

Y2Y Partner Profiles

Working with organizations like the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Predator Conservation Alliance helps Y2Y leverage the good work being done in both Canada and the United States.

CANADA

During the 19th century, the mountains along the Yukon's eastern border were often called the Arctic Rockies, an apt name for the northern anchor of the Yellowstone to Yukon region. Here, the Wind, Snake and Bonnet Plume rivers (known as the Three Rivers), along with their sister tributaries, flow through the vast Peel River basin. A varied land of peaks and plateaus, boreal forest and tundra, rivers and wetlands, the region is not yet fully revealed to science, but recognized as a conservation prospect of global value.

The Peel watershed is an ecological benchmark vital to the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. Constellations of intact wild mountain watersheds, with fresh clean waters, are increasingly rare in the world. Few places remain where a full complement of large carnivores and prey species range across such an immense landscape free of roads. This area supports the largest intact woodland caribou herd in the Yukon, a species threatened with extirpation to the south. About 25 per cent of the territory's vulnerable peregrine falcons breed here, and the Peel basin is home to critical wetlands used by migratory waterfowl. Still, the watershed is exposed to development schemes for uranium and iron mining, oil and natural gas, pipelines, coal and coal bed methane.

The Yukon Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) launched the Three Rivers Project to drive the Peel watershed conservation campaign – an effort that began in 1992 with a lawsuit to block poorly regulated mining exploration. The Three Rivers Project encompasses a national touring art exhibition, multi-media show and a new celebratory book, all based on the 2003 Three Rivers Journey. After a strong push by First Nations and CPAWS, the Peel Watershed Land Use Planning Commission was established in 2005. CPAWS now works with local communities to support a conservation-based plan for the Peel region.

The goal is to protect the Three Rivers wilderness and the ecological integrity of the greater Peel watershed. CPAWS proposes a conservation strategy that includes a large Three Rivers protected area, along with special conservation lands in the greater Peel basin to protect wetlands, river corridors and other important features. The proposed core wilderness area is approximately 30,000 square kilometers (11,583 square miles), about the same size as Canada's four Rocky Mountain national parks, combined with Yellowstone and Yosemite Parks.

Visit www.cpawsyukon.org to learn more about the conservation proposal and the Three Rivers Project. See the CPAWS on-line shop for the new book *Three Rivers: the Yukon's Great Boreal Wilderness*.

UNITED STATES

Since 1991, Predator Conservation Alliance (PCA) – soon to be known as Keystone Conservation – has advocated for predators and their habitats in the Northern Rocky Mountains of the US and Northern Great Plains. These regions are uniquely important for wildlife. The Northern Rockies is the only region left that is home to the full suite of carnivores: wolves, grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions, wolverines, lynx, fishers, martens and coyotes.

In the past, PCA made its greatest gains in court, forcing federal agencies to meet legal mandates to protect these species, especially on public lands. But using the court system did not help change the attitudes of people in these regions, and these attitudes support state and federal policies that erode protection of these species. As a result, PCA initiated its Co-existence program in 2003 to reduce conflicts between people and predators and build long-term pride in wildlife in the Northern Rockies and Northern Plains. PCA is now refocusing their strategies and programs towards practical, on-the-ground, collaborative methods of wildlife conservation.

"We have to experiment to find ways to harmonize carnivore conservation with the traditions and livelihoods of local people," says Steve Primm, a PCA program associate. He organized the Ruby-Madison Grizzly Team, a diverse group of ranchers, citizens, agency representatives and other interests, to give local people a role in guiding grizzly conservation. "It's important to acknowledge that people's objections are real and legitimate. We shouldn't ignore them, we should offer help where possible and include local people in the design of solutions. They have innovative, practical ideas, and they know the local situation."

One example of PCA's pragmatic approach is its Range Riders Project. This is a collaborative effort, facilitated and funded by PCA, to prevent and reduce conflicts between wolves and livestock by using horseback riders and other non-lethal techniques. "When conservationists, wildlife managers and landowners sit down and work out a solution to the problem together, everybody wins," explained Janelle Holden, PCA's executive director. The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group conceived the idea for the project and is now partnering with PCA on its third field season.

PCA's work in these key landscapes has created an understanding that even though predators can threaten humans or their activities under some circumstances, co-existence is possible.

