



# Connections

## Newsletter

Grizzly bear sow and cub in a meadow. Photo: Kent Nelson.

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

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This issue is dedicated to Karsten Heuer for the many ways he shaped wilderness conservation.

Experience Karsten's journeys through these books and films:

- *Walking the Big Wild: From Yellowstone to Yukon on the Grizzly Bear's Trail* (2003)
- *Being Caribou: Five Months on Foot with an Arctic Herd* (2005)
- *Finding Farley* (2009)
- *The Magic of the Wild mini-series* (2013)
- *They Belong: The Return to Banff National Park — Bison Return from the Edge of Extinction* (2021)

Read more about how Karsten inspired conservation on Page 3.

## 2024 — a breakthrough year in land conservation

***Because of you, 6 key parcels of land are protected***

2024 was a breakthrough year for private land conservation. And it's all thanks to you!

Last year, Y2Y and our partners conserved 27 sq. km (6,794 acres) across six key land parcels in Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia, with more coming this year!

**The 55-acre Chokecherry Slope** in western Montana was the last piece of private property between the Rattlesnake Wilderness and Highway 93, the very parcel of land where the famous grizzly bear Ethyl tried to cross but had to turn back. When this land became available, Y2Y, one of our long-time donors, and land-trust partner Vital Ground Foundation stepped in immediately to work on the deal.

This tiny property will have a big impact. Y2Y's senior connectivity specialist, Eric Greenwell, says:

*"It might just be 55 acres, but this was the last unprotected piece between the Rattlesnake Wilderness and Highway 93 — a major barrier for wildlife. If we hadn't stepped in, wildlife would have been forced onto roads or cut off from the rest of their population."*

In north Idaho, a key property called **100-Acre Woods** near the Kootenai River was at risk of development. Because of you, and thanks to the landowner and our partner Vital Ground Foundation, it is permanently protected. **This land provides a safe corridor for grizzly bears, wolves, and elk to move safely between the U.S. and Canada, and from the Selkirk Mountains to the Boundary-Smith Creek Wildlife Management Area.**

And in British Columbia, 5.24 sq. km (1,297 acres) were purchased in the Kootenay region: **Bummer's Flats, Wycliffe Prairie, and Lower Wolf Creek, major wildlife migration routes in the Rocky Mountain Trench.** These lands were once broken up by fences. Now those barriers are being removed, thanks to your generosity! *Continued on page 6*



Wolf in Yellowstone National Park. Photo: National Park Service/Jacob W. Frank.

# The secret lives of wolves

## *Donors like you are building a path to success*

**A** lost wolf collar, missing for 18 years, tells an incredible story.

Recently, a worn and weathered radio collar was discovered deep in the forests of Montana. It belonged to Wolf 57, a young female wolf collared in Banff National Park in 2001. She was part of the Fairholme pack until she disappeared in 2003. Because the collar remained intact, researchers believe she likely died of natural causes.

But for nearly two decades, no one knew what happened to her.

Then, the discovery of her collar — 500 km (311 miles) from where she was last seen — confirmed what conservationists have long known: **wolves, like all wide-ranging species, need vast, connected, and intact (or wild) landscapes to survive.**

Wolf 57's journey echoes the story of another famous wolf, Pluie.

On a rainy morning in 1991, researchers placed the first-ever satellite tracking collar on a wolf. Over the next two years, Pluie traveled an astonishing 100,000 sq. km (40,000 sq. miles), crossing three U.S. states and two Canadian provinces before she was trapped and legally killed in British Columbia.

Pluie's incredible journey inspired the creation of the Yellowstone to Yukon vision when it became clear that conservation couldn't focus only on isolated parks and reserves.

As a Y2Y donor, you know that wolves, grizzly bears, and other **wildlife need vast, connected corridors** to roam safely, find food and mates, and keep their populations healthy.

### **Without safe corridors, they face immense risks:**

- They become isolated and struggle to find mates
- They're hit by vehicles while attempting to cross busy roads
- They're threatened by human-wildlife conflict and land development

When Pluie's story inspired Y2Y's creation in the 1990s, there were no dedicated wildlife crossings in the region.

### **Today, thanks to donors like you, more than 177 crossings connect key landscapes!**

These crossings, along with protected lands and corridors, are helping wildlife like Wolf 57 and Pluie move safely. Every conservation breakthrough, whether it's a lost-and-found collar, a new conservation easement, or a new crossing, proves that your commitment to Y2Y is working.

