"The voice of grasslands in British Columbia"

SUMMER | FALL 2026

BC GRASSLANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE GRASSLANDS CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Who We Are

The **Grassland Conservation Council of British Columbia (GCC)** is the only provincial environmental not-for-profit dedicated to increasing and sustaining the ecological health and vitality of BC's rare and highly at-risk grasslands.

Since 1999, we have been a dedicated collective of passionate organizations and individuals committed to protecting BC's grasslands—underrepresented yet remarkably biodiverse ecosystems. Our community includes ranchers, ecologists, conservationists, and concerned citizens who recognize the irreplaceable value of these threatened landscapes and work tirelessly to ensure their preservation for future generations.

Through partnerships, education, and outreach, we help people build the knowledge and connections needed to care for healthy grassland ecosystems. We work with partners to deliver public education both in the classroom and on the land, creating opportunities for youth to learn about grasslands through hands-on experiences. We also connect directly with landowners and communities, working alongside people in the grasslands they call home to share knowledge and support stewardship. We bring diverse perspectives together—from ranchers and recreationists to educators and conservationists—to develop practical guidance and find solutions that work on the ground. We engage with all branches of government, sharing our expertise and advocating for policies that protect these sensitive ecosystems.

Looking forward, we're building a sustainable organization with dedicated staff and a growing community of supporters whose generosity complements our project-based funding—ensuring we can continue this essential work for generations to come.

The Grassland Conservation Council of BC respectfully acknowledges that our work takes place within the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of many First Nations across British Columbia, from the Peace River grasslands in the north to the Garry oak ecosystems of Vancouver Island in the south, and across the Interior from Lillooet, Nicola, Thompson, and the Cariboo-Chilcotin to the Okanagan and Kootenays. The degradation of grasslands and the crisis of biodiversity loss have resulted directly from colonization and the ongoing barriers to Indigenous stewardship practices, which have sustained these once-abundant ecosystems for all remembered time.

We are committed to building respectful, reciprocal relationships with First Nations and Indigenous organizations. We seek to bring Western conservation approaches into conversation with Traditional Ecological Knowledge, supporting Indigenous-led stewardship and the protection and restoration of these enduring grassland landscapes.

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BC GRASSLANDS

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South Okanagan protected area
PHOTO: Katelyn Michaud

Message from the Chair

Thirty by Thirty for BC's Grasslands

Dr. Tom Dickinson



In 1987, Gro Harlem Brundtland chaired the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, which produced *Our Common Future*, a report aimed at articulating a global agenda for change. The Commission's work reflected growing worldwide concern about the rapid loss of biodiversity and frustration that, without new approaches, these declines would continue and their consequences for people would worsen.

The report introduced the term "sustainable development" and strongly argued for actions to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations. It helped establish a global understanding that human well-being and the health of the natural world are deeply interconnected.

Nearly 40 years later, many people feel that the future for nature is even more uncertain. Although Canada can celebrate the fact that protected areas now cover a significant portion of the country, many ecosystems and the species they support remain underrepresented.

Grasslands are one example. **Over the past half century, grassland bird populations have declined by more than 50%, and an increasing number of at-risk wildlife species depend on these ecosystems.** While climate change is adding new pressures by altering conditions faster than some species can adapt, many of the historic threats facing BC's grasslands remain: invasive species, conversion of land for agriculture, transportation corridors, and urban and industrial expansion.

In many cases, the idea of sustainable development has been challenged by decisions that prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term ecological health.

In 2022, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) renewed the global commitment to protecting the Earth's lands, oceans, and inland waters, particularly as climate change continues to accelerate. **Countries around the world agreed to work toward conserving 30% of their lands and waters by 2030, particularly areas important for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.**

British Columbia is part of this global effort through a framework that involves collaboration between First Nations, the provincial government, and the federal government. **While achieving 30x30 is ambitious, it is possible — but success will require many different partners working together.**

Supporting collaboration among diverse partners has been at the heart of the Grasslands Conservation Council since its creation, and it remains one of our greatest strengths today.

In this issue, you will discover how different approaches to conservation and protection are helping shape the future of BC's grasslands. You will also learn about GCC's ongoing efforts to educate communities, especially youth, on why these ecosystems matter, and explore some of the partnerships that continue to guide our work.

Laurie Guichon Memorial Grasslands
PHOTO: Dennis Lloyd

Message from the Executive Director

The GCC in Action

Mike Dedels



It is hard to believe that it has been four years since I took on the role of Executive Director of the Grasslands Conservation Council. When I started in July 2022, I was given the new five-year Strategic Plan for 2022–2026. Many of the proposed Outcomes and Actions were ambitious, especially considering the challenges of recent years, but knowing the dedication of the Board and their commitment to the GCC and grasslands, I was confident we could make significant progress.

With the support of our Board and the incredible generosity of funders, large and small, we have been able to accomplish much of what was outlined in the current plan and are now looking ahead to the next five years. Our current Strategic Plan is available under "Stay Connected" on our homepage at bcgrasslands.org.

Why is this important? As the GCC continues to expand our network of partners — including private landowners, First Nations communities, all levels of government, and other non-profits — it is increasingly important to have a clear plan and shared priorities. People often ask, "What does the GCC do?" Being able to answer that clearly is essential.

My usual response is that **we work to keep BC's grasslands and keep them healthy, including supporting restoration when needed**. In keeping with the idea that fewer words are often better, this has been distilled into five Strategic Areas: Outreach, Stewardship, Research, Policy, and Capacity. While there is naturally some overlap between these areas, together they capture the full scope of our current work, which I have summarized below.

On the outreach front, the GCC is reaching a much broader audience through talks and tours, social media, our newsletter and magazine, and engagement with schools and universities. **As more people learn about the values of our grasslands, support for their conservation continues to grow.**

Our outreach team, Heidi and Rabeya, with support from Directors Wendy Gardner and Heather Richardson, has significantly expanded these efforts over the past two years. This growth has been made possible through your membership support and the generosity of a major Foundation donor.

I have also greatly valued the openness of landowners who invite us onto their properties to share knowledge and discuss the challenges facing grasslands and the species that depend on them. The passion people have for this land is what makes this work both possible and worthwhile.

Stewardship is a growing area of work for the GCC. With leadership from Dennis Lloyd, who served on our Board for eight years, helped establish the Friends of Lac du Bois, and contributed countless hours to the Laurie Guichon Memorial Grasslands Interpretive Site, the GCC is expanding its on-the-ground stewardship efforts. This includes invasive plant demonstration sites, targeted control of emerging invasive species, and partnerships that improve grassland health.

In 2026, we completed a major weed control event with the Friends of Black Mountain in Kelowna and continue to seek partners in other regions interested in supporting local stewardship efforts. Last year also marked the first summer field crew for the GCC, and our 2026 crew had a full season of projects, including work with First Nations partners in several locations.

Building local interest, capacity, and partnerships for grassland stewardship will be essential to the long-term success of the GCC and the landscapes we work to protect.

Over the years, a major focus of our research efforts has been

quantifying BC's grasslands through grassland mapping and identifying priority grassland areas. These resources are available under the "What We Do" tab on our website.

Last year, we were excited to receive support from the BC Conservation Fund, Federal Nature Legacy Funding, the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship, and the Sitka Foundation to update our original grassland mapping. This work will provide a clearer and more current picture of BC's grassland landscape. Keefer Ecological Services is leading this project, with a final product expected in spring 2027 and a review process planned for fall 2026.

Looking ahead, we also hope to expand our involvement with post-secondary institutions to develop and support additional research projects that advance our understanding of BC's grasslands.

The pressures on grasslands from development continue to increase, reinforcing the need for the GCC to provide sound policy advice. Once grasslands are lost, they are rarely recovered, which is why the GCC has provided input on policy decisions across the province in recent years. This has included mine proposals, solar developments, and residential expansion into grassland areas.

You can find examples of this work by searching for "Advocacy" on our website. In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever that decision-makers have access to current, factual information, and the GCC is committed to providing that support.

We are also working to contribute to the 30 by 30 initiative for the conservation of global ecosystems. **Given the rarity of grasslands in BC and the significant pressures they face, it is essential that high-quality grasslands are considered in conservation planning.**

I hope you enjoy the articles in this issue of *BC Grasslands* highlighting the value of grassland conservation initiatives. I sincerely appreciate the contributions from the many passionate people who shared their knowledge, experience, and commitment to these landscapes.

The final area of activity in our current plan is Capacity. This is what enables the GCC to move forward, including membership, donor development, funding applications, and the ongoing work to strengthen our Board and committees.

One of the achievements I am most proud of is expanding our membership model to include long-term membership options and affordable student memberships. **We have now grown our membership to well over 200, and we thank all our new and returning members for their continued support.** Please visit the Membership tab on our website to learn more.

We are also developing project plans to share with funders, supporting both long-term conservation initiatives and the long-term health of the GCC as an organization.

As you can see, the GCC has been very active. In the second half of 2026, we will reach out to our members, partners, and supporters as we develop our next five-year Strategic Plan. We look forward to hearing your ideas and perspectives as we plan for the future.



Lac du Bois, overlooking Sun Peaks
PHOTO: Bob Needham

Loving the Grasslands: Our Community Invests in Conservation


Churn Creek Rock Bluffs
ART: Mark Hobson

Every winter, the Grasslands Conservation Council of BC's Loving the Grasslands fundraiser brings together people from across the province who share a passion for one of BC's most endangered ecosystems. Conservationists, ranchers, researchers, Indigenous partners, businesses, artists, and community members gather for an evening of connection, celebration, and support for grassland conservation.

Held on February 5, 2026, at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, this year's event featured a buffet dinner, live and silent auctions, an online auction, and live music. The auctions showcased an incredible collection of generously donated artwork, outdoor adventures, handcrafted goods, accommodations, and unique experiences, highlighting the remarkable generosity of our supporters.

Together, our sponsors, donors, volunteers, auction contributors, and guests helped raise well over $40,000 to support the GCC's work across British Columbia!

