



“A consumerist attitude may lubricate the wheels of the economy; it sprinkles sand into the bearings of morality.”
Zygmunt Bauman

December 2014

The Tiger - the book.

No SAGE meeting in December.

Have a fantastic holiday season and happy new year.

Solar Wind Workshop
Wednesday, December 10 - Picture Butte Community Centre. Contact: Lethbridge County Agriculture Service Board at (403) 732-5333

SACPA: Going Wild: Where are the Planet's Best Wilderness Locations? With Brian Keating. sacpa.ca

Take a journey into one of the planet's most remote areas; Primorye in northeastern Russia, squeezed between The Peoples' Republic of China and the Sea of Japan. Converging in this area are 4 distinct bioregions marked by Siberian taiga, Mongolian steppes, Korean and Manchurian subtropics and northern boreal forests – a Boreal Jungle in the author's terms. It's not easy being a human here, eking out a living collecting pine nuts, trapping animals and logging – but it's becoming impossible for the Siberian Tiger to thrive in this, one of the last regions on earth in which they roam.

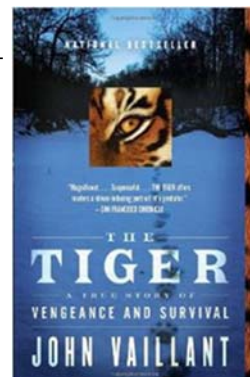
Russia is not usually thought of as keen on conservation, yet it is the first nation ever to undertake a comprehensive survey of this keystone species and, in 1947, to call for a moratorium on hunting. Russian biologists may have been hampered by rigid Stalinist inter-

pretations of Marxism and its reductionist view of nature, but they and the tigers were driven to their knees by Perestroika, the consequent destruction of Russian state political systems and the opening of the border to China and international poaching. Enter the world's greatest capitalists and a game changing 1993 New York Times report by Suzanne Possehl: *Russia and America Team up to Save Endangered Tiger*.

Team Tiger is well funded and supported by the US and Russia, proud and confident in their ability to protect both Amur tigers and humans, certainly confident to resolve the 1997 incident of a man eating tiger in Primorye. But what a strange tiger tale it is; in a part of the world where indigenous peoples revere the animal and where most believe tigers will only hurt if they have been hurt – the Russian team is confronted with the death of a hunter named Markov whose

remains would fit into the chest pocket of a sports shirt, tiger tracks that indicate an animal of such size it could drag a grown man without breaking stride and a crime scene in which everything the victim owned – from hunting dog to drinking ladle, to the door of Markov's cabin – has been mangled, mauled and utterly destroyed. “Why” wonders one of the investigators at the scene “is the tiger so angry with him?”

A thoroughly well documented and engaging read that roams about in politics, anthropology, history and biology and will give you more information than is strictly necessary to answer the question of tiger vengeance.



Grinch's Guide to Christmas Presents

Buy nothing.

Yes, tell everyone that there will be no presents, not this year, not ever. No plastic junk to feed the yawning landfill over the next few months. No glossy paper stuffed into green garbage bags the day of the big event. No cheesy fake smiles to endure as they open your completely thoughtless gift.

Imagine no holiday traffic, driving behind someone going 30 km/h, straddling two lanes with the left blinker on. No parking by door-dingers at the Big Box. No threats from the local collection agency after your credit cards explode.

Give something.

Okay, so you won't get away with the first option. Try re-gifting all of the crap you got last year. The sweater that is three sizes too small, the ear wax remover, the 100,000 piece puzzle of the sky, the hat with the protruding reindeer antlers. You didn't want them, but you got them anyway. So, why not pass them along to someone who may enjoy them (or not, who cares - they can re-gift it next year). If you are dealing with a problem gift-giver, the re-gift can go right back to them - that should send the preferred message.

Or, Buy something.

As a final option, the least desirable from a Grinchy perspective, is to actually buy something. You already know that batteries are bad, chemical off-gassing from plastics is bad, wood products from old-growth forests are bad, excess packaging is bad ... sigh. But you are obliged to buy something!

