

**ECOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST**
(preliminary report)

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DISCLAIMER

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FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST MISSION

"to develop and recommend an approach to sustainability and integrated resource management through research and technology developed by means of collaborative partnerships".

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

The Foothills Model Forest represents a broad range of stakeholder groups with interest in Alberta's forests and how they are managed. However, Foothills Model Forest has no resource management authority or responsibility. The authority over, and responsibility for, the management of Alberta's public lands is vested in the Government of Alberta. The Government delegates certain rights and responsibilities to various resource industries and organizations which conduct their activities on public lands in Alberta. The Government of Alberta and other agencies and organizations will consider and respond to the recommendations of Foothills Model Forest from the perspective of their particular rights, responsibilities, obligations and stewardship commitments.



**ECOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
FOOTHILLS FOREST**

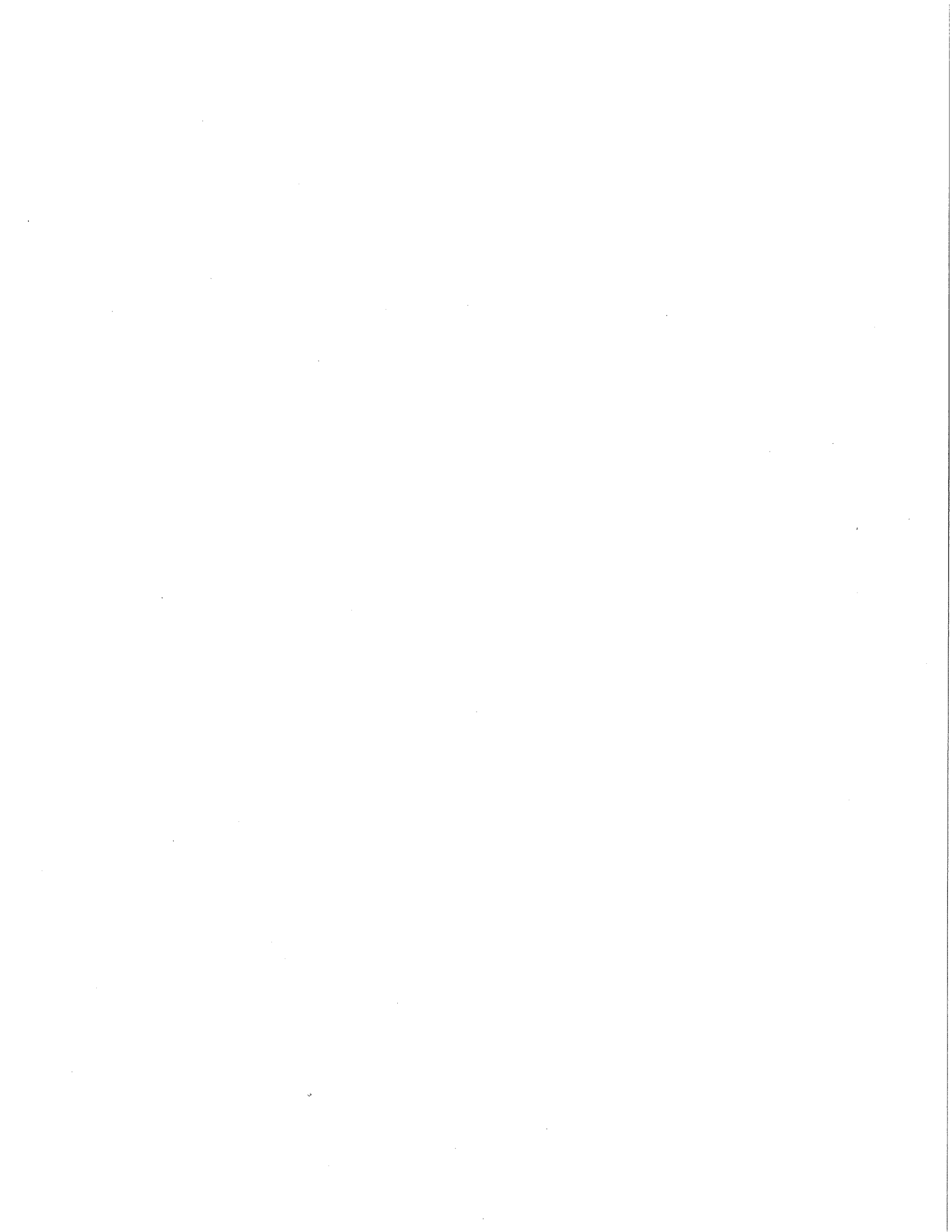
PRELIMINARY REPORT

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APRIL 1994.

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FOOTHILLS FOREST ECOTOURISM PROJECT

Summary

Given the growing interest in the Boreal Forest and concern over the environment, in particular public (mis)conception over forestry (mal)practise, information on the Boreal Forest Ecosystem should be a high priority, of benefit to both industry and the public. Information can best be disseminated through the vehicle of recreation, specifically ecotourism opportunities. Ecotourism has inherent in it an education or interpretive component and a first-hand experience with nature. Interpretive brochures and guidebooks, self-guided interpretive trails, auto-touring packages, eco-museums and guided tours are just some of the methods of conveying this message which have been covered under the aegis of this project. The following pages briefly summarize the work done in the last fourteen months on ecotourism potential and opportunities within the Foorhills Forest. Recommendations are provided along with an overview of potential problems and suggestions for implementation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the people of Hinton, Brule and Entrance, many of whom have contributed greatly to this project, both in terms of local knowledge and discussions on appropriate changes. I would also like to thank the staff of William A Switzer provincial park, particularly Andy, Jeanette and the dogs; the Town of Hinton, Hinton Chamber of Commerce, Evergreen Tourism Association, staff of Environmental Protection, Alberta Forest Service, Parks and Recreation, Alberta Tourism and Economic Development in particular Pam Whyte, ecotourism expert; Dan Wilson of Dan's Rafting, Rick of the Crestwood Hotel and particularly Lorraine Johnston of the Town of Hinton and Jack Wright, ex-forester and President of Hinton Good Companions. My thanks (and commiserations) also go the staff of the Faculty of Environmental Design, especially my supervisor Rich Revel and Environmental Science Head Valerius Geist; my co-supervisor Dr. Dianne Draper, Department of Geography and tourism expert. Many of the Foothills Forest staff contributed hours of effort and support, especially

pat Golec and Dennis Quintilio, working group co-ordinators; Cliff Mathies, Melissa Todd and Wayne Bessie, although ALL Foothills Forest staff were fantastically supportive whenever contacted. Outstanding among Weldwood staff in assistance is Christy Butt, who provided much needed background information and reviewed many documents, and also Rick Bonar. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Brooke Shields, summer student 1993, who helped with my field work after hours; and Corrina Serben, FTS staff, for her valuable input on forestry interpretation and accompaniment on winter field trips.

METHODOLOGY

Initial stages of the project involved a thorough review of information available on the physical, natural, cultural, recreational and human resources in the area. Foothills Forest is a geologically, ecologically and historically diverse area with many kinds of recreational and tourism opportunities, including ecotourism. Initiatives already underway in the area fall under the accepted terms of reference of ecotourism, although up to now few have been recognised as such. The full potential is still largely untapped. Areas of concentration were identified from the original literature search and from conversations with Foothills Forest, Weldwood and Forest technology staff, local business operators and residents of Hinton. Orientation trips were kindly given by Melissa Todd, Rob Stewart and Christy Butt; Lorraine Johnstone and Dan Wilson; Beth McCallum (Cardinal River Coals); Switzer staff and Jack Wright, of Hinton Good Companions.

The project worker found it necessary to learn the essentials of logging and forestry operations as a basis for future interpretive work. Following an initial orientation to the project area, ground truthing of many ideas was done by investigating existing trails, following old logging roads etc. Areas of critical wildlife habitat were explored in conjunction with Foothills Forest and Weldwood biologists. Ecologically significant areas were identified with assistance from local and regional members of nature/environmental groups such as the Alberta Wilderness Association and Federation of

Alberta Naturalists.

Once potential areas were selected, state-of-the art literature on interpretive and multi-purpose recreation and tourism planning was reviewed. An inventory of the supply side of the resource was conducted to highlight areas of best potential and included restrictions imposed by current timber operations. Information on local demographics and establishment of local, regional and national demand was gathered, partly from 1993 visitor surveys conducted by the Town of Hinton and Jasper National Park in conjunction with Alberta Tourism. The Town of Hinton will be continuing its tourism planning with identification of local and regional themes and detailed tourism action strategy. I hope to continue my involvement. Much overlap exists between the objectives of the Foothills Forest and local tourism initiatives.

