



# Connections

## Newsletter



Photo: Unsplash.

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

### In this issue

- P2 — Bringing grizzly bears back
- P3 — The kids these days!
- P4 — Fostering a new model for conservation
- P5 — Saving mountain caribou
- P6 — Thank you for saving wildlife

*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.*

## You're saving wildlife ...by the numbers

96

the percentage research suggests crossing structures reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions with hooved animals

126

the number of wildlife crossing structures currently built in the Y2Y region

34

the number of additional overpasses in key crossing areas the Alberta government recently committed to in order to keep humans and wildlife safe

## Animals are safer, thanks to you!

***A new wildlife crossing is nearly finished and animals are already being saved***

After almost two decades of researching, planning, fundraising and building, a new wildlife overpass is nearly complete — and already in use!

The Bow Valley Gap wildlife overpass (known as the Stoney Nakoda Exshaw wildlife arch) is Alberta's first wildlife overpass constructed outside a national park. It took the dedication and belief of our partners, biologists, transport experts, Indigenous communities, and donors like you to make this project a reality.

In 2019, after a decade of research and advocacy, our Y2Y community helped get the Alberta Government to fund a wildlife overpass across one of the busiest stretches of the Trans-Canada Highway, about 37 km (23 mi) east of Banff.

The "Bow Valley Gap" is known by the ȩyǎhé Nakoda (Stoney Nakoda) Nations as "the place where animals cross forever." It's also known for its high rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions — on average 69 collisions occur per year, costing around \$750,000, annually.

**Thanks to your support and generosity, the deer, elk, coyotes, grizzly bears and humans who travel this route will have safer passage.**

While construction is not entirely finished, wildlife cameras show animals are already using the wildlife arch to cross over the deadly Bow Valley Gap.

It's only because of donors and supporters like you, who advocate for wildlife year after year, that massive conservation projects like this can be built.

Turn to page 6 to see how you're saving wildlife in other high-collision areas of the Yellowstone to Yukon region.





Grizzly bear in Grand Teton National Park. Photo: National Park Service / Adams.

# You're bringing grizzly bears back

*Grizzly bears are returning to their historic home ranges because of you*

It's always thrilling to spot a majestic grizzly bear, isn't it? Especially from a safe distance.

One recent grizzly bear sighting wasn't just thrilling, it was a cause for celebration.

A landowner captured an image of a grizzly bear on a trail camera in the Tobacco Root Mountains of southwestern Montana... which is the first confirmed sighting of a grizzly bear in the region in decades!

**This proves the work you're investing in to bring grizzly bears back is working! Thank you!**

The Tobacco Root region is considered a "stepping stone" between the Northern Continental Divide population around Montana's Glacier National Park, and the isolated Greater Yellowstone population in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Long-term isolation for the Yellowstone population is a death sentence.

This recent bear sighting in July 2024 came on the heels of two other unique sightings. This past spring, a grizzly bear was confirmed in Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains. And last summer, one was spotted on the Montana side of the Pryor Mountains near the Wyoming state line, where grizzly bears hadn't been seen in over a century!

**These recent sightings are giving hope that the robust northern grizzly bear population will reconnect to the Yellowstone bears, securing their survival!**

And at the same time, many people are understandably nervous about having more bears in our backyard.

Landowners, ranchers, hunters and outdoor recreationists will have to adopt bear smart strategies — from carrying bear spray and being bear-aware on outings, to managing grizzly bear attractants (like livestock, feed or garbage). In fact, the grizzly bear spotted this spring in the Bighorn Mountains preyed on cattle, and was sadly killed by wildlife agents.

**That's why your ongoing support is crucial.**

You can protect more corridors and connect landscapes so grizzly bear populations will continue to expand and safely return to their home ranges. You can also support the education and infrastructure (like wildlife overpasses and bear-proof fencing) to keep bears and humans safe. The solutions are there — all we need is you!

Grizzly bears once roamed from the coast to the plains, and from Alaska to Mexico. By the mid-70s, their numbers in the lower 48 dwindled to fewer than 1,000. Alberta experienced similar trends, with the grizzly bear population falling to 691 bears in 2010.

**Thanks to your generosity, those trends are turning around.**

You're restoring and recovering habitat for grizzly bears and other animals, and improving connectivity throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region. And with these recent grizzly bear sightings, we know these efforts are paying off. **Thank you for being a champion of conservation and helping grizzly bears return to their historic home ranges.**



# The kids these days!

## How young people are supporting Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

In a world where tweens are entertained by TikTok, MrBeast and Minecraft, a determined group of kids in Alberta's Bow Valley are bucking the stereotype.

At the Alpenglow School in Canmore, Alberta, students from kindergarten to grade six organized an Earth Day 'Fun Run' fundraiser — and they chose Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative as the beneficiary!

