

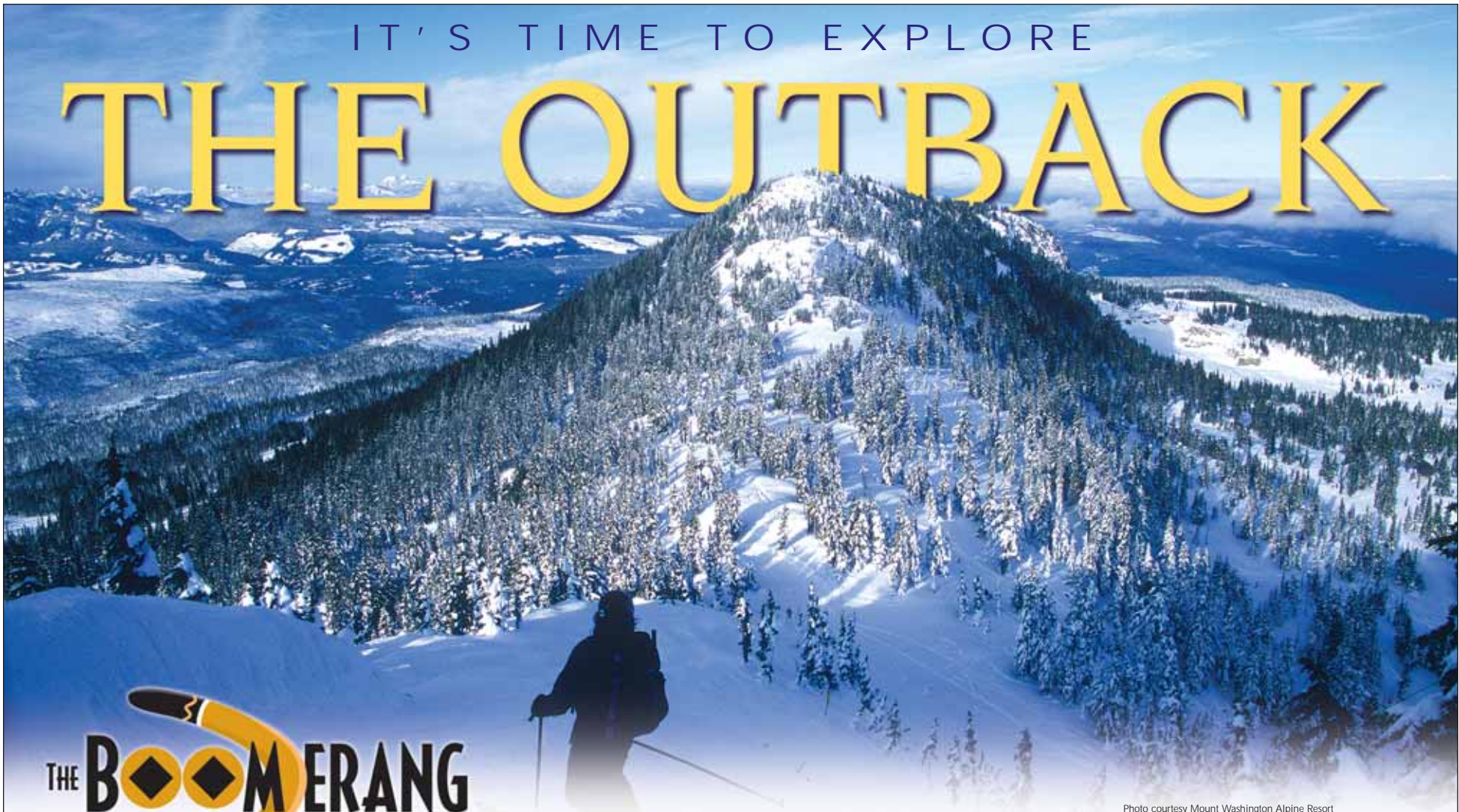
THE MOUNT WASHINGTON

MARMOT

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S UP ON MOUNT WASHINGTON Volume 15 #1 • Winter 2004~Spring 2005

IT'S TIME TO EXPLORE

THE OUTBACK



Mount Washington sets high standards with a new lift and a third more terrain!

The Boomerang will launch Mount Washington into the next level of service for a destination Alpine Resort: the steep and the deep, says Mount Washington Alpine Resort President Peter Gibson.

