



# ON THE TRAIL NEWSLETTER

December 2020, Revision Dec 4, See page 3



## Winter Edition

### From the Online Photo Gallery

- [Distancing Everywhere](#)



- [Our new mascot?](#)

The official mascot of 2020:



Always wears a mask.

Compulsively washes hands.

Letters of racoon rearranged spell corona.

### From the President

-- by Mike Cogut --

I am hoping that everyone is in good health. I trust that members who wanted to hike with the Calgary Weekend Hikers got a chance, and that those who didn't hike with us, got out safely with their friends.

When I volunteered for this position it seemed very straightforward ... just follow the processes that were successfully executed by past presidents. Sometime in March it became obvious that this would not be possible. Thanks to the support of the volunteers on the Executive Committee meeting, and of many of our members, we unanimously decided to suspend hiking until we could better understand the upcoming pandemic. We started hiking when the number of new infections were down to an insignificant level and new information suggested that outdoor activities could be conducted reasonably safely. As far as I know, the Club's activities resulted in zero Covid-19 infections which was our goal.

Currently, the pandemic situation is deteriorating once again. Personally, I'm glad that the hiking season is over so the Executive doesn't have to continue to review the situation until next year.

This year the number of hiking opportunities were reduced to approximately one-third of the previous years. This was not only due to having half a season, but also to setting limits on the number of maximum hikers, cancelling carpools, and many of our coordinators being uncomfortable leading hikes. Considering these challenges, I am pleased that we posted as many hikes as we did. Thanks to all of the coordinators who contributed this year. Without you, no one would have gotten out on Club hikes.

We assumed that there would be a significant number of members who would not renew their memberships due to the Covid-19 situation and its affect on the Club's activities. As of November 18, our forecast turned out to be true and about 15% of our membership did not renew. This creates no problem for the ongoing activities of the Club. However, we no longer have a waiting list and have member vacancies so if you know of any friends who would be interested in joining, please have them contact Pati Roberts at [patiroberts@shaw.ca](mailto:patiroberts@shaw.ca).

*(Continued on page 2)*

### The 2020 Executive Committee

President:	Mike Cogut	Social Coordinator:	Sigrid Willi
Vice President:	vacant	Communications Coordinator:	Fritz Kiessling
Secretary:	Susan Rimer	Archiving:	by Secretary
Treasurer:	Terry Wilson	Newsletter:	Dorothy Whitson
Hike Planning Coordinator:	Lorna Jurgens	Webmaster:	Fritz Kiessling
Membership:	Pati Roberts		





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Information about the Chalet itself may be found at [www.skigolden.ca](http://www.skigolden.ca), or call Sigrid at 403-229-4475 if you have any questions -- but please not after 9 p.m.

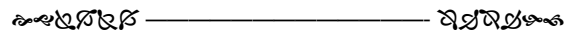
Come join us this coming summer!



## West Bragg Creek trails

-- by Mike Cogut --

The trail system at West Bragg Creek has been a great resource to many of us due to its proximity to Calgary and the beautiful forests, hills and trails in the area. The Bragg Creek Trail Association has mobilized volunteers who annually spend thousands of hours to create and maintain these trails. The CWH continues to financially support the Bragg Creek Association. However, our support is more of an honorarium and doesn't pay for the amount of usage that our members get from this facility. If you're using the West Bragg Creek trail system I encourage you to consider making an individual contribution to their efforts either on their website (<https://www.braggcreektrails.org/>) or to drop a contribution in their collection boxes at the parking lot.