Well, consider a **rain barrel** from [Environment Lethbridge](http://EnvironmentLethbridge.org/), or a **t-shirt** (oldmanbasin.org/) from the OWC film project ...
Was that shameless advertising, or what?
Have a Merry Christmas!

At First Light

(Courtesy of Lorne Fitch, P. Biol., May 2012)

No photograph could have captured it, although in the memory the nuances of light, dark, shadow, texture and color remain. A painter might have done a tolerable job. That assumes the palate was expressive enough to include the cerebral sense of warmth with sunrise, coupled with the visceral, bone chilling cold of an air temperature well below freezing. It would have been a curious juxtaposition if the oils had remained viscous or the watercolors unfrozen.

A video could have done some justice to the creeping potential of dawn and the explosion of light as the sun crested the ridge to the east. It might have encapsulated a segment, a vignette of motion and the sense of time. That is if the hands would have been steady enough, or the fingers sufficiently thawed and flexible to focus the

camera. A big if, I think.

A photographic image, even a painting can recall, like an imperfect sketch, what one saw. This gives rise to memory and a spark to our brain's hard drive to resurrect all of the senses of the scene. We then try to recreate not just what was seen, but the richer, multidimensional tapestry of what we felt and experienced. It's best to be aware of our limitations with words and pictures. Despite our skills and the artifacts of our art we cannot hope to match, to recreate the throb of life, the panorama that unfolds before us and the intangible, uncapturable qualities of the phases, faces, and moods of the landscape.

I took no pictures, nor did I sketch the scene that cold, clear fall day, at dawn. Sometimes it is a distraction to attempt to record a scene in

deference to watching and participating in it. Not only do we lack the technology to capture the essence of a scene we can't often define or divine the meaning. There it is, and it is beautiful. That's enough. Better perhaps to be part of it all than to parse it into bits for analysis.

Only in memory are found all the indelible features, images and sense of that morning. In the senescence of autumn the grass held variegated shades from gold through tan to brown. Each blade of grass was rimmed with frost, thick hoar frost layered to provide individual definition. Each frost crystal was an individual prism funneling, focusing and refracting light. Rays of sunlight bent, and split into a kaleidoscope of color with the jewelling of each frost particle as the sun washed over the field of grass. No wind be-

Interesting Links:

Alberta Energy Efficiency Alliance <http://www.aaea.ca/resources>

Film: The stunning documentary *GRASSLANDS* by acclaimed filmmaker Ian Toews brings the sights and sounds of the wild prairie to the big screen.

Can China Cut Coal? <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/>



Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

sage-communications@sage-environment.org

trayed this decoration.

No human ingenuity could have eclipsed this scene or even matched or paralleled it. This was real special effects, organic and natural. It's a time when you catch yourself forgetting to breathe. Scenes like it quicken the heart, like glimpsing the face of a lovely woman in a crowd. The encounter occurs in seconds, maybe less but the heart is filled with wonder, delight and joy.

There are those rare moments of such sublime delight you want them to endure, but they don't and that may be their virtue. For, if they lasted too long the risk increases they will become common, mundane and not powerful enough to provoke a memory. A snap shot is what we get; if we are receptive and watchful that is reward enough.

On the eastern horizon clouds had lifted slightly, providing a window through which sunlight poured, bathing the scene. Light at dawn and dusk has a special quality; warmer, diffuse, oblique and expressive. Maybe it's related to the anticipation of a day after a period of darkness, or a day ending, soon to be plunged into gloom again that gives this brief period an intrinsic, but hard to describe feeling. Ephemeral and fleeting perhaps it was, but tangible to the eye.

Four whitetail does emerge or, more to the senses, materialize, apparate from out of a patch of aspen. Their backs are blanketed

in frost, reminding me of the comfort of earlier wood heat and a down sleeping bag. As they cautiously advance their legs scatter jewels of ice and the sunlight bounces off puffs of frost dust. Deer eyes are brown, liquid and have the catch light of the recently risen sun reflected. Brown on white is the palate. The image is reminiscent of a ship on a winter north Atlantic run- ice encrusted on top, rusty brown beneath and white waves below the Plimsoll line.

