

I really didn't mean to hit the guy. I just wanted to get the . . . phones to work.

Actor Russell Crowe, 41, charged with assault and weapons possession, after hurling a faulty phone and hitting a New York hotel clerk in the face.

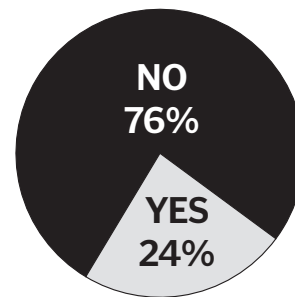


Q:

TOMORROW: WHERE BUFFALO SHOULDN'T ROAM?

An Alberta government proposal to allow captive buffalo on grazing leases has prompted some outrage by provincial fish and game and wilderness associations. Writer **Will Verboven** finds this curious, since these same lands were grazed by buffalo originally.

Here is how you voted on Day 1:



Today's question

Should bears that wander into populated areas be shot? This is your final day to respond.

To vote go to calgaryherald.com/Q

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QUERIES • QUIBBLES • QUIRKS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2005 A19

INBOX

YOUR SPACE • YOUR TIME

Anti-human policy

ISABELLE DUBE • Re: "Grizzly attack kills woman jogger," June 6.

Isabelle Dube died horrifically and needlessly because of the government policy of letting grizzly bears live near people.

This dangerous policy serves no human benefit. Its net effect — and its intent — are to prevent people from enjoying nature without the fear of a pending bear attack.

This anti-human policy is driven by the nature-worshipping ideology of environmentalism, which regards pristine nature as a sacred value in and of itself regardless of any harm or benefit to humans.

Environmentalists may claim concern for people, but, in any clash between human welfare and their leave-nature-alone credo, environmentalists always choose the latter.

If human life and human enjoyment of nature must be sacrificed to preserve grizzly bears (or cougars) then the greens are all for it.

Throughout history, mystics and other power lusters have urged people to sacrifice their lives to the gods, the tribe, the state or the fuhrer — all with deadly consequences.

Environmentalists have added "pristine nature" to this list and, tragically, many today have been brainwashed into believing human welfare is subordinate to "leaving nature alone."

The purpose of government is to protect individual rights, not to sacrifice people to dangerous animals.

Isabelle Dube isn't the first victim of this inversion of purpose, and, shamefully, she won't be the last.

Glenn Woiceshyn, Calgary

Bears there first

GRIZZLY ATTACK • As a resident of the Bow Valley for 25 years, I felt compelled to write to the Herald over Cameron Baty's statement: "The view in town is that bears have more rights than we do."

As humans, we have the right to live here, as well. Live here yes, but clearcut their habitat and use "their gardens" with a blatant disregard for the early season appetites, I don't think so.

Our wildlife has lived in our woods, which we are reducing for corporate and personal gains, for centuries.

We are sharing this planet with the wild life out there. Once you leave the security of your home, you're free game — especially to the bears and cougars who are heavier, faster, stronger than most of us, and have much more "bush smarts" than we have.

Baty should be thankful our bears and cougars don't go out in two-somes and three-somes for their safety.

He would then truly see who has what "rights" and where we have those rights!

Benjamin J. Smeenk, Canmore

Halt development

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR • It is very unfortunate that the most recent grizzly bear attack resulted in not only the loss of a human life but also the loss of another bear from an already endangered grizzly bear population, especially as in this case it seems that one possible cause is that of encroachment on the grizzlies area by a large development, which in this case is SilverTip.

Ever since the development of SilverTip, there has always been concern there was an insufficient area left so animals, in particular the grizzly bear, could travel back and forth to Kananaskis Country.

YOU SAID IT BEST

Each day, a letter that expresses a view particularly well is featured on Q. Each month, one outstanding letter will be chosen for a special prize.



Herald Archive, Rocky Mountain Outlook

Reader says eagerness to accommodate developers has ignored wildlife corridor needs.

Town's sprawl led to inevitable encounter

BACK-COUNTRY • Re: "Grizzly attack kills woman jogger," June 6.

Any loss of life is regrettable, but Canmore's sprawling development across the Bow Valley made this encounter inevitable.

