Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

FALL/WINTER 2026

Connections Newsletter

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

Fall brings the elk rut. Credit: iStock.

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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.



YOU HELPED US SCORE BIG!

Thank you for helping us exceed our September Match goal!

Your generosity (and the matching assist) made double the difference for wildlife and wild places.

We're lucky to have you on our team!

Pine marten. Credit: NPS.

Celebrating the small things that make big moments possible

Conservation moments deserve celebrating. And thanks to you, Y2Y has an extraordinary one to share: being named one of 15 finalists for the 2026 Earthshot Prize!

Founded by Prince William in 2020, this global environmental award champions solutions to the planet's greatest environmental challenges. Y2Y is one of three finalists in the Protect and Restore Nature category, recognizing more than 30 years of work with our partners to keep wildlife and landscapes connected.

This honor elevates the Yellowstone to Yukon region and its ecological importance to the world stage. It opens opportunities to build more public support and connect with people who can help accelerate conservation.

And behind this exciting moment? Thousands of quieter ones.

The phone calls. The permits. The countless cups of coffee. The behind-the-scenes meetings in uninspiring board rooms. It's about the collaborations, partnerships and people working quietly, often for decades, behind every "exciting" major conservation announcement.

This is the conservation work nobody sees — until now.

In the pages that follow, you'll read about an unconventional conservation hero leading a game-changing awareness campaign. You'll see how innovation and creativity gave new life to abandoned structures to keep wildlife and people safe. You'll get an insider's view into cross-border collaborations that help diverse groups find common ground to reach shared goals.

This is what your generosity makes possible.

Every wildlife crossing, recovered caribou herd, and conserved corridor depends on persistent work that rarely makes headlines. Your support makes those everyday efforts into lasting change.

This issue celebrates the special people and projects behind the scenes of this critical conservation work.

These are the stories behind the big moments — including this one.

Thank you for being part of the work the world is now celebrating. This honor belongs to you, too. *You help make every conservation win possible…even the ones you can't always see!*

Read more about Y2Y's Earthshot nomination at **y2y.net/earthshot.**



Giving new life to forgotten places and the wildlife who use them

HOW YOUR DONATIONS TURN ABANDONED STRUCTURES INTO WILDLIFE LIFELINES

The Brock Creek project is helping wildlife access underpasses along I-90 in western Montana. Credit: Daniel Anderson.

Watch a short video on the wildlife bridge in North Idaho, and see the wildlife already using it.

Building a wildlife crossing from scratch is no small feat. Each structure requires environmental assessments, engineering studies, multiple permits, and millions of dollars in supply and construction costs. Add in supply chain delays and government approvals, and it could take up to 15 years to build a wildlife crossing in a high-collision area.

But now two projects along Interstate 90 are rewriting the rulebook for crossing structures. The I-90 is a known barrier to wildlife movement and a key focus of our strategic connectivity work. What's unique about these two projects is that they repurposed abandoned transportation infrastructure, instead of starting from scratch. **And your donations made it possible.**

In 1969, an overpass was built in north Idaho across I-90 near Osburn in anticipation of municipal growth. It was soon abandoned when a mining company bought the surrounding land and blocked expansion.

For close to 60 years this bridge stood unused, while the Silver Valley's elk, deer, and bears tried to cross four lanes of interstate traffic below. This stretch of I-90 has the second-highest rate of wildlife collisions between Coeur d'Alene and the Montana border. **In the past decade alone, at least 75 animals were struck within two miles of the old bridge.**

Local truck driver and outdoorsman, Carl Wilson, saw what others had overlooked: the abandoned bridge could become a lifesaving wildlife overpass. For nearly a decade, he rallied neighbors, businesses, and state agencies to convert it. Thanks to your support, Y2Y joined Idaho Fish and Game, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and community members to retrofit the bridge. Your donations funded wildlife gates and fencing to funnel animals away from the interstate and onto the overpass.

Unfortunately, Carl passed away in December 2022 before seeing his vision completed. Kirsten Voorhees, a fourth-generation Silver Valley resident and civil engineer, carried the torch. By August 2025, the crossing was complete, and trail cameras almost immediately captured deer and elk crossing safely above the highway!