All creation, embodied at that moment in those four deer. They could be an apt metaphor for the true grandeur of life, especially on such a morning. For it is on occasions such as this that there is a palpable sense of being part of it all and because of the connection, responsible.

They come closer, unsuspecting but alert. Evolution with predators gives them a constant aura of vigilance. Be still I think and ignore your toes that scream to move and allow some hot blood to circulate to them. Consciousness seeps into my mind at about the same rate of blood flow to my toes. It is about the wonder, promise and reward of being present at first light.

Lorne Fitch is a Professional Biologist, a retired Fish and Wildlife Biologist and an Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary

Alberta Energy Efficiency Alliance

You may be surprised to hear, but Alberta has an Energy Efficiency Alliance. Established in 2007, the AEEA is a group of industry, associations, municipal and non-profit organizations oriented to the following 'beliefs':

1. Energy efficiency plays an important role in creating a sustainable Alberta, economically and environmentally.
2. There are non-economic barriers to the adoption of economic energy efficiency technology and activities.
3. There is a role for all orders of government, all businesses (commercial, institutional, retail, industrial, and utilities), non-profit organizations and individuals in maximizing the benefits of energy efficiency.

Their vision is: "Alberta will become a world leader in energy efficiency, as it is a world leader in energy production."

The auditor general in Alberta has recently criticized the provincial government for its ineffective strategy to reduce carbon emissions, and noted that currently effective monitoring is deficient. Furthermore, Environment Canada has projected that the country will miss its 2020 GHG reduction targets due to the absence of a plan.

The War on Science: Muzzled scientists and wilful blindness in Stephen Harper's Canada. (2013)

"Bill C-38 fundamentally rewrote the Canadian Fisheries Act, reducing its mandate from all fish habitat to only that of "valuable" fish populations, leaving more than half of Canada's freshwater fish species and 80 percent of species at risk of extinction unprotected. The omnibus budget also repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and amended the Species at Risk Act and the Navigable Waters protection Act, the latter of which was further revised a few months later in Bill C-45, 2012's second omnibus budget bill. (Before C-45, the Navigable Waters Protection Act provided environmental oversight for nearly 3 million bodies of water across Canada; after the bill become law, just 162 remained protected.)

The list of C-38's cuts and closures went on and on. In addition to shutting down the Experimental Lakes Area, the bill axed the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) and eviscerated the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences (CFCAS). The cuts to CFCAS necessitated the closure of the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory (PEARL), Canada's only research and data-gathering facility on the High Arctic. The bill's myriad hacks and slices shut down oil-spill response stations in northern British Columbia, slashed staff at Department of Fisheries monitoring stations nationwide, and triggered the summary abandonment of 492 environmental impact assessments on a broad range of

proposed industrial projects across the country. One of the bill's few new investments on the environmental front was an \$8-million line item to permit Revenue Canada to perform a higher volume of audits on environmental NGOs, ostensibly to uncover what Natural Resources minister Joe Oliver claimed was widespread overspending on political activities in violation of their charitable status. (By the end of the first year under this new audit program, Revenue Canada had spent \$5 million on almost nine hundred NGO audits to uncover a single organization in violation of the spending rule for political activities – Physicians for Global Survival, a nuclear disarmament group)" (p.27).

That's the story elaborated in Chris Turner's essay, *The War on Science*.

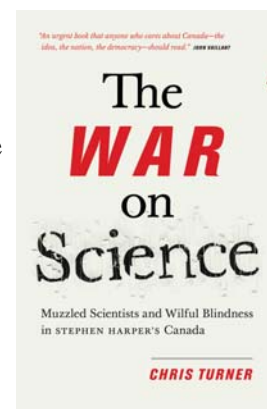
But why? Why has this government so assaulted environmental science and laws to protect the natural world? Turner suggests: "The most obvious reason [...] is that the government has an agenda, only partially stated. To accelerate the exploitation of Canada's resource wealth – that's the explicit part. To eliminate its ability to see the cost of this policy – that's the implicit part." Could a government be so cynical that it willfully obscures evidence of the impact its policies will have on future Canadians? Chris Turner says it could, and is. Another example Turner gives is in regards to Canada's decision to withdraw from the United Nations



Convention to Combat Desertification: "Renewing the funding for Canada's participation in 2013 would have cost \$283,000 for the next three years – or less annually than the cost of a single Economic Action Plan ad aired during a *Hockey Night in Canada* playoff broadcast. Instead, Canada summarily abandoned its commitment to the convention, becoming the only UN member nation on earth not party to it" (p.98). Embarrassing?

