



Connections Newsletter

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 protect and conserve wildlife and wilderness throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Thank you for all you do to help people and nature thrive.

A current of hope

The Yellowstone to Yukon region holds the headwaters of 10 major river systems in North America. The glacial melt creates torrents and streams that in turn feed larger rivers and watersheds.

These currents flow through ancient forests, native grasslands, and fertile valleys. Across geographic boundaries and political borders. The rivers provide clean water for millions of people and support a rich web of life, from lady's slipper orchids and bull trout, to caribou and grizzly bears.

But with increasing development and climate change, many of us are right to worry about the long-term health and conservation of our watersheds.

The good news is many of the region's rivers are still wild and free-flowing—just like your generosity.

Every gift you make flows across borders and boundaries throughout this remarkable landscape, to nourish thousands of communities, and support countless species. Your giving is like a watershed—it keeps every inch of the Yellowstone to Yukon region healthy for generations to come.

In this issue, you'll see the deep and wide impact of your giving.

Thank you for everything that flows from your generosity.



You made a conservation milestone possible

THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING THE KOOTENAY FOREST LANDS

The Flathead River runs through the land acquisition in the Elk Valley of British Columbia. Credit: Nick Nault.

Somewhere in southeastern B.C.'s Elk Valley, a grizzly bear follows a creek in an old growth forest, through land that will never be subdivided, logged, or lost... because of you.

The stunning Elk Valley has been home to grizzly bears, bighorn sheep and lynx for centuries. And key parcels of land called the Kootenay Forest Lands project, located within the homelands of the Ktunaxa Nation, are now protected for generations to come.

The Elk Valley is an important passageway that helps grizzly bears move between Banff National Park and the wildlands of Montana—and ultimately reconnect with the Yellowstone population. It's also become increasingly squeezed by land development, highways, and mining and forestry operations. Studies show it has the highest death rate for young grizzly bears in North America.

Eric Greenwell, Y2Y's Senior Connectivity Specialist, describes the land's significance: *"This project spans ridgetop to ridgetop, and all the way through the Elk Valley bottom. It's an essential movement corridor for animals coming out of Banff and going south into Montana and Idaho. This is really a pinch point for animals trying to move south and reconnect with their former populations."*

For over two decades, Y2Y has worked to preserve the integrity of this keystone region. And when a new opportunity opened up to help protect this critical corridor, Y2Y donors were there.

Last year, Doman Building Materials Group Ltd. wanted to sell its timberlands in the heart of this region—and conservation groups knew there was a limited window of time to act. The Nature Conservancy of Canada brought together many people and groups to protect the 45,000 hectares (112,000 acres) of ancient forest. When they asked Y2Y for help, it was an easy decision—because of your ongoing generosity, we had immediate access to a pool of funds that could be used to support the land purchase.

The Kootenay Forest Lands, as they're now called, is one of the largest private land conservation projects in Canadian history.

Thanks to you, this milestone conservation deal protects:

- Critical habitat for at-risk species like grizzly bears, badgers, whitebark pine, bull trout, and bighorn sheep
- A vital passageway that allows wildlife to safely move between the US and Canada
- 930 kilometers (578 miles) of streams, securing clean water and healthy fisheries across dozens of watersheds
- A rare high-elevation grassland ecosystem considered to be at risk across the region
- Old growth and mature forests that provide ample carbon storage
- The mountain views, outdoor recreation and world-class fly fishing, enjoyed by 6,000 local residents and 400,000 yearly visitors to the area.

Your generosity is creating conservation wins south of the border, too.

Three smaller, but significant, private properties in Montana were recently secured. In January, we partnered with a local land trust to secure a conservation easement on the 675-hectare (1667-acre) Indreland Ranch property northwest of Missoula. In December, your support allowed us to purchase the 20-hectare (50-acre) Brock Creek Project, located along the north side of Interstate 90 and adjacent to an existing underpass. We also secured the 49-hectare (120-acre) Nellie Creek Project south of the interstate in a conservation easement.

Each property sits in a Y2Y priority linkage zone along a creek or river drainage that provides natural pathways for wildlife to move safely through the landscape.