RESULTS

ECOTOURISM DELIVERABLES

Deliverables fall into two categories:

1. Those directly related to my work at the Foothills Forest and which will be completed (or nearly so) prior to my leaving. These are listed in point form below.
2. My thesis, to be completed some time after leaving Hinton. Since the thesis encompasses much more than just my work in Hinton, and necessitates close association with my thesis committee, it is anticipated that several months will elapse before thesis defense. In "guidelines for graduate students", the recommended time is 6 months.

Foothills Forest Deliverables

1. Cache Percotte - development of a trail system linking the Town of Hinton trails with those in CP. Initial planning has been done with Jack Wright and Jim Freisen. A meeting of involved stakeholders (Town Trails Committee; Town of Hinton representatives) was held April 21st to discuss possible partnerships and outline action plans. I will be kept up-to-date over the summer by Jack. Construction can possibly be done by the Minimum Security Crew, using the Town bobcat. Interpretive signage

could include those available from Watchable Wildlife (\$2.75 ea.) Maps Alberta, who produce these signs, can custom make others specific to the locale. An interpretive brochure for a self-guided trail could be designed and placed in pamphlet boxes.

This project awaits the completion of the Cache Percotte management plan.

Expected Completion Date: uncertain, probably Fall '94, dependant on trail construction and liaison between groups.

2. Expansion of multi-use trails and integration into network: Jim Freisen, Jack Wright & I have talked about linking the Bighorn Trail to the Town trail system as part of the Cache Percotte project. I have also tried to establish joint ventures with Andy and Jeannette at Switzer to link trails there through Solomon Creek or the Nordic Centre toward town. They have no budget, although we may be able to do a co-operative venture with the Nordic Centre and use the MS crew.

I have digitised all the historic trails (from old maps and other info), existing hiking, biking, horse and ski trails into the GIS system. Now Carole is back we have to do final editing.

Expected Completion Date: maps completed. Linkages dependant on other partners.

3. I have contacted AFS about revamping the Emerson Lakes interpretive centre. We are trying to track down the original text and revamp the whole thing.

Expected Completion Date: Fall 1994, for text/brochure and possible signage.

4. Field guides and brochures have been prepared highlighting trails in the area and passed on to the Working Group Co-ordinator for standardisation with graphics etc.;

bird checklist (complete);

text for mammal and wildflower checklists (draft complete).

Interpretive brochures for the Bighorn Trail (draft complete).

Interpretive trail for Folding Mountain (draft complete).

Bike trails brochure (draft complete).

A similar one for ski trails was planned but stalled recently due to lack of a vehicle.

Expected Completion Date: April 1994.

5. Auto Touring Packages: preliminary work was done throughout the FMA with Jack Wright, but it was decided to restrict suggestions to non-haul roads. Preliminary work has been done on 2 routes, now stalled due to lack of vehicle. I also had considerable difficulty tracking down organisations willing to give ideas of costs or tips on promotion of cassettes for touring, although I have several examples of same.

Expected Completion Date: April 1994 for route, tape to be finished thereafter (presumably we need a commercial recording and person with good voice!).

6. Promotion: articles have been published in Environment Network News and Update and are upcoming for Borealis, Explore, Nature Canada, Buzzworm, International Wildlife, Connections and other magazines.

Poster presentation and talk given at "Trails for Tomorrow" conference in Banff, April 1994.

A presentation has been accepted at the International Conference on Building a Sustainable World through Tourism, September 1994.

I am involved in the recreation component of the NAIT program through Howard Anderson and Jim Freisen.

Videos have been loaned to several schoolteachers for show in conjunction with presentation from Melissa's department.

7. Development of indices to evaluate the economic benefit of ecotourism within the Foothills Forest: this will form a separate chapter of my thesis. Much of the work is based on the excellent course I took (and paid for) at the Banff Centre in October.

Expected Completion Date: rough draft finished now; final form will appear in thesis.

The following components initially included in the Ecotourism DAWP have dropped out due to circumstances beyond the scope of this project:

Development of international-calibre tourism generator with WDO: no funding available.

Demonstration Projects: time was spent becoming involved initially but operational plans changed, cf. elk project. Concern was raised regarding sending tourists along haul roads.

Co-operative opportunities with Jasper: time and effort was spent with people from Jasper, including in the Park Service. Most groups in Jasper want one-way co-operation, ie to their benefit only. I am still involved in Chamber of Commerce meeting etc. but little concrete commitment can be garnered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This work forms the first phase of ecotourism throughout the Foothills Forest. As in any complex tourism venture, much time needs to be spent gaining a thorough knowledge of the area and all the stakeholder groups involved. Now that this has been achieved, and working relationships established with the Town of Hinton, Chamber of Commerce, Evergreen Tourist Association and others, it is felt that further work could be achieved more easily. I recommend a close working relationship with all these groups to develop an overall plan for the area in conjunction with the Community Tourism Plan currently underway with Alberta Tourism. Work with Switzer Park and the Alberta Forest Service could assist in developing a network of trails recognised at the provincial and even national level, which would form a good basis for ecotourism opportunities in the area.

I have developed good contacts with organisations such as Alberta TrailNet which would be useful in the future, particularly for marketing our area. Now several products have been developed, marketing of same is necessary. Contacts at the TIC, local businesses and tourism ventures are the first outlets. Marketing in Calgary and Edmonton is also essential. Mail-outs could be sent to provincial and regional tourism bodies and ecotourism operators.

PROBLEM AREAS

Perception of the area as ruined by resource extractive industries. There is a current strong opposition to forestry practises in Canada at the local, regional, national and international levels. A balanced view is being presented by groups such as the Alberta Forest Products Association and FEESA, but much more work is needed. The Foothills Forest could provide valuable assistance through ecotourism opportunities.

A proposed questionnaire/survey this summer should help define current attitudes and target areas for education/marketing.

Fragmentation of the tourism industry and the need to contact so many stakeholders to achieve even small gains has been a stumbling block throughout the project but, with time and patience, I feel that much has been and will continue to be accomplished.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A co-ordinated effort to raise the profile of the Foothills Forest and its ecotourism potential is needed. This should include promotion of how ecotourism opportunities can be developed in a working forest. Continued liaison with local, provincial and national groups such as Alberta TrailNet, Heritage Canada, Alberta Tourism, biking and hiking clubs, nature travel groups, non-governmental organisations and many more is vital. Articles should be prepared for relevant newspapers and journals (popular rather than scientific, although both can be targetted). I would be willing to assist with these upon my return in September, time permitting.

APPENDICES

Examples of text for all the brochures prepared to date are included as an Appendix.

APPENDIX
(draft brochure text)



ANIMALS OF THE FOOTHILLS FOREST

Welcome to the Foothills Forest! We are home to many vertebrate species, some of which are rare throughout the rest of the Province. One of the key objectives of the Foothills Forest is integrated Resource Management, balancing and integrating the different resources of the Boreal Forest, Montane and Subalpine Ecoregions. Care is taken that in areas where harvesting occurs, buffer zones are left around streams to preserve water quality and quantity. Cutblock size and shape and harvesting plans are designed bearing in mind the inhabitants of the Forest. For instance, following harvesting "wildlife" trees are left standing to provide homes and for cavity nesting birds and animals where appropriate. Logs and branches left on the cutblock put nutrients back into the soil but also provide homes and migration routes for small mammals. For those species common in older stands, such as caribou, marten, winter wren and others, logging is designed to provide enough suitable habitat to maintain populations.

Mammal names follow Banfield (1974) and Smith (1985) except for insectivores and bats, which follow van Zyll de Jong (1983, 1985).

