would be inspired to give to Y2Y. But what motivates donors who live further afield to contribute to our cause?

Meet Samantha Hauser, a San Francisco-based donor, with a deep commitment to sustainable urban development and a passion to protect the wild spaces of the Yellowstone to Yukon region. It’s inspiring to see a self-described “city kid” who grew up in Los Angeles have such a passion to conserve land thousands of miles away.

As a new architect, Samantha found she had little influence on decisions affecting the land. To play a bigger role in responsible land development, Samantha moved into real estate development. She now works with a development firm that prioritizes projects that integrate sustainability.

She also volunteers for her city’s planning commission where she sees a tremendous number of applications to develop small pockets of land — and she knows the cumulative effect these smaller projects will have on the environment.

When she saw a TV documentary years ago about biodiversity and Y2Y, our interconnected approach to land conservation struck a chord.

“How cool that an organization like Y2Y was looking at land from a macro level, whereas my projects are at such a micro level. I was inspired by the expansive approach and forward-thinking mission.” Samantha’s support of the Yellowstone to Yukon region extends beyond our beautiful landscapes. Her support is driven by a deep

respect for the mission of Y2Y.

“I support Y2Y, not because of where it is, but because of WHAT it does — create access for wildlife and protect connectivity,” she explains. This reflects her belief in the critical need for land conservation.



Samantha began giving one-time gifts in 2018. Today, she’s a sustaining donor. She’s explored the region and dreams of retiring along the Snake River.

When asked why she supports Y2Y, she shared this beautiful message, “The opportunities to protect land are fleeting. I thought, if I can afford to donate, then I should do it. Sometimes it feels uncomfortable giving a generous gift. But then I think of the discomfort I’d feel if we lost this vital resource — especially when I could have done something to protect it. Because once the land is gone, it’s gone forever.”

An insightful message from this “city kid,” whose heart lies thousands of miles away along the Snake River.

You’re probably like Samantha, donating to Y2Y to protect a landscape you love, and advance a mission you believe in.

**Thank you for protecting land that once gone, is gone forever. Your (uncomfortable) generosity keeps the Yellowstone to Yukon region wild.**

# You're keeping Y2Y wild

**Research shows the Y2Y region is the most intact area on Earth — but is it enough?**

(continued from p. 1)

At Y2Y we rely on sound science, and now a groundbreaking study shows just how special this place is and how urgently we must act to keep it this way!

The study examined six of the largest mountain regions worldwide. It analyzed fragmentation, human impact, and how much of each mountainous region is protected, relative to the global target of 30 percent of lands and waters protected by 2030 (30x30). Globally, it shows:

- About 50% of mountain lands worldwide are heavily impacted by human activities — more than previously thought.
- Up to 40% of our mountain ecosystems are degraded by fragmentation.
- Just 2 of the 6 mountainous regions meet global protection recommendations.

- The Yellowstone to Yukon region is the most intact but least protected mountain region. Only 15.6% of the Y2Y region is protected, which means we have more work to achieve global conservation goals.

The findings underscore that while our conservation efforts are working, **there is still more to do to protect this globally significant environmental gem.**

We need your ongoing help to protect an additional 50 million acres, safeguard and connect habitat by ensuring more crossing structures are built across busy roads and highways, and equip more communities with conservation tools, funding and support. With your renewed help and generosity, this ecological gem could be protected for all, forever.

**Read more at [y2y.net/saveourglobalgem](https://y2y.net/saveourglobalgem).**

## Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



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To make a donation call us toll-free at (800) 966-7920 or make a secure donation online at [y2y.net/donate](https://y2y.net/donate). The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative is a 501(c) 3 public charity in the United States, IRS #81-0535303. In Canada, the Initiative is a Registered Canada Revenue 149(1)(f) Charity, Business Number 86430 1841 RR0001. Y2Y holds a four-star rating with Charity Navigator.

### Yes, I want to save this global gem!

Your generous monthly donation connects and protects critical wildlife habitat and supports on-the-ground projects to keep our wild places wild, our communities healthy, and our water and air clear and pure. To make a gift, fill out and mail the form, call us toll free at 1-800-966-7920 or visit [y2y.net/donate](https://y2y.net/donate).

#### Contact information

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Please renew and upgrade my support to protect nature

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

Yes, I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Payment method

My check is enclosed, made payable to the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

OR

Charge my  Visa  MasterCard  AMEX

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ (MM/YY)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_