From the Kootenay Forest Lands to Nellie Creek, these conservation wins show what's possible when landowners, land trusts, Indigenous Nations, and donors like you come together.

Thank you for being here with us when it counts.

You're keeping bears and people safe...

... ONE CAMPSITE AT A TIME

There's a well-known anxiety that comes from sitting at your computer, continually refreshing the page as you wait for the ticketing to open. Because you know once it does, you'll be in a virtual lineup with thousands of other superfans, vying for one of the highly coveted spots.

And no. We're not talking about getting tickets to the next Taylor Swift concert! We're talking about getting a reservation at a beloved national, provincial or state-run campground.

Camping has surged in popularity, with around 25 per cent more households camping today than just five years ago. Studies show 2025 saw the second-highest total number of campers at around 82.4 million across the US and Canada.

The pressure to find prime camping spots is pushing more people onto private land throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region.

Enter Hipcamp, a platform that connects outdoor lovers with private landowners who open their properties for camping. Think of it as AirBnB for wild experiences. From a meadow with a fire pit in Montana to a treehouse tucked into the B.C. mountains, Hipcamp offers unique, uncrowded alternatives to the reservation roulette.

But here's the thing about camping on private land in the Yellowstone to Yukon region: you're often in prime grizzly bear country. And not all Hipcamp hosts—or guests—are prepared for that.

These aren't official campgrounds with bear-proof bins or conservation officers. They're private properties, where hosts may not yet have the knowledge or resources to manage wildlife attractants safely.

We recently partnered with Hipcamp to reach the 700+ hosts who offer camping experiences within the Yellowstone to Yukon region. Our goal is to provide best practices for hosting in wilderness areas, safely sharing space with wildlife, and get ahead of any bear problems before they start.

The partnership has two components:

- 1 Y2Y delivers a webinar for Hipcamp hosts to introduce wildsmart and bearsmart practices.
- 2 Hipcamp hosts in the Yellowstone to Yukon region can apply for up to \$500 in funding to make bearsmart improvements to their properties, like bear-resistant food storage, electric fencing for chicken coops, or educational signage for guests.

Caitlin Jacobs, Y2Y's Wildlife Coexistence Coordinator, explains that the goal is awareness. Many hosts don't think much about bear safety simply because they haven't had an incident yet. The webinar and grant get them thinking and planning ahead.

Beyond the grants, Caitlin connects Hipcamp hosts with local organizations and resources they weren't aware of, who can provide further guidance, support and funding.

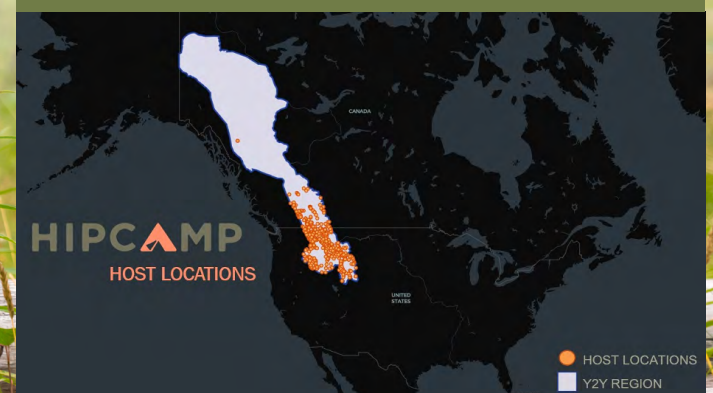
One host near Bozeman, Montana, used his grant to cover wildlife fencing costs. By combining Y2Y's contribution with a fencing program run by Defenders of Wildlife, his entire fence was paid for. Another proactive and bear-aware host in Golden, B.C. used the funding to top up her electric fencing supplies.

This proactive work matters, especially as grizzly bear populations expand and bears return to their historic habitat. A bear that gets into garbage, the chicken coop, or a camper's cooler isn't just a dangerous situation, it often leads to a habituated bear that has to be destroyed.

As a Y2Y donor, you're funding smart, community-level coexistence programs across the region, to make sure that doesn't happen.