I Introduced

Common Name	Latin Name	Abundance	Habitat
CLASS OSTEICHTHYES: Bony Fishes			
Order Osteoglossiformes - Bony Tongues			
Goldeye	Hiodon alosoides	rare	LAKE, RIVER
Order Cypriniformes: Minnows, Suckers, Allies			
Lake chub	Couesius plumbeus	occ./f.c.	STREAM
Pearl dace	Semotilus margarita	abund.	STREAM
Spottail shiner	Notropis hudsonius	f.c.	RIVER
Finescale dace	Chrosomes neogaeus	f.c.	STREAM
Flathead chub	Platygobio gracilis	f.c.	RIVER
Longnose dace	Rhinichthys cataractae	f.c.	LAKE; STREAM
Longnose sucker	Catostomus catostomus	comm.	LAKE; STREAM
White sucker	Catostomus commersoni	abund.	LAKE; STREAM.
Flathead minnow	Pimephales promelas	f.c.	LAKE; PONDS

Order Salmoniformes: Trouts, allies

Northern pike	Esox lucius	f.c.	LAKE; RIVER
Lake whitefish	Coregonus clupeaformis	f.c.	LAKE; RIVER
Mountain whitefish	Prosopium williamsoni	abund.	STREAM; RIVER
Arctic grayling	Thymallus arcticus	abund.	STREAM; RIVER
Cutthroat trout	Oncorhynchus clarki	occ.	STREAM; LAKE
Rainbow trout	Oncorhynchus mykiss	abund.	STREAM; RIVER; LAKE
Brown trout I	Salmo trutta	occ.	STREAM; LAKE
Bull trout V	Salvelinus confluentus	occ.	RIVER; STREAM; LAKES
Brook trout (char) I	Salvelinus fontinalis	f.c.	STREAM; LAKE
Splake (brook/lake trout) I	Salvelinus x S. namaycush	occ.	LAKE
Lake trout	Salvelinus namaycush	occ. (loc)	LAKE

Order Percopsiformes: Trout-Perch, Allies

Trout-perch	Percopsis omiscomaycus	occ.	LAKE; RIVER
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Order Gadiformes: Codfish, allies

Burbot	Lota lota	comm.	LAKE; STREAM
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Order Gasterosteiformes: Sticklebacks, allies

Brook stickleback	Culaea inconstans	f.c.	PONDS; STREAM
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Order Scorpaeniformes: Mailcheeked fishes

Spoonhead sculpin	Cottus ricei	comm.	STREAM
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Order Perciformes: Perchlike fishes

Iowa darter	Etheostoma exile	occ.	LAKE
Yellow perch	Perca flavescens	occ.	LAKE
Walleye	Stizostedion vitreum	occ.	LAKE; RIVER

CLASS AMPHIBIA: Amphibians

Order Caudata: tail-less amphibians

Long-toed salamander V	Ambystoma macrodactylum	comm. loc)	MONT. PONDS/MARSH
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Order Anura: tail-less amphibians

Western (Boreal) Toad	Bufo boreas boreas	comm.	MONT/SUBALP FOR /MDWS
Boreal Chorus frog	Pseudacris triseriata maculata	f.c.	NON-ALP PONDS /BOGS
Wood frog	Rana sylvatica	f.c.	MST FOR; OCC SUBALP/ALP
Leopard frog	Rana pipes	rare	FOR LAKES
Spotted frog	Rana pretiosa	comm.	MONT / SUBALP STREAM/PONDS
Canadian toad	Bufo hemiophrys	occ.	PONDS, MARSHES

CLASS REPTILIA: Reptiles

Order Squamata: Lizards, snakes

Red-sided (common) garter snake

Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis occ.

MONT. STREAM/MARSH.

Wandering garter snake Thamnophis elegans vagrans occ.

MONT WET & WOODS

(Western terrestrial)

CLASS MAMMALIA: Mammals

Order Insectivora: Shrews

Masked shrew Sorex cinereus comm DAMP MDW, FOR, BOGS

Dusky shrew Sorex monticolus comm GRASSY/WILLOWY SHORES OF MONT BOGS, STREAMS

Water shrew Sorex palustris f.c. RIP, DENSE FOR, STREAMS

Arctic shrew Sorex arcticus occ. GRASSY DAMP MDW

Pygmy shrew Sorex hoyi f.c. GRASSY SUBALP MDW, FOR, BOGS

Order Chiroptera: Bats

Little brown bat Myotis lucifugus comm FOR, CAVEN, URBAN

N'ern long-eared bat Myotis septentrionalis f.c. FOR, URBAN

Long-eared bat Myotis evotis occ FOR, URBAN

Long-legged bat Myotis volans occ FOR, MDW, URBAN

Silver-haired bat Lasiycteris noctivagans f.c. RIP, FOR, URBAN

Big brown bat Eptesicus fuscus comm. FOR, MDW, URBAN

Hoary bat Lasiurus cinereus f.c./comm BF, CONIF, RIP, URB

Order Lagomorpha: Hares and Rock Rabbits

Pikas:

Pika Ochotona princeps f.c. ALP, TALUS

Snowshoe hare Lepus americanus abund. FOR

Order Rodentia: Rodents

Squirrels:

Least chipmunk Tamias minimus comm EDGE, TALUS

Yellow pine chipmunk Tamias amoenus comm DRY MONT FOR, SUBALP, FOR. OPENINGS

Woodchuck Marmota monax rare ALP MDW

Hoary marmot Marmota caligata comm ALP MDW

Columbian grd squirrel Spermophilus columbianus f.c. MDW, ALL ELEV.

Golden-mantled grd sq. Spermophilus lateralis f.c. DRY, ROCKY, ALP/SUBALP

Red squirrel Tamiasciurus hudsonicus abund. MONT / SUBALP CONF

N'ern flying squirrel Glaucomys sabrinus f.c. MONT CONF

<i>avers:</i>			
Beaver	Castor canadensis	abund.	MONT WET
<i>New World mice & allies:</i>			
Deer mouse	Peromyscus maniculatus	comm	DRY, ANY
Bushy-tailed woodrat	Neotoma cinerea	rare	CON, CAVN
S'ern red-backed vole	Clethrionomys gapperi	abund.	SUBALP FOR, RIP
Heather vole	Phenacomys intermedius	f.c.	SHRUBBY MONT &
SUBALP FOR & MDW			
Meadow vole	Microtus pennsylvanicus	comm.	DAMP MDW, GRASSY MARSH, BOGS
Long-tailed vole	Microtus longicaudus	f.c.	RIP, TALUS, FOR GLADES, SUBALP/ ALP
Water vole	Microtus richardsoni	rare	SUBALP/ALP WET MDW
Muskrat	Ondatra zibethicus	f.c.	WET, LAKES, RIP
Northern bog lemming	Synaptomys borealis	rare	BOGS, GRASSY MARSH, SHRUBBY MDW
<i>Old World mice & allies</i>			
House mouse I	Mus musculus	rare	URBN
<i>Jumping mice & allies:</i>			
Western jumping mouse	Zapus princeps	f.c.	MST MDW, GRASS
<i>New World procupines:</i>			
Porcupine	Erethizon dorsatum	f.c.	CONF, US. SUBALP
Order Carnivora: Carnivores			
<i>Dogs:</i>			
Coyote	Canis latrans	comm	MONT; GRASSY, OPEN FOR
Gray wolf	Canis lupus	comm	GRASSY MONT FOR, RIVER VALLEYS, LAKES (WINTER)
Red fox	Vulpes vulpes	f.c.	GRASSY, OPEN FOR
<i>Bears:</i>			
Black bear	Ursus americanus	f.c.	MONT FOR & OTHERS
Grizzly bear V	Ursus arctos	occ	MTN SLOPE, SUBALP
<i>Weasels etc.:</i>			
Marten	Martes americana	f.c.	MONT/LWR SUBALP FOR
Fisher	Martes pennanti	occ	MIXEDWOOD FOR
Ermine	Mustela erminea	f.c.	ALL

Least weasel	Mustela nivalis	occ	MDW, MIXEDWOODS
Long-tailed weasel	Mustela frenata	rare	MDW, ALP TUNDRA
Mink	Mustela vison	f.c.	WET, RIP
Wolverine V	Gulo gulo	f.c.	SUBALP OR ALP
Striped skunk	Mephitis mephitis	rare	GRASSY/SHRUB, URBAN
River otter	Lutra canadensis	occ	LAKES, RIP

Cats:

Mountain lion (cougar)	Felis concolor	rare	MONT, SUBALP
Lynx	Lynx canadensis	comm	SUBALP FOR
Bobcat	Lynx rufus	rare	MONT, GRASS/SHRUB

Order Artiodactyla: Ungulates

Deer:

Wapiti (elk)	Cervus elaphus	comm	GRASSY, OPEN MDW
Mule deer	Odocoileus hemionus	comm	MONT FOR, SHRUB MDW
White-tailed deer	Odocoileus virginianus	abund	OPEN FOR
Moose	Alces alces	comm	SUBALP MDW & MARSH
Caribou V	Rangifer tarandus caribou	f.c.	ALP TUNDRA
		(summer);	SUBALP FOR (winter)

Antelope, sheep:

Mountain goat	Oreamnos americanus	f.c.	TALUS; ROCKY; STEEP
Bighorn sheep	Ovis canadensis	f.c.	DRY, ROCKY SLOPES

LEGEND

- I - introduced species
- V - species classified as vulnerable (COSEWIC)
- abund - abundant
- v.c. - very common
- comm. - common
- f.c. - fairly common

- Mont - Montane
- Alp - Alpine
- Conif - Coniferous forest
- Rip - riparian
- Caven - cave/cavity nest
- Subalp - subalpine
- For - forest
- Mdw - meadow
- Wet - wetlands
- Urbn - urban

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WELCOME TO FOOTHILLS FOREST

The region surrounding Hinton is a little-known jewel, seldom explored by people whizzing along Highway 16 to Jasper. It is (understandably) hard to share these beautiful areas. The following outlines some of the area's natural and cultural resources with suggestions for exploration.

