

EcoTourism Spotlight..

Bluebird conservation creates tourism oasis

To see a mountain bluebird is to see one of Canada's prettiest birds. Seeing this flying blue ball against the browns and white of the spring landscape is a true sign Spring is underway.



Unfortunately, the mountain bluebird, like other songbirds, is suffering from habitat destruction and climate change. A particularly nasty storm in 2008 wiped out more than half of Alberta's bluebird population but one organization, the Ellis Bird Farm, is fighting for the species' survival.

The farm got involved in conservation in the 1950s when Charlie Ellis started building bird houses. He was heartened to see tree swallows and then bluebirds moving into the area. Over several decades, the number of bluebirds increased thanks to the careful stewardship of Charlie and his sister, Winnie.

Ellis Bird Farm is located eight kilometres east (on Highway 12) and eight kilometres south (Prentiss Road/RR 26-0) of

Lacombe, in Central Alberta.

Fortunately, when Charlie and Winnie decided they were getting too old to maintain the bluebird trail, Union Carbide (now MEGlobal) was looking for land to build a plant. They bought the Ellis' land with the condition they would "look after the birds." The homestead is now a tourism hot-spot and the base for conservation activities. Open to tourists for more than 20 years, the Ellis Bird Farm has become a popular Alberta destination for nature lovers.

There is something for everyone at the Farm; old and young can play on Grandparents and Grandchildren's Days, music and food fill the evening hours at fundraisers, and for the truly adventurous there is the Bug Jamboree! This event is packed with eclectic and informative displays. Staff even collect road-kill for the forensic entomologist a few days in advance! While I need convincing that it's fun to look at dead things off the road, Myrna Pearman, the Farm's Executive Director, thinks it's critical, "We're losing our children to screens," she says.



Kids will also love the chance to examine pond life off the pier; a fence makes sure that only nets, not the handlers go into the water. Birdwatchers will enjoy the aerial displays of purple martins and warblers, while frustrated gardeners can learn more about sustainable gardening practices. Various demonstration gardens show how to attract butterflies, birds and people. And everyone will enjoy a visit to the teahouse for a taste of mouth-watering local pies and ice cream.

The Ellis Bird Farm is open 11 am to 5 pm, Tuesday to Sunday and holiday Mondays, until August 31. To learn more go to www.ellisbirdfarm.ab.ca



South Sask. retreat

If you're looking for a private retreat on the open prairies of western Canada, consider visiting Mammy's Place.

Named for Alice Russell, a.k.a. "Mammy", this quaint house is located near the Estuary Ferry, on the Bow River. The great location makes for unique bird watching (burrowing owls frequent the neighbourhood), fishing, hiking or touring the Great Sandhills. For more information visit www.mammysplace.ca.

ECO TOURISM Management

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Have you seen? ..

Little bears and even littler sense

Carol Patterson, President Kalahari Management

Colin and I were headed for a weekend in British Columbia's Columbia Valley when we came across a black bear sow and her cubs grazing next to the road. They were eating quietly and allowing people to watch them in a safe manner.

At least, that was the situation before some scatter-brain tourist decided to hop out of her

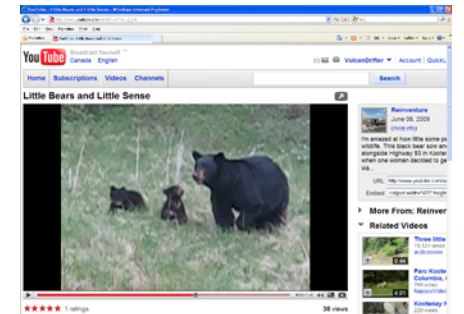
car and go for a pee in the woods, a few short metres behind the mother bear!

It must not have occurred to her to wait for the next gas station or at least, cross the road.

I edited her drawer-dropping from my video to keep my PG rating but I couldn't believe my eyes when minutes later, she hopped in her car, zoomed up a few metres, hopped out and ran to within a few metres of the bear for a picture-perfect moment.

If you watch my video at <http://tiny.cc/ou1j8> you'll see what happens when the bear sees this dipstick standing 20 metres away.

You decide who is acting like the perfect lady in this clip.



Have you ever seen someone displaying remarkably bad judgment when watching wildlife? If you have, please send your story to info@kalahari-online.com.

If we use your story in an upcoming issue of *EcoTourism Management*, we'll send you a complimentary copy of my latest book, *Reinventure: How Travel Adventure Can Change Your Life*.

WELCOME



Ecotourism Management is published quarterly by Kalahari Management to provide you with helpful information on the ecotourism industry.

Each issue includes practical advice on running a business, all of it designed to help your business succeed. As well, an ecotourism organization will be featured in each issue to inform you about other businesses in the industry.

Kalahari Management offers research services, business planning, training and accounting. If you have information you would like to share in *Ecotourism Management* or would like more information about our services, please call Carol Patterson at 403/290-0805, fax us at 403/398-1503 or email: carol@kalahari-online.com

Workshop garners rave reviews

Carol Patterson of Kalahari Management led a recent workshop on how to bring the fun and passion back into your work and personal life.