"For the high-end customer, it's going to be extremely exciting because this is a first for them," Gibson said. "We've had the powder, the face and the back basin, but we didn't have the unlimited black diamond and double black diamond."

The double black diamond territory is called The Outback, and it's 162 hectares (400 acres) serviced

by a new, \$3.5 million chairlift, the Boomerang Quad.

The Boomerang is Canada's first double off load chairlift; the addition of this lift gives riders 1,600 acres in bounds in which to play. It's also the second major chairlift expansion in two years: the 2003 season saw the Hawk high-speed 6ix Pak lift open up new terrain for the novice and intermediate skiers. Gibson said the buzz is positive for the Outback: early-bird season's passes were at a record high in early November, "so it's obviously a good impact."

Resort representatives are banking on the new double black diamond terrain drawing the customers who traditionally left the Island for

Bear Lodge 50% SOLD OUT! See page 3

continued on page 3

Photo courtesy Mount Washington Alpine Resort

Exclusive to The Marmot
Mount Washington
Winter '04 ~ Spring '05
Accommodation Guide





News in Brief is a new feature at the Marmot newspaper, encompassing people, places and things at Mount Washington.

☞ The Resort has hired a new Director of Outdoor Operations, **Erik Meertens**. He joins Mount Washington from Sun Peaks Resort. He's already instituted a successful recycling program in the maintenance shop.

☞ Former lift operator **George Trousdell** is now head of Lift Operations for Mount Washington. He was in charge of building the new Boomerang lift.

THE INSIDE SCOOP

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☞ Former Nordic lead hand **Marc Lyster** has taken over Nordic operations from **Mark Paganielli**. Lyster was lead hand for two years and has a lot of experience with nordic run grooming. He's also well-versed in the Resort's land use agreement with Strathcona Park, through which many of the nordic trails run.

☞ Now that the road to Raven Lodge has been paved, Mount Washington has petitioned BC Parks to move the trailhead to Paradise Meadows closer to the Lodge. There is no parking available anymore on the sides of the road near the existing trailhead, and in the interests of safety (and convenience) moving the trailhead would move people closer to washroom facilities. The trail head needs to be moved, according to the Resort.

☞ Public Relations man **Dave Hampshire** is entering his fourth winter with the Resort. Congratulations also go out to Dave and his wife, Linda, who are expecting their first child in April.

☞ Did you know? Mountain resident **Sue Walker** is a certified hummingbird bander.

☞ Longtime Resort employees **Sophie** and **Tony Radomi** are the proud parents of twins. Sophie is a baker in food services while Tony has been an instructor and worked in the maintenance shop.

☞ **Stay tuned for a big announcement** next summer about accommodation and retail space on Mount Washington.

The Marmot On-line

Want to read past issues of the Marmot? You can read them on the web at www.themarmot.ca

The View From Here

Rick Gibson

Why UK You Ask?

The real estate market at Mount Washington is fluid, constantly evolving and, this year, moving swiftly.

In the last two years I've had easily 300 inquiries from the United Kingdom. It's an incredible source for buyers; out of all those inquiries we've seen eight properties purchased, including some units in the new Bear Lodge currently under construction by Appia Developments. This shows us that the Comox Valley is no longer a secret. People are coming to the Comox Valley for the lifestyle we offer. What other ski area in the world can you think of that has the same snowfall as Mount Washington and is 45 minutes from 20 golf courses, two international airports, two major hospitals, fishing, scuba diving, mountain biking - and is affordable?

Purchasers are no longer looking at the mountain as their ski place, they're looking at it as their recreational property that they can enjoy all four seasons of the year. People interested in purchasing property on Mount Washington are from all over the world. I'm getting an average of 5,000 unique visits to my Web site every month, which is pretty significant. And they're from all over the world: it's amazing what countries come up in my stats. Zimbabwe has come up more than once; Samoa; Iceland; some of the Soviet States; Mongolia. I can only assume many of the people from these areas who visit my Web site are Canadians working overseas. One of the buyers who has purchased a unit at Bear Lodge is from Tampa, Florida. He bought solely because of WestJet Airline's



entry into the Tampa market. Now he can get from Tampa to the Valley inside of a day. Missing on Mount Washington is the Alberta market. However, we see them buying in the Comox Valley and taking day trips to the Resort, because they're leaving the snow not coming to the snow.