In neighboring Montana, a forgotten passageway ran beneath I-90.

An old, abandoned branch of a railroad track near Garrison passed under I-90, along the natural drainage of Brock Creek toward the Clark Fork River. Wildlife biologists have seen grizzly bears, deer, and other species on both sides of the highway here for years, drawn by the berry-rich corridor that runs right to the highway's edge. Lingenpolter, a "famous" collared male grizzly bear is known for attempting to cross I-90 over 45 times in this region!

So, when an opportunity came up to buy neighboring property along this vital corridor, Y2Y and our local partners saw the huge conservation potential. With support from donors to our Nimble Private Lands Fund, we acted quickly to provide half of the funds needed to purchase the 50-acre (20 hectare) Brock Creek property.

Now we're facilitating conversations and site visits with our partners, including Montana Department of Transportation, Vital Ground Foundation, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and engineers, to assess the viability and funding needed to install fencing to funnel wildlife to the underpass.

Early evidence shows elk and deer are already using the underpass! With additional fencing, we know grizzly bears and other animals will be close behind. And when the time comes, your donations can help build that too.

These two projects show what's possible when you bring the right people and partners together at the right time. They highlight how innovation, creativity, and passionate community members create conservation wins. And your generosity powers this innovative conservation work!

Thank you for giving new life to these overlooked places, and to the wildlife who depend on them.

One of the biggest, wildest places in the region is close to being conserved

THANKS TO PARTNERS LIKE YOU

"Over 3 million hectares of jaw-dropping natural beauty and grandeur. This is British Columbia's largest intact wilderness…there are no clear cuts, no power lines. There's not even a road. It's one of the biggest, wildest places left on earth. And right now, there's a rare opportunity to be part of protecting it forever."

These are the words greeting visitors to the campaign website for Dene K'éh Kusān, one of the most significant conservation efforts of our lifetime.

For thousands of years, the Kaska Dena have cared for this land in northern British Columbia, and now they're leading the way to further safeguard the region as an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area. They have a plan to protect this vast wilderness in a way that creates jobs, supports Kaska culture, shelters wildlife, and becomes a world-class destination for everyone to enjoy.

And thanks to a growing network of people and partnerships, this conservation area is close to becoming a reality.

Conserving land of this size and scale is understandably complex.

This project involves multiple Indigenous communities, crosses several jurisdictions, and requires hundreds of experts and partners. Thanks to donors like you, we're able to contribute funding, scientific research, and policy expertise to the conversations and partnerships that will safeguard this extraordinary region.

But how do you get people to care about a place nobody's ever heard of, and very few have ever visited? By building strong partnerships and networks with people who love the wilderness and helping them spread the word.

One such partnership is the British Columbia Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Coalition. With 35 groups and counting, the Coalition represents more than 273,000 people with diverse interests including conservation organizations, wildlife viewing, ecotourism, naturalists, and hunting and angling outfitters. Thanks to your generosity, Y2Y is at the table, to help fund and shape initiatives that build support for Dene K'éh Kusān.

Your generosity is also supporting creative marketing campaigns to help more British Columbians (and wilderness-lovers worldwide) understand how precious this landscape is, and why we need to act on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

From short-form sharable videos to billboards and bus ads, you're bringing Dene K'éh Kusān into the hearts and minds of millions of people. To see more of the creative campaigning, make sure you read the story about Bruce Canowski on page 5. Bruce recently stopped in for a coffee with Chief Harlan Schilling of Liard First Nation, to talk about conserving Dene K'éh Kusān.

When you're looking at a vast wilderness area like this, it's easy to focus on the extraordinary scale of what needs to be protected. But equally extraordinary is the scale of who is working behind-the-scenes to make it happen. And in this case, it's a collaborative community with depth and passion.

These people and the partnerships won't make the headlines. But it's important to remember that conservation at this scale only happens because of the passionate people who are working steadily in the background.