Explaining how your interest in arts, nature, kite-flying, etc. can be transformed into work or business opportunities, Carol shared her reality-tested strategies for taking the tedium out of middle age.

More than 110 people packed the room for the one day seminar and left, lamenting that their friends weren't able to attend.

To reduce the pain, Carol will be offering the workshop again December 2, 2009, and March 24, 2010, at the University of Calgary.

To register visit <http://tiny.cc/zIW0B>

In My Opinion..

Can you Reinventure on a cruise ship?

by Carol Patterson
President,
Kalahari Management Inc.

Before I went to the B.C. Tourism Educators conference held this year on a large cruise ship, I debated whether it was possible to have a Reinventure (a journey of self-discovery) on a vessel designed to deliver as much comfort as possible.

I'm happy to report that it IS possible to have a Reinventure under mass tourism conditions, but you need to work at it.

You have to be determined lest the all-you-can-eat buffet lulls you into a deep slumber.

And be a self-starter because some of the best opportunities won't be pointed out by the staff.

Twice I carved out a few hours to scan the horizon and was

rewarded for my patience with the sight of dozens of whales feeding and frolicking. Humpback and grey whales are now making their way north to feed in the rich waters off Canada and Alaska.

With a set of moderately-powered binoculars I was able to watch the whales diving, swimming and slapping the water.

One whale even surfaced close



enough to hear the spout and I was on the 10th deck!

Granted, there were some long moments of tedium between whale sightings, but that is why take-out wine was invented!

I also had to forgo dinner one night (the viewing was too good to leave.) I felt decidedly frumpy on deck with all my fleece layers as one fellow cruiser after another, most dressed in sequins and strappy sandals, asked if there were indeed whales out there?

"Yes," I replied, "tons of them!" Most passengers were shivering too much to get the pun or the full whale show, but I was thrilled.

I found my Reinventure and a world-class wildlife experience!

Carol

Editorial: Have you Seen a LooLu? Enter our 'worst animal-watching behaviour' contest

If you've ever been witness to a LooLu (Lookers Lucky to Live)? you know how badly humans can behave around wild animals. Is it because more and more of us live in big cities? Do we watch too many reality shows?

Regardless, it is amazing the lengths people will go for that perfect shot. A few weeks ago, a young child was sent to hospital after his parents placed him on the back of an elk for a photograph.

When the elk lifted his antlers, probably wondering what had landed on his back, he cracked



the ribs of his uninvited passenger.

Carol

Would you be a WWOOFer?

If you have a green thumb or would like to develop one, a working holiday on an organic farm may be just the ticket. The World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) links organic farmers with travelers keen to help out.

There are 45 WWOOF chapters, including one in Canada (www.wwoof.ca). Memberships are country specific but each WWOOFer is

asked to register and pay a \$45 annual fee. As a WWOOFer you can expect to work six hour days in exchange for room and board.

Experience is not generally required and the work can be extremely varied, from helping a dairy farm in Manitoba to cooking and cleaning at a B&B in New Brunswick.

Want more animal time on vacation?

The Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah, offers visitors accommodation and the chance to help rescued animals. Home to 1,700 animals, the Sanctuary has cabins, cottages and RV sites. There are free tours of the Sanctuary and the opportunity to visit nearby Bryce and Zion National Park.

If you're a keen animal lover, you'll be able to pitch in, walking dogs or socializing cats. For more information visit www.bestfriends.org.

Upcoming Ecotourism Events

The Travel Tourism and Research Association, Canadian Chapter will hold their conference **October 14 to 16** in Guelph, Ontario. Details are available at www.ttracanada.ca/en/index.html

The Watchable Wildlife Conference will be held in October in the legendary bird watching destination of Cape May, New Jersey. For more information go to www.watchablewildlife.org.

The International Ecotourism Society's **2009 North American** conference will be held **November 2 to 4** in Portland, Oregon. To learn more go to www.ecotourism.org.

Need a Reinventure? (or know someone who does?)

Travel allows us to reinvent ourselves over and over again. If we merely open our eyes and our hearts, change can happen.

In Reinventure: How Travel Can Change Your Life author, lecturer, traveller Carol Patterson has gathered favorite travel stories, hers and others, to show that no one comes home unchanged.

Some of the wonderfully entertaining stories in **Reinventure: How Travel Can Change Your Life** are earth-shattering epiphanies, some are just gentle adjustments. Either way, they will make you laugh, cry, think or just shake your head in wonder.

Reading **Reinventure** means becoming part of the experience.

Learn more, follow the stories, get Reinventure tips, or add your own stories at: www.reinventuretravel.com

Order your copy of **Reinventure: How Travel Can Change Your Life** at www.trafford.com/08-0116 or email orders@trafford.com. It's also available at major online book retailers. isbn: 978-1-4251-6979-4

