

On Wednesday November 1, 2006, Dee and I went up Barrier Lake Lookout in the Kananaskis Valley. We had not much choice as there was too much snow on the high slopes for hiking and not enough lower down for snowshoeing.

Again, it was a beautiful sunny day, although a bit on the chilly side (-7c). We started from the Barrier Lake parking lot, walked across the dam and then hiked the trail to the lookout (well marked with signs) and enjoyed great views of the Bow and Kananaskis Valleys and of Mount Yamnuska.

Ciao, Vic



Barrier Lake and Mount Baldy



Even in winter there is still an abundance of wildlife to view in the mountains



South View from Barrier Lookout



Barrier Lake and Mount Baldy from Barrier Lookout Trail





Snow Elephant!



Mount Yamnuka from Barrier Lake Lookout

Mount Yamnuska

Elevation 2240m (7349ft.)

Latitude 51; 07; 25 Longitude 115; 07; 00

Can be seen from Highway #1 (Trans Canada)

Please note that "Yamnuska" is an unofficial name as the mountain was officially named Mount Laurie in 1961. The native name for the mountain translates as "wall of stone".

Located on the north side of the Bow River, Mount Laurie is the most easterly mountain in the valley and features a very steep, often vertical south cliff 360 metres in height and almost two kilometres in width. Geologically, the mountain is noteworthy because of the clear view of the McConnell Thrust Fault that has forced 600 million year old Paleozoic limestone over 100 million year old Mesozoic rocks. The harder limestone forms the cliff and the softer shales of the Mesozoic era form the lower layers.

Generally sound rock combined with easy access from Calgary and a southern exposure which makes it climbable when most other mountains are not has made the mountain very popular with serious, technical climbers. The rock climbing history on Mount Laurie began in the 1950's. There are now over one hundred recognized routes on the cliff face.

Yamnuska is the setting for Ben Gadd's highly regarded novel, "Raven's End." The story follows the lives of a group of ravens that reside on Yamnuska. One of the ravens, Colin, ventures off and travels through the Rockies searching for the mythical "Mountain of Feathers." Ben weaves his extensive knowledge of the Rockies into this wonderful tale.

Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to summit Mount Everest, has written that Yamnuska is a very special mountain to him, "When I'm away from home, in a foreign land, and I'm run down and hurting, sometimes I lean back and close my eyes and find myself drifting back to Yamnuska. I can feel the wind in that area and hear the trees when the wind passes through them and they speak. I can taste the water that comes from Yamnuska's underground streams, and I feel the accomplishment, fear, and deep satisfaction that I have experienced in 32 years of climbing on that mountain. I've been to a lot of places in this world, but none of them feel like home the way that mountain does."



See Mount Yamnuska on the right?



McConnell Thrust Fault

Until 1961 the mountain was known as Yamnuska which is derived from the Stoney word from the Stoney "Iyamnathka" that describes steep cliffs or "the flat faced mountain." It was renamed at the request of the Stoneys in honour of the founder of the Indian Association of Alberta, John Laurie.

John Laurie (1899-1959) was an educator and political activist. Born in Ayr, Ontario, he was educated at Galt Collegiate Institute and the University of Toronto. He came west in 1920 and attended Calgary Normal School. After teaching in several rural communities, he taught at Western Canada College and later at Crescent Heights High School. In 1939 he became interested in the problems facing Alberta Indians and for the next twenty years espoused Indian causes and assisted many Indian youth in furthering their education. He acted as Secretary of the Indian Association of Alberta from 1944-1956, utilizing much of his spare time promoting the

causes of Alberta Indians. In the mid-1950's, his health failed and he resigned as a teacher in 1956. From 1955 until 1959 he worked for the Glenbow Foundation compiling information about the Stoneys. John Laurie received an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta in 1956 and, in the same year, was selected as Calgary's outstanding citizen of the year.

The following inscription appears on a large rock on the Stoney Reserve beneath the mountain: "A good friend to the Indians who taught them to preserve their culture and their treaty rights, and helped unite the nine tribes of our province into the Indian Association of Alberta. His efforts improved the condition of the Indian, and created friendship, equality, and understanding between Alberta Indians and other citizens. Over the boundaries of colour and race swept the will of the Great Spirit."

Yamnuska is the only mountain in the Canadian Rockies with two books written about it. "The Yam" was written by Chic Scott, Ben Gadd, and Dave Dornien. "Yamnuska Rock," by Andy Genereux, describes 115 climbing routes on the mountain. Both are available through Rocky Mountain Books.

- Copy courtesy of the PeakFinder web site *By Dave Birrell*



Mount Baldy from Barrier Lake Lookout



Crystal patterns provide micro beauty to compliment the stunning landscapes



You can't win a game of hide & seek when you're wearing a red toque



Heading home after another glorious day