And that includes you. Your donations are helping power the work to create Dene K'éh Kusān. And thanks to your passion for wilderness and wildlife, it's closer than ever to being protected and open for all to enjoy for generations to come.

See why this is a place like no other at **biggestwildest.ca.**



Obo Lake. Credit: Maureen Garrity.
Inset map courtesy Dena Kayeh Institute.



Conservation beyond borders

HOW YOU'RE HELPING BREAK DOWN SILOS THAT CAN SLOW CRITICAL CONSERVATION WORK

Transportation experts visit a wildlife underpass near Banff. Credit: Laurel Angell.

Conservation's biggest wins rarely happen on large stages. They happen in small-town community halls, university lecture rooms, and blizzard-swept landscapes, or around tables where diverse groups sit down together, sometimes for the first time, and discover they want the same thing.

This past April, you helped us facilitate Living Up to the Montana Landscape, a statewide speaking and engagement tour. Events across Montana brought together policymakers, tribal leaders, engineers, ranchers, researchers, and community members, **all united around one urgent question: how do we make Montana's roads safer for wildlife and people?**

"Montana stands at a pivotal moment for wildlife conservation and road safety," says Jordan Reeves, Y2Y's director of landscape connectivity. He adds that local voices are driving a solutions-focused conversation about how crossings reduce vehicle collisions, benefit locals, and support rural economies. "These events ensure those voices are heard."

This kind of collaboration takes years of relationship-building and trust, as well as someone willing to convene the room. That's where your support is invaluable. You help us host meaningful gatherings where diverse groups with varied perspectives and motivations can find common ground.

And these collaborative conversations are also happening across the border! This past July, Y2Y helped orchestrate a rare event: an official visit between Alberta and Montana's senior transportation officials. The world-famous Calgary Stampede provided a fitting backdrop for cross-border diplomacy between two jurisdictions that share a deep ranching heritage and a growing commitment to wildlife connectivity. The goal: tour the wildlife crossing network along Highway 1 through the Bow Valley and Banff National Park.

As they walked the landscape together, they saw what systematic investment can create: seven overpasses, 41 underpasses, and 95 km (59 mi) of wildlife exclusion fencing.

The results? An 80 per cent reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions along one of Canada's busiest mountain highways.

"Alberta is a world leader in the development and preservation of wildlife crossings," said Montana Department of Transportation (then) director Chris Dorrington. "I greatly appreciate the partnership and opportunity to learn about their wildlife corridor advancements."

One insight from the visit stood out: not every crossing needs to be a big, visible overpass. Much of Alberta's success comes from well-placed underpasses paired with thoughtfully planned fencing that funnels animals to safe crossing points. Your generosity ensures this vital conservation knowledge and experience flow across the border…just like the wildlife we all aim to help.

But perhaps the most meaningful outcome of the visit is what happened next. The day Dorrington returned home, he spoke about the trip in state legislature. His chief engineer returned to his team energized. Within weeks, plans were underway for a cross-border summit bringing together about 30 engineers and biologists from Alberta, Montana, and British Columbia to share data, compare projects, and build the relationships that make future crossings faster and smarter. That summit is happening this fall, with participants touring the Reconnecting the Rockies crossing projects along Highway 3 through the Crowsnest Pass and Elk Valley.

Thanks to your support, 30 influential people from three jurisdictions are coming together to accelerate wildlife crossing work throughout the entire region.

As Deb Wambach, wildlife co-ordination bureau chief at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks says, "This is important work that no one entity can accomplish alone."

And that includes you, too. You have an important seat around our table. You help us bring together Tribal and Indigenous leaders, academic researchers, conservation biologists, ranchers, and passionate citizens to achieve a common goal: safer passage for wildlife, and wild spaces for all of us to enjoy. Thank you for your brilliant generosity!



Meet Bruce. He's on a mission.

AND YOU'RE HELPING HIM ACCOMPLISH IT

He's furry, he's funny — he's Bruce and he's loving B.C.
Credit: Shot in the Dark Productions.

When you think of a "typical" conservation campaigner, you might form a particular picture in your mind.

