The great outdoors: Learn to Camp event

The Learn to Camp event held on July 24 at Twin Lakes was a success. Spearheaded by the ACE initiative, the group campout was in the Twin Lakes area.

Services Supervisor Graham Thursfield took the group on a nature walk and taught the group about wild flowers, plants and animals.

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In addition, citizen scientists who do not have a smartphone can pick up a GPS unit to participate in the study. The program will run through the fall "until people are not finding scat anymore," says Kinney.

On August 6, there will be an information session held at the Provincial Building at 7 p.m. There will be researchers on hand who are directly involved with the study to talk about the project and past projects. "It will be good for people who have questions about not only this project but the whole body of research that goes into developing a population estimate," says Kinney.

For more information about the project, visit www.grizzly-scata.ca.

Sean Kinney, Communications and Development Manager for the Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley, Edson and Hinton and the edge of the Rocky Mountains between Beauval and Jasper.

The program is launched in central Alberta by the Alberta Conservation Association, aims to determine the population size, abundance and distribution of grizzly bears in central Alberta.

The program, which is in partnership with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) and the Alberta Conservation Association, aims to determine the populations size, abundance and distribution of grizzly bears from their scat DNA.

Sean Kinney, Communications and Development Manager for the Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley, Edson and Hinton and the edge of the Rocky Mountains between Beauval and Jasper.

"The idea behind the pilot project is to get good engagement and good samples from the area," says Kinney. "We are all optimistic that everything’s going to go well and that there will be an opportunity for this to get bigger than it already is."

The program is derived from Scandinavian bear managers who used volunteer hunters to collect scat DNA samples. It will cover the land bordered by the towns of Nordegg, Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley, Edson and Hinton and the edge of the Rocky Mountains between Beauval and Jasper.

"The IRI, which previously studied this area in 2004 through barbed wire hair collection techniques, says that there will be plenty of bear scat available in the fall as the bears prepare for hibernation. The DNA will be processed to determine the genus, species and location, as well as the bear has been related or is related to a bear that is currently in the database."

The smartphone app allows the study to target a large number of Albertans who can easily record and submit scat information directly to the IRI database.

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