There are going to be more options for buyers in the coming months. Bear Lodge is half sold and it's not even finished yet! A small townhouse project is going to be developed next summer along Nordic Way, across from Strathcona Park. Called "Wildwood at Strathcona", these townhouses will be a little more upscale than any previous development on the mountain. There is also talk of a hotel complex, similar to Deer and Bear Lodges, which will likely have smaller suites. The most important aspect of this complex, though, will be a retail component. Anything that adds retail to the Resort will be significant. One thing is for sure: the market is strong at Mount Washington and the world has noticed that it is still affordable.



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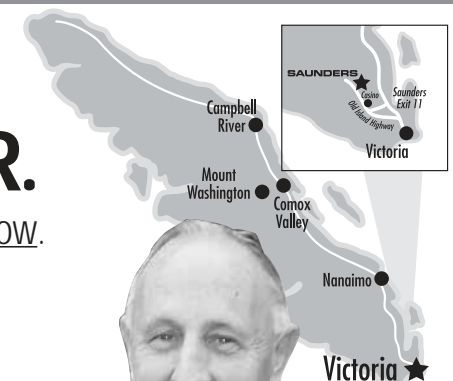
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Steep and deep is the name of the game in The Outback

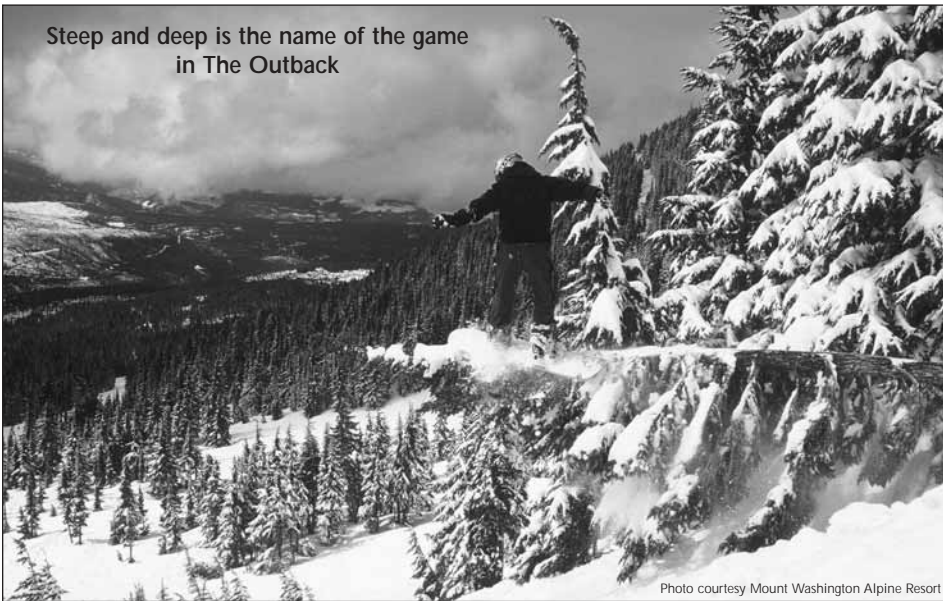


Photo courtesy Mount Washington Alpine Resort

The Outback

continued from page 1

the thrill. "It definitely gives us an edge we haven't had before," he said.

The new terrain fits in with the Resort's direction of creating a destination market for people who like to play on snow. In informal customer polls last year the number one item on their wish list was more terrain, and number two was "steep and deep", Gibson said. "You have to look at number three as planned progression." With the progression of lift development — the Eagle and Hawk chairlifts — it allowed more people to get to the top of the mountain. The second upgrade, the Hawk, opened things up to the novice and intermediate.