### **Wolf 57's collar is a reminder that your generosity keeps wildlife moving.**

Because of you, there will be more stories of resilience to uncover, more proof of thriving landscapes, and more reasons for hope as we continue to connect and protect this precious and wild landscape we all love.

# The true spirit of conservation

## Honoring Karsten Heuer's legacy

In June of 1998, a young biologist, Karsten Heuer, set out on foot to travel 3,400 km (2,100 miles) from Yellowstone National Park to the Yukon Territory. His inspiring 18-month journey brought global attention and support to the vision of a connected landscape where wildlife could roam freely. Karsten wasn't just walking — he was proving the Yellowstone to Yukon vision was possible.

Karsten passed away peacefully on November 5, 2024. We were deeply saddened to lose an inspirational leader and mentor, and one of our dearest friends.

As a champion of conservation and our cause, and an inspirational storyteller, few people embody the vision of Y2Y as fully as Karsten did. His book *Walking the Big Wild* captured the possibility and urgency of reconnecting landscapes for wildlife. As Y2Y's president from 2013 to 2015, Karsten strengthened conservation throughout the region. He later served as an advisor, finding new ways to progress our work.

He completed more cross-country conservation adventures, like following the Porcupine caribou herd migration as re-told in *Being Caribou*, and paddling across Canada with his partner Leanne Allison and son Zev, detailed in *Finding Farley*. Karsten also successfully led Parks Canada's project to reintroduce bison to Banff National Park. Through every adventure, Karsten told stories that moved people to care.

As Harvey Locke, Y2Y co-founder and Karsten's long-time friend, says:

**"Karsten lived his life in motion. He embodied the spirit of Y2Y!"**

And it's true. Karsten lived a full, rich and adventurous life in motion — like the grizzly bears, wolverines and caribou we all care so much about.

The spirit of Y2Y is about more than just land and wildlife. It's also about people.

***A connected landscape from Yellowstone to Yukon is possible because people like you believe in it.***

Not everyone will trek thousands of miles to document the importance of connected corridors and wild landscapes. Those of us who care will do whatever we can, whether it's write a letter, give a generous donation, or take a group of kids on a nature walk.

**This movement is succeeding because you contribute in a way that's meaningful to YOU.** Just as Karsten contributed in a way that was meaningful to him.

As Harvey says:

***"Y2Y is not just about any one person. It's about the way those of us who love this landscape choose to contribute to its vitality and the shared vision."***

We're grateful to Karsten and his family for everything he gave to Y2Y and the conservation community. And we're grateful to you because you have been on this journey with us — and with Karsten — each step of the way.

*Karsten Heuer was a biologist, wildlife and landscape defender, storyteller, best-selling author, husband, father, son and friend. We miss him and are honored to share part of his story with you.*



Karsten stands atop Iyā Mnathka (Mount Yamnuska) in Alberta. Photo: Dan Rafla.



Karsten Heuer and his partner, Leanne Allison. Photo courtesy of Karsten Heuer's family.



Bow River in Canmore, Alberta. Photo: Shutterstock.  
Inset: Wendy, left, Brenda, right, speak to the crowd at their birthday fundraiser. Supplied photo.

# Making a difference on the dancefloor

*How two friends used a milestone birthday to make a monumental gift*

**T**wenty-six years ago, Brenda Davison sat in a dark auditorium in Banff, Alberta, tears streaming down her face.

She was listening to Karsten Heuer, a young biologist and adventurer, share stories from his epic journey hiking from Yellowstone to the Yukon (see story on page 3). He spoke of the shrinking ranges of grizzly bears, wolves, and cougars. Of roadways blocking migration routes. Of wildlife struggling to survive.

When the presentation ended, the crowd erupted in applause. Brenda joined in and gave Karsten a four-minute standing ovation.

That night, Brenda walked away with a **renewed commitment to protect wildlife corridors** in the Bow Valley, around her hometown of Canmore, Alberta.

Since then, Brenda has been involved in many community conservation projects. As a junior high teacher, she and her colleague, Wendy Allsopp, helped students raise awareness for a wildlife crossing over a large hydro canal near Canmore. Their efforts paid off. In 2002, the Canadian federal government committed \$3 million to build the crossing, ensuring safe passage for wildlife between Banff National Park and Kananaskis.