The students got pledges for the Fun Run from friends and family. One sweet six-year-old asked the guests at her birthday party to bring donations instead of gifts to "protect homes for animals."

**These generous kids raised a whopping \$5,600! One kindergartener raised over \$1,000 on his own!**

Our Donor Relations Specialist, Robin, chatted with three grade sixers to find out what inspires them about our work. As a Y2Y supporter, you might relate to their responses!

**Q: Why did you choose to give your hard earned money to Y2Y?**

*Student 1:* Well, we thought it was really cool how you protected all the animals and made areas where they could cross safely. I think the crossing thingies are awesome!

*Student 2:* Because of what your goals are: to protect the animals and the land. It's not only good for Canmore, but for like a super humongous area of the world.

*Student 3:* Because it was really helping animals and reducing traffic incidents. It's, like, safer!

**Q: What do you think the role of science is in conservation?**

*Student 2:* Science helps because the science figures out what animals need to survive to be protected.

*Student 3:* It helps learn more about animals and what they need. Knowing more means we can help more.

*Student 1:* Sometimes you need to prove it for people to listen to you.

**Q: What is your hope for this area (Canmore, Banff and the Bow Valley) in 30 years?**

*Student 2:* I think if we take better actions in our community to protect the animals, give them the space they need so they are still here in 30 years, which is better for people too because we are all one Earth.

*Student 3:* I think it's going to have less production of greenhouse gases and we are going to have a much greener Canmore. I'm pretty, like, hopeful, but I hope good decisions are made until, like, people my age are allowed to make them.

**Q: What can everyone do to help the environment, the Earth and conservation?**

*Student 3:* You could plant trees and give animals space. I don't want a bear in my yard, but I want them like here, on the Earth.

*Student 1:* You could fundraise for groups like Y2Y and ride your bike more often.

### *From the mouths of tweens!*

If you agree "*the crossing thingies are awesome!*" please join these kids by matching their giving. We'd love to report back to them that their generosity inspired other nature lovers around the world to donate to Y2Y. Use the form on the last page or visit [y2y.net/donate](https://y2y.net/donate). Thank you!



Students gather at the Alpenglow School fundraiser in Canmore, Alberta. Photos: Noer Wuisman.



Cows and trumpeter swans in the prairies. Photo: Shutterstock.

---

# You're fostering a new conservation model

## *Cattle, conservation and connections for wildlife*

**W**e want more people to think of our land as kin — seeing nature as more of a sibling or a mother to be nourished, rather than a commodity to be sold,” explains Cole Mannix about his venture, the Old Salt Co-op in Helena, Montana.

This innovative enterprise is revolutionizing the meat industry by linking local ranchers directly with vendors and restaurants, mirroring what microbreweries have done so well for beer.

The Old Salt Co-op isn't just transforming supply chains; it's fostering a new generation of conservation-minded consumers, who want to develop relationships with their food suppliers and support conservation at the same time.

Each summer, the Old Salt Festival brings this mission to life on the Mannix family ranch an hour west of Helena in the rolling ranchlands of the Blackfoot Valley. With 2,500 attendees ranging from young urban families to ranching old-timers, the festival is a vibrant celebration of sustainability through fire, food, music, and art.

Over three days, guests enjoy wood-fired cooking and fun activities, including poetry, artisan makers, Americana musicians, and conservation experts. The “Land Talk Lounge” hosts discussions on topics like conservation easements, soil health, and food systems.

Your generous support helped us sponsor the Old Salt Festival. As a donor you help us share this modern conservation approach with partners and ranchers throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Besides, it's so much more than just raising awareness about how we buy our food.

By ensuring that cattle raised on Montana's ranches are processed and sold within the state, the Old Salt model significantly cuts the environmental impact of beef transportation and production, while promoting sustainable ranching practices. This model supports local economies and helps ranchers maintain low-impact practices, preventing the subdivision and sale of these vital rangelands.

Which means more ranchland will remain undeveloped, intact and connected for the wildlife who roam these lands, too.

As a donor and an important member of the Y2Y family, you're working toward this vision. Thank you for supporting and promoting a new wave of conservation efforts like the Old Salt Co-op. You're making a real difference to the lives and livelihoods of so many throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region. See the Old Salt Festival in action at [oldsaltco-op.com](http://oldsaltco-op.com).

***“Whether you come for the music, food, or talks, you see how interconnected we are by fundamental elements like food, land, and art,” says Mannix. “It starts a conversation about how we can remake our food systems to be compatible with the land. And redefine what wealth truly is.” – Cole Mannix***





Starr Gauthier looks out at the caribou maternal pen. Photo: David Moskowitz.

*“We're just like caribou. We're in their territory. So, to share it with them and to help them thrive is pretty special.”*

– Starr Gauthier, Caribou Guardian,  
in the Caribou Homeland film

## You're helping save mountain caribou

### *And supporting the Indigenous Guardians of the future*

In the heart of the Twin Sisters Mountains in northeastern British Columbia, an extraordinary story is unfolding — one where mountain caribou are making a comeback, and young people are reconnecting to their ancestral roots.