Animals and humans have both been forced into a narrow corridor on the north

side of the valley by fenced developments on the south side.

Planning approvals should have maintained existing trails in all areas for both humans and wildlife.

Officials seem to have overlooked the proximity to back-country in their eagerness to accommodate the wishes of

developers. A mountain biker was reported as saying the bear should have been shot earlier.

No, the humans should have observed the voluntary closure of this trail and left the animals to go about their business in peace.

G. R. Williams, Calgary



Courtesy, Dube family
Isabelle Dube.

Although the developers of SilverTip claim that, after many studies, there was an adequate corridor for animals, it would seem this recent tragic event may prove otherwise.

Indications so far appear this was not an aggressive bear but perhaps a chance encounter with a bear doing what it does naturally and that is roaming its territory. I feel too much blame was placed on the grizzly and it should not have been destroyed.

I am very sorry that Isabelle Dube lost her life so tragically, but animals such as the grizzly have to be given large areas to move around in and, if we don't, then there will be more both human and grizzly mortalities.

Nigel J. Higenbottam, Calgary

Clean sweep

ACTIVISTS • Re: "Grain on tracks brings bears to danger," June 4.

If "wildlife activists" Tracey Henderson and Jim Pissot think the efforts of Canadian Pacific to keep grain off their tracks isn't good enough, why don't

Bruce N. Mills, Dundas, Ont.

Human-free zones

BOW VALLEY • Re: "Attack breeds caution," Robert Remington, Column, June 7.

Housing and tourist developments are permanently clustered near the TransCanada Highway in the Bow Valley Corridor.

They continue to grow, and removing them is not an option.

The current strategy of promoting increasing numbers of both humans and large carnivores in the same area and then attempting to "manage" both populations is a futile exercise.

Training carnivores and people to avoid each other, relocating and collaring, trail closures, and fencing townsites will create employment for a few but will only delay the inevitable.

We should protect the wilderness ecosystems that remain and keep them free of human development.

We should not be wasting our efforts in the Bow Valley in order to satisfy the unrealistic expectations of tourists and environmentalists. A recent result of this attempt to "manage" the co-habitation of people and large carnivores is two deaths — one human and one bear.

Maurice Gaucher, Calgary

Legacy of greed

DEVELOPMENT • I live in Canmore and have also lived in smaller towns as well as larger cities where urbanization encroaches upon nature.

While driving to Canmore, there are three billboards depicting grizzlies, with one stating the chance of seeing grizzlies is 90 per cent, I believe. On the way to Edmonton on a billboard for the Red Deer zoo, there is a photo with a child's head in the mouth of a bear.

The advertisements for SilverTip Golf course and Blackstone resorts show bears usually depicted as majestic or playful.

It is extremely unfortunate this lovely woman was mauled and killed by a bear. It is not her fault.

I believe most of the fault lies with developers, contractors, those with the connections to have houses and golf courses built where they should not be and to some obsequious past and present town councillors where the overarching motivation is greed.

Greed to make money building and selling homes; greed to build flashy resorts; greed to service those resorts; greed to make money out of anything regardless of the impact.

It would be a legacy for Dube's family members (especially her child), friends and community, if people, town council and the Alberta government really did care about overdevelopment and its consequences.

Unfortunately, the needs of the many do not outweigh the greeds of the few.

Dave Bateman, Canmore

Here's a plan that will avert another tragedy

JEFF GAILUS
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

The headline in Tuesday's Herald — Was the killer bear handled properly? — only hints at the complexity of factors that led to the tragic deaths of Isabelle Dube and Bear #99. The answer may rely less on handling bears than it does on handling people and human development.

Isabelle was a friend of mine. Our daughters are about the same age, and we would run into each other at birthday parties and soccer games. We mountain biked and skied together, or at least as together as my tired old legs would allow.

On more than one occasion, we talked about the growing conflict between wildlife and recreation. She was concerned, and rightfully so, that rampant development had given golfers and homeowners the lion's share of the land and left the rest of us to fight over the scraps.