## Why you shouldn't go up the Mt. Indefatigable trail

-- by Derek Ryder --

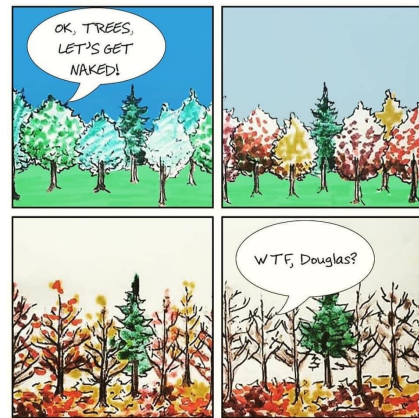
at: <https://www.kananaskis.org/why-you-shouldnt-go-up-the-mt-indefatigable-trail/>

If there's one route that stirs up a bunch of controversy in K-Country, it's the now decommissioned Mt. Indefatigable trail. So popular at one time, it actually is described and graces the front cover of Gillena Daffern's 2010 guidebook for the area – despite being closed in 2005. This former official trail used to have memorial benches on it. However, it is decommissioned, with that big sign seen above asking you nicely not to go up there. Why? Why isn't it just closed? Other people ignore the sign; can you? In a time of COVID with many trails busy, traffic up there has actually *increased*, as people appear to think that a closed trail will be less busy, so this **closed** trail is even MORE busy than it has ever been. On this page, we're going to do a deep dive into the decommissioning, and help you understand why, if you like having grizzly bears on the landscape, you shouldn't go up there. First, let's explore why Parks don't just close it.

## What Questions have Elephant for an Answer?

-- by Terry Wilson --

At least half the questions had something to do with a large grey



African animal. About 25% had something to do with security or 'The Question'. The others were entertaining and some time had been spent to think up an interesting question. Like :

- "What did you have for Breakfast?"
- "What kind of Fish was that?"
- "What day is it?"
- "What city do you live in?"
- "What is my cat's name?"
- "Who's in the room?". This question was fairly common.
- "You have the memory like an?"
- "What's my favourite type of steak?"
- "What's your name?"
- A few referred to "What do we Not want to meet on a hike?"

Last year the question was "What is your favorite sport?", and the answer was "hiking".

Three members used that question where two had the correct answer of "elephant", but the other person used "hiking" just to keep me guessing.

For those folks who remember the old elephant jokes; I got "How do you get down off an ....?". And the answer to that joke was "You don't get down off an elephant, you get down off a goose." Keep the interesting questions coming. Terry



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**CALGARY  
WEEKEND  
HIKERS**

## Corridor Sign

Note the reference to the ministerial order. The only way you can implement a closure in Alberta Parks is via Ministerial Order. In the National Park, the Park Superintendent can close an area; not in a Provincial Park. Conservation Officers have the right under the regulations to temporarily close things for safety, but a permanent or annual seasonal closure (like wildlife corridors) is under the jurisdiction of the Minister, and only the Minister. Ministerial Orders are not just based on science, but also... politics — who is minister, when elections are, political priorities, and what party is making the decision. Since 2005, 4 proposals have been put on various Ministers desks for a permanent or seasonal closure on Mt. Indefatigable. The most recent proposal was submitted for Ministerial approval in mid 2018; it remains on the Minister's desk. In fact, the proposed Indefatigable closure isn't the only seasonal wildlife closure that has been proposed in K-Country in the last 15 years, but not a single one has ever been approved by the Minister of the day.

The Alberta Parks Ecology Team, and the Peter Lougheed District Conservation Officer staff, were the originators of the 2018 proposal. It was initiated in 2016, and took 2 years to go through internal reviews before it was ready for the Minister. Why did they initiate it? Several reasons.

Studies by PhD candidates and Masters students of camera and counter data collected by the Ecology team and COs clearly shows the criticality of the movement corridor in that space; it's one of the few ways grizzlies can move towards the Upper Kananaskis dam, which is a transit barrier.

From 2005 to about 2010, usage was minimal and at what the Ecology team research demonstrated to be sustainable levels. But despite being closed for 5 years, traffic on that trail started increasing, which recent PhD research has correlated directly to social media posting. As examples, a check on Google

Trends in the summer of just 2019 (pre-COVID) showed over 2,000 searches in May, June & July alone for information on the hike. A scan of Instagram will show hundreds of recent photos taken from the trail (including folks walking by the closure sign with a "thumbs up"); many "influencers" with literally tens of thousands of followers are posting photos from up there. An entire wedding party went up there for engagement photos. The voluntary closure is no longer working, and promotion on social media is the main issue (though not the only one).