Thanks to donors like you, Y2Y has proudly supported various Indigenous Guardian programs within Treaty 8 territory, including the Sauleau First Nations Land Guardians and the Caribou Guardians programs.

The Caribou Guardians program, led by the West Moberly First Nations and Sauleau First Nations is a key part of the ongoing work to save the Klinse-za caribou herd — and it's helping nurture the next generation of environmental leaders.

Indigenous Guardians can include Elders, youth, and other community members with specific training who work to better understand and care for the land.

By facilitating time on the land, Guardian programs can support Indigenous youth to engage in culture, language, and biodiversity.

Local students, teens, and young adults play a central role in the Caribou Guardian program. Each year, students, Caribou Guardians and other community members gather over 25,000 pounds of lichen from the boreal forests, to feed the female caribou and their calves in protected maternal pens.

*Imagine what it must be like for a young student to tromp through the wilderness in search of a special species of lichen to feed a rare caribou, an animal that was once so plentiful they fed the entire community.*

Teenage “Elders-in-training” are also stepping up at the Twin Sisters Native Plant Nursery, where they gather and grow native seeds and plants to restore damaged caribou habitat. The youth learn about the gathering traditions

and spiritual uses of these plants. They reconnect to the wisdom of their Elders.

As they collect lichen and tend to native plants, young people are reminded of the sacred relationship between these animals and the land. And they're experiencing what it's like to be an essential member of an ambitious solution!

“We are all working hard to recover these caribou. Each year, community members pick bags and bags of lichen to feed the mother caribou in the pen while other members live up at the top of the mountain with the animals. One day, we hope to return the herds to a sustainable size,” said Carmen Richter, a member of Sauleau First Nations, when speaking about her master's research at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan on creating a plan for lichen collection. Carmen is a Sauleau First Nations Land Guardian program advisor, and a biologist working on habitat restoration in the region.

They're clearly on the right path. The Klinse-za caribou herd has grown from just 38 in 2013 to nearly 200 today, thanks in part to these young Guardians.

The recently expanded Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park now protects nearly 500,000 acres (203,000 hectares) of critical habitat. It will offer a safe haven for caribou as they recover, and a living classroom for youth to continue reconnecting with their culture and community.

With your support, this caribou recovery program is a model for Indigenous-led conservation efforts worldwide. As a donor, you're helping the Guardians of tomorrow save caribou and reconnect to their land and culture. Thank you for this extraordinary gift!

Watch this inspiring video about the Caribou Guardian program at [y2y.net/CaribouHomeland](https://y2y.net/CaribouHomeland).

# Thank you for saving wildlife

*Donors like you are “bridging the gap” to keep wildlife and humans safer*

The research on wildlife crossing structures is clear: animals are 2.46 times more likely to use a designated structure to cross a busy highway than crossing randomly. Collisions go down. Lives are saved.

With the Bow Valley Gap overpass, wildlife are using this safe passageway — even before the construction is complete! **Thank you for making this possible!**

As a Y2Y donor and supporter, you’ve been a driving force (no pun intended!) behind the dozens of crossing structures built in the region to date. Because of you, more elk, bears, moose, cougars and other precious wildlife are safer when crossing dangerous and deadly highways. You’re making roads safer for humans, too.

This is great news — and yet our work is not done.

There are more high-collision hotspots throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Thanks to your generosity, we’re bringing together wildlife biologists, community partners and government agencies

to identify and plan an additional 40 wildlife crossings and fencing projects in the region.

Our focus right now is on Highway 3 in British Columbia and Alberta, and Interstate 90 in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. These two highways are like massive walls blocking wildlife movement and migration.

Without more crossing structures on these two highways the vision of a reconnected landscape will not be achieved. There is a strong willingness among our partners right now to invest time, energy and money into these massive infrastructure projects.

That’s why we need you to continue to champion these projects. *We can’t lose momentum!*

**Your donation provides safe passage for wildlife, and bridges the gap across deadly stretches of highway. Your ongoing support ensures these life-saving projects will move forward, before it’s too late. Thank you for your continued generosity!**

## Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



Phone 403.609.2666  
Toll-free 1.800.966.7920



200-1350 Railway Avenue  
Canmore, AB T1W 1P6  
Canada



P.O. Box 157  
Bozeman, MT 59771-0157  
USA



y2y.net  
info@y2y.net

To make a donation call us toll-free at (800) 966-7920 or make a secure donation online at [y2y.net/donate](http://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.

Photo: Shutterstock

### Yes! I want to bridge the gap and give wildlife room to roam safely!

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](http://y2y.net/donate).

#### Contact information

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

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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: \_\_\_\_\_