The Foothills Forest is one of the ten-strong Model Forest Network, an initiative under Canada's Green Plan to investigate sustainable forestry. A key goal is non-timber valuation of forested lands through Integrated Resource Management (IRM). The many uses and demands for forested land, some competing, can be balanced if stakeholders together devise a comprehensive, co-ordinated management plan. One of the key components and strengths of the Foothills Forest is recreational opportunities. Situated at the junction of the Boreal Forest and the Rockies, encompassing William A. Switzer provincial park and adjoining Jasper National Park and Wilmore Wilderness, fine outdoor activities are offered in settings as diverse as the Foothills of the Rocky Mountains, glacial lakes and the beautiful Boreal Forest. You can find areas to ride, hike, fish, hunt, camp and picnic.

The terrain varies from rugged mountains to rolling hills. A history of resource extraction has provided many recreational opportunities. For instance, old logging roads through regenerated areas close to Wilmore (Mumm Creek) and Mountain Park (Whitehorse Creek) are especially suited for mountain biking. Reclamation of old mine workings at Luscar and Cadomin have provided fishing spots, incorporated picnic areas and trails which lead to high peaks and on to Miette Hot Springs. The existing trails follow routes taken by miners desirous of a hot soak after days of grimy work!

PICNICKING

Picnic spots are located along the major routes, in William A. Switzer Park and have also been constructed along trails maintained by the Alberta Forest Service and Weldwood. The Forestry Technology School maintains areas in the Cache Percotte Forest. A particularly scenic spots are located at Wildhorse/Kinky lakes.

CAMPING

Campgrounds are offered in the town of Hinton, in William A Switzer park and at AFS sites (Whitehorse Creek, Wildhorse/Kinky Lakes, Rock Lake, Big Berland, Pierre Grey Lakes etc.). Backcountry campgrounds are common in many areas.

HIKING

Trails include historic routes of the early settlers and forest rangers such as the Bighorn Trail, alpine hikes through meadows of wildflowers such as at Folding Mountain and scenic strolls along the Athabasca River. There are many kilometres of interpretive, hiking and hiking/equestrian trails with a wide range of scenic ridgetop and valley views. Several trails have been developed recently by Weldwood of Canada. The Canyon Creek Trail follows through quiet aspen and spruce forest along the top of a deep cleft in the limestone and drops down to the Athabasca River. The Sundance Creek Trail was developed along the shores of a series of glacial lakes and has two

beautiful campsites along the shore. The Emerson Lakes area includes interpretive information on local glacial features and is a great fishing and canoeing spot. The Alberta Forest Service maintains a small campsite here. The Bighorn Trail starts close to Hinton and ascends to a 22 km ridgewalk offering scenic views of the Front Ranges and Athabasca Valley. The route was used by forest rangers at the turn of the century and ends up at the Gregg River Cabin, which dates back to 1911. Perhaps one of the best hikes in the area is at Folding Mountain. The access is off Highway 16, near Folding Mountain Resort. Strong hikers can ascend to the top of Folding Mountain, passing through carpets of wildflowers. Wildlife such as bald eagles, drumming grouse and occasional deer may be seen. Apart from spectacular views of the mountains and the Athabasca Valley, the Boreal Forest stretches away to the east. Small clearcuts below bordering Brule Lake River attest to the resource-based economy of the region. Across the valley, the train tracks of the CNR pass through the Brule Tunnel, site of the terrible train disaster.

In addition to backcountry trails, the Town of Hinton has developed a comprehensive series of multi-purpose trails ideal for hiking, biking and running, or ski-ing in winter. Routes are clearly identified and maps placed at junctions. The longest individual loop is 2.0 km, but lengthier routes can be made. Linkages are also planned into the Cache Percotte Forest, managed by the Forest Technology School. The School has a 1.5 km interpretive trail and forestry museum on its grounds in Hinton. An excellent map with descriptions of all trails has been produced by the Town and is available at free at the Tourist Information Centre and local businesses.

The Foothills Forest is funding projects to catalog and develop more trails where appropriate, connect existing routes and design interpretive walks in key areas. A brochure detailing routes surrounding Hinton will be available shortly, free of charge. Work on guidebooks for trails in the area is underway and it is hoped these will be published early in 1995.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

All roads, highways and forest roads are open to cycling. The long history of resource extraction in the areas has left a legacy in the extensive network of old logging and mining roads. Many of these are extremely suitable for mountain biking and challenges for all levels from beginner to expert.

EQUESTRIAN USE

Horses are an integral part of Hinton, past and present. Many guides and outfitters live and operate in the area. Wilmore Wilderness contains some of the best country in Alberta for horse packing, with excellent staging areas at Big Berland and Rock Lake. Other trails such as the Bighorn, Folding Mountain, Drinnan Creek to Mystery lake are extensively used.

FISHING

Wildhorse and Kinky lakes are stocked and offer excellent fishing. Many of the rivers also offer excellent sport fishing. Reclamation of mining areas around Luscar has also incorporated artificial, stocked lakes.

SKI-ING:

Cross-country ski-ing facilities are excellent. The Athabasca Nordic Centre is a world-class facility, host of the 1994 World Cup Biathlon. Classical and skate ski-ing are both excellent on an extensive network of groomed, undulating trails. 1.6 km of trails are lighted for evening ski-ing. William A. Switzer Provincial Park maintains groomed trails for classical cross-country ski-ing. Other suggested areas include the Cache Percotte Forest close to town (snow permitting), the Pine and Spruce Management trails and areas in the Foothills too numerous to mention. Cross-country ski-ing or ski mountaineering is still relatively undiscovered considering the terrain and proximity of great scenery.