But conservation heroes don't always look the way you expect.

Sometimes they look like a lynx driving around in a pickup truck, fuelled by a thermos full of coffee and old-school road trip tunes.

Meet Bruce Canowski. He's a hardworking lynx who goes on a road trip around British Columbia.

You see, he's heard a lot of talk about wild places changing too fast. His niece and nephew warned him a lot of his favorite places, including his beloved fishing hole, are likely strip malls and selfie spots now. So he set out on an epic road trip adventure to explore the real story.

Bruce calls it a "mid-life nature audit." We call it one of the most creative conservation campaigns we've ever seen.

Bruce is the face of Keep it Wild B.C., a coalition of organizations (including Y2Y) working to build public awareness and support for wild places. The Wildly Serious coalition has created a fun, out-of-the-box conservation campaign that's connecting with wide audiences and generating buzz.

Bruce the lynx is a disarmingly charming, salt-of-the-earth Muppet-style of puppet who travels around B.C. asking great questions about development and conservation, and listening thoughtfully to the answers. And he's growing quite a fanbase.

With close to 6,000 followers across social media, Bruce's YouTube videos are racking up. Seems that a lot of people are interested in the coffee meetups he has with outfitters, tour guides, industry CEOs, Indigenous leaders, a radio DJ, and an NHL All-Star!

Bruce has thoughtful conversations about recreation, development, wildlife, conservation, and environmental values. He knows that the people most likely to protect wild places are those who feel connected to them, which includes people from all walks of life and with varying interests in the outdoors.

You're support funds Bruce's adventures: the videos, the road trip, the Spotify playlist (yep, you can listen to it, too!). Through this unlikely character, people from different places and walks of life are connecting to the Yellowstone to Yukon landscape, and finding shared reasons to care for the wildlife and wild places we all love.



Follow along on Bruce's wild adventures: **keepitwildbc.ca**

Listen to the ***Keep It Wild* road trip mix** on Spotify (scan the QR code).

A warm welcome to Cathy Kerkam



Y2Y's new director of philanthropic partnerships brings big-hearted energy to our team and our growing community of supporters.

There's a 70-year-old man in the northeast United States who has designated Y2Y as a beneficiary of his estate. He doesn't live near the Rockies, so why would he choose to support Y2Y? His father took him to Yellowstone National Park as a child, where he saw his first grizzly bear, and the region has since had a special place in his heart.

That story of a memory creating a lifelong love of nature is one of the reasons why Cathy Kerkam joined Y2Y as our new director of philanthropic partnerships.

Cathy is based near the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C. She is a dedicated outdoor enthusiast who enjoys hiking, fly fishing, gardening, and exploring beautiful landscapes.

She comes to Y2Y with decades of fundraising experience at some of North America's most respected conservation organizations. She enjoys inspiring people, growing communities of support, and finding the thread of connection that causes people to care about nature and give generously to conserve it.

"You don't have to live in the Yellowstone to Yukon corridor to love it and the extraordinary wildlife found there," she says. "In fact, many people who live far away, even on the east coast, are passionate about this region and have connections to it. It is exciting to be part of something this hopeful."

Cathy joined Y2Y because she was impressed with the organization's bold goals, its steady leadership and scientific approach, and its concrete and measurable conservation successes. And now Y2Y has recently been named a finalist for the 2026 Earthshot Prize, further demonstrating Y2Y's leadership! Read more about the Earthshot Prize at: **y2y.net/earthshot.**

Cathy's goal? To share her love of the region and to inspire more people to learn about and support our work. It's all about fueling Y2Y's important conservation work to ensure that wildlife and people can thrive in this wonderful mountain region.

We're thrilled to have her join our team, and even more thrilled to introduce her to you. Welcome, Cathy!

Inset: Cathy Kerkam. Background: Dene K'éh Kusān. Credit: Maureen Garrity.

Explore the many ways to show how much you love nature: **y2y.net/donate/ways-to-give**

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 continue supporting Y2Y, to keep the big (and small) conservation wins coming!

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 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: _____