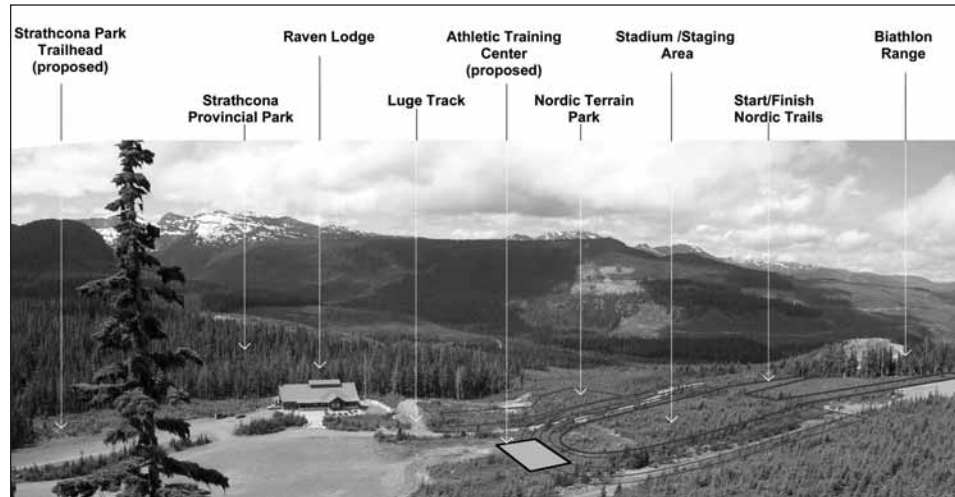
"This (Boomerang) is the logical next step in looking at the high end." He said the questions that customers are going to start asking as they consider Mount Washington as a place to come for an extended holiday are: How much acreage? How much powder? How much black diamond terrain? The Resort can now answer those questions with confidence.

The Boomerang will operate at different hours from the Resort's other lifts: it will be open from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The later opening gives Resort staff time to go into the Outback and stabilize the slopes to minimize any risk of an avalanche. The earlier shut-down time will give staff enough time before daylight wanes to ensure all skiers and boarders get down from the Outback safely.

Gibson reminds skiers that the Outback is aptly named. "It's not going to get the level of attention that other slopes get with the winch cats and groomers," he said. "It's an area you just can't groom; it's just too steep. It's the Outback, and it will be treated that way."

Gibson added that only 15 per cent of the Resort's clientele will be able to take advantage of the new Outback terrain, and the Resort has an obligation to make sure its core product is maintained.

Gibson is up front with customers wanting to ride the Boomerang that there will be days the lift won't open on time. Staff can't get into the site to blast for avalanche control until daylight. "We're going to be doing everything we can to make sure we open as often as we can."



Proposed Nordic Training Facility site concept

Nordic Training Facilities 'Ready' for the Olympics

Nordic skiing is about to take the spotlight at Mount Washington Alpine Resort, putting the Resort in a unique position as compared to other Ski Resorts in British Columbia.

"There's a myth out there that you can't make money at cross-country skiing. Before you make money at anything you first have to invest in it. I think we're the first to invest capital funding in cross-country skiing," says Resort President Peter Gibson. "We've taken a very different step and built a facility just for cross-country skiers."

In 2001 the Resort spent a million dollars and built Raven Lodge, a dedicated cross-country, or Nordic, skiing facility, one kilometre past where the old Nordic building had been located. Now, just three years later, there are many days during the ski season when Raven is packed with skiers, Gibson said.

"Our numbers have been growing ever since we built Raven Lodge," said Marc Lyster, Director of Nordic Operations at Mount Washington. And visitors are spend-

ing increasing amounts of time on the mountain, he said.

"What we've invested has allowed us to grow the program that we had obviously outgrown many years before in the old Nordic Lodge," said Dave Hampshire, public relations co-ordinator at Mount Washington.

Lyster, newly crowned as the Director of Nordic Operations, sees the new focus on Nordic as a career opportunity leading up to the 2010 Olympics. It's also a growth opportunity for the Resort. "(Nordic) is going to be growing," Lyster said. "We need to do the development now to get people coming to the Resort. We can't wait until 2008. It's going to grow and expand over the next few years, for sure."

Lyster said his five-year plan for the Nordic facility includes developing race trails for the Strathcona Nordics Ski Club that are set up for the podium, in front of the Raven Lodge. A trails crew spent time last summer getting the trails ready so grooming crews don't have to wait for the

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Bear Lodge Set to Open

It's been a bear of a project, but Bear Lodge is almost complete. And it's already half sold, says Rick Gibson of Royal LePage.

The foundation for Bear Lodge was poured in 1995, at the same time as Deer Lodge, but then the building market went soft and Appia Developments decided to put the lodge on hold. It was eight long years before Appia picked up the project again.

Bear Lodge features 59 fully-furnished condo units in one, two and three bedroom configurations. People have been clamoring for units for the past two years, but it was only this fall that Gibson got the go-ahead to start selling. "We've got purchasers from the States, from Great Britain and the Lower Mainland, but primarily Vancouver Island," he said.

Bear Lodge will be very similar to its sister development, Deer Lodge. Some of the floor plans are slightly different, and the exterior has been built with rain-screen technology to prevent leaky condo syndrome, Gibson said. Bear Lodge should be finished this ski season.