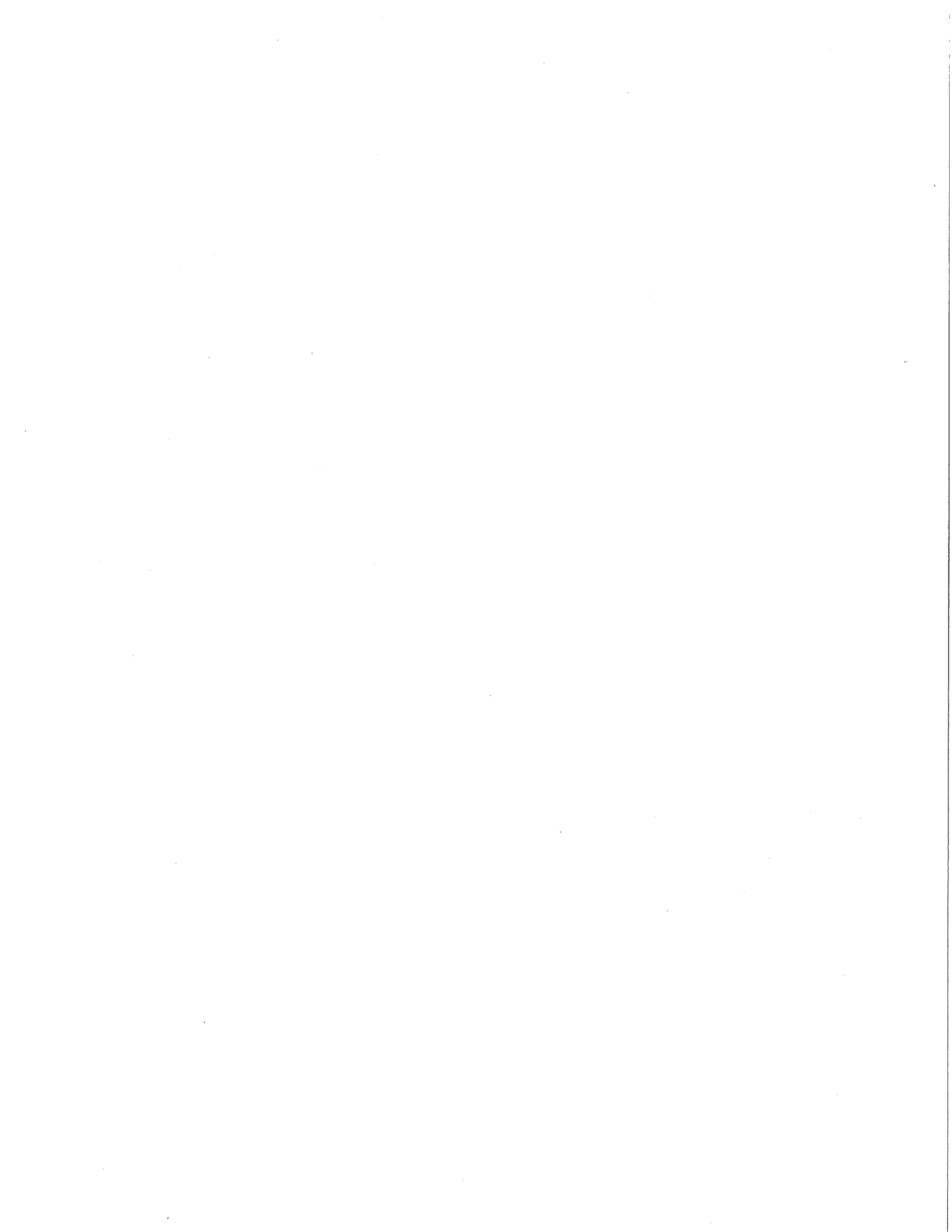
The Athabasca Nordic Centre also offers a telemark hill and luge facilities.

OHV USE:

Locally, excellent opportunities exist for snowmobiling or OHV use in the Cache Percotte Forest; across the Bighorn Trail; around Wildhorse/Kinky lakes; near Whitehorse Creek and many other areas.

For information on closure of certain areas, consult the sub-regional Coal Branch Integrated Resource Management Access Plan available from Alberta Environmental Protection.

For more information on the Foothills Forest, copies of available brochures or to arrange a tour, contact: Foothills Forest, Box 6330, Hinton, Alberta T7V 1X6 or call 865-8330.



THE BIGHORN MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL

Time: Full day (allow 8 hours one-way) or backpack.

Distance: 22 km one way (12.5 miles)

Note: water at campsites and Gregg River Cabin only.

The Bighorn Trail offers a rugged hike through spectacularly beautiful Rocky Mountain scenery. Climbing more than 1800 ft, the trail cuts along the crest of the Bighorn Ridge in a line parallel to the Rockies Eastern Slopes before descending to the Gregg River Cabin on the south end.

The Bighorn is one of the original pack trails in this area which ran north and west along the foothills from west of the Bighorn Range near Nordegg to Hinton. It was originally part of the Dominion Forestry Service patrol trail system that extended along the foothills from Hinton to the U.S. border. Efforts are presently underway to preserve the trail by using it as a boundary for cutblocks, as can be seen toward the south end along the Teepee Creek road.

Starting Point: The most common starting point is to drive the Robb road (first right on Switzer Drive after the hospital) to the first junction; take the right fork. Parking for the start of the Bighorn Trail is immediately on your left, a couple of hundred metres after the junction, where an old road cuts off. (The trail sign may be hard to spot).

Alternatively, start from in town and hike via Maxwell Lake, the TransAlta right-of-way to the Robb Road and then along cutlines and exploration roads (see map).

A pick-up at the other end (either Teepee Creek road or at Gregg River Cabin) is necessary unless you wish to have a really long day and retrace your steps!

This section of the old pack trail was restored by the Hinton Junior Forest Wardens and is being maintained for your pleasure by Weldwood of Canada as part of its Forest Management Program. It presents a good example of the success of the Integrated Resource Management strategy of Weldwood and the Foothills Forest. The value of the trail for historical and recreational purposes was recognised early in the history of resource management of the area and steps were taken to modify harvesting practises so that the trail would not be lost. Although technology has changed, the philosophy remains the same. The route of the Bighorn and many other trails in the area has been input into the computerised maps and forms part of the Decision Support System for forest management in the area. Factors such as critical wildlife habitat or even individual nest sites for species of concern such as pileated woodpeckers can be accurately located on the computer data base and taken into consideration in operational or harvesting plans.

The trail is 12.5 mi long and can be hiked in one or two days. Strong hikers should be able to finish the trip in eight hours with ample time for viewing, rest stops, photography and snacks! The trail is accessible at both ends by all-weather roads.

Two primitive campsites are located on the trail at miles 3.5 and 10.5. Each is supplied with picnic tables, fire ring, primitive table and water supply. You are requested to have no open fires other than in the fire rings provided and make sure that your fire is out before leaving the site. Please carry out all your garbage. There is no water between the campsite at 3.5 mi and a spring at 9.5 mi.

The trail offers exceptional views of the Athabasca Valley to the north, the mountain range to the west and south as well as distant and closeup views of timber harvesting operations, Highway 40 (south to Cadomin) and vast expanses of pine and spruce forests of various ages.

Seismic lines crossing the trail at miles 4.0 and 6.1 run southwest to the Luscar Highway (40). Should you wish to shorten your trip, arrange for pick-up at these points.

Description:

From the trailhead, the route initially parallels the road and traverses gently undulating terrain through open, mature aspen forest and mixedwood. Look for bear-clawed trees and pileated woodpecker holes. After 20 minutes of pleasant walking through open aspen forest, the trail starts to ascend fairly steeply through thicker spruce forest, climbing more than 1800' to the crest of the ridge. After about 3 mi it emerges onto a more open slope affording views of the Town of Hinton and the Rockies. Kinky and Wildhorse lakes may be seen, the other side of Highway 16. Note the small size of cutblocks in that area.

Still ascending but now less steeply, the trail emerges onto an open slope perfect for a rest, snack and vistas. In July and August the wildflowers carpet the slopes here.

The trail now offers easier walking through mature spruce and fir forest. Snags and coarse woody material abound. Even large trees are covered with arboreal lichens. The habitat offers food and protection for a number of wildlife species including squirrels, voles, deermice etc. Calypso and bog orchids may be glimpsed in the woods or alongside the trail in places.

The trail follows the crest for most of its length, passing through mature spruce-fir forest and lodgepole pine stands. Close to mile 7 the trail is more open; the east side is bordered by areas of recently cut and regenerating lodgepole pine forest, which afford open vistas of the vast expanse of Boreal Forest. Care has been taken to log only to the edge of the trail to preserve its integrity. Note the amount of material left on these blocks. Although they appear to be "messy", the limbs and litter left provide essential nutrients back to the soil. Complete removal of material would result in a more sterile, less nutritious medium for new growth. Burning of this material enhances release of necessary elements such as nitrogen to the soil and helps release conifer seeds, particularly those of lodgepole pine. This species has tightly-held cones bound in a tough or "sclerotinous" glue which does not release seeds unless the temperature reaches 40 - 50 C.

Hence the reason that many of our lodgepole pine forests are "fire dependant". The new forests here are healthy and rapid growing,

providing food and shelter for many species of birds and animals. The highest diversity is found at the junction of the old and newer growth, since many species are dependant on one or the other but may forage temporarily in either.

The trail descends steeply at about mile 10 (km 16) to Teepee Creek, where logging is scheduled. To preserve this historic route, harvesting occurs only on either side of the trail, never across it. It may be preferable to finish the route at the Teepee Creek haul road rather than crossing and taking the Bighorn to the Gregg River Cabin. Although the route is initially good, routefinding skills are necessary to locate the crossing of Gregg River, and bridges have been washed out.

The trail ends at the historic Gregg River Cabin. Built by the Dominion Forestry Service around 1911, the cabin once served as a stopover spot for patrol rangers. It is maintained by the Alberta Forest Service and the Forest Technology School at Hinton. For more information on the fascinating history of logging in the area, visit the Forestry Museum at the Forest Technology School.