These unrestricted funds are especially valuable, allowing us to respond to emerging conservation priorities while continuing to deliver our education and outreach programs, support stewardship and advocacy initiatives, and build the local partnerships required to care for our irreplaceable grasslands.

Loving the Grasslands is more than a fundraiser—it's a celebration of the growing community that believes these extraordinary landscapes are worth protecting. To everyone who attended, donated, sponsored, volunteered, or bid in the auctions, thank you. Your support is helping ensure that BC's grasslands continue to thrive with us and the generations yet to come!

THANK YOU SPONSORS!

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Keeping Grasslands Connected

Danielle Toperczer
Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative



Stand on a dry bench above the Thompson River in late spring, and the grasslands can look deceptively simple: open slopes, bunchgrass, sagebrush, scattered shrubs, and long views across the valley. At first glance, they may seem still.

But look closer, and the landscape is full of movement: insects passing between flowers, deer shifting between seasonal ranges, raptors following the contours of the hills, water moving through draws and riparian areas, and native grasses holding soil in place through heat, wind, and drought.

Grasslands are among British Columbia's most recognizable landscapes and also among its most vulnerable. They support an incredible range of life, from grassland birds, pollinators, reptiles, amphibians, and native plants to larger mammals such as mule deer, elk, coyotes, and badgers. They also support ranching, cultural values, clean water, food systems, and the sense of place that defines many Interior communities. **This richness depends on connection.**

At its simplest, ecological connectivity means that nature has room to move. Wildlife move between seasonal ranges, food, water, shelter, and breeding areas. Plants depend on pollinators, seed movement, genetic exchange, and space to recover after disturbance. Water, nutrients, fire, and other natural processes also move across landscapes. **When those movements are interrupted, ecosystems can lose some of their ability to function.**

In the Thompson-Nicola region, grasslands often occur alongside dry forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers, riparian areas, and agricultural lands, with important transition zones between them. These edges matter. Many species use different habitats at different times of year, or even different times of day.

> *"Keeping grasslands connected is essential to keeping nature connected across British Columbia."*

Grasslands are one part of the broader connectivity story in the Interior, and many occur in valley bottoms, rolling benches, and lower-elevation areas — places that also tend to attract roads, towns, agriculture, subdivisions, utility corridors, and other forms of development. Because grasslands are relatively rare in British Columbia and often occur in accessible, easily converted landscapes, their links to surrounding habitats can narrow, fragment, or disappear over time.

A grassland slope may provide winter range for deer. A riparian draw through open range may link wetlands to uplands. A working ranch may help maintain habitat continuity across a valley. A small patch of native grassland may act as a stepping stone for pollinators or other species moving through a changing climate. None of these places works alone. Together, they form part of a larger network. Keeping those relationships intact is what ecological connectivity is all about.

Connectivity in a changing climate

Climate change adds another layer of pressure to already vulnerable grassland systems. As conditions shift, species may need to adjust where they live, where they breed, where they find water, or where they move during extreme weather. **Some changes may happen gradually over generations. Others may require more immediate access to shade, moisture, higher elevations, or seasonal refuge.**

Grasslands often sit within these movement pathways. They connect lowlands to uplands,



Aberdeen Trail
PHOTO: Alex Bruvold

open habitats to forest edges, and dry areas to wetlands and riparian corridors. When those linkages remain intact, plants and animals have more options. When they are broken, adaptation becomes harder.

Wildfire and drought add to the challenge. Grassland systems are generally better able to recover when native plant communities remain strong and movement routes remain available. Fragmented landscapes, by contrast, can be more vulnerable to invasive plants, erosion, habitat loss, and the cumulative effects of repeated disturbance. **Connectivity does not prevent change, but it gives ecosystems more room to respond.**

From corridors on a map to relationships on the land

Recent connectivity work in the North Thompson–North Okanagan region shows why grasslands need to be understood as part of a larger landscape. First Nations have identified critical corridors within their territories, drawing on Indigenous Knowledge, cultural values, ecological priorities, and their own decision-making processes. Alongside that Nation-led work, regional collaboration is also underway to better understand ecological connectivity from the North Thompson to the North Okanagan.

TNCC supports this collaborative process through coordination, spatial analysis, and partner engagement, while respecting that Nation-led corridor work remains grounded in each Nation's authority, priorities, and process.

TNCC has also supported ecological corridor mapping for municipalities. This work helps translate ecological connectivity into practical planning information by identifying areas that may support wildlife movement, habitat linkages, and landscape permeability. It can support more informed land-use decisions, help bring connectivity values into planning and development review earlier, and identify knowledge or data gaps where local observations, Indigenous Knowledge, field verification, or additional ecological information could improve future practices.

In Kamloops, corridor mapping supported by TNCC helped inform the City's Official Community Plan, and similar decision-support work is underway with other municipalities.

Together, these efforts are helping build a broader picture of how wildlife and ecological processes move through the landscape. They have highlighted what many people already know from experience on the land: **movement often follows valley bottoms, river corridors, riparian systems, lower-elevation habitats, and upland connections between watersheds. These are also the places where roads, rail lines, fencing, development pressure, and other land uses can create pinch points.**

The North Thompson–North Okanagan work is not about drawing lines on a map and calling the work finished. It is about using maps, local knowledge, Indigenous Knowledge, ecological science, and partner experience to support better conversations and more informed decisions. It also shows that grassland connectivity cannot be separated from the surrounding landscape. Grasslands are connected to wetlands, riparian areas, forests, working lands, and communities. They are also connected to cultural values, local economies, and long-standing responsibilities to the land.

That broader view matters. A corridor that looks simple from above may involve many land uses, jurisdictions, histories, and relationships on the ground. Understanding it well requires patience, respect, and collaboration.

Stewardship across connected landscapes

Because grasslands are part of larger ecological, cultural, and working landscapes, stewardship also needs to look beyond single sites. Some grasslands are formally conserved. Others are part of working ranchlands, private lands, community spaces, transportation corridors, or areas experiencing development pressure. Each can influence how well grasslands continue to function within the broader landscape.

In practice, grassland stewardship can take many forms: maintaining native grassland remnants, keeping open range intact, supporting wildlife-friendly fencing, restoring degraded areas, managing invasive plants, protecting riparian corridors, reducing barriers along roads, and considering ecological linkages when land-use decisions are made. It also means recognizing the conservation value of well-managed working landscapes, where ranching and habitat continuity can often exist together.

Understanding these relationships requires many kinds of knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge, laws, and responsibilities to the land, along with rancher and landholder experience, conservation science, local government planning, and community stewardship, all contribute to a fuller picture of how grasslands function across seasons and across boundaries. The strongest approaches are often those that bring these perspectives together with respect.

This is not about separating people from grasslands. It is about recognizing that people are already part of these landscapes, and that thoughtful stewardship can help grasslands continue to support both ecological function and community life.

Keeping Nature Connected

Through TNCC's Keeping Nature Connected campaign, partners are helping share a simple public message that complements grassland conservation work across the region: connected landscapes support healthier ecosystems, more resilient communities, and safer movement for wildlife.

In a region like the Thompson-Nicola, where grasslands, forests, rivers, wetlands, ranchlands, highways, and communities all overlap, these connections are not abstract. They are the slopes above rivers, the draws that hold moisture, the fence lines that can either block or allow movement, the road crossings where wildlife risk increases, and the working lands that continue to provide habitat across broad valleys.

Grasslands are an important part of that story. Everyday landscapes that may not always be formally protected still play an essential role in

the bigger picture. These places help wildlife move, allow plants and animals to respond to change, and support the relationships between land, water, people, and communities.

Keeping Nature Connected complements the long-standing work of groups such as the Grasslands Conservation Council by helping communities see grasslands as part of a broader connected landscape.

A shared responsibility

The theme of "Grasslands Forever 30 by 30" invites a broader look at how conservation areas function over time, including how protected and conserved areas remain connected to the surroundings. **For grasslands, one important question is not only which areas are conserved, but also how those areas remain connected to the surrounding landscape.**

Because grasslands cross many boundaries and land uses, collaborative partnerships can help bring different perspectives together. First Nations, ranchers, landholders, local governments, researchers, communities, and conservation partners such as the Grasslands Conservation Council and TNCC all have roles to play. This work depends on trust, good information, and practical solutions that make sense on the ground.

Grasslands are habitats, movement pathways, working landscapes, cultural landscapes, and part of the living connections that tie communities to the land. **Keeping grasslands connected is essential to keeping nature connected across British Columbia.**



Arrowleaf Balsamroot, Thompson-Nicola region

PHOTO: Mandy Ross



Park Rill Floodplain, Stewart Ranch, NTBC Okanagan Falls
PHOTO: Graham Osborne

A Closer Look: Conserving the Living Landscapes of BC's Grasslands

Kelcie Walther, Nature Trust of BC

At first glance, British Columbia's grasslands seem spare and open — slopes of bunchgrass, sagebrush, and scattered wildflowers stretching across the southern interior. But a closer look reveals an ecosystem alive with movement: songbirds calling from trees and fence posts, pollinators moving steadily between blooms, and mule deer travelling across the hillsides.

For Nicholas Burdock, Okanagan Conservation Land Manager with the Nature Trust of BC (NTBC), learning to see that complexity is part of what makes grasslands so compelling.

"Often people look at a grassland and think it's just a scrubby wasteland," he says. "But when you look a little closer, there's a tremendous amount of life there."

Grasslands cover less than one percent of British Columbia's land base, yet they support more species at risk than any other ecosystem in the province.

For more than 50 years, NTBC has worked to conserve these landscapes through land acquisition, restoration, stewardship, and partnerships across the southern interior.

Today, NTBC manages a growing network of grassland conservation areas in regions including the Okanagan and the Kootenay Boundary. Each conservation area helps protect habitats increasingly shaped by development, invasive plants, altered fire regimes, and other pressures.

Conserving grasslands often means actively managing them. One of NTBC's key approaches is its Biodiversity Ranching Program, which works with local ranchers to manage grazing in ways that support healthy ecosystems.

"Much of the grassland that NTBC manages is part of our biodiversity ranching program," Burdock explains.

"We're still actively managing grazing livestock to help care for these grasslands in a sustainable way."

