

PROTECTING THE WATER, WILDLIFE AND OUTDOOR HERITAGE OF THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT.



Headwaters Montana



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Expanding Waterton Lakes National Park

It All Makes Sense from Here

July 12, 2013

Dear Friend:

Mount Haig
At 8,439 feet (2590m) this precipitous peak ranks as dramatic as many in the adjoining Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. I had the good fortune to climb it with five friends and three enthusiastic dogs. From the top you can see how the land connects. We only need to keep it connected as part of a new Canadian National Park.

Flathead Wild!
needs your voice. Join up! (Click image to enlarge.)

I'm sitting atop Mount Haig in the Canadian Rockies, just 30 miles (48km) from the Montana border and Glacier National Park. In front of me, the broken limestone and shale shards descend in sweeping arcs until they merge with ridge lines that go on forever. Behind me, *very close behind me*, my seat drops away vertically 2,000 feet to a jewel-like turquoise lake. I could be on top of Siyeh Peak in Glacier, but I'm not. I'm sitting on the highest peak in the proposed new Flathead National Park.

From up here you can see how the land fits together. How a grizzly bear and her cubs might tumble out of their winter den and find security in the high, carved cirque basin to my right from the instincts of male bears or the disturbance of human activities. How the green blush of a new year's flowering moves up the valleys and canyon walls. How the returning winged-ones find willows and cottonwoods along the Flathead River and tributary creeks or in the tall spruce and pine to regenerate the song-filled air.

From below, or from the confines of an office or the busy-ness of town, the view isn't so clear. While the Rocky Mountains do go on almost forever, they are being broken, severed, and isolated into islands by Man's highways, railroads, mountaintop removal coal mines, logging, towns, and other incessant and increasing activity.

This bit of the Rockies, however, this patch I'm sitting in, atop Haig Peak, can be protected as a Canadian national park. It's still intact. Still full of thriving, abundant and diverse **wild** life. Fortuitously, it's on Parks Canada's list of ten priority new parks or expansions...the result of years of citizen effort.



The Map

Click on the map image above to view a detailed map of the propose Flathead National Park

People have advocated the protection of this 100,000 acres of habitat and spiritual wellspring for over 100 years. Today the campaign is carried by **Flathead Wild!** Called Waterton's "Missing Piece", I only have to glance at the [map](#) flapping in my wind-drenched lap to understand how Haig Peak fits into the whole.

Waterton is too small to be an effective biological reserve. At a 130,00 acres (5,2576 hectares) it covers just the Alberta side of the Continental Divide, and is not large enough to retain the



Turquoise Lake

My seat on the summit was narrow and breathtaking. Here I'm looking down 2,000 (610m) vertical feet into the Castle watershed. (Click to enlarge.)



Epicenter for Griz

While I saw nary a Ursid of the hominilis kind, I did see several jet-black black bears.

This griz was 'captured' by Joe Riis' camera a few miles south of Mount Haig. The Flathead harbors the densest inland populatoin of grizzlies in inland North America. (Photo by Joe Riis/LCP. Click to enlarge!)



Wild Includes Wildflowers

The Flathead provides a spectacular show of wildflowers in a wild array of habitats. Read more [here](#).



Every Bit a National Park

The spectacular valleys of the proposed park rival almost anything in Waterton-Glacier International Peace park. Here, Haig Brook flows along the bottom of a massive, glacier-carved valley. Tombstone Mountain, Commerce Peak, Miskwasini Peak rise 3500 feet (1067m) from these valley floors.

biological richness of the southern Canadian Rockies. The proposed Flathead National Park in British Columbia would almost double the protected area, incorporate the richer, more diverse habitat and species on the west side of the Divide, and protect Glacier National Park's boundary along the international border. The new park would serve as a "National Park Wilderness Reserve" and provide the only wildlife sanctuary in southeast British Columbia.

North of where I sit, I *want* to see the mountains of Banff National Park. But I can't. I can only see the mountains and valleys that lie between me and that iconic park. It may seem a long way away but I suspect you know that it's not. Golden eagles, all sorts of birds of prey, and our smaller feathered friends migrate up and down the Backbone of the Continent between Mexico and Alaska (!) twice a year. Wolves, bears, and wolverines traverse such distances in their peripatetic wanderings. It may be "out of sight", but it's not out of our mind and consciousness nor that of our animate kin.



Not an Eagle
but a genuine indicator of the depth and breadth of the feathered folk in the Flathead. A rare Lincoln's Sparrow (Photo: Steve Gniadek. Click to enlarge,



The Wildlife Corridor
stretched from Whitefish to Banff. It still functions well, but increasing human population, industrial logging and mountaintop removal coal mining in Canada, growing recreational pressure both sides of the border threaten the long-term viability of this ancient corridor.

A new national park will only help protect part of Nature's wealth. That's why the **Flathead Wild!** calls for legislating a **Wildlife Management Area** for the public lands between the new park and Banff. The Wildlife Management Area would allow all sorts of human activities, including logging, but it would ensure that the habitat remain healthy and connected north-to-south, and onward through as-yet-unborn generations.

From my mountaintop perch it all makes sense. Mount Haig is not only the highest peak, it's also the northern-most point in the proposed park. South of me I see Commerce, Sage, and Kishinena creeks, and all the jagged, jumbled peaks in between. For me, it's a landscape to explore, protect, and treasure.

I hope you'll join me in the exploration and the effort. ~ **Dave Hadden**, Director, *Headwaters Montana*



Sammy Made the Grade

She wasn't the boldest but she was the sweetest of the five dogs on our journey into the Flathead. Sorry, Pema, you're a good - nay - fanatical fetcher, but only John knows your 'sweet' side.



Thank You!
Headwaters Montana is one of two U.S. conservation groups working to protect the entire North Fork Flathead watershed. Your continued financial support is greatly appreciated.

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