Points of Interest: Forest succession; views of Athabasca River Valley and Hinton; historic pack trail.

Other Activity Options: Photography, birdwatching, camping, picnicking, trail riding.

Side or longer loops: Pine Management Trails at Gregg River Cabin.

FOLDING MOUNTAIN TRAIL

A suspended pocket of wilderness at the eastern boundary of Jasper National Park. It contains an historic route to Miette Hot Springs, used by the residents of the coal mining community of Luscar. It is now used extensively by as an equestrian and hiking trail, and has been used extensively in the past by off-highway vehicles. It is well noted for its profusion of wildflowers. On the lower slopes the orchid family is particularly well-represented. There is a profusion of yellow lady's slipper, calypso, robin's egg lady slipper and several varieties of bog orchid.

Starting Point: Follow Highway 16 west from Hinton for approx. 25 km; park at a pull-off on the left hand side after the turn to Folding Mountain Resort. Walk in the ditch down the highway toward Jasper until a good trail can be seen cutting up through the trees (a 5-minute walk) just past a telephone pole (and "keep right except to pass" sign).

Distance: 25 km

Time: Allow 8 hours, including stops.

Description: Folding Mountain is tough hike; a long day with some steep sections. Drinking water is not available on most of the hike.

The route commences in a spruce-aspen-birch mixedwood forest. Birch is not common in the region but the moist, alkaline soils and mature spruce forest form an ideal habitat. The north-facing valley along which the trail winds helps keep snow fairly late in Spring and maintain cool, moist soils which favour birch. Look for a bear-clawed tree a few yards up the trail in an opening on the right. Many of the mature aspen in this area carry the scratches and clawmarks of bears long since departed. In some cases they go right to the treetop!

The forest is cooler than along the highway and on the upper open slopes by several degrees. Many animals and birds rest here during the summer days to avoid the heat of the sun. As you walk, be on the watch for chickadees, robins, nuthatches, deer, squirrels and other wildlife.

The trail ascends steeply, and for the first hour switchbacks through aspen forest with birch and some large, mature spruce, following a narrow creek valley. After about fifteen minutes, the trail contours around a small bluff to an open area with smaller spruce, allowing the first glimpses of the Athabasca Valley, Roche Miette, the Pallisades and the Brule Range. The slope is dry and covered with bearberry and juniper. In moist weather, deer tracks can be seen along the trail - they too follow the easiest route! Look at the base of some of the larger spruce trees. The large, almost square holes were made by Pileated Woodpeckers. These birds chip away at the bases of trees to expose carpenter ant nests, one

of their favourite foods. The nest cavities of pileated woodpeckers are found high up in mature aspen trees such as around you; look carefully and you may see several large holes. The male excavates several to attract the female and allow her the choice of location to rear their young. The Foothills Forest has an on-going research project to catch and attach radio transmitters to these birds. They are important as they use mature aspen forests and are also a "keystone" species; ie. they represent 38 other species dependant on a similar habitat. For more information about this and other Foothills Forest projects, see the information on the back of the brochure.

After about 30 minutes of walking, noticeable here and higher up along the trail are spruce trees from which the outer bark has been "scaled" off, exposing the inner, reddish cambium. If you look closely, you can see the holes of boring insects such as the bark beetle. The three-toed woodpecker pulls the outer bark off to reach these insects for a tasty meal. If he gets carried away he may strip too much bark and actually kill the trees, especially smaller ones.

After an hour, the trail emerges onto more open slopes affording views of the Athabasca Valley. Roche Miette and the Pallisades are now hidden from view, but vistas of Brule Lake and the snaking ribbons of the Athabasca River and Highway 16 make this a pleasant rest spot. From here, the trail ascends less steeply through spruce-fir forest, flattening out at one point in thick fir forest around an old campsite.

Alongside the trail everywhere are small piles of "bracts", the small "leaves" from spruce, pine and fir cones. The squirrels may gnaw off individual cones or small cone-laden branches and feed where they fall on the ground. They hold the cone almost human-like in their paws, rotating and nibbling at the same time. The bracts are removed one by one, the seeds at the base eaten and the remainder discarded to form the small red piles at the base of trees. Squirrels are especially active in the early spring after hibernation.

The trail emerges onto a steep ridge with stunted, krummholz vegetation, and contours along the crest of the ridge on the east side, exposing views of Gap Ridge. This is probably the best spot for wildflowers. Folding Mountain has meadows covered with wildflowers found no further north and also at the southernmost limit of some Arctic varieties. Many rare species are present; all are extremely beautiful and a considerable time can be spent looking. But please do not pick or trample the wildflowers - they may take many years to grow a few centimetres, and their hold to life is precarious at best. Only a small number of some species are left.

A small section of scrambling over sandstone leads to a flatter portion of the ridge, permitting views of the final ascent. Although the last two kilometres looks steep from a distance, several good trails exist across the scree slope ahead. The summit is well worth the effort for the view. At the top, notice the dark greenish conglomerate which forms several huge boulders. This is the Cadomin conglomerate, which is very important in some areas as a reservoir for oil and gas. It is a very porous rock, often filled to capacity with hydrocarbons. Unfortunately it is often fairly thin or lenticular and difficult to find in the subsurface.

If you walk to the right (south) along the ridgetop, you will eventually reach the boundary with Jasper National Park. The steep, almost conical peak you see in front of you is Mount Fiddle. There is an easy ascent route from this side; but check first with locals or the warden service before considering an attempt.

Whilst on the ridgetop, look carefully at the pattern of logging around Wildhorse and Kinky lakes. Small strip harvesting was done here in the 1950's to minimise environmental impact. Unfortunately, the soils are very sandy - most have blown from the shores of Brule Lake. Regeneration of trees has thus taken a long time and, because of this, it will not be harvested again. Closer to you, along Gap Ridge, large areas of lodgepole pine have been harvested over the years. The soils here are much richer and less sandy, and regeneration is rapid. Some of the larger trees were probably planted in the sixties!

Follow the same route down. Several well-marked trails exist; many of them historic horse routes. Do not be alarmed if parts of the return route are unfamiliar; all trails end at the highway.

Points of Interest: Views of Brule Lake, Bedson Ridge, logging operations around Hinton.

Other Activity Options: Trail riding, birdwatching (spruce grouse, eagles bunting and chickadees), photography, Alpine wildflowers (including rare Arctic species)

Side or longer loops: ridgewalk in either direction once Folding Mountain is reached. Longer backpacking or horse trips to Mystery Lake and Jasper National Park start from here (see map).

Wildflower species:

BIKING ROUTE DESCRIPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - HINTON AREA

Biking opportunities in the area abound due to the many old exploration roads originally constructed for logging, mining or oil and gas operations. Although many of these have been unused for a number of years and are somewhat overgrown, they are ideal routes for pedestrian or bike travel and offer exciting opportunities to travel in country otherwise inaccessible. In some instances they pass through new and regenerating cutover areas and illustrate current "new" forestry practises.

The length of these routes varies greatly, as does the physical challenge offered. Routes in the Foothills and near Wilmore are both isolated and, in many cases, only for those strong enough and experienced in backcountry biking. A list of recommended items to take on trips is included following the trail descriptions. Remember that you are almost always in remote country and immediate rescue is not guaranteed should you run into difficulties. ALWAYS leave your planned route and duration with a friend or at your hotel.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVEL ON HAUL ROADS

It may be necessary to travel on some logging truck haul roads to reach your destination. Weldwood (Canada) has developed and maintained certain trails for your enjoyment and pleasure. The roads you will travel on to these trails were built to provide access to harvesting and forestry operations. Large trucks with over 60 tons of logs measuring up to 100 feet in length may be encountered. These trucks are unable to move far to the side of the road for fear of collapsing the shoulders and overturning. They are also unable to manoeuvre quickly due to their size and weight. The onus is on you to observe the following common sense rules on all company roads:

1. Travel with headlights on.
2. Observe posted speed limits; travel more slowly under adverse conditions.

Do not attempt to overtake and pass loaded trucks unless you can see that your way is clear to do so.

4. When meeting loaded trucks, slow down, pull over to the shoulder, allowing the truck to pass.

Except where required for trail maintenance purposes, motorized traffic such as snowmachines, trail bikes or four-wheel drives are not permitted on Weldwood trail systems.