At biodiversity ranching sites such as White Lake Basin and Okanagan Falls, grazing is coordinated through strategies like rotational pasture use, range health assessments, and careful monitoring and management of invasive plants. **These practices help maintain the structure and diversity of native grassland communities while supporting working landscapes that have shaped these ecosystems for generations.**

NTBC's stewardship work also includes habitat restoration. In the South Okanagan, staff have been restoring antelope-brush ecosystems — a

rare shrub-steppe habitat that supports numerous species at risk.

Restoration efforts focus on reducing conifer encroachment and creating conditions that allow younger antelope-brush plants to regenerate, helping maintain the long-term resilience of these communities.

> *"Often people look at a grassland and think it's just a scrubby wasteland. But when you look a little closer, there's a tremendous amount of life there."*

Community partnerships are another important part of NTBC's work. Through collaborations with schools and local volunteers, students and community members have helped plant native shrubs and participate in habitat monitoring projects across the region, including annual antelope brush planting events with local schools.

In the White Lake Basin, NTBC has been working with partners Okanagan Nation Alliance, Osoyoos Indian Band, and the BC Wildlife Federation to install beaver dam analogues along Park Rill Creek to encourage a more natural, meandering flow.

For Burdock, spending time on the land is often what shifts people's perspective on grasslands.

"You really do need to take the time to get out there and look around," he says. "You'll start noticing the birds of prey, the pollinators, and all the different life using those landscapes."

NTBC continues to expand its conservation work across the southern interior. One current initiative is the proposed protection of Marron River Grasslands, near Penticton — a property that would safeguard a diverse mix of native grasslands, sagebrush steppe, and riparian habitat along the Marron River.

Each conservation area adds another piece to a larger landscape of protected grasslands. And with careful stewardship, these seemingly quiet ecosystems continue to reveal just how much life they hold — for those willing to look a little closer.



Park Rill Creek Property
PHOTO: Nature Trust of BC



Churn Creek views
PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society

Spotlight on Churn Creek Protected Area: Managing for Grassland Conservation

Ordell Steen, Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society



Churn Creek Views

PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society

Churn Creek Protected Area (CCPA) is the largest and most ecologically diverse grassland protected area in Central Interior British Columbia, established in 1996 to restore and conserve nationally significant and threatened grassland ecosystems. It also provides important habitat for significant populations of California bighorn sheep and mule deer as well as rangelands for operation of the historic Empire Valley Ranch.

CCPA was established in 1996 under the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan over crown land. In 1998, the private lands of Empire Valley Ranch, which had held most of the range permits in the new protected area, were purchased by the Province and added to CCPA, increasing its size by 50% to about 37,000 ha. The protected area extends west from the Fraser River, following Churn Creek as the landscape rises from about 300 metres a.s.l. to nearly 1,700 m near Black Dome Mountain.

A principal challenge is to meet grassland restoration and conservation goals while maintaining a viable working ranch and recreation area. This challenge is being addressed by BC Parks, BC Ministry of Forests through their Range Section, BC Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship, Empire Valley Ranch, Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation, and Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society.

A Landscape of Endangered Grasslands and Diverse Ecosystems

The grasslands, shrub-steppe, and dry forest ecosystems found in CCPA are among the most threatened ecosystems in British Columbia. They support many of the province's species at risk and are becoming increasingly rare due to habitat loss and fragmentation. As a result, CCPA is one of the very important conservation areas in British Columbia.

The protected area extends from the very dry Lower Grasslands (BGxh), where grasslands and sagebrush shrub-steppe dominate the landscape, through the species-rich Middle Grasslands (BGxw), where dry forests become more common on north- and east-facing slopes, and into the Upper Grasslands (IDFxm), where grasslands occur in warm, dry slopes within extensive Douglas-fir forests. Churn Creek Protected Area is the only large protected area in BC with well represented Lower, Middle, and Upper Grasslands.

The area's flat, rolling, and rugged terrain supports one of the greatest varieties of grassland and shrub-steppe ecosystems in British Columbia's Central Interior. Many of these ecosystems remain in a mature, relatively undisturbed condition. **Alongside the grasslands, visitors can also find a wide range of Douglas-fir forests, as well as small stands of aspen, cottonwood, lodgepole pine and spruce.**

Although the area is a very dry landscape, nearly 20 different wetland types have been recorded. Small lakes, ponds, streams, and lush riparian areas occur throughout the landscape and provide important habitat for wildlife.

Grazing and Grassland Recovery

To protect its ecological values, the CCPA management plan aims to maintain the historic extent of grasslands and adjacent open, dry forests,



Sagebrush views, Churn Creek

PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society



Controlled burning, Churn Creek

PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society

and allow ecological recovery of grasslands that were heavily utilized by livestock grazing in the past. Past livestock grazing, current reduced grazing levels, fewer natural fires, spread of forests onto grasslands, invasive species, and the impacts of climate change all influence how these ecosystems have changed over time.

Past livestock use before the protected area was formed left many grasslands in medium to excellent condition while others, especially on previously private, fenced lands in the Upper Grasslands, were heavily affected. To allow the condition of degraded grasslands to recover and that of excellent grasslands to be conserved, the CCPA management plan directed that livestock stocking levels would be reduced below historic levels and innovative livestock management practices would be implemented.

Today, cattle grazing continues as part of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan, but under special management including reduced cattle stocking rates and a rotational grazing system. Ranch operators, who are critical to the success of the plan, control livestock use by strategically locating salt blocks, placing trucked water on non-sensitive sites, developing natural water sources, maintaining fences, and using riders to control livestock distribution.

To determine if these practices are resulting in grassland improvements, permanent monitoring plots have been established throughout the protected area to track ecological health of the grasslands over time. These include both plots with and without a paired livestock exclosure. Results show a mixed picture. Many grasslands remain stable, some have improved, and others have declined slightly. Areas that were in medium to excellent condition when the protected area was established continue to support outstanding grassland ecosystems, while the past heavily used, poor condition grasslands have been slow to improve.

Restoring a Changing Landscape

Like most grasslands across British Columbia, those of CCPA continue to change. Researchers have shown that wildfires historically occurred about every 20 years on average in the area and were predominantly low severity (burning mostly small understory trees but killing few large trees) and occasionally high severity (burning canopy as well as understory trees).

During the last 150 years however, relatively few fires have occurred, which has allowed Douglas-fir trees to invade previously open grasslands (tree encroachment) and greatly increase the density of small trees (tree ingrowth) in previously open forests. The results have been replacement of the rich shrub and herb vegetation of open grasslands and open forests with dry forest mosses and sparse herbs characteristic of closed forests. **As a result, forage for wildlife and livestock has been reduced, habitats for grassland dependent plants and animals have been lost, livestock grazing has been concentrated on a dwindling land base, and the risks of severe wildfires have been substantially increased.**



California Bighorn Sheep, Churn Creek

PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society



Young forest encroachment of Upper Grasslands

PHOTO: Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area Society

> *"Churn Creek Protected Area is the only large protected area in BC with well represented Lower, Middle, and Upper Grasslands."*

Since the protected area was established, BC Parks, BC Wildfire Service, Empire Valley Ranch, Friends of Churn, and Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation have worked to restore the rich and productive vegetation of open grasslands and open-grown treed areas. Restoration includes manually removing young encroaching trees, thinning dense understory layers beneath the large old trees adjacent to grasslands, and using prescribed burns to remove small trees and slash. More than 1,200 hectares have been manually treated to remove small trees and more than 3,000 ha have been treated by prescribed burns. Although these efforts have restored open grasslands and open forests of large trees in the short-term, ongoing maintenance fires or other treatments will be required to maintain these restored habitats over the long term.

Invasive plant species are less common in CCPA than in many other grasslands in southern British Columbia, but they continue to spread and threaten native vegetation, wildlife habitat, and forage for wildlife and livestock. BC Parks, regional districts, the Empire Valley Ranch, and the Friends of Churn are working to map, monitor, and control invasive species throughout the protected area.

CCPA experienced widespread wildfires during the summers of 2021 and 2026. The 2021 wildfire, which was over 11,000 ha, was predominantly a low-severity fire that spread very fast across grasslands and open treed areas with local areas of high severity in some dense, older Douglas-fir encroachment and ingrowth. **While the fire stimulated new bunchgrass growth and reduced big sagebrush densities, it also temporarily reduced biological soil communities, ground cover of grasses, and plant litter.** The 2026 French Bar Creek wildfire is burning as we write this but currently overlaps about one-third of the protected area. It has apparently been much more severe in forested areas than the 2021 wildfire, affecting important old-growth Douglas-fir forests and mule deer winter range. This would not be unexpected given the very dry conditions and high densities of young tree encroachment and ingrowth on the landscape.

Progress is being made on achieving conservation goals; however, the impacts of grazing, more severe weather and fires, and invasive plant introductions combined with ongoing grazing make achieving these goals challenging. **A commitment for resources is needed to continue restoration efforts to improve the ecological integrity and resilience of this grassland treasure. With it, this special landscape will remain a critical component of BC's protected area system.**



BC Parks Foundation: Protecting Grasslands and Connecting People to Nature

Chelsea Rooney, BC Parks Foundation

Juniper Ridge
PHOTO: Heidi Wismath

BC Parks Foundation was founded to help protect British Columbia's extraordinary natural places and ensure they can be enjoyed for generations to come. Working alongside partners, governments, communities, donors and conservation organizations, we conserve ecologically significant lands, support long-term stewardship and create opportunities for more people to experience the benefits of nature.

Grasslands are an important part of that work. Although they cover less than one percent of British Columbia, these ecosystems support an extraordinary diversity of plants and wildlife, provide habitat for many species at risk, store carbon, stabilize soils and sustain ecological processes that extend far beyond their boundaries. Despite their ecological importance, they remain among the province's least protected ecosystems.