Mt. Indefatigable's upper meadows as seen from Upper Lake Day Use Area. The upper slopes of Mt. Indefatigable are meadows spectacularly full of bear food, and more importantly, denning space. There have been collared bears denning up there every year for the last 15 years, and the Ecology team has located those dens every year (visiting in mid summer, when unoccupied). The data shows denning bears are moving their dens as a result of the increased trail traffic. As trail use increases, bears move farther away from the human influenced areas of the trails and are choosing poorer denning sites. Bears den where people aren't. Problematic denning leads to reduced reproduction rates.

Recently published studies by Clayton Lamb show that the only reason we're able to have the 691 bears we do have in the Province is because of spaces like Kananaskis Lakes, home to a solid population of reproductive grizzlies. The area is at carrying capacity for grizzlies based on the space and habitat they need, so new young grizzlies disperse from those areas to sustain the population elsewhere – if they survive. When forced into worse denning sites, reproduction rates and survivability drop. Bears aren't able to sustain or grow, and will never disperse and are at risk of not recovering from being threatened.

While only a Minister can close an area, the actual control over what trails are where in a Park is on a local, Kananaskis District level. It's mostly created under Park Management Plans approved by District Managers; you can read the plan for Peter Lougheed Provincial Park [here](#).



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The elimination of Mt. Indefatigable as a designated Trail and its decommissioning resulted from these plans which state: *“If monitoring indicates that off trail use is adversely affecting wildlife, additional measures such as information, education as well as area or seasonal closures will be considered.”* The data from the early 2000’s clearly showed that ON-trail use, in addition to off-trail use, was adversely affecting wildlife. So the decommissioning took place in 2005. The data continues to support this evidence, and in fact, shows it worsening. However, without a Ministerial seasonal closure, it can’t be closed. Conservation Officer staff have become more proactive over the years in using temporary closures to control access in critical grizzly bear terrain; Rawson Lake and Sarrail Ridge are examples of this; the photo to the right was taken in early summer of 2020 and shows 4 hiking parties AND a bear on Sarrail ridge (the trail was closed that afternoon). Uniquely, they are reluctant to put up closure tape on the Mt. Indefatigable sign because the sign itself already says the trail is closed; yellow tape gives the wrong message regarding the importance of the sign.

The argument that “everyone else is doing it, so why can’t you?” (in psychology and logician terms, *“bandwagoning argumentum ad populum”*) is an unsustainable one. Bandwagoning depends on the assumption that if you believe something, and large numbers of people disagree, you must be wrong. It depends on people’s own lack of confidence in their ability to judge the merits of something. Given that most people are smart enough to judge the merits of this with all the facts, we thought this post about the facts appropriate. When you ask folks heading up there why they ignore the closure sign (as Wildlife Ambassadors from Bow Valley Wildsmart have done), their answers are often quite sad; bandwagoning isn’t the only argument. This happens on social media sites regularly any time people post about going up there, and the folks who understand all of the above attempt to influence others. Many

argue that if it really needed to be closed, Parks would close it, so the closure isn’t “real”, which is demonstrably false. Some argue there are lots of places for bears to live, and try to extend that logic to suggest the sign means we shouldn’t go into the wilderness at all, anywhere. In 2019, someone posted this:

*“I went with 13 others on Canada Day a year ago. Came across a bear and because we all yelled, he turned around.”*

This is pretty much the antithesis of respectful behaviour. The bear was just living their life until people appeared and chased him off, possibly off a food source — in a space where the people were asked not to go in the first place. In a space specifically identified as prime bear habitat, people making poor choices stressed the bear.

Many people maintain active social media sites, some profiting from their images, stories and affiliate links, and they actively promote going up there. Grizzly bears are a COSEWIC Species at Risk & Threatened in Alberta. There are, at last count, just 691 of them left in the province. Who Instagrams for them? Which of the two takes precedence over the other? Since no one can speak for the bears, it is Parks’ responsibility to. The decommissioning was one way of speaking for the bears. The sign is Park’s equivalence of an Instagram post.