For more information about the lodge phone Gibson at (250) 334-3124 or e-mail him at <rick@rickgibson.ca>.

400 New Acres and More for 2004 Winter Season

Winter is shaping up to be the most exciting Mount Washington Alpine Resort has ever had, says a Mount Washington representative.

"We're adding a lift and 400 acres of new terrain...it's one of the biggest announcements we've ever made," they said. The Boomerang chairlift into MacKay Lake opened with the season in early December, opening up the Outback: one-third more terrain than the resort had last year. And it's all double-black diamond runs for the expert skiers.

"People that have been skiing here for 25 years, they needed it. Their skill sets have progressed," they said. "I've been hearing from people 'now I don't have to go to Whistler'." The Boomerang has a steeper incline than the peak chair at Whistler, they noted.

Opening up the Outback terrain means Mount Washington now has extreme skiing and snowboarding at the Resort, says Dave Hampshire, Resort Public Relations. As such, the Resort will hold its first-ever Extreme Skiing event in March. "Basically, that's people leaping off cliffs with skis on, in front of judges," he said.

The other thing the Resort is doing this year is a "Guys' Week". "We've had the Women's Week for the last four years and that's been successful; why not one for the guys?" Hampshire said. The week will feature discounted activities, catered lunches, group lessons and après excitement.

Resort personnel are predicting more business at Raven Lodge this winter, now that the road has been paved all the way into the lodge. The lodge is open for dinner between 5-9 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays.

The Friday night "fondue and snowshoe" event is also gaining in popularity, Resort President Peter Gibson said.

Also available this winter will be a pair of new adventures; dog sledding and back country snow camping. The high Arctic has made its way to Mount Washington with an authentic dog sled ride courtesy of Arctic Light Kennels. A guide will lead his team of dogs on a thrilling, one-hour ride through winding trails in Paradise Meadows. Dog sledding is available Wednesday through Sunday; pre-booking is required. Cost is \$69 per adult with a two-adult minimum (children 12 and under cost \$59).

A company called Outer Limits is offering back country day excursions and snow camping. A one-day tour into the back country includes a trip to the summit of little Washington for 360-degree views.

These trips include requisite avalanche gear, a guide, trail pass and bag lunch. The snow camping includes a day of touring and back country navigation coupled with an overnight stay at a base camp.

The Outback is a long waited dream come true for the more advanced skiers and borders.

Photo courtesy
Mount Washington
Alpine Resort



Photo courtesy Mount Washington Alpine Resort

Summer 2004 in Review

"It was our best summer ever." So says just about everyone at Mount Washington Alpine Resort.

And that despite four weeks of bad weather in the height of the busy season. "We're up about 25 per cent on overall revenue for the summertime," said Resort Management. Although they didn't have exact visitor numbers, they said they came close to reaching their projections of 25,000 chairlift rides. "Visitors spend more money when they were here and did more things,". Last summer the Resort offered "alpine action packs" combining chairlift rides with access to disc golf and mini-golf, which people took advantage of.

"Mountain biking was a huge success for us. We were more than double what we did last year," they said, both in mountain bike passes and visitations. "A big part of that was opening up the intermediate and novice terrain, which allowed us to open it up to families."

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New Nordic Boss Looks Forward to the Future



Marc Lyster is the new Nordic boss at Mount Washington Alpine Resort. Lyster takes over from Mark Paganelli, who ran the program for the past four years.

However, Lyster is no stranger to Nordic operations at Raven Lodge. He was Paganelli's lead hand for three years, and spent last year grooming the 55 kilometres of track set and skating trails that loop into and out of Paradise Meadows. Now, he's in charge.

"I look after the operational side of Nordic including the rental shop, making sure the retail's running well. I look after

grooming and the other stuff that goes on outside; lessons, programs, etc.," he said. It's basically the same tasks he looked after as lead hand, except now he is also in charge of the budgets and paperwork.

Lyster was born and raised in the Comox Valley, in Black Creek. He did not learn to ski until he was 12, then didn't really start skiing until he was 20, he says. "My Dad was really big into snowmobiling so I learned to ride a snowmobile when I was seven or eight," he says.