NOTE: Distances to trailhead measured from Hinton Recreation Centre. Distances and times are for RETURN trips. Return routes retrace outward ones unless otherwise stated.

ATHABASCA RANCH TRAILS Loops 1 - 10km - up to 4 hours;
EASY

The trails in this area offer some of the most scenic and easily accessible bike touring in the area.

Start: Drive Highway 40 north from Hinton toward Grande Cache. Take the Hinton/Entrance Airport turn, then fork right past the Initial Attack Helicopter Base and park off the track at any point beyond.

Distance: Loops of 1 - 10 km or more can be made.

Time: Allow approx. 45 mins. to the river and back.

Features: Views of the Athabasca River and railway bridge. A good place for viewing ungulates (especially elk) which like the open, grassy meadows.

Description: Head east along the old road, following the Athabasca River downstream. The route is fairly rough in places with some large boulders and, in wet weather, some large puddles which may be quite deep! Biking is generally easy with few really steep sections. Wildflowers abound in the summer. The route descends into open meadows of the Athabasca Ranch. Few such open areas occur locally and ungulate density is correspondingly high. None of the roads or trails are ever far from the river. A great place to spend time idling sunny summer afternoons. Take a picnic in your panniers!

Additional activities: Ski-ing, birdwatching, especially near the river.

Options: Link to trails around Microwave transmitter and Upper Lake road.

Cautions: Fall hunting season.

MICROWAVE TOWER 2km - 20 min. MODERATE; STEEP BUT SHORT

Start: Drive highway 40 north. The tower road is unmarked, steeply uphill from a large left-hand bend in the highway (see map). Park either just off the main highway, or drive a short distance uphill, take the first right and park at the (locked) gate.

Features: Views of Hinton and area, Folding Mountain and Front Ranges.

Description: The route to the top of the hill is short and steep - ideal for a summer's evening. It should only take about 15" to reach the top. In addition to the view, the rapid descent is worthwhile. For a longer ride, take the old road to the right about halfway down from the top. The road contours along toward Hinton, allowing views of the Athabasca Valley and townsite. It ends in a cutblock; however, by cutting up to the left the Peppers Lake road can be gained and cycled. It is wise to return to the vehicle by turning left since, by continuing right, one eventually joins the main Haul road into the mill. However, the route can be followed safely for some distance and is very scenic as it follows the ridge, crossing some pretty streams.

Cycle travel on the main haul road is definitely not recommended; the downhill run to the Athabasca is hairy enough for a loaded logging truck without the additional worry of cyclists. The gravel on this portion is usually tough on both bikes and their riders!

Alternative A: take the road on the left on the way down from the microwave tower. Ride a short distance; you will see a seismic line veering off to the right. This allows a great descent into the trails around the Hinton-Brule airport. Once relatively flat ground is reached, the seismic cutline crosses an open meadow. Shortly beyond this, several roads cross the cutline. Any of these to the right will lead you back to the airport and eventually Highway 40, from where it is possible to cycle uphill on the shoulder and back to you vehicle.

Alternative B: Take the road to the right on the descent from the tower. Cycle to the cutblock and thence to the Peppers Lake Road. Cycle along the road east until you see two roads cutting off to the left within a short distance of one another.

Take one for an enjoyable cycle to Peppers Lake; a beautiful, quiet spot where loons often call and ospreys fish. Return to the Peppers Lake road and cycle right t for your vehicle.

Additional activities: Birdwatching; photography.

Options: Can link to longer trails in Peppers Lake road.

ATHABASCA LOOKOUT AND NORDIC CENTRE TRAILS 20

km or more - 40 min; EASY

Start: Drive highway 40 north. Turn left at the top of the hill before William A. Switzer Park boundary, signposted to Athabasca Nordic Centre. Follow the road a short distance to the first lodge and parking (right).

Time: Various loops along trails or the road to the Lookout may be combined for distances from 2 - 20 km and times from 20 mins. to a full day.

Features: Views of Solomon Creek, possible SRS practice aircraft; views toward Willmore Wilderness; Paskapoo Sandstone outcrops.

Description: Several options exist from the parking lot, depending upon the amount of energy available. The ski trails may be biked and provide undulating terrain of moderate difficulty. Loops may be completed fairly close to the lodge. The option to stop at any point is good for a group of mixed abilities when weather is changeable. The road may be followed to the Lookout, approximately 5 km return. The last section uphill is steep with large boulders and provides quite a challenge - almost as much so on the descent, where rock shocks may be an advantage!

Additional activities: Hang gliding, birdwatching.

Options: Cycle down to Solomon Creek, turn right along the road to Switzer Park, right past Jarvis Creek day use area to Highway 40. From there it is a right turn and head down for the uphill stretch to the Nordic Centre. This longer route represents a tough trip!

WILLIAM A. SWITZER TRAILS:

Valley Trail: 3.5 km - 2 hours; EASY

Start: Drive Highway 40 north. Take the Gregg Lake Campground turnoff to the right, close to the north park boundary. Park either near the Information Booth (if gate is closed) or the day use area.

Features: Interpretive trail highlighting local glacial features such as kettle lakes and eskers. Passes through aspen forest

beautiful in Fall.

Description: The valley trail is a broad route gently undulating through aspen forests. Steeper sections occur as the route follows the top of a couple of eskers. The return route is a little higher and flatter, with one fast descent. Not recommended on a busy weekend when families may be walking the route. Sharp turns and a fairly narrow trail may cause problems if crowded. Always use your bell to warn people and wildlife of your approach.

Additional activities: Birdwatching, bear-scratched trees.

Options: Take the trail to Gregg Lake and follow the shoreline (informal trails exist, and a service road closed to the public) or tie in to Meadow Trail (see below).

Meadow Trail: 4 km - one hour; EASY

Start: As for the Valley Trail. Go beyond the (Gregg Lake) campground to the road terminus and park in the day use area by the boat launch. Ride along the service road (locked gate) to the south along the lake to an obvious trail (road) cutting left through the valley bottom.

Distance: 4 km return from service road.

Time: Allow just over an hour return.

Features: Meadow communities; Jarvis creek; Beaver Ranch interpretation.

Description: A nice flat trail, good for a family outing. Remains of the unsuccessful beaver ranching operation provide an interesting spot to stop. In mid-summer, the long grass may make travel slow. The valley bottom may be boggy, even in dry weather.

Additional activities: A good ski route

Options: Bike to Cache Lake road and return via Valley Trail instead of retracing steps.

Gregg Lake Trail: 2 km - 45 min; EASY

Start: Take highway 40 north to Gregg Lake campground, Loop G or park at the registration booth if the campground is closed. Alternatively, start as for Meadow Trail but take path to right along service road (opposite picnic area by lake).

Features: Bear-clawed trees; scenic views of Gregg Lake and meadows; Fall colours.

Description: This route is especially attractive in the late Fall when the campground is closed, but can be done at any time of the year. If parking at the booth, cycle through the campground, following the path to the right of the road. It is a great descent through the trees. When you reach loop "G", follow the trail sign and descend along the path to the lake.

Additional activities: Picnicking spots along lakeshore; photography (sunsets).

Options: Connect with Valley or Meadow trails. Instead of cycling back the same route, turn left at the service road toward the boat ramp. Cycle up the road to the campground entrance. Beware of oncoming traffic at sharp bends. Not recommended on busy weekends. Alternatively, turn left at the lake and cycle up the campground road back to loop "G".

MOBERLEY LOOKOUT 8 km - 2 hrs; TOUGH ASCENT; STEEP BUT FAIRLY SHORT

Start: Highway 40 north from Hinton to the (left) Rock Lake turnoff. After crossing the creek, take the left turn (marked "Moberley") at the "T" junction. Park on the left hand side of the road just beyond the junction, to one side of the (locked) gate of the Fire Lookout service road. Follow the road to the (manned) lookout.

Time: 1hr 30 minutes up; 30" down

Features: View from the top of Rock Lake; Wildhay River; logging operations; succession from aspen forest through lodgepole pine to spruce-fir with increasing elevation; Fall colours.

Description: A tough ride up the fire road. The ascent is a real "head-down" grunt, but luckily switchbacks and some flatter sections offer temporary respites from the climb. The descent is fast and should be taken very carefully.

Additional activities: Birdwatching, photography.

Options: From parking area, bike the old Evans Trail, which may be followed for many miles. It eventually joins with trails from Mumm and Collie creeks.

