

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Education Program 2008 – 2009 Report

CPAWS Southern Alberta Chapter's educational programs educate students about the importance of parks and natural areas and inspire them to take action to conserve wilderness spaces. We engage elementary and secondary school students in quality science and education programs that encourage environmental stewardship. This report summarizes the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's environmental education programming for the 2008-09 school year.

"I really enjoyed this program because it encourages "the next generation" of people to start and continue saving the Earth."
– Student, Simons Valley Elementary

PROGRAM DELIVERY

This past year, the CPAWS' education program addressed endangered species, watershed conservation, grizzly bears and environmental stewardship. Students and teachers benefited from our in-class presentations, hiking programs and teaching kits.

Our programs included:

CPAWS Elementary School Visits

- **Endangered Species**
- **Water Rangers Program**
- **ECO-Partners Program**
- **Elementary Guided Hikes**

CPAWS Secondary School Visits

- **Grizzly Bears Forever! Program**
- **Junior High School Visits**
- **Junior High Guided Hikes**
- **ECO-Partners Program**
- **Senior High School Visits and Field Studies**



Junior High Students Hiking at Ribbon Creek

Program delivery this past year was extremely successful. We exceeded our target numbers, presenting 153 programs (296 visits) to 3836 students and their teachers in 57 schools in Calgary and surrounding areas.

Our ECO-Partners Program continued to be extremely popular, exceeding target numbers in both the elementary and secondary stream. We officially launched the Water Rangers Program this school year, which was incredibly well received by teachers and students. We surpassed our targets for senior high programs and this can be attributed to our winning strategy of targeting the Bio 20 curriculum mandatory field study. As in other years, we were over-subscribed for our secondary hikes, and had a waiting list of ten teachers who were unable to book our hiking program this spring. The numbers of

schools we worked with was slightly lower than forecasted, which was due to the high number of ECO-Partners and a large single booking from a single school. The table below summarizes our program delivery for 2008/09.

CPAWS Education Program 2008-2009 Summary

Program Type	Programs Delivered	Number of Visits	Number of students	Number of schools
Elementary Programs: Endangered Species and Water Rangers Program, Endangered Species teaching kit	49 (29 Water Rangers)	95	1061	21
Elementary Guided Hike	14	14	272	7
Elementary ECO-Partners Program	9	36	222	4
Junior High Grizzly Bears Forever (GBF) Classroom Program and Teaching Kit	35	66	935	13
Grizzly Bears Forever Junior High Hike	21 (+ 10 on waiting list)	21	650	4
Junior High ECO-Partners Program	13	52	370	3
Senior High Grizzly Bears Forever Program and Field Study	12	12	326	5
TOTALS	153	296	3836	57

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Each year, CPAWS Southern Alberta carries out extensive evaluation of the environmental education programs. Feedback from teachers and students who participate in our programs enable us to maintain a high standard of program quality. These quality programs have been recognized by Green Street and the Alberta Emerald Award Foundation.

By assessing the feedback from evaluation forms and student focus groups, we can maintain and improve our programs. Teacher and student responses from the 2008-09 school year are summarized below.

Teachers

Feedback from teachers who experienced our programs was exceptionally positive. Many comments focused on how well the programming linked to curriculum goals for the various grade levels and the connection of the material to students' everyday lives. Teachers also commented on the balance between hands-on activities and independent discussion which helped to keep students interested in the academic subject matter. Elementary teachers were very pleased that we incorporated a water component.

Constructive suggestions for improvement were: updating or building upon existing program materials such as visual aids, providing newer and more varied items for the touch bags activity, and adding informative video clips to the slideshow presentations.

“Our students many of whom have difficulty remaining on task, were involved engaged and learning the whole time” - Grade 4 teacher, Calgary Academy

“Awesome visual and kinaesthetic learning” - Grade 2/3 teacher, Calgary Academy

Students

The majority of students enjoyed the CPAWS education presentations. In-class activities and hikes were cited as the most memorable aspects of the program. Students involved in the Water Rangers Program felt strongly that everyone should be a 'Water Ranger' to help to conserve the small amount of fresh water available on earth. The most noted activity by far, was the activity where students "mucked up" their drinking water and then watched CPAWS educators use a "demonstration wetland" to clean it up. They especially appreciated working through the Water Ranger Field Journal and the water conservation actions associated with the journal. To improve the program, students asked for more visual aids and touch bag items/artifacts.

"I think the best part of the program was how we learned so much in such a creative way so it didn't feel like it was doing work." – Student, Simons Valley Elementary

"I learned many different things about grizzly bears and our environment. Things like grizzly bear habitat, how we can help the bears, and how we can help our environment. We learned this in the classroom and on the hike." - Grade 8 student, Terry Fox Junior High

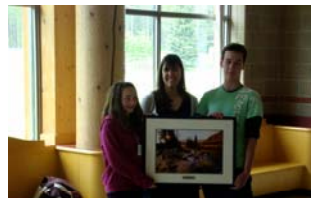
SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

It has been a rewarding year for the Southern Alberta Chapter of CPAWS Education Department. We have developed new and exciting partnerships and managed a hectic programming schedule with reduced staff.