"That was before the (resort) was even there." He has spent the past nine years working at Mount Washington, eight of them living on the mountain - and the past three year-round, as he worked on the trail crew and doing first aid in the summers. This will be his first year

since the big snow of 1996 living off the mountain, he says. He even spent three summers working at Mt. Buffalo, a small family ski resort in Victoria, Australia, on an exchange Mount Washington has with the resort Down Under. He was an instructor, but also ran the rental shop, did grooming and snowmaking as well as other odd jobs at the 20-employee ski hill. "I cooked breakfast; I looked after kids," he says.

In his spare time Lyster likes to ride his mountain bike; in the winter it's skate-skiing, which he likes for the endurance. "I spend most of my time mountain biking and skiing," he says.

Photo: Susan Quinn



Photo: Rick Gibson

Building Boom Hitting Mount Washington

Mount Washington is about to be hit with a building boom. Bear Lodge is just the start of a fresh spate of construction, which also saw a new chalet built along Nordic Way, foundations laid for two more in the Alpine Village and plans for a new townhouse development next summer, says Realtor Rick Gibson of Royal LePage in the Comox Valley.

There's also talk that a hotel will be built next year, although no one is naming names. "We had a development permit for a Victoria developer to do the digging for a 50-unit condo lodge with some significant retail space," said Jay Oddleifson, who looks after development and planning for Mount Washington Alpine Resort. "We ran out of time in the summer to dig the hole, so we will proceed in the spring. Stay tuned for a major announcement."

The hotel complex would be located between the Alpine lodge and Deer Lodge and would include retail/commercial space. Oddleifson and Gibson both agree

that a retail component is "sorely needed" at the Resort. "Retail space will be very significant for the development of Mount Washington," Gibson said. "The biggest thing that new project will do for everybody on the mountain is create a nucleus or heartbeat of a commercial centre on the mountain. That's one thing that has been missing from the Mount Washington recreational experience."

The suites in the proposed hotel will probably be smaller than those found in Deer and Bear Lodges, he added. Oddleifson said developers are planning two new subdivisions along Nordic Way: one to be on a pie-shaped piece of property near another chalet that was built this summer and also near the old Nordic Lodge (where Pizza Mogul is located).

Gibson said one of the subdivisions will be a townhouse complex near the Hawk chairlift, across from Strathcona Park. Called "Wildwood at Strathcona", the townhouse complex will be a bit more upscale than anything the Resort has seen in the past.

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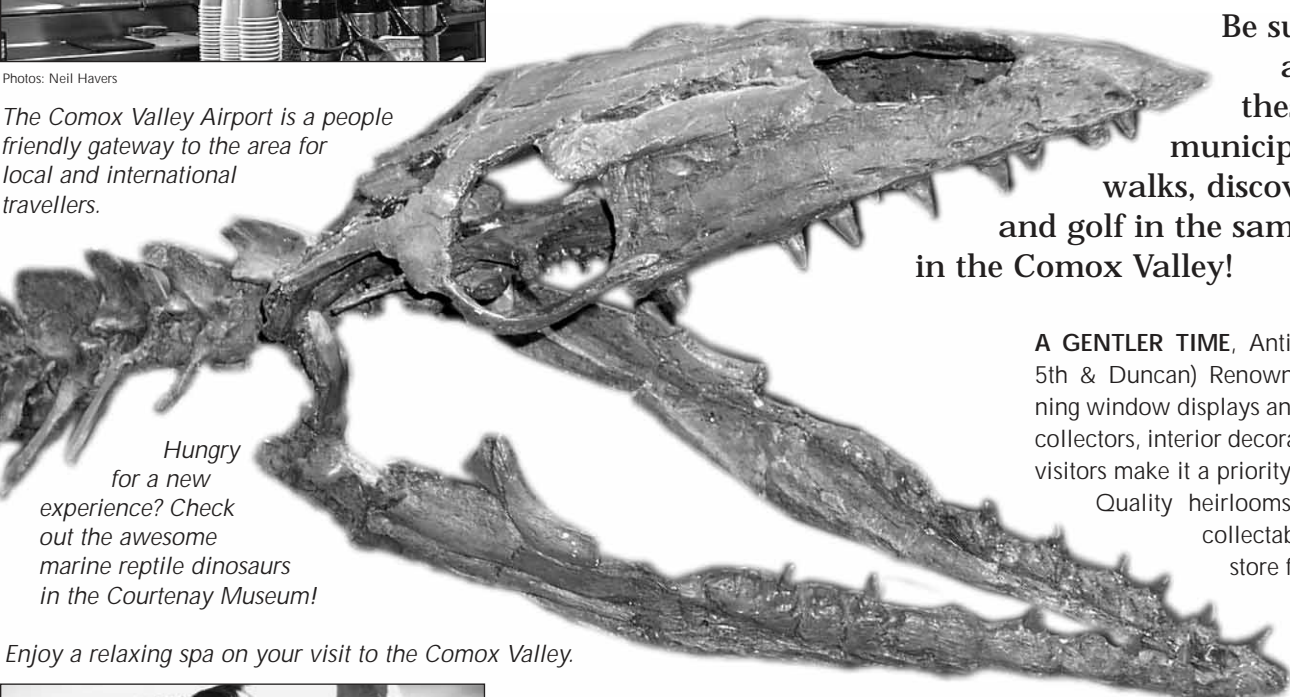
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Photo: Neil Havers