Today, BC Parks Foundation has protected, or has contributed to projects protecting, more than 1,400 acres of conservation properties containing important grassland habitat across southern British Columbia. These landscapes span some of the province's most significant grassland regions, including Juniper Ridge overlooking Kamloops, Old Richter Pass and Marron River Grasslands (with the Nature Trust of BC) in the South Okanagan, High Bar Ranch and the Lillooet–West Pavilion area in the Fraser Canyon, and Shawniken near Spences Bridge. Together, they help protect native grasslands, open forests and associated habitats that support pollinators, migratory birds, species at risk and the ecological connectivity these landscapes depend on.

Juniper Ridge is one of the newest additions to this growing portfolio. The 517-acre property protects rare grasslands alongside mature

> *"More than 1,400 acres of conservation properties containing important grassland habitat have been protected across southern British Columbia."*

Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper, including trees more than



Rainbow from Juniper Ridge
PHOTO: Heidi Wismath



Picking wax currants on Juniper Ridge
PHOTO: Mandy Ross

250 years old. More than 30 bird species have been documented on the property, which also provides habitat for American badger and many other species that depend on healthy grassland ecosystems.

Its protection also reflects BC Parks Foundation's collaborative approach to conservation. **In 2026, a province-wide crowdfunding campaign brought together local organizations, community leaders, major donors and hundreds of British Columbians to raise the $1 million needed to protect the property forever.** The campaign demonstrated the power of collective action, with every contribution helping secure an increasingly rare ecosystem for future generations.

Helping people discover and understand these landscapes is another important part of our work. Through the Discover Parks program, BC Parks Foundation has developed nearly ten Discover Trails in provincial parks across British Columbia. These self-guided interpretive experiences combine engaging signage with audio and video to reveal the natural and cultural stories that shape each place, inviting visitors to slow down, look more closely and discover the remarkable nature around them.

The newest Discover Trail at Kikomun Creek Provincial Park introduces visitors to one of British Columbia's largest remaining grassland ecosystems. **Along a six-kilometre route, visitors learn how prescribed fire, forest thinning, and invasive plant management help restore ecological health while discovering the plants, wildlife and natural processes that make these landscapes so unique.** The trail transforms a walk through the park into an opportunity to better understand one of British Columbia's rarest ecosystems and the important work underway to protect it.

At BC Parks Foundation, we believe people protect what they know and love. Every protected landscape creates an opportunity for people to experience nature, build a deeper understanding of the ecosystems around them and become part of their future. By conserving ecologically significant lands and helping people connect with places like British Columbia's grasslands, we're working to ensure these remarkable ecosystems continue to thrive for generations to come.

Choosing Conservation: The Story of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park

Brenda Couture, Friends of
Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park


Arrowleaf Balsamroot


Old Man's Whiskers / Prairie Smoke (budding)


Springbeauty

Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park protects more than 3,200 hectares (7,952 acres) of North Okanagan grasslands, as well as cliff and wetland habitats. It was designated a provincial park in 1975 after the North Okanagan Naturalist Club, Vernon Fish and Game, and a coalition of other local groups lobbied the provincial government to purchase the land from Coldstream Ranch rather than sell it to a developer who wanted to build a resort and golf course.

Fortunately, the owners of Coldstream Ranch also wanted to preserve this beautiful landscape for the enjoyment of future generations, and chose to sell it to the provincial government instead. That decision ensured this remarkable landscape would remain accessible to everyone and protected one of the North Okanagan's most ecologically significant grassland ecosystems.

With input from community organizations, a strong emphasis on long-term ecological stewardship and conservation was prioritized from the beginning. Today, the park is home to numerous endangered and threatened plant and animal species, with some areas set aside specifically to conserve rare ecosystems such as bunchgrass grasslands. It also protects one of the few remaining publicly owned examples of the rapidly disappearing natural grasslands that once stretched from Vernon to Osoyoos.

The story of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park reminds us that the landscapes we treasure today exist because people recognized their value decades ago and chose conservation over development. As grasslands continue to disappear across the Okanagan, protecting the natural areas that remain—both inside and outside our parks—is increasingly important for wildlife, biodiversity and future generations.

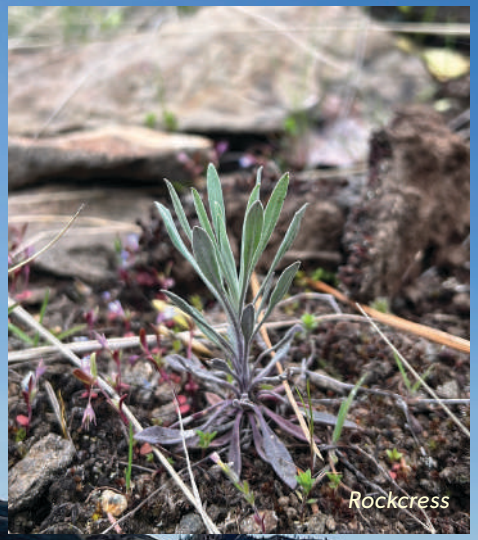
Thanks to the efforts of BC Parks and the Friends of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park (FKLPP), a nonprofit society formed in 2005 to help preserve and protect this beautiful landscape, education, stewardship and research into invasive plant management continue year-round. Last year, FKLPP received the Together in Action Award from the Invasive Species Council of BC in recognition of this work.

Because the land is protected, the park provides an ideal place to study the effects of invasive plants on native ecosystems and evaluate methods to contain—or, hopefully, eradicate—them. The knowledge gained here benefits grassland conservation well beyond park boundaries.

By working together, we can all do our part to protect these rare grassland ecosystems so future generations can be sustained by, as well as enjoy, the same spectacular landscapes we are fortunate to live with today.



Silky Lupin



Rockcress



Smallflower Woodland Star



Yellow Bells

Kalamalka Lake



East Kootenay AGM & Field Tour

Mike Dedels

There is simply nothing as life-giving as the feeling you get when you're talking with someone who speaks your language: people who take delight in what you find wonderful, share your concerns, and are looking in the same direction as you.

For just that reason, the GCC was excited to get out to the East Kootenays for our 2025 Annual General Meeting and Tour (held April 30th & May 1st) in Kimberley. As many of our directors and members reside in the Thompson-Nicola, we've gotten into the pattern of having a Kamloops-based AGM one year and travelling to another grassland area every other year. It had been quite a while since we headed east, but we were presented with an excellent opportunity to partner with the Columbia Mountains Institute (CMI) on their "Future of the Grasslands in the East Kootenays" workshops, so we began planning with them through 2024 for a late April event. Unfortunately, this event had to be rescheduled until the fall, but the GCC forged on, and we were glad we did.

We gathered at The Biscuit in Kimberley for a welcoming dinner buffet and AGM. Randy Harris captivated the audience with his presentation on Ecosystem Restoration, and we're grateful to everyone who participated, whether in person or online.

We welcomed new Directors Allen Wootton and Lindsay Jones, as well as Wendy Gardner, bringing her expertise and GCC history back to the Board. We also thanked Bob Haywood-Farmer for his many years as Chair of the Board and continue to appreciate Bob for his ongoing contributions. At the meeting, we also approved our new membership fee structure, with longer-term and student memberships now available. This has been a tremendous success for the GCC.

If you are not a member, check it out at: **www.bcgrasslands.org.**

Against the backdrop of a stunning early May day—complete with blooming wildflowers—the following day, we ventured into the East Kootenays for a field tour. Our journey through the Wycliffe Conservation Corridor revealed the critical importance of habitat connectivity, while our visit to Lost Springs showcased successful prescribed burns and restoration efforts.

The remarkable progress in the East Kootenays demonstrates what we can achieve together, though there's always more work ahead. Many thanks to GCC Director, Shawna LaRade, the speakers and the participants for making it a wonderful day. These gatherings are a cherished opportunity for the GCC to travel throughout BC and strengthen bonds with our diverse partners in grassland conservation. We're already looking forward to our next meeting!

A couple of us got to return for the excellent CMI event in October, with representation from First Nations, ranchers, conservation interests, and many more. It was also very interesting to see the seasonal changes on Wycliffe.



Wycliffe Conservation Corridor
PHOTO: Mike Dedels



Blue camus flower meadow in Garry Oak forest
PHOTO: Wylie Thomas

30 by 30 and Garry Oak Ecosystems

Wylie Thomas, Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team

The global 30 by 30 goal—to protect and conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030—is an ambitious and necessary response to biodiversity loss. But for some ecosystems, including Garry Oak and associated ecosystems, the challenge is not simply protecting what remains. It is also about restoring, reconnecting, and expanding habitat where people live.

In Canada, Garry Oak ecosystems occur only in British Columbia, primarily on southeast Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, with a few small occurrences in the Lower Fraser Valley. They are globally rare, reaching the northern limit of their range here, and form part of a broader Pacific Coast oak landscape that extends south into Washington, Oregon, and California. Garry Oak ecosystems are much more than oak trees. They include open woodlands, camas meadows, rocky outcrops, coastal bluffs, vernal pools, and grassland-like openings. Many of these places are also cultural landscapes, shaped and cared for through Indigenous stewardship since time immemorial.

Garry Oak ecosystems are among British Columbia's most biologically diverse landscapes and support one of the highest concentrations of species at risk in Canada.

Yet less than 5% of their original extent remains in near-natural condition. Much of what survives exists as small, isolated fragments surrounded by urban development, where invasive species, habitat fragmentation, altered fire regimes, and the loss of pollinators continue to threaten these ecosystems.

This creates a unique challenge for 30 by 30. Unlike larger ecosystems, we cannot simply protect 30% of Garry Oak habitat in Canada because much of it has already been lost. Many of the remaining fragments—small parks, rocky knolls, shorelines, road edges, and even private properties—are incredibly valuable, but too isolated to support healthy ecological processes on their own.

The solution is to think beyond the boundaries of protected areas. We need to safeguard every remaining high-quality fragment, restore degraded sites, and reconnect habitats through ecological corridors and "stepping stones." In the Greater Victoria area, First Nations, local governments, community groups, schools, volunteers, and private landowners have begun doing this work by removing invasive plants, restoring meadows, growing native plants, naturalizing boulevards, and adding species such as camas, sea blush, woolly sunflower, and native grasses to gardens and public spaces.

For Garry Oak ecosystems, every restored meadow, every native garden, and every connected habitat patch helps rebuild a living landscape.