With the camping season just around the corner, bears and outdoor lovers will stay safe. They may not know that your donation makes this work possible, but we do. Thank you.

Avoid the campsite reservation stress and explore a unique Hipcamp location near you: [Hipcamp.com](https://www.hipcamp.com)



A grizzly bear resting on a log. Credit: Shutterstock.



Nature's vacuum cleaner

THIS ECOLOGICAL GEM SAVES MORE THAN JUST WILDLIFE

Many of you share a deep concern for wildlife and wild places, and an increasing worry about what a changing climate might mean for our watersheds and water supply.

We tend to think of climate solutions in terms of personal actions—flying less, driving electric, changing what we eat. Or using economic tools like taxation or clean energy investment. These all matter. In addition, we need to maintain the role that nature is playing in keeping carbon from entering the atmosphere and pulling it out of the atmosphere. This is important because somewhere between 10-20% of the carbon going into the atmosphere today is from the destruction of nature.

Natural ecosystems are powerful climate tools, pulling carbon dioxide (CO₂) out of the atmosphere, and locking it away in forests, soils, and peatlands. This reduces the greenhouse effect and keeps the planet cooler. With this in mind, Y2Y's science team set out to measure how powerful the Yellowstone to Yukon region really is. And the results are honestly mind-blowing.

Our researchers found the region absorbs 15 per cent of all CO₂ annually across the US and Canada. That's equivalent to the emissions of approximately 20 million cars every single year!

The region also stores 13 per cent of all the carbon locked up in plants and forests across both countries. Yet, this region makes up only 7 per cent of the total landmass—so it's working overtime doing its part for climate change.

As Y2Y's Director of Science and Knowledge Dr. Graham McDowell explains:

"It turns out that the region is like a big vacuum cleaner sucking CO₂ out of the atmosphere. This relatively small landscape plays an outsized role in sequestering and storing carbon."

And that's not all.

Deep in the peatlands, old growth forests, and ancient soils lie what scientists call irrecoverable carbon stores. They're like geologic carbon vaults built over millennia. If they're damaged or disturbed, they cannot be rebuilt on a timescale meaningful for society.

Dr. McDowell's research shows that 40 per cent of carbon in the region is irrecoverable—and in the peatland soils, that number swells to a whopping 90 per cent! And this region, at less than 1 per cent of Earth's surface, holds more than 3 per cent of the planet's total irrecoverable carbon.

Which gives us yet another reason why this landscape is a global ecological gem worthy of our attention and protection.

We can combine this new carbon data with wildlife research and cultural values to focus our conservation work where it matters most.

When you support Y2Y and large-landscape conservation, you're not just helping people and wildlife, you're helping the planet.

Thank you for supporting Y2Y at the scale the climate and nature need!



A once-in-a-generation conservation opportunity

HOW YOU HELPED MAKE IT HAPPEN

Dene K'éh Kusān. IPCA proposal in northern B.C.
Courtesy: Kaska Dena. Credit: Garth Lenz.

Imagine a wild area the size of Switzerland. No roads or rumbling trucks. No subdivisions or industrial development. Just ancient forests, vast alpine meadows, and crystal clear rivers. Moose live here, as do grizzly bears, thousands of migratory songbirds... and seven herds of woodland caribou that sustained vibrant Indigenous communities for millennia.

The good news? This place exists. The better news is we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect it.

In northern B.C., near the Yukon border, Dene K'éh Kusān is the largest tract of intact, unprotected wilderness in B.C. It's the beating heart of the Yellowstone to Yukon region, a globally significant landscape stretching across 40,000 square kilometers (9.88 million acres). It's also the territory of the Kaska Dena, who have cared for these lands for thousands of years.

And they have a plan to protect it for thousands of years more.

The Kaska Dena have proposed an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area that comprises 4 per cent of B.C.'s landmass and a significant portion of the Yellowstone to Yukon region. They're working with neighboring First Nations, regional stakeholders, and all levels of government to make it a reality. Thanks to your generosity, Y2Y has spent decades working to support the Kaska Dena's vision for this world class protected area.