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Photo: Neil Havers

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Looking for things to do in the Comox Valley?

Complete lists are available at www.comoxvalleychamber.com or www.comox-valley-tourism.ca



Photo: Neil Havers

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Comox Valley Airport Goes International

The Comox Valley Airport has gone international. Air Transat Holidays began offering charters from Comox to Puerto Vallarta at the beginning of December.

Air Transat had all but sold out its Christmas season by late October, and Spring Break was fully booked by then, airport general manager Chuck Fast said.

"They're really happy with the pre-selling," Fast said in a November interview. Air Transat is also offering a through-fare to Calgary for \$100, which connects travellers to all of its other flight destinations.

Air Transat's charters come on the heels of the Comox Valley Airport earning national recognition for its high level of customer satisfaction, Fast said. Comox scored a 4.49 rating (out of 5.0) for airports with less than 500,000 passengers in the InterVISTAS-run survey. The survey was

conducted in August, four months after the new F/O C. Cottingham Terminal opened.

"The 2004 survey results suggest that passengers are extremely satisfied with the new terminal building at Comox Valley Airport," InterVISTAS wrote in its findings. The high satisfaction score was a significant improvement over the weak 3.52 rating recorded in 2003, InterVISTAS said.

Fast still didn't have word on whether Horizon Air was going to start servicing a Comox-Seattle run, which he had high hopes for last year. He did say, however, that private charter business is picking up for the airport. More and more visitors are chartering aircraft or bringing in private aircraft to drop them off in Comox while they ski or golf, Fast said. For those who need to overnight their aircraft, Fast sends them on to Campbell River Airport, which is half an hour from Strathcona Parkway.

Mount Washington Community Assn. Focuses on Community Safety Issues



Property owners at Mount Washington are busy with the Mount Washington Community Association (MWCA), changing the association's articles so that its board members are directly responsible to owners.

The community association was formed a few years ago to represent property owners in such issues as governance options, promoting a safe, recreational use of Mount Washington, building a public safety facility and promoting harmony and co-operation between all strata corporations, the alpine resort, business and commercial owners on the mountain as well as government regulatory bodies, chairman Al Walker said.

While the association's focus last year was on the public safety facility, that is but one facet, Walker said. The MWCA has also dealt with transportation and road issues, snow clearing and other issues that effect the Mount Washington Community.

The Association last year met with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways to deal with newly created traffic issues on Henry Road. The Board has also expressed concern about the safety of the corner of Nordic and Strathcona Parkway - a corner that board members says is "very dark and hazardous. Every single motor vehicle has

difficulty navigating this corner properly and it needs to be attended to now," according to Board minutes from November. The Association would like the Ministry to install a light or some manner of ensuring that this is a safe corner.

High on the MWCA's agenda is the emergency services building. Last year a proposed building was narrowly turned down in a petition conducted by the Regional District of Comox-Strathcona.

However, both the MWCA and the Resort agree that at the very least, a fire hall is necessary for the owners' protection and the Resort's progression.

The Resort has agreed to fund another study, this time with the MWCA's input. Ryan Thorburn arranged to have someone in the fire service help the Association assemble a needs list for a fire facility and accompanying equipment.

There will be changes this time around, the Association decided at a meeting in November. Board members will clarify who is an "elector" in any petition, and put this in writing to avoid the same confusion that occurred last year.

For more information on the community association or an update on the emergency services building, visit the new Web site at www.mwcommunity.com.