For Garry Oak ecosystems, 30 by 30 is about more than protecting land — it is about bringing nature into parks, schoolyards, boulevards, gardens, and neighbourhood green spaces — so that the last remnants of this globally rare ecosystem can once again function as a connected, resilient landscape.



The Vernon Commonage: Protecting a Mosaic of Life

Harold Sellers, North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

The **Vernon Commonage** is one of the most significant remaining grassland landscapes in the northern Okanagan Valley. Located south of the City of Vernon, it stretches between Okanagan and Kalamalka lakes, forming a connected landscape of grasslands, forests, wetlands, and rocky hillsides.

The name "Commonage" comes from a late 19th-century arrangement where the area was "given to the [First Nations peoples] for pasturage in common with [settlers] in the vicinity."[1] Of course, the landscape's memory of human use stretches back much further. The Vernon Commonage is part of the ancestral and unceded lands of the syilx people, who have cared for and used this landscape since time immemorial.

The Commonage has never been a densely populated landscape. Over time, a small number of settlers and ranchers have made their homes here, with agricultural use historically and currently focused primarily on cattle grazing. Today, the landscape continues to reflect this history, where working ranchlands exist alongside some of the Okanagan's most important remaining natural habitats.

What makes the Vernon Commonage so special is the incredible diversity contained within this relatively small area. The landscape includes open native grasslands, rocky outcrops, shrub-steppe communities, patches of forest, wetlands, and "kettle hole" ponds formed by ancient glacial activity. These different habitats support a wide variety of plants and wildlife, creating an important refuge in a valley where natural ecosystems have become increasingly fragmented.

The Commonage provides habitat for many species at risk, including birds, reptiles, mammals, and plants that depend on intact grassland ecosystems. These include species such as western rattlesnake, western screech-owl, Lewis's woodpecker, badger, and numerous rare plants. More than 80 at-risk species have been identified as using the Vernon Commonage, highlighting the importance of protecting this connected landscape.

One plant of special note is a small population of bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*), the most northerly known site for this species in the Okanagan Valley. Bitterroot is also recognized as one of the Four Chiefs of the syilx/Okanagan Nation and holds important cultural significance.

Despite its ecological importance, the Vernon Commonage continues to face development pressures. Several proposals have been brought forward in the 21st century, raising concerns about the loss and fragmentation of grassland habitat.

Many local residents, conservation organizations, and community groups recognize that protecting the Commonage is about more than preserving open space. It is about maintaining wildlife corridors, protecting species at risk, supporting healthy ecosystems, and ensuring future generations can experience one of the Okanagan Valley's most ecologically unique landscapes. The North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC, Nature Conservancy of the North Okanagan, and Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program have come together to form the Commonage Conservation Partnership.

Through collaboration, education, and advocacy, the partnership is working to build a future where large portions of the Vernon Commonage receive lasting protection.

We hope the future will see conservation protection established across this remarkable landscape, ensuring the Vernon Commonage remains a healthy and connected grassland ecosystem for generations to come.

[1] *Where the Grass is Always Browner on the Other Side of the Fence: A History of the Okanagan Commonage*, by Dr. D. John Price, 2008.



> *"The Commonage is more than just grassland — it is a mosaic of habitats that supports a remarkable diversity of life."*

Rose's Pond

PHOTO: Brad Foster

Weird & Wonderful BC: Transforming Fear into Curiosity

Siya Markel, Young Leader in Conservation, CPAWS-BC

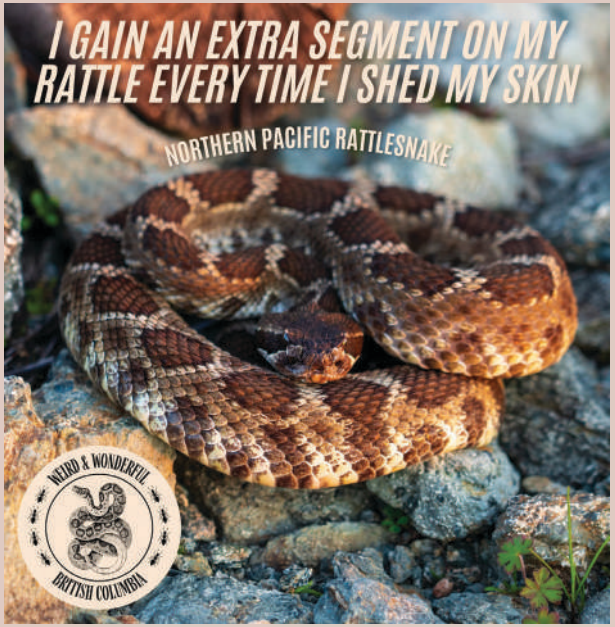
I can't say I was the kid who was never afraid of insects or big animals. I was the one who would cry and scream until a spider was escorted out of my bedroom, bolt at a snake moving through the grass next to the pool, or freeze up in terror at the sight of a bear. Like many people, my response to unfamiliar wildlife was fear, which took a long time for me to unlearn.

But the more I learned about each of these species, the more I understood their behaviour, and the more predictable they became. And the more I was able to appreciate them. The spiders began to get rides outside on my open palm, the snakes were cooed at like a puppy or kitten, and I knew that the bears didn't want to see me as much as I didn't want to see them.

This is the power of education: something that can bring understanding, respect, and appreciation to some of society's most feared species.

Many of British Columbia's native species are misunderstood. How often have you seen a social media post about a snake being killed in someone's yard, a bear getting into someone's garbage, or a spider being swiftly squished after a photo was taken? Wildlife such as rattlesnakes, bats, coyotes, vultures, and spiders are often viewed negatively because of myths, misconceptions, or simply a lack of familiarity.

Yet each of these species plays an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Predators help regulate prey populations, scavengers



reduce the spread of disease, and insect-eating species contribute to natural pest control. The animals we fear are often the same ones quietly helping keep ecosystems healthy.

The opportunity to share this message with my community came through the Young Leaders in Conservation Program hosted by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society of BC (CPAWS-BC). Fresh out of university, the program helped me develop the advocacy skills that have become central to my career, while providing an opportunity to bring conservation closer to home.

When I was considering what I wanted to do for my summer project, I fairly quickly landed on what is now *Weird and Wonderful BC*.



The goal was simple: highlight species that are often feared or considered pests and tell a different story about them. Through a nine-week public education campaign in the Merritt Herald and on social media, each week featured a different species found in the BC Interior. By combining science-based information with fun facts, the campaign hoped to reduce fear and encourage coexistence.

Readers learned that rattlesnakes are not aggressive animals waiting to strike, but important predators that help keep rodent populations balanced. They discovered that bats provide valuable insect control, vultures play a critical role as nature's clean-up crew, and spiders help maintain healthy ecosystems by controlling insect



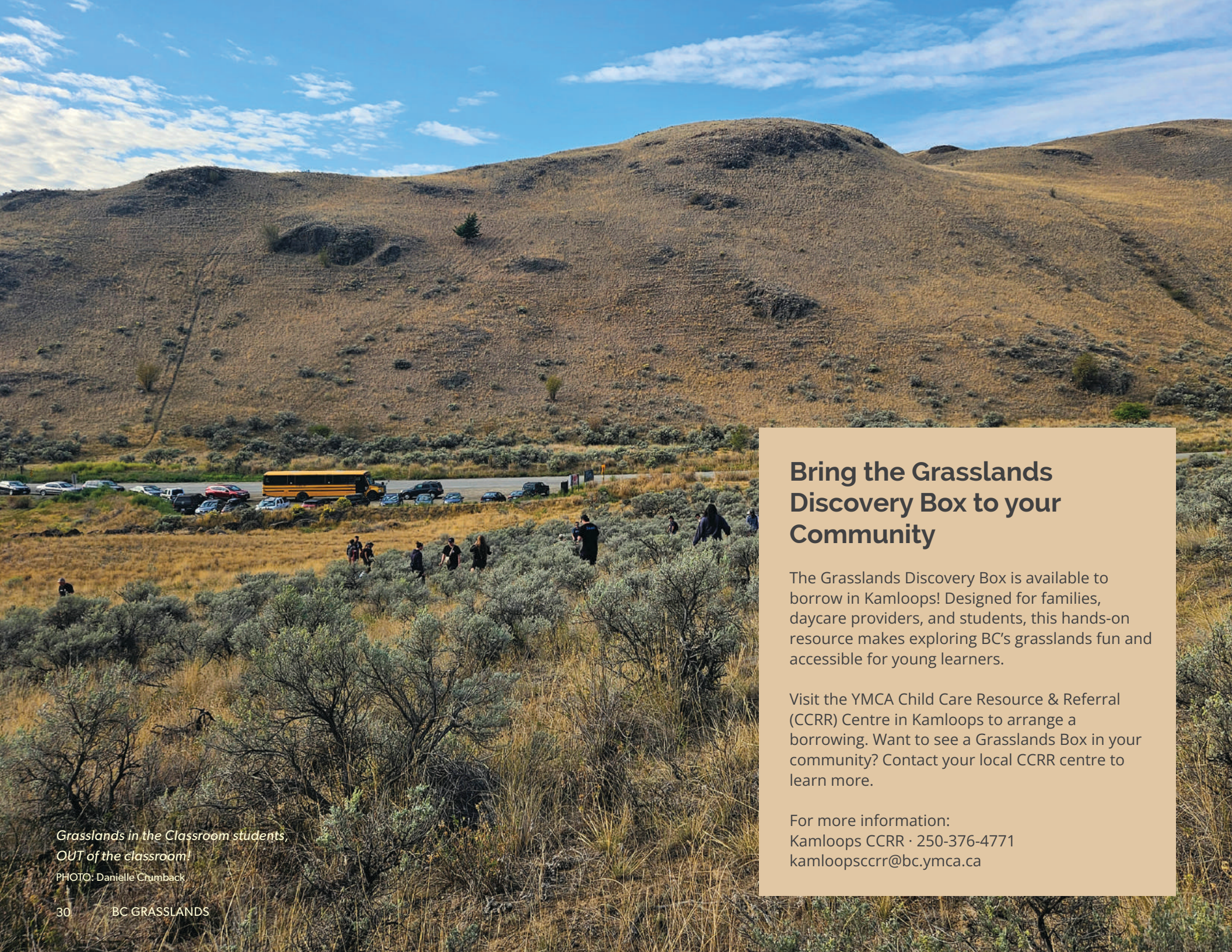
populations. Each species had a story that was more complex and fascinating than the myths that often surround them.