Action Challenge

This year, once again, we have experienced outstanding success with our CPAWS Community Environmental Action Challenge initiative. Most classes engaged in an environmental action project.

- 71% of elementary classes took action
- 50% of junior high classes took action
- 100% of elementary ECO-Partners took action
- 100% of junior high ECO-Partners took action



Students receiving the Gareth Thomson Action Challenge Award at Banded Peak School

From the installation of solar panels on the roof of a school gymnasium, to wildlife cameras on school property, to a new litter-less lunch legacy and ramped-up recycling programs, CPAWS schools have made a difference in their local communities. Each year we select two outstanding schools for their exceptional environmental projects that receive our Awesome Action Awards. This year's winners were Deer Run School and Banded Peak School who both received a beautifully framed award-winning nature photograph. Check out their projects online at www.actionchallenge.ca in the fall of 2009.

Water Rangers Update

CPAWS Southern Alberta Chapter was one of three environmental non-profit organizations selected by Petro-Canada (now Suncor) through their Community Partnerships Program to develop a long term education-based water initiative in 2007. In the fall of 2007, a watershed focused water conservation program entitled *Water Rangers* was developed targeting elementary students grades 4-6 and the corresponding curriculum. In the spring of 2008, the program was piloted to 7 classes in 4 schools in Calgary and the surrounding area and subsequently evaluated. The feedback was used to refine the program for the official launch in the fall of 2008. The program's corresponding educational materials were developed in the fall of 2008.

On March 19, 2009 Suncor hosted a media launch to announce their Community Investment Partnerships. The successful event housed more than 60 guests, had great media coverage and gave lots of exposure to Alberta ECO-Trust, the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) and CPAWS.



Students working on the 'Marsh Metaphors' activity during the Water Rangers Program

Since piloting the program, *Water Rangers* has been very well received and has reached almost 900 students, in 36 classes and 16 schools across the greater Calgary area and Southern Alberta. CPAWS is most grateful to Suncor for their partnership in this project and their commitment to environmental education. We look forward to our continued working relationship on this project.

Workshops

CPAWS' Education Team was actively involved in the following workshops and courses during the past year:

- Host: Reconnecting with Nature Workshop at the Cross Conservation Centre
- Staff training: Camp Chief Hector
- Participant: Action Workshop for Environmental Education Leadership
- Host: ECO-Partners teacher workshop
- Host: "Bear Talk" for the Calgary Outdoor Club and Fortis Alberta
- Participant: Waterlution workshop for water educators in Kananaskis
- Participant: 5th World EE Congress and Green Street Biennial Meeting in Montreal
- Scholarship recipient: Personal Leadership Course at the renowned Banff Centre
- Host: five workshops at two Teacher Conventions in Calgary

It has been a privilege to profile CPAWS, specifically our education programs, and enrich our professional development throughout the past year.

Master Bow Stewards Course

The CPAWS Southern Alberta Education Department partnered with another not for profit group, Clean Calgary Association (now called Green Calgary Association), to develop an adult education course that focused on water. The Master Bow Stewards Course, which was modeled on the successful Master Composter Course, took place in April and May, and involved six evening sessions and two optional field trips. The course focused on water from a global to local perspective. CPAWS spoke

about our watershed from a wilderness perspective and led participants on an interpretive hike. Participants raved about the course and three of them will volunteer for CPAWS Education this fall.

Biological and Environmental Conservation Course

CPAWS Southern Alberta is excited to be working with St. Mary's University College to develop a university-accredited course on biological and environmental conservation. The course will be offered for the first time in 2010. CPAWS is working with an Associate Professor of Biology at St. Mary's to develop the course curriculum, which will have a strong focus on local wilderness conservation. We are really looking forward to the experience and expanding our educational programs to university students.

Merging Education and Outreach

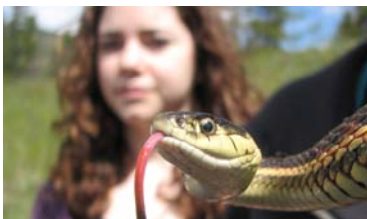
Over the winter, CPAWS Education Department expanded to include an outreach department. This development will help to make the operating, administration, fundraising and organization for our conservation campaigns and education programs more consistent. This fall, we will be re-organizing the staffing for education programming and outreach positions.

Staff Changes

In March our School Programs Coordinator left suddenly due to an illness in the family. Bookings are heaviest from March to the end of June, so maintaining program delivery was of paramount concern. We hired a contractor at the beginning of May to help deliver the scheduled programs and, as a result, we did not have to cancel any programs.

COMMENTARY

The 2008-09 school year was challenging and successful. We are very pleased with the continued demand for our classroom-based elementary and junior high programs and the on-going success of our ECO-Partners Program. We launched our Water Rangers Program and created new and exciting partnerships with St. Mary's University College, Clean Calgary Association and Community Investment Partnerships. The consistently high numbers of students who have been motivated to take action is a real tribute to our environmental education programs and validates the recognition we received by winning an Emerald Award in June 2008.



*A Red-sided Garter snake interpretive moment
at Yamnuska*

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank all of our funders for supporting our programs. This support allows us to bring hands-on, engaging stewardship programs to students in southern Alberta.

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