The War on Science is a good polemic against our current federal government. Most of the stories were amply covered by the press over the past few years, but Chris Turner puts it together in such a way as to make it hurt all over again. He concludes: "This is an entirely new way of thinking about the role of government and the balance of public and private interests in Canadian life. This is a new political age – the age of wilful blindness, in which government's aim is to reduce its own ability to see the true costs of its policies and in which facts contrary to those policies are overlooked, eliminated, clamped down, ignored. This is a breach of fundamental democratic principles" (p.106).

"Do No Science, Hear No Science, Speak No Science – that is the Harper agenda" (p.31).





A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

21 November 2014

Lethbridge City Council
City Hall
910 – 4 Ave. S., Lethbridge AB
Attn: City Clerk, council@lethbridge.ca

Dear Honorable Mayor and Councillors:

**Re: Bylaw 5894, Proposed Amendment to the City of Lethbridge Bylaw 5700
Portion of 1410 and 1520 – 24 Ave. S. (20-21-8-W4), Tudor Estates Neighbourhood**

SAGE (Southern Alberta Group for Environment), a non-profit society established in 1984, is a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community through informing citizens, participating in public processes and supporting sound environmental initiatives and actions. We have informed ourselves about the proposed change in land use classification to allow residential development on the edge of the Oldman River valley adjacent to Tudor Estates Neighbourhood. We provide the following comments for your consideration in making a decision regarding the above application for rezoning.

Current Ownership, Zoning and Use of the Land

Although the Notice of Public Hearing is not clear about ownership, we are informed that the western half of the land proposed for rezoning (1.78 ha/4.40 ac) is public land, acquired by the City in 2001 as part of a 25-acre parcel. This 4.4-acre parcel is a narrow peninsula jutting westward and flanked on three sides by steep-sided coulees of the Oldman River valley. This scenic parcel of public land is grassland and used extensively for outdoor recreation by residents of Tudor Estates and beyond, as evidenced by the network of informal trails that run through it.

It is our understanding that when purchased the parcel was zoned Urban Reserve in *Land Use Bylaw 4100* and that all parcels with that zoning in the previous bylaw were arbitrarily switched to Future Urban Development (FUD) when *Land Use Bylaw 5700* was instituted in 2011. It is also our understanding that at that time detailed consideration was not given to the most appropriate zoning and use of individual parcels of land designated as FUD under *Land Use Bylaw 5700*.

According to *Land Use Bylaw 5700*, FUD is “for the control of subdivision and development until the required municipal services are available, area structure or area redevelopment

plans are approved, and more appropriate alternative districts are applied". The City-owned parcel and the private land being considered for rezoning to Low Density Residential (R-L) are not part of an area structure plan or area redevelopment plan. Noteworthy is that the City-owned parcel is flanked on three sides by lands zoned as Valley District (V) and subject to the *River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 5277)*.

In an *in-camera* meeting on July 7, 2014, City Council entered into a conditional land sale with Douglas J. Bergen and Associates Ltd. of Coaldale that would exchange this 4.4-acre parcel of public land for \$8,500 and a 1.95-acre parcel that would form part of the right-of-way for a proposed future crossing of the Oldman River valley, should a third crossing be built in future. The sale is conditional on rezoning the land to Low Density Residential (R-L) on or before December 31, 2014 and on the developer subdividing the parcel by December 31, 2015. There was not public notice associated with the conditional land sale agreement.

This appears to be the first opportunity for openly assessing the environmental aspects, alternative uses and appropriate zoning for these public lands.

Essential Municipal Services

We have been informed that thirty-seven houses are proposed for the development, twenty of these on City land. It is our understanding that municipal stormwater and wastewater utilities serving Tudor Estates are already stressed and there is not an easy fix. Hence, it is doubtful that the required municipal services are available in the Tudor Estates area to allow a change to zoning that would lead to a residential subdivision of this size.