At its core, Weird and Wonderful BC is about sharing a lesson that took me years to learn myself: the species that initially make us uncomfortable are often some of the most fascinating. **Sometimes all it takes is a little knowledge to transform fear into curiosity, and curiosity into stewardship.**

For conservation to succeed, people must not only protect wildlife but also understand and value it. If you're interested in following along, visit the Weird and Wonderful BC page online on Facebook. Learn more, fear less, and coexist better!

Vernon Commonage

PHOTO: Heidi Wismath



Bring the Grasslands Discovery Box to your Community

The Grasslands Discovery Box is available to borrow in Kamloops! Designed for families, daycare providers, and students, this hands-on resource makes exploring BC's grasslands fun and accessible for young learners.

Visit the YMCA Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) Centre in Kamloops to arrange a borrowing. Want to see a Grasslands Box in your community? Contact your local CCRR centre to learn more.

For more information:
Kamloops CCRR · 250-376-4771
kamloopsccrr@bc.ymca.ca

Grasslands in the Classroom students, OUT of the classroom!
PHOTO: Danielle Crumback

Bringing Grasslands Learning Beyond the Classroom

Heidi Wismath

Grassland education is most powerful when young people have the opportunity to experience these ecosystems firsthand. **A conversation about biodiversity, wildlife, or conservation can take on new meaning when children are standing among the grasses, hearing birdsong, asking questions, and making their own discoveries.**

One of my favourite field experiences this year happened on Earth Day, when I joined a group of Grade 1 students at Cosens Bay in Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park. Among other amusements (berry picking, cactus spotting, counting turkey vultures, wildflower hunting, mimicking bird calls), the students were helping us search for and mark Scotch thistle, an invasive plant that threatens native grassland communities. But our exploration quickly turned into an unexpected wildlife investigation!

While searching through the grasslands, the students discovered a deer skeleton. Suddenly, our thistle survey became a conversation about life, death, and the many relationships that shape an ecosystem. We wondered together: What had this deer's life been like in this landscape? What might have caused her death? How had different parts of her skeleton ended up scattered across the area?

The young learners considered whether scavengers might have played a role. Some even brought up an earlier point I'd made about aging deer by counting antler points—except this deer had no antlers to examine!

Moments like this are a reminder that l earning from the land is often about following curiosity. We cannot always know what will become a meaningful experience for a child, because every child brings their own perspective, and the plants and animals who share these places with us are constantly changing. Good environmental education leaves room for the unexpected—it invites students into a state of wonder, exploration, and relationship with the world around them.

Through our collaboration with Awaken Education, students in Grades 8–10 have been exploring grassland ecology, conservation challenges, and the role they can play in protecting these unique ecosystems. **It has become increasingly clear to me that many young people are eager to engage with complex environmental issues, especially when given opportunities to connect those issues to the places around them.** It is both an honour and a joy to be part of those moments of learning, curiosity, and connection. You can read more about this fantastic collaboration in the accompanying article.

I have also had the opportunity to visit many schools and classrooms throughout the North and Central Okanagan through our partnership with Allan Brooks Nature Centre. Through their Nature in the Classroom program, centre visits, grassland walks, and summer camp sessions, I've been able to connect with students of all ages and share the importance of grassland ecosystems.



2026 CONTEST SPECIAL MENTION
Mountain Bluebird
PHOTO: Dave Whiting

The team at Allan Brooks Nature Centre has been an incredible partner. Their Education Programming Lead, Calista, brings deep knowledge, creativity, and enthusiasm to every program, working alongside her team to inspire young people to build meaningful connections with the natural world.

Whether students are learning in a classroom, exploring a protected area, or kneeling in the grass to investigate a mystery they have discovered themselves, **these experiences help build something bigger: a sense of belonging, curiosity, and responsibility within the landscapes they call home.**

Nurturing Stewardship Through Connection

Rob Buchanan, Awaken Education (Vernon, SD22)

The collaboration between Awaken Education and the Grasslands Conservation Council (GCC) has created incredible opportunities for young people to learn alongside passionate people who care deeply about these landscapes.

Over the past several months, our Ecosystem Studies crew has explored grasslands, forests, and wetlands alongside Heidi Wismath from the GCC and a wide range of community partners, developing a deeper understanding of British Columbia's diverse ecosystems—particularly its grasslands—and a greater appreciation for the plants, animals, and relationships that sustain them.

Many of our students have been surprised to discover that grasslands are among British Columbia's rarest and most ecologically significant ecosystems, supporting an incredible diversity of life.

Achieving goals like 30 by 30 ultimately depends on future generations' understanding, valuing, and caring for these places.

Experiences on the land build that connection in ways classrooms alone cannot. When young people come to know the grasslands in their own communities, conservation becomes personal rather than abstract, and stewardship becomes a shared responsibility.

Heidi joined us for many days throughout the course, and her kindness, generosity, knowledge, and passion made a lasting impact on our learners. Her enthusiasm for these ecosystems and her willingness to share her expertise helped create a welcoming environment where curiosity and thoughtful questions could flourish.

Throughout the course, learners connected with and learned from many individuals and organizations, including the Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Friends of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park, Studio sísp̓ík, the Invasive Species Council of BC, and Ursus Heritage Consulting. These partnerships enriched our understanding of ecology, restoration, and the cultural and historical significance of these landscapes. We also learned more about the Vernon Commonage and the remarkable community effort to protect and conserve this important grassland corridor.

Rather than learning about grasslands only from books or screens, learners established monitoring plots, estimated percent cover, identified native and invasive species, examined biological soil crusts (biocrusts), and discussed what kinds of data might still matter decades from now. Along the way, conversations naturally expanded into biodiversity, disturbance ecology, fire history, climate change, and the importance of long-term stewardship.

One of the things we love most about this partnership is how often it encourages people to slow down and notice. Whether discussing native plants and pollinators, observing wavyleaf and scotch thistle side by side, exploring burn areas and considering the succession patterns of different kinds of forests, or simply learning to pay attention to patterns across the landscape, our learners have been developing a stronger sense of connection to their home community and the ecology that sustains their lives here. Many have been surprised to discover that grasslands are among British Columbia's rarest and most ecologically significant ecosystems, supporting an incredible diversity of life.

Perhaps most importantly, this collaboration has shown what is possible when community organizations, scientists, educators, and curious young people learn together. We are grateful to Heidi and all of the community partners who generously shared their knowledge, encouragement, and time with us, and we look forward to continuing this work of learning, connection, and stewardship together.

A Reflection from Heidi Wismath

Returning to Awaken Education almost every week this spring was the highlight of my season. Watching students naturally drift toward curiosity—the genuine moment when young minds begin noticing patterns in the world around them—is what I live for.

Some days we marvelled at jumping spiders. Other days, we practiced telling turkey vultures from ravens soaring overhead. We crouched in the grass to look closely at ligules and wildflowers, collected native seeds, and later watched some of those students nurture them into new plants. We talked about fire, pollinators, biological soil crusts, and species at risk. Most importantly, we spent time paying attention.

Those moments matter. They are where connection begins.

One of the greatest joys of my role with the Grasslands Conservation Council is sharing the conservation work happening right here in the North Okanagan. **I get to help introduce these students to the people restoring habitats, protecting wildlife, managing invasive plants, and asking big ecological questions.** I also get to share some of the questions I'm still trying to answer myself, because conservation isn't about having all the answers—it's about learning to ask better questions together.

I think we sometimes underestimate young people. They are inheriting the landscapes and communities we shape today, and they are already imagining what comes next. Every week, they surprised me with thoughtful observations, creative ideas for getting it done, and a genuine desire to leave the places they love healthier than they found them.

And as usual, I learned just as much from them as they did from me. I'm incredibly grateful to Rob, the Awaken Education crew, and our many community partners, who each create this remarkable community.

Opportunities like this are still far too rare, but they remind me that the future of conservation is already taking shape—in dusty shoes, on water breaks, with curious questions, and flourishing among those of us willing to stop, look closely, and care about what we find.



Heidi practicing grass ID with Awaken Ed. Students

PHOTO: Rob Buchanan

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas: A Path Forward for Grasslands IPCAs

Jordyn Bogetti, Program Coordinator, GCC



Lupin and Buckwheat on Okanagan Indian Band

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are an emerging designation for protected areas that reflect Indigenous stewardship and follow Indigenous laws and cultures. IPCAs build on decades of Indigenous Nations asserting their rights and responsibilities to their traditional territories while resisting settler land management practices that excluded Indigenous governance. **Although many people associate IPCAs with forests and coastal ecosystems, Indigenous-led conservation is equally important in BC's grasslands, where some of the province's rarest ecosystems and highest concentrations of species at risk occur.**

In 2018, the Indigenous Circle of Experts released the *We Rise Together* report, which set guidelines and frameworks for creating new IPCAs and gave an overview of IPCAs in Canada and internationally. In the report, IPCAs are described as "a variety of land protection initiatives… where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems (Indigenous Circle of Experts 2018). Internationally, IPCAs fit under the Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) framework developed by the IUCN.

An IPCA is an Indigenous Nation's vision and plan for the lands and waters, and each Nation sets its own stewardship approach. Each IPCA is developed under the laws of a different nation and is unique, but there are some consistencies. IPCAs are all Indigenous-led and represent a long-term commitment to conservation, reflecting the values and beliefs the respective nation holds towards the land, the environment, and the responsibilities of people as caretakers and stewards in that relationship. **Because there is no single framework, IPCAs are flexible and adapt to meet the needs of each Nation and ecosystem.** Unlike Federal and Provincial Parks, IPCAs are often created with the specific intention of allowing continued human use and sustainable harvesting of the area.