Two decades later, Brenda's passion for conservation remains just as strong. **To celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays, she and Wendy turned their joint birthday bash into a**

**Y2Y fundraiser, with live music, a raffle, and a room full of friends.** The result? A night of fun that raised close to \$5,000 to protect the wildlife corridors they care so much about! When they turned 71, they did it again, and donated another \$1,200 to fund critical conservation work.

When we asked Brenda why protecting wildlife corridors is so important, she shared:

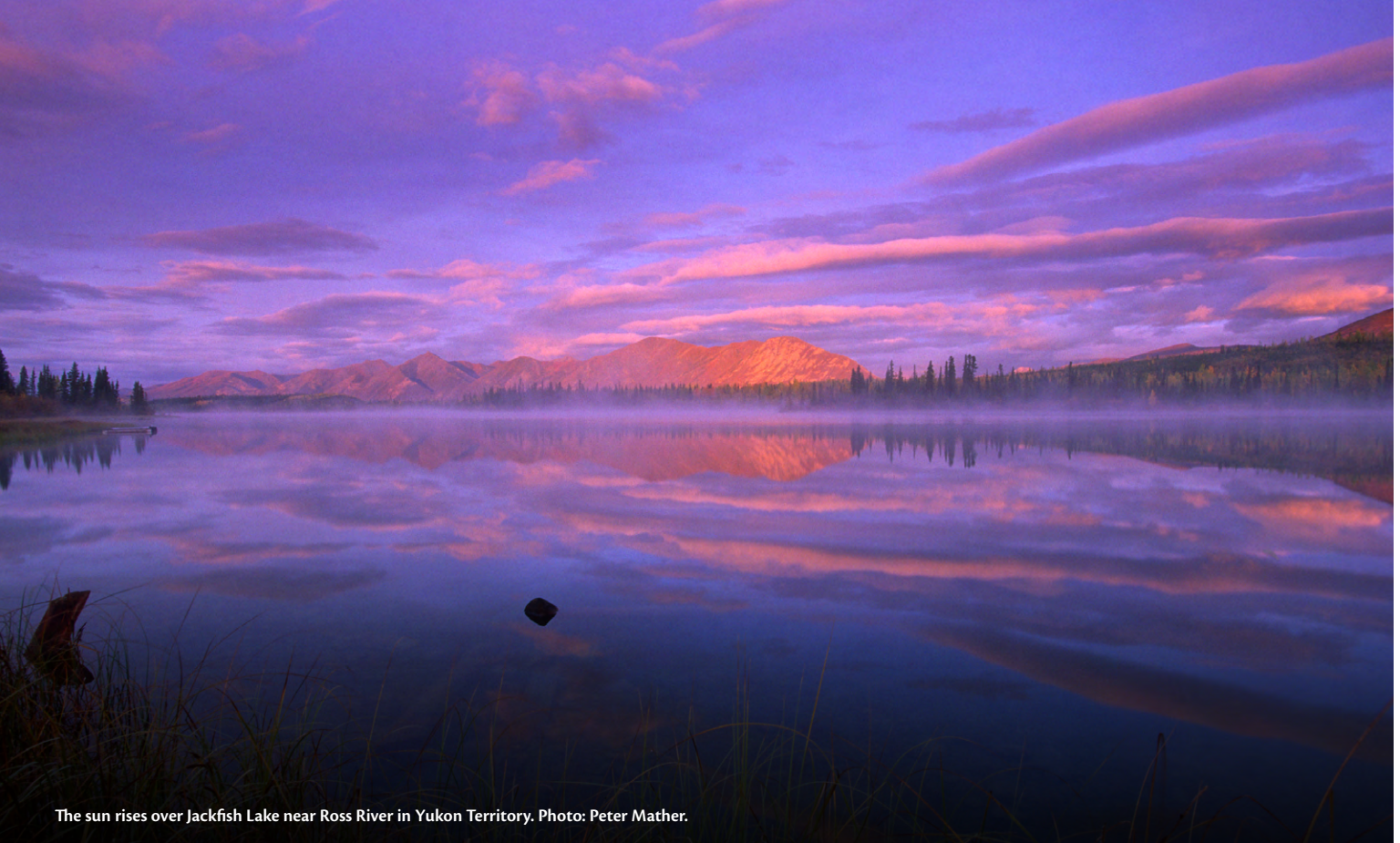
*"These are the last places wildlife can live in southern Alberta. Only a sliver of habitat remains. Yet, so much activity goes on in these areas: quading, biking, hiking, fishing, forestry, mining... in such a tiny space.*

*These small corridors of wilderness are all the animals have. They can't go anywhere else. They can't survive unless we do something to protect them."*

Brenda's words remind us why this work matters and how every action counts.