We suggest a full assessment of the costs versus the benefits to taxpayers is needed to inform a decision regarding municipal investment in major infrastructure upgrades such as would be required to accommodate the proposed development. We have not seen such an assessment.

River Valley Setback and Slumping Risk

The City-owned parcel is adjacent to the Valley District and therefore subject to development setback as per the *River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 5277)*. We are informed that a geotechnical study was commissioned by the proponent, although it has not been made public at the time of preparation of this submission.

A walk along the tops of coulees adjacent to Tudor Estates and northward to Chinook Heights and Park Royal Estates provides ample visual evidence of natural slumping as well as accelerated slumping attributable to residential developments on adjacent uplands. Minimum legal setbacks do not appear to be sufficient. It is probable that the City-owned parcel on the narrow peninsula flanked by steep-walled coulees has geology similar to the areas experiencing accelerated slumping to the north and south.

We suggest a decision to rezone the lands needs to be informed by a detailed geotechnical study and risk assessment specific to the site. Such a study would involve drilling and monitoring to acquire the information on subsurface geology, drainage and factors that result in accelerated rates of slumping. Experience has shown that a desktop study that establishes a minimum setback is not sufficient to provide confidence that Lethbridge taxpayers will avoid major liability should the development proceed and there is subsequent loss of private property to slumping, such as occurred at Stafford Coulee.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan Policies

SAGE is familiar with the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan (2010)* having participated in its preparation. Our view is that the proposed rezoning and subsequent residential development is inconsistent with the policies set out in the *ICSP/MDP*. Of particular relevance is:

Section 6.5.1 Lethbridge's River Valley is the Primary Open Space System.

"Policy 3) Restrict development on or near to hazardous lands in the river valley"

Hazardous lands include "...lands with slopes over 15%, and lands characterized by extensive slumping, drainage or erosion problems." Our view is that the City lands that are the subject of this application are near to hazardous lands and therefore development must be restricted.

"Policy 4) Ensure the River Valley is accessible to all residents"

"Policy 5) Incorporate strategically located view corridors adjacent to the river valley"

"Policy 6) Increase accessibility to the river valley by requiring linear open space along the valley crest"

"Policy 7) Create a continuous pathway throughout and along the top of river valley"

We suggest that development of a subdivision with 20 residences on such a narrow peninsula would exclude recreational users and violate the above policies. Should the rezoning and development proceed, a well-established trail along the north side of the parcel would be interrupted and built upon and there would be insufficient space for a public trail along the south side of the development. Squeezing a trail between backyards and the coulee edge would create the potential for conflict between homeowners and trail users. Well-used green space along the valley crest would be lost as would the opportunity for a continuous pathway along the top of river valley extending from Lethbridge College north to the Sugar Bowl that is part of the recommended future pathway development indicated in Figure 7.2 of the *City of Lethbridge Bikeways & Pathways Master Plan (2007)*. A more appropriate zoning for the parcel, currently zoned Future Urban Development, is Park and Recreation (P-R) or River Valley (V).

Summary

In summary, we recommend that City Council deny the application to change the land use classification on a portion of 1410 and 1520 – 24 Ave. S. (20-21-8-W4) from Future Urban Development (FUD) to Low Density Residential (R-L). The land in question is in an area that has experienced accelerated slumping following residential development on adjacent uplands and insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate residential development on the narrow peninsula flanked by steep-sided coulees would not be at risk of accelerated slumping. Current municipal services, particularly wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, are reportedly inadequate to accommodate additional residential development and thus to justify rezoning. Much of the land (4.4 ac) is owned by the City and receives extensive recreational use.

We suggest the City Council deny the application for rezoning and vote to retain these lands in public ownership. Proceeding with proposed development of a public pathway along the top of river valley would be consistent with the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan (2010)* and the *City of Lethbridge Bikeways & Pathways Master Plan (2007)*. We suggest a more appropriate zoning for these public lands, currently zoned Future Urban Development (FUD), is River Valley (V) or Park and Recreation (P-R).

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Braum Barber', written in a cursive style.

Braum Barber, Chair