This approach aligns particularly well with grassland ecosystems, which have been shaped by thousands of years of Indigenous stewardship. Indigenous Nations throughout what is now British Columbia have long maintained relationships with grasslands through practices such as cultural burning, harvesting food and medicinal plants, hunting, and caring for culturally significant places. In many grassland ecosystems, cultural burning helped maintain open habitats, recycle nutrients, reduce woody encroachment, and create conditions that benefited both wildlife and culturally important plants. These reciprocal relationships helped maintain open grasslands, supported biodiversity, and sustained healthy populations of plants and wildlife.

Today, many grassland ecosystems face pressures from invasive species, habitat fragmentation, altered fire regimes, and climate change. Indigenous stewardship offers opportunities to restore ecological processes while recognizing that healthy ecosystems and healthy communities are interconnected. **Rather than viewing people as separate from the rest of the natural world, IPCAs acknowledge that people have responsibilities to care for the land and that sustainable use can be an important part of conservation.**

A nation's declaration of an IPCA can be considered part of its right to self-determination, consistent with both the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and B.C.'s enactment of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. IPCAs can exist both within and outside of existing Crown-protected area


Mariposa Lily


Brittle Prickly Pear Cactus


Triteleia


Yellow Bell

frameworks. While an increasing number of IPCAs are formally recognized by federal and provincial governments, Indigenous Nations have also asserted their right to establish IPCAs without an agreement with other governments.

The B.C. government does not have a unified designation for recognizing IPCAs as part of a formal provincial land designation, but instead as opportunities to engage with Indigenous Nations to establish shared goals for land and water stewardship. There are some IPCAs in B.C. where the provincial government has entered a government-to-government partnership for land management.

The province recently announced three new conservation planning projects in partnership with Indigenous Nations to support the goal of 30x30 (protecting 30% of land and inland waters by 2030). These are the Qat'muk area (west of Invermere), the Skagit Headwaters (near Manning Park), and the Raush Valley (south of McBride). Grasslands are not the sole ecosystem in any of the three newly announced areas, but there are some valley-bottom and sub-alpine grassland regions in the Qat'muk and Skagit Headwaters areas. While many of the more well-known IPCAs in B.C., such as the Haida Gwaii protected areas and the Tla-o-quit-aht Tribal Parks, are in coastal and temperate rainforest climates, there are Indigenous Nations in the interior of B.C. that are protecting rare grassland habitats.

One example is Nexwagweẑ?an, or Dasiqox Tribal Park, located in the traditional territory of the Tsilqot'in Nation, and declared in 2014 after a decades-long legal action by the Nation to gain recognition of their title and rights. Nexwagweẑ?an advances the stewardship vision of the Xeni Gwet'in and Yunesît'in communities, with a name meaning "there for us" in Tŝilhqot'in. It covers approximately 300,000 hectares southwest of Williams Lake, protecting forests, rivers, alpine landscapes, and important Interior grasslands that provide habitat for species at risk and support cultural harvesting.

By maintaining a connected landscape rather than protecting isolated ecosystems, Nexwagweẑ?an demonstrates how Indigenous stewardship can benefit both biodiversity and cultural continuity. It abuts several other protected areas, including Big Creek and South Chilcotin Mountains Provincial Parks, allowing for continuous wildlife habitat and uninterrupted protection.

The strengths of IPCAs lie in their ability to centre Indigenous laws, Traditional Knowledge, and stewardship practices while achieving long-term conservation outcomes.

For BC's grasslands—among the province's rarest and most threatened ecosystems—this approach offers opportunities to restore ecological processes, strengthen landscape connectivity, support species that have evolved alongside Indigenous stewardship for millennia, and promote healthy communities and food systems.

As governments work toward protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030, IPCAs represent not only a pathway for conservation, but also an opportunity to advance reconciliation through Indigenous leadership. These types of protected areas will likely become more prevalent as governments engage in reconciliation and conservationists recognize the resilience and long-term protection that Indigenous land governance practices can provide in the face of climate change and uncertain futures for ecosystems.

To learn more about IPCAs, visit:
https://ipcaknowledgebasket.ca



PHOTO CONTEST 2026 SPECIAL MENTION
PHOTO: Bob Needham



Annual Report 2025/26

Governance and Capacity

2026 is the International year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and the past year has been another year of growth and connection for the GCC. With significant support from donors and foundations we had a budget of close to $200K, and a projected budget for the upcoming year of over $400K, the largest operating budget we have had in recent years.

The increase in funding and funding partners brings exciting opportunities for us to undertake new and more ambitious projects in support of grasslands but also comes with increased challenges in terms of developing and implementing those projects. As always, our partnerships with other NGOs and organizations remain key.

At our AGM last June, we welcomed Allan Wootton, Lindsay Jones, and Wendy Gardner to our Board of Directors. Our active Board continues to contribute their diverse background and knowledge to our mission in many ways. This year, we also bid farewell to Dennis Lloyd, who served on the Board as the Financial Director, and whose presence will be greatly missed. We also said goodbye to our bookkeeper Hallie MacDonald, who is retiring. We thank Hallie for all of her work and support, and look forward to working with Ab Ashok, who will be taking over those responsibilities.

Funds received from the Sitka Foundation, the BC Interior Community Foundation Grant, BC Parks, the Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship, and our other valued donors kept us busy in all areas this past year. We are also deeply appreciative of an anonymous donor who has provided funding over three years to increase GCC capacity and flexibility. It is heartwarming to see the support for our special grasslands.

At the end of the last fiscal year, we received notice of a very generous amount of funding from WLRS, which is a significant portion of the increase in the upcoming year's budget, and allowed us to hire a new Program Coordinator, Jordyn Bogetti, to assist with operations and some of the tasks that were previously the responsibility of the executive director. This will allow our executive director, Mike Dedels, to dedicate more time to partnership building and landowner engagement.

The GCC's "Loving the Grasslands" event is an annual highlight. This past February we hosted the event for the 4th time at a new venue, hosted by Thompson Rivers University, to allow for our largest attendance yet. This year's event earned over $40,000, which can be used to leverage other funding and provide operational flexibility over the upcoming year.

Alongside the event, we also hosted an online auction, giving donors across the province the opportunity to support us. Sponsorship for this year's event was incredible, with over 25 corporate and personal sponsors, and more than 20 donors for our fundraising auctions. We are looking to improve our sponsor recognition in 2025.

Membership was a priority this past year. We moved to a new membership model, offering 1-year, 4-year and lifetime memberships. We also implemented a student membership option, to encourage and support engagement with youth and the upcoming professionals and researchers who can help our grasslands thrive into the future. We currently have over 200 members, many of whom have committed to four years or a lifetime of protecting our grasslands.

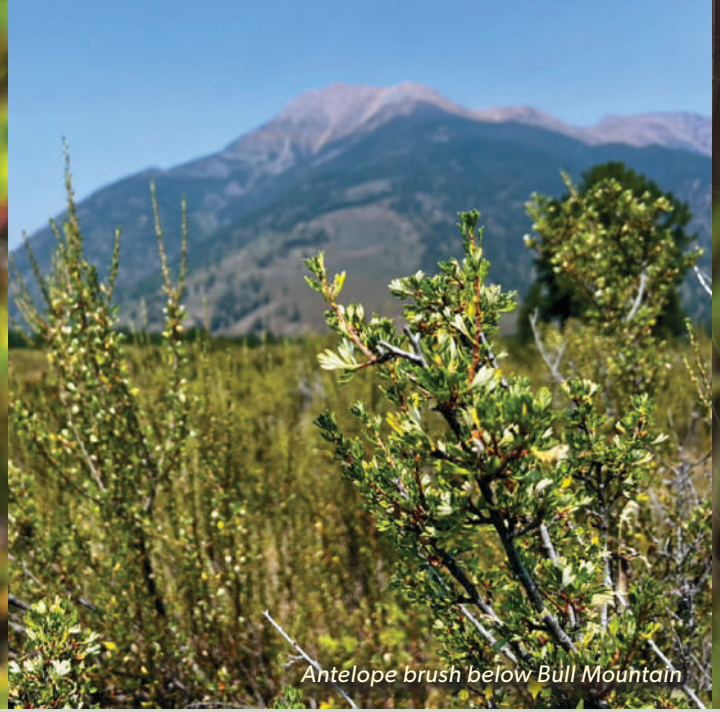
Partnerships is a term that we use regularly at the GCC. Indigenous partnerships are very important to our organization in all of our strategic areas. Getting out on the ground to talk about grasslands and their values is more important than ever. We are proud of our engagement efforts and will be building on them in the coming years.

Last but not least, we enjoyed beautiful spring weather for our AGM hosted in Kimberley in Spring of 2025. Last year we hosted tours at Wycliffe and Brown's Meadow.

Education and Outreach

Through the support of fundraising and many partners, GCC members and volunteers continued to actively bring awareness of the importance and value of grasslands and their stewardship through outreach and awareness work.


Melissa Blue pollinating an aster


Antelope brush below Bull Mountain


Banded Garden Spider

Heidi Wismath continued her work as our outreach coordinator, managing our newsletter, working with students, and playing a major role in producing last year's Grassalands magazine. Last fall, we hired Rabeya Shikdar Orpa as an Outreach consultant. Rabeya is a Master's student at Thompson Rivers University, where she established a TRU Grasslands Club, and hosted many student-based events, including a weed pull and a botany art and craft event.

Rabeya and Heidi have been promoting outreach at Farmer's Markets, a film festival, a "Sow & Grow", and other events in communities throughout the Thompson and Okanagan regions. These events generated 3,000 connections across more than six communities in the southern interior, and online events reached a larger audience throughout the rest of the province and beyond.

Executive Director Mike Dedels partnered with other organizations for presentations and educational tours, including the Thompson Rivers Probus Club, and the Friends of Kalamalka. He also presented at several conferences, including the BC Institute of Agrologists AGM, and the Integrated Vegetation Management Forum. Over 1500 people attended these presentations. Landowner visits were a highlight.

Youth education remains a priority for all ages, from our pre-school education boxes through to high school students. The GCC continued supporting grasslands curriculum development with Thompson Rivers University, and created a number of educational resources, many of which are available for download on our website. Heidi Wismath worked with elementary and high school students in the Okanagan.