BRULE MINES 2 - 10 km - 2 hours or more; EASY

Start: Drive Highway 40 north from Hinton. After crossing the Athabasca River, take the Brule (left) turnoff at the hillcrest (opposite turn to Entrance/Brule airport). Park at the Brule Community Hall (left). Follow the road behind the community hall into old mining area; many roads cut off and can be followed for varying times of enjoyable exploration.

Distance: Varied loops, 2-10 km

Time: Allow 2 hours or so for investigation.

Features: Old mine workings, some old equipment.

Description: There are so many options for biking in this area no one particular route is recommended. Please be aware that many of the roads enter private property and respect all closures. Routes are generally flat or gently undulating with short hills and ideal for family outings or groups of varied abilities and endurance.

OGRE CANYON 12 km+ - 2 - 4 hours MODERATE

Start: Drive Highway 40 north; take the Brule turnoff to its terminus in Brule. An enjoyable bike ride along the CN road to Ogre Canyon. Some steep and rocky section; may be some large, deep puddles in wet weather. Note: Close gates at the boundary of the grazing lease.

Distance: approx. 12 km to parking area for Ogre Canyon; from there 8 km return to ridge; 4 km return along riverbank

Time: Allow 2 hours return to the parking area; 1.5 hours return to the train tracks or beyond. Additional time for hiking to Ogre Ridge; this is not recommended as a bike route as some sections are very steep and there has been much erosion.

Features: Mountain stream destination; limestone karst topography; sinkholes; fossils; views of sand dunes and Brule Lake; unusual vegetation; Fall colours. Brule train tunnel.

Description: The road to Ogre Canyon is rather tedious for hiking but makes an excellent bike route. It is often muddy since the close canopy and northerly aspect shelter the surface from the drying sun. Navigation of large puddles is to be expected.

Additional activities: Birdwatching; climbing; camping. NOTE: Climbing routes occur close to the bottom of the canyon.

Options: Ascend Bedson Ridge; and into Jasper Park (backpack).

BRULE-OLD ENTRANCE 15 km + - 4 hours; EASY

Start: Drive Highway 40 north. Take the Brule turnoff past Mountainview Estates; take a side road to the left (1 km) and park overlooking the river. An old road follows the bluff almost to Brule. Other roads cut down to the Athabasca; some are CP service roads.

Features: Athabasca River; train tracks; wildflower meadows on the bluffs.

Description: A great day's exploration can be had along these old exploration and CN roads. A good route follows the top of the bluff from Mountainview to Brule and can be very pleasant on a sunny day. The permutations and combinations for routes overlooking the Athabasca are almost endless. The old roads are mostly in fairly good shape. Some portions are rocky. There is little water along the way and this area can be very hot, dry and dusty so carry plenty of fluids. At several points roads drop down to the river and side trips can be taken to spend time watching waterfowl, river rafts or just sitting. Sections may be steep if you choose to descend to river level.

Additional activities: Cross-country running; birdwatching.

OVERLANDER TRAILS 2 km+ - 20 KM; 20 mins to all day; EASY - ADVANCED

Start: Drive from Hinton west on Highway 16 about 20". The turn for the Overlander Lodge is on the right shortly after Folding Mountain Resort (look for "roadside turnout"). Drive up the short track and park near the "community hall". The trail starts right here, in a clearing which was originally an old sawmill site.

Distance: Many loops may be taken, from distances of 2 - 20km or more depending on the day and participants abilities.

Time: 30 minutes to full day.

Features: Views of Wildhorse - Kinky lakes; Brule Range and Folding Mountain.

Description: From the parking area, follow a narrow trail to a wide track. Turn right and follow the track gently uphill. By ignoring all junctions to the right, this trail may be followed to Highway 16 and emerges near the Folding Mountain resort.

From there you may retrace your route back to the Overlander or take a track going to the left as an alternative return route.

NOTE: this return route involves a very steep descent, used as part of the "Overlander Overender" bike race held annually in June! The track straight on ends up at Wildhorse and Kinky lakes, a beautiful destination on a sunny Summer or Fall day. For the other many options available, see map. Most routes involve at least some hill climbing.

Additional Activities: Supper at the Overlander Lodge! The cabins here may also be rented. Wildhorse and Kinky lakes are stocked with fish, have boating ramps and are great picnic spots. Birdwatching (osprey, loons and other waterfowl) is also good.

Options:

CACHE PERCOTTE FOREST TRAILS various loops - 20 mins - all day; EASY

Start: From Hinton, take the Robb Road across from the Forest Technology School (first right off Switzer Drive after the hospital). The road soon becomes gravel and is a Weldwood Haul road, so exercise the proper precautions. Trucks are descending steeply and may be going at speed. After approximately 4 km, note the signage for Cache Percotte Forest. Take the next left; a large wooden sign denotes Cache Percotte Forest boundary. An alternative entry is to bike right from Hinton townsite along the trail system to Johnson Lake and follow the Trans-Alta right-of-way to the Cache Percotte (see map).

Many options exist for hiking and biking on old logging roads in the area; some suggested routes are described below.

Distance: Many loops.

Time: Varies from 2 hours for Flume Road to a full day combining various routes.

Features: Logging operations; old mine workings

Description: Cache Percotte trails vary from fairly flat or gently undulating to some very steep sections. Generally, a creek crossing signifies a steep descent to stream level followed by a rapid climb up the other side! Trail surfaces are usually good, with some large boulders. Rock shocks are an advantage for long day trips.

Additional activities: Birdwatching; wildflowers, particularly orchids; ski-ing; mountain biking.

Options: Can link into Town of Hinton trail network, or Bighorn . rail.

Caution: Fall hunting season; military or other groups at Spring Camp at some times of the year.

EMERSON LAKES 2.5 km - 45 minutes (for either trail); EASY

Start: 55 km from Hinton; 75 km from Edson. Take the Hinton Valley Route; do not branch right toward Highway 16 but take the Haul road toward the Athabasca River. Cross the river (one-way bridge; extreme caution) and follow the haul road uphill to the second junction; take the right road (Emerson Creek Road). Follow the road to approximately 55 km from Hinton to the Emerson lakes campground (AFS). The trails start at the lakeshore.

Distance: Interpretive and Nature Trails 2.5 (4.8) and 3.0 km respectively.

Time: Allow 45 minutes (1 1/2) for the Interpretive Trails and about 50 minutes for the Nature Trail.

Description: Interpretive Trails: start to the right of the parking area along the lakeshore.

Features: Beaver activity; glacial features; eskers and kettle lakes; Trapper's cabin; beaver activity.

Additional activities: Camping, fishing (rainbow, Brook Trout and splake), boating, birdwatching.

Description: Nature Trail: commences to left of parking area, circumnavigating glacial (kettle) lakes. The trail is overgrown and indistinct in a couple of places but affords a pleasant forest route.

Options: The two trails may be combined (they join near the parking lot) for a longer ride.

SUNDANCE LAKES AND WILD SCULPTURE TRAIL loops up to 12 km; 2 hours to all day/ overnight; MOSTLY EASY

Wild Sculpture Trail: 18 km - 4 hours; MODERATE (some steep sections and route-finding)

Start: From the Hinton Recreation Centre proceed east to Northwest Industrial Park road at the bottom of the hill. Turn left 0.5 km to Weldwood (Canada) road (no sign). Turn right and keep to the left around the mill 3.6 km to the bridge. CAUTION: Single lane bridge; give way to logging trucks descending from the other side. Continue 5.1 km to turnoff; turn right onto Emerson Creek road. Wild Sculpture trails are 42 km from here (just past yellow "60" sign). Alternatively, take Highway 16 east from Hinton to the Obed road; turn right off the highway and join the Emerson Creek road where the Obed road crosses it. The parking lot at the trail head was once a logging camp, established in the late 1940's. The trail starts immediately behind the parking lot. Signs along the way delineate the upper Wild Sculpture (Skyline) Trail from the lower lake trail (see map).

Features: Hoodoos; glacial lakes; Fall colours

Description: The Wild Sculpture Trail takes you past sandstone formations naturally sculptured by the wind. The high trail also affords spectacular skyline views of the Sundance Valley and the deep, clear waters of Sundance Lake. Fresh water springs are prevalent and you can enjoy breaks at several rest spots and points of interest. Allow a minimum of 4 hours for the complete trip.

Additional activities: Photography; fishing; camping.

Options: Return along the lakeshore trail.