From the classroom to the dance floor, Brenda shows how passion and action go hand in hand. Whether you host a gathering, inspire students, or celebrate a milestone like Brenda and Wendy, there's a way for everyone to make a difference.

*If you'd like to host an event to support Y2Y, reach out to us at [info@y2y.net](mailto:info@y2y.net). We may be able to provide resources or a guest speaker to help bring your vision to life.*



The sun rises over Jackfish Lake near Ross River in Yukon Territory. Photo: Peter Mather.

# The largest conservation opportunity in North America ...and you're part of it

**A** national park is more than just a place on a map. It's a promise to protect wildlife, culture, and ecosystems for generations to come.

Thanks to donors like you, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help create a massive national park at the north end of the Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Nestled in the heart of the Yukon Territory, the proposed **Ross River Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)** and potential National Park Reserve would span almost 10 million acres — that's five times the size of Yellowstone National Park! This new national park would become one of the largest in North America, and the second-largest in Canada.

This vast wilderness is home to grizzly bears, moose, wolves, and seven caribou herds. It's a major flyway for migratory birds like sandhill cranes, whose flocks darken the skies each year.

The park would also be a climate win. Boreal forests and wetlands are powerful carbon stores, absorbing and holding greenhouse gases. Protecting this landscape safeguards wildlife corridors and fights climate change in a measurable way.

Most significantly, this area is a place of deep cultural importance, where the Ross River Dena (meaning "people" in Kaska language) have stewarded the land since time

immemorial. IPCAs like this can support ecotourism, land-based education, and Indigenous Guardian programs, in addition to long-term land protection.

*"The Ross River community holds deep ties to the land. This national park ensures future generations can continue their traditions, while protecting the land from irreversible loss due to industrial development."*

— Meaghen Kimmitt, Y2Y Yukon conservation specialist

Thanks to donor support, Y2Y was able to support community efforts, and encourage collaboration from governments. In December 2024, a feasibility study for a new national park was officially kicked off, which is the first step toward turning this vision into reality.

"These kinds of parks don't just happen," says Y2Y's director of landscape protection, Tim Burkhart.

*"It takes years of advocacy, community leadership, and support from people like you who believe in protecting wild places. This isn't just another park. It's an anchor for the entire Y2Y region and will ensure wildlife can move freely between ecosystems for generations."*

Your generosity will help keep this project on track and gather support from decision-makers and the public.

Thank you for helping transform Ross River from a promise into a protected legacy for generations to come.

# A race against time

## You're saving critical pathways before they're gone

Continued from page 1.

While national parks and large public lands provide essential core habitat, we often need to secure small but strategically-located private lands to stitch corridors together.

The challenge? **Conservation opportunities don't wait.**

A landowner may want to protect their land, but they need immediate financial support to make it happen. Other times, a critical property is about to be sold and must be secured quickly.

Eric Greenwell further explains the urgency:

*"Montana and Idaho are two of the fastest growing states in the U.S. If we don't act now, these vital wildlife corridors could be lost forever."*

Some conservation deals take years to finalize. Others happen in a matter of weeks.

That's where the **Y2Y Nimble Private Land Fund** comes in. Your donations to the fund allow us to seize opportunities the moment they arise.

**We can work with private landowners and land protection partners to conserve landscapes because of people like you.** Every acre is conserved by caring and generous donors who help us stitch corridors together, piece by piece.

Thanks to you, 27 sq. km (6,794 acres) of private land were protected in 2024. Another 7 sq. km (1,668 acres) are pending and expected to close soon.

Today, grizzly bears, wolves, and elk still have room to roam. Steadfast donors like you made that happen. And as we face increasing pressure on our wild spaces, your continued support will allow us to move quickly to secure land before it's lost forever.

Thank you for being part of this monumental conservation work. *To find out more about the Y2Y Nimble Private Land Fund, please contact Renée Krysko at [renee@y2y.net](mailto:renee@y2y.net).*

## 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](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.



Bison calf and cow.  
Photo: National Park Service/Neal Herbert.

## Yes! I want to connect and protect these wild spaces where people and wildlife share nature's untamed legacy.

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 clean and pure. To make a gift, fill out and mail the forms, 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 (1<sup>st</sup>) of each month.
- Yes, I would like to make a one-time donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I'd like my gift to go towards the Karsten Heuer Core, Corridor & Critters Fund

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_