Being a student is a lifelong endeavor that doesn't stop at high school graduation, and Heidi also did outreach with UBC Okanagan students and in other post-secondary forums. One of the year's most successful initiatives was the launch of the Students of the Grasslands Webinar Series, a collaborative online showcase featuring presentations from undergraduate and graduate students conducting grassland and rangeland research.

We produced the annual GCC magazine last year, thanks to the efforts of BC Parks, Rotary Kamloops Daybreak, and the BC Interior Community Foundation. Last year's theme was "Spreading Seeds of Knowledge", featuring contributions from over a dozen contributors. 3000 copies were distributed to GCC members, to the public during outreach events, and to BC Cattlemen's Association Members.



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Elk family
PHOTO: Michelle Da Costa



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Pollinator at work
PHOTO: Lori Weidenhammer

GCC e-news and social media platforms continue to play a major role in disseminating information on the importance of grasslands. Our website received nearly 4,000 page views from more than 2,000 visitors this year. The GCC is actively using social media to promote events and share grassland awareness and appreciation. We now have 5,000 followers across our Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts. In January, Rabeya ran a photo contest through Instagram, which garnered 167 submissions from 30 participants. The contest was a terrific way to share the beauty of the grasslands, engage with local community members, and increase our media library for future publications.

Stewardship and Protection

This past year, the GCC continued working in invasive species management and grassland restoration. With funding support from BC Parks Foundation, GCC and the Friends of Lac du Bois undertook stewardship efforts in Lac du Bois protected area. The demonstration plot at Red Hill continues to be a valuable research and outreach project.

Invasive species continue to threaten grassland habitats across the province. This year the GCC organized weed-pulls, with the support of volunteers and local groups, including in the Laurie Guichon Memorial Grasslands Interpretive Site (near Merritt), Lac du Bois Protected Area, and Tunkwa Lake Park.

GCC has been working with the BC Parks Foundation to monitor and inventory several BCPF properties around the province. A new BCPF property in Juniper Ridge, Kamloops, was protected at the beginning of last fiscal year, and GCC is helping to establish inventory and support stewardship of this new protected area. This year's AGM included a tour of local grassland areas, including the Juniper Ridge protected area.

Across the province, there are many local groups, such as the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, the Friends of Black Mountain, the Invasive Species Council of BC, and the Kooteney Conservation Program, working on grassland stewardship. GCC continues to engage with many of these groups and will be looking to enhance partnerships. As always, we welcome anyone interested in partnering on a project to reach out.

Science and Research

Research has always played an important role in conservation work. The GCC supports projects that help to better understand grassland



Burrowing Owl
PHOTO: Max Parada



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Nodding Onion
PHOTO: Nancy Elliott

habitats in the province. The GCC has implemented a major project to map and identify grasslands across BC, with funding support from the Sitka Foundations, BC Parks and the Ministry of Water Lands and Resource Stewardship. This mapping project will create a model that refines and improves on the previous grassland identification model, capturing even small pockets of grasslands. The model will also provide information about changes to the size and locations of grasslands from encroachment, development, fires, and other factors that have altered canopy coverage. Mapping work is underway, with the project set to complete next spring.

Last year, the GCC in collaboration with BCCF hired techs to complete field work throughout the interior. Summer techs inventoried sites, flagged invasive plants, and compiled reports on the status of those protected areas. This year, we had an even larger team of techs supporting GCC research, who are already out in the field working on sites throughout the interior including High Bar, Horse Camp (northeast of Clinton), Juniper Ridge Acres and Lac du Bois (Kamloops), and Richter Pass (Osoyoos). They will also be completing some species at risk habitat assessments as part of our partnership with WLRS. We look forward to working with Danielle, Emily, Abby and Katie.

Policy

The deterioration and loss of grasslands continue to be a major concern. The GCC has continued to engage with the government about development projects that threaten these rare habitats, including the mine proposal at Record Ridge near Rossland, which will impact rare West Kooteney grasslands. Advocacy also continues on the development of the Vernon Commonage. Heidi Wismath has been working closely on this project with interested groups, including the Commonage Preservation Alliance.

This year, GCC has been engaging with ministries and policy-makers, including the Ministry of Water, Lands, and Resource Stewardship, the Ministry of Parks and the Environment, and with local municipal governments. As the only NGO representing all of BC's grasslands, it is our mandate and responsibility to share the value of grasslands and ensure that the consequences of losing these valuable habitats are understood by lawmakers and policy-developers.

GCC Treasurer's Report

Ian Barnett

The GCC continues to grow financially. The annual "Loving the Grasslands" event continues to provide significant revenue, and the amended membership fee structure elevated that revenue from $3500 to $19,000. Expanding any NGO's revenue beyond government sources is a very good thing, and in addition to the above revenues, the GCC is becoming more successful at securing significant, diverse dollars to support our programs. Governments see the GCC as a respected partner, and we continue to expand diverse revenues from public sources.

Education and communications continue to be the GCC's largest investment envelope, with many local events, video projects, and the magazine extremely popular. The grassland mapping project is critical to understanding where the most important areas are located and the risks that they face. This is a multi-year effort, and we have attracted new revenue sources to support this work. GCC has embarked over the past several years on a native plant project, and this will continue to attract revenue from an increasing number of sources.

Overall, the GCC's revenues over expenditures in FY 2025/26 have given us a $27,300 surplus, which we will carry forward into the next fiscal year for investments in grassland conservation. We continue to enjoy a very significant level of in-kind assistance from board members and volunteers, which is a reflection of their commitment. This is viewed positively by our cash donors.

Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia
Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2026

	31 Mar 2026	31 Mar 2025
ASSETS		
Bank Accounts	201,727	178,812
Investments	30,065	25,000
Accounts Receivable	-	7,050
GST Claim Receivable	3,949	1,933
Prepaid Expense	600	600
Total Assets	236,340	213,394
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Deferred Revenue	-	36,365
Funded Projects:		
Education & Communications	645	-
Native Plant Project	2,093	-
Parks Projects	10,517	-
Laurie Guichon Site	3,393	-
Mapping Project	16,642	-
Total Liabilities	32,000	36,365
Opening Balance Equity	177,029	90,689
Surplus in Operations	27,311	86,340
Total Equity	204,340	177,029
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	236,340	213,394

Director

Director

Auditors' Report
We have examined the books and records of the Grasslands Conservation Council of BC and found no significant errors. We conclude that these financial statements fairly represent the standing of the Council for the year ended March 31, 2026.

Thomas Dickinson

Michael Dedels

May 8, 2026

Thank you to Executive Director Mike Dedels for his leadership and fundraising work, to long-time board member and recent Treasurer, Dennis Lloyd, who has stepped aside, and to Hallie McDonald for her many years of bookkeeping.

2026 CONTEST WINNER! PHOTO: Emily Stewart

Be part of BC's grassland community

Grasslands are rare, beautiful, and deeply connected to the people and communities who care for them. For more than 25 years, the Grasslands Conservation Council of BC has brought people together to learn about, protect, and care for these special places.

Membership is one of the most important ways you can help keep this work going. Your membership supports youth field days, educational resources, community events, student awards, and opportunities to get out and connect with grasslands.

Whether you've been with us for years or are just discovering GCC, there's a place for you here.

Membership options:

Student: $10 / 3 years
Individual: $35 / year
Four-Year: $100
Corporate: $250 / year
Lifetime: $500

Able to do a little more? Donations are always welcome and help us grow our programs and respond to emerging conservation needs.

And membership isn't just about supporting GCC—it's an invitation to get involved. Join us for events and our AGM, contribute native plant observations, help with invasive species control, share what you're seeing on the land, and connect with others who care about BC's grasslands.

Join us. Help keep our grasslands—and the communities around them—growing.

bcgrasslands.org/membership

HELP US PROTECT BC'S GRASSLANDS
BECOME A MEMBER OF GCC



~ Donate Today ~

Print and mail or apply online:

bcgrasslands.org/membership

Yellow-headed Black Bird
PHOTO: Robyn Stack

At the **Grasslands Conservation Council**, we count on our diverse community of membership to help us carry out our mission through education, outreach, stewardship, policy, and research. We invite you to keep your membership with us current or consider our lifetime membership option. You can also support us through Canada Helps (www.canadahelps.org/en/) by making a donation.

MEMBERSHIP: *(check one)*

- ❑ Student Rate - $10 for 3 years
- ❑ 4-Year Membership - $100
- ❑ Lifetime Membership - $500
- ❑ Annual Individual Membership - $35
- ❑ Annual Corporate Membership - $250

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

DONATE: I would like to make a donation of: $ _____

TOTAL: (Membership + Donation) $ _____

All donations over $25/yr will receive a tax receipt. The $35 annual membership fee to the Grasslands Conservation Council of BC is not tax deductible.

Payment: Cheque or money order - payable to Grasslands Conservation Council of BC
Mail to: P.O. Box 3341, Kamloops, BC V2C 6B9

Signature (REQUIRED):

_____

Date: _____

❑ Please add me to the email notification list.
❑ Please remove me from the email list.

The GCC is a registered charity in Canada.
Charitable Registration Number: 870042777RR0001

Donations are tax-deductible. Charitable receipts are issued quarterly or by the end of the year.

Help keep BC's

GRASSLANDS FOREVER

for you

for your children

for your grandchildren

Consider making a gift to the Grasslands Conservation Council as part of your yearly giving. We are the only non-profit society in BC dedicated to conserving the province's grasslands. All of our resources go directly to projects that help preserve these irreplaceable ecosystems. Your donation to GCC will support ongoing outreach, stewardship, and research efforts.

Together, we can ensure that BC's diverse grasslands and the biodiversity they support endure for future generations. Learn more about GCC and our projects at: **www.bcgrasslands.org**



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Yellow-headed Blackbird
PHOTO: Payton Maffioli



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Low pussytoes
PHOTO: Pierrette Beaton



2026 CONTEST WINNER!
Bumble Bee on Indian Paintbrush
PHOTO: Robert Needham

Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia

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