Because, in the end, the sign is all about respecting wildlife ([Leave No Trace Principle #6](#)). Respect for wildlife from an outdoor ethics perspective means we recognize it is *their* space, not ours. We have extirpated most wildlife from our cities and other places we live; the rest of the space is theirs — the living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms of the wildlife. Our Parks, and even our Public Lands, are managed to enable our animals have a space to live. As we write [here](#), Provincial Parks are primarily about ecological protection; enabling human use comes in a distant second. A main purpose of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park is to protect the space for grizzly bears; ignoring the sign does the opposite. The Management Plan for the Park clearly states:



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“Maintaining a sustainable regional grizzly bear population will be a priority” in park management.

### Entering a bear den

So why should you not go up there? The short answer is that going up Mt. Indefatigable is just another nail in the coffin for the long-term survivability of grizzlies, and defeats the purpose of having protected spaces at all. If you care about having grizzly bears on the landscape, if you care about our Parks and protected spaces, if you care about a threatened species and don't want to personally contribute to it's extirpation, you'll pick any one of the 1,200 km of other official trails, or one of the ~2,0000 other km of routes and not that one.

REALLY good alternatives, by the way, include King Ridge or the South End of Mt. Lawson, each of which offers a nearly identical hiking experience and views to Mt Indefatigable – and have never recorded bear denning.

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### Social Report

-- by Sigrid Wili and Pat Booker --

Once again, COVID has interfered with our Club social gatherings. This time our much-loved October Pot Luck Dinner had to be canceled for everyone's safety. All those great dishes we missed!

Our next scheduled event is our Annual General Meeting to be held Thursday, January 14, 2021. It will be less of a social gathering this year. As with most meetings during COVID times, the AGM will be held virtually via ZOOM, rather than in person at the Marda Loop Community Centre. More information about the AGM will be forthcoming, but we hope to have a good turnout in spite of the change in venue – your own home. So please mark this in your calendar.

Stay tuned for how, when and if we will be able to organize and hold other social get-togethers in 2021.

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### T'was a Month Before Christmas 2020

T'was a month before Christmas,  
And all through the town,  
People wore masks,  
That covered their frown.

The frown had begun  
Way back in the Spring,  
When a global pandemic  
Changed everything.

They called it corona,  
But unlike the beer,  
It didn't bring good times,  
It didn't bring cheer.

Contagious and deadly,  
This virus spread fast,  
Like a wildfire that starts  
When fueled by gas.

Airplanes were grounded,  
Travel was banned.  
Borders were closed  
Across air, sea and land.

As the world entered lockdown  
To flatten the curve,  
The economy halted,  
And folks lost their nerve.

From March to July  
We rode the first wave,  
People stayed home,  
They tried to behave.

When summer emerged  
The lockdown was lifted.  
But away from caution,  
Many folks drifted.

Now it's November  
And cases are spiking,  
Wave two has arrived,  
Much to our disliking.

Frontline workers,  
Doctors and nurses,  
Try to save people,  
From riding in hearses.



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This virus is awful,  
This COVID-19.  
There isn't a cure.  
There is no vaccine.

It's true that this year  
Has had sadness a plenty,  
We'll never forget  
The year 2020.

And just around the corner -  
The holiday season,  
But why be merry?  
Is there even one reason?

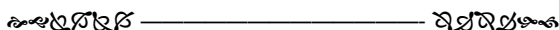
To decorate the house  
And put up the tree,  
When no one will see it,  
No-one but me.

But outside my window  
The snow gently falls,  
And I think to myself,  
Let's deck the halls!

So, I gather the ribbon,  
The garland and bows,  
As I play those old carols,  
My happiness grows.

Christmas ain't cancelled  
And neither is hope.  
If we lean on each other,  
I know we can cope.

Author unknown (sent to us from Lois Hinz)



# Be kind be safe be calm



## Bear Safety 101 (video)

<https://campers-village.com/blog/post/bear-safety-101>

Reprinted courtesy Ralph Hagen of "The Other Coast"