For years, a war of sorts has been raging in Canmore. Since the 1970s, the government of Alberta has sold off thousands of hectares of Crown land surrounding the town, hoping it would grow into a tourist destination to rival Banff.

Rightfully concerned with the effect of rampant development, Canmore residents demanded limits to ensure adequate surrounding landscape was maintained for the use of recreationists and wildlife. Several studies, hearings and open houses all recommended functional wildlife corridors be maintained to keep wildlife populations healthy and, more important, to keep people safe.

An example: In 1993, Martha McCallum and Dr. Paul Paquet prepared a wildlife management plan for Stone Creek Properties, now SilverTip, the community behind which Isabelle was killed. They wrote: "The provision of wildlife corridors is probably the most important mitigation measure to protect people from bears by providing the option of an undeveloped travel route for bears."

They go on to say "functional wildlife corridors require both protection of continuous corridors and prevention of wildlife disturbance within the corridors . . . Wildlife corridors can be protected from human disturbance by providing adequate park and recreation facilities adjacent to corridor areas. This approach will . . . provide a transitional buffer between the corridors and other human development."

This sound advice was ignored, which is as much to blame for Isabelle's death as the handling of Bear #99 this month. Although wildlife corridors were designated, scientists have long been telling us they are not large enough to provide wildlife the room they need to amble unmolested from one end of the valley to the other. This has led to many a dead bear, several human injuries and one tragic fatality.

The heedless development and poor planning that characterize Canmore inevitably breed conflict. Environmentalists blame developers for destroying wildlife habitat and the critters that call(ed) it home.

Developers claim they're being prevented from earning a fair return on their investment, and the provincial government berates town council for being obstructionist.

Recreationists attack environmentalists for putting the needs of animals ahead of those of people. And then people and bears start bumping into each other in what little space is left.

The real question, and one I

think Isabelle would like us to answer, is: What now? How can we prevent a similar tragedy from happening again?

Canmore must become a truly BearSmart community. It will take leadership (and money) from the instigators of this fiasco, the Government of Alberta.

But that is the obligation that accompanies the right to turn an important wildlife movement corridor into a resort community that will one day rival the excesses of Aspen and Vail.

We don't have a choice. Canmore will never be able to entirely rid itself of bears — I've had the pleasure, on a run of my own, of watching a sow and her cubs dashing through the nearby forests on more than one occasion — and we're past the point of shooting every bear that wanders into view. But we can make the Bow Valley safer for both people and bears.

Canmore has already done an excellent job of securing the attractants — garbage, bird feeders, compost — that once lured bears into town. Now we need to develop a plan that will minimize human-bear conflict in the wildlife corridors.

We can do a much better job of keeping bears and people apart. When a bear is in the area, Alberta Fish and Wildlife must post signs to warn residents and trail users to stay away, and trails (and golf courses) must be closed to human use so the bear has a chance to move on without

getting into trouble. If the bear enters town, bear-human co-existence specialists must monitor it around the clock, delivering aversive conditioning (noise, rubber bullets, barking bear dogs) until it learns to move on (which may take up to a week).

Only if the bear continues to be a nuisance should it be relocated within its home range, and continuously monitored and aversively conditioned if it tries to return. Had these precautions been taken with #99, this tragedy may well have been avoided.

If, after continued effort, the bear can't learn to live in the world we have created for it, it will have to be destroyed.

These recommendations were ignored in the past because they are expensive to implement. But some people are fiercely opposed to the management (and limitation) of human use in the wildlife corridors around Canmore. People can ensure Isabelle did not die in vain by supporting the limitations on human-use that will be a part of a bear management plan.

The name of the game now is keeping people safe and bears alive in a poorly planned municipality smack dab in the middle of bear country. It will require the co-operation of the entire community.

It doesn't mean we can't enjoy the amenities Canmore has to offer, but it will mean we — golfers and mountain bikers and developers alike — will need to exercise a little more restraint.

I think, under the circumstances, Isabelle would have wanted us to at least try.

JEFF GAILUS,
WRITER AND CONSERVATIONIST,
CO-ORDINATES
A BEARSMART COMMUNITY PROGRAM
IN ALBERTA.

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