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Meet the Mountain Boys

They're called the "Mountain Boys", and they're bounding down a snow-packed pathway in the Alpine Village: Stewart, nine, in his shirt sleeves, Andy, six, ever-polite as he offers to carry a visitor's camera bag, and Damien, four, bringing up the rear with his snow-leaping talents and urgent sense of curiosity.

Their mother, Sue Walker, follows gracefully in a long, gray skirt and black turtle-neck, while father Al Walker greets everyone with hugs and grins-back from a day at his business in town, Walker Technologies Ltd. The Walker boys have grown up on the mountain, with Strathcona Park as their backyard, Mount Washington Alpine Resort as their playground and mother Sue as their social, emotional and intellectual grounding.

The Walkers have been visiting Mount Washington since 1992, when Al and Sue came every other weekend from Victoria to ski. When Sue was pregnant with Stewart

she told Al she didn't want to be dragging a high chair and other baby-related gear to rented chalets, so they bought a place. The tri-level chalet was built by Mount Washington founder Henry Norie and has served the family well, says Sue (there are altogether six children in the family: Natalie, 22 and Tyler, 18, both live on their own now, while Harrison, 16, is living with the family this year and commuting every day to G.P. Vanier Secondary School in Courtenay).

Steller's Jays crowd a loaded bird feeder outside the Walkers' dining room window as Damien brings treasures to the large, solid wood table to show a visitor. This time a Rescue Hero, the next a pair of crystals - an amethyst and a quartz, he says proudly. The boys gladly bound downstairs to show off their "school room" - the long wooden counter where their computer terminals are set up, flanked with an organized bookshelf in the rear and Stewart's sleeping area behind a pair of woolen blankets to one side (It's a perfect area for a theatre, to

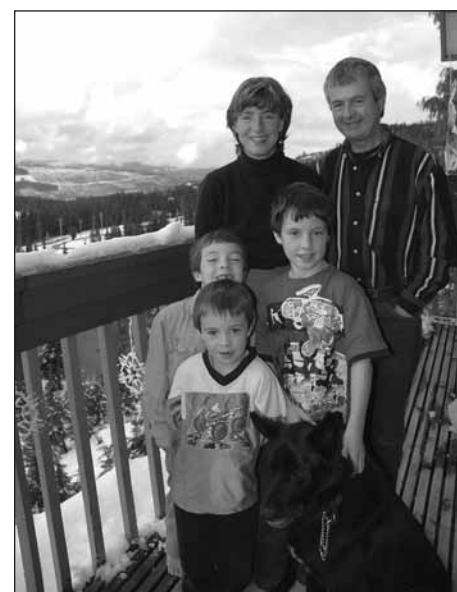
fuel the boys' creativity, says Sue).

In the pantry downstairs Sue has squirreled away enough food to last the family throughout the winter. She learned to can last year, and this year learned to make pickles. When she goes grocery shopping she will spend \$2,000 at one time to stock up for winter. "It's like a 7-11 down here," she says, chuckling. "We make use of all the space that we can," she adds, looking around the chalet, natural light flooding the picture windows. "We moved from a five-acre plot and 3,000-square-foot house to a 50-foot-square circle on a strata lot, and it's all vertical. We don't have closets. We don't have dressers for the kids. Things get shoved under the bed in crates," she said.

She's been known to move a wall if it's in her way, and she's always moving furniture around to find the most efficient living space. All this organizing takes work, and Sue prefers to use a spreadsheet to help her. "It's quite challenging," she admits. "Living up here is interesting. You think you need something so you put it on your list and a few days go by...all of a sudden you realize you don't need it anymore, because you made do," she said. "When you live up here (full time) you can't just run into town, especially with these guys - it's a big event."

The Mountain Boys are three of a list of Mount Washington children who are home schooled. They are registered with the North Island Distance Education School (NIDES) in Courtenay, and Sue teaches them every day. The flexibility of the children's programs allows them to start early and end early, meaning they have the entire afternoon to play in their "backyard": Strathcona Park and Mount Washington Alpine Resort.

The whole family can often be seen snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, Al said. "Quite often we'll take time off of school and take our books and art supplies, and sit on a small bridge and have 'art in the park'," Sue said. The boys held their own Terry Fox Run in October, running the three-kilometre loop in Paradise Meadows.



Meet the Walker family, parents Sue and Al and their boys Stewart, Andy and Damien.
Below: Walker family home

They raised \$42.

The adult Walkers are involved in mountain life in their own way. Al is chairman of the Mount Washington Community