We first signed a formal agreement with the Kaska Dena in 2005. For 21 years, you have helped sustain this relationship and vision. The funds you've contributed supported a land guardian program, amplified the Kaska storytelling and advocacy, and contributed technical expertise to the land use planning process.

Now this long-term investment is reaching its watershed moment.

As Y2Y's Director of Landscape Protection, Tim Burkhart, puts it: *"This is a once in a generation opportunity—and it's not an exaggeration. We've never before had this alignment of Indigenous leadership, a pathway toward conservation, and the political will to follow through. It's very special, and we can't afford to lose momentum at this critical time."*

The provincial and federal governments have shown interest in supporting and funding the Kaska Dena's Indigenous-led conservation plan. The land use planning process is underway. Now we need more voices across the Yellowstone to Yukon region to make it clear to decision-makers this initiative matters. We need you to champion this monumental conservation opportunity.

Dene K'éh Kusān will protect world-class wilderness and wildlife, and create a conservation-based economy with opportunities for Indigenous land guardians, guide outfitters and ecotourism. Generations of Indigenous peoples, outdoor enthusiasts and nature-lovers will continue to enjoy this spectacular landscape.

In the Kaska Dena language, Dene K'éh Kusān means ***Always will be there***. Thanks to the Kaska people leading this effort, and caring people like you supporting their work, we are optimistic it will be.

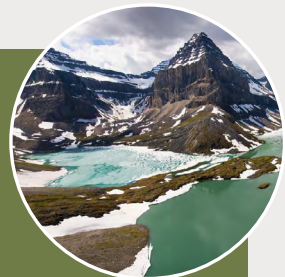
Can you help us cross the finish line?

If you live in B.C., consider writing to your MLA, the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, and the Premier to express your support for Dene K'éh Kusān. Canadians can also write to the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change (and Nature).

Wherever you live, your ongoing financial support allows Y2Y to continue walking alongside the Kaska Dena to protect Dene K'éh Kusān forever. Thank you!

Explore the Dene K'éh Kusān wilderness in person, or virtually on their website. With fact sheets, virtual flyovers and short films, you'll see why this is one of the most remarkable places on earth.

<https://denakayeh.com/dene-keh-kusan/>



Nature nerds unite to protect wilderness

Ten years ago, a young ornithologist and novice nature guide named Justin Peter sat in a lecture hall at the University of Guelph in Ontario. He was attending a presentation by Harvey Locke, one of Y2Y's co-founders. Harvey's message of wilderness conservation and wildlife connectivity resonated with Justin—so much so, he was moved to donate to Y2Y.

Fast forward to today, Justin is now the Director of Programs and senior naturalist for Quest Nature Tours, a leading tour company that operates small-group tours in natural history, culture and the arts on all seven continents.

Every December, the team at Quest Nature Tours chooses a charity to support with a holiday donation... and last year, Y2Y was selected! Harvey's presentation must have left a lasting impression on Justin, the resident "bird nerd."

Kidding aside, Quest Nature Tours helps guests enjoy a front row seat to view spectacular landscapes and wildlife during their luxury tours to B.C.'s North Coast, the Yukon and Southeast Alaska (among many other global destinations). The guides and their guests have a deep love and appreciation for wilderness, wildlife and nature.

It's a love and appreciation shared by all Y2Y donors.

Every time we receive a gift of any size from a donor like you, we know it's coming from someone who cares deeply about nature and wildlife—from larger animals like grizzly bears, caribou, or wolverines, down to the smallest songbirds, salamanders, and lady's slipper orchids.

Just as many drainages feed a larger watershed, so do many donors create this conservation movement. Your collective generosity adds up to something far greater than any single gift.

Thank you for the many ways you show your love of wildlife (and unleash your nature nerd) with Y2Y!

More ways to safeguard this ecological gem:

- Give a gift of securities
- Start a monthly donation
- Encourage your employer to donate or match your giving
- Give a tribute gift in honor of someone you love
- Consider leaving a gift of nature in your will



A bluebird sitting by a river. Credit: Shutterstock.

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



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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 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 rivers flowing strong and pure. To make a gift, fill out and mail the form below, call us toll free at 1-800-966-7920 or make a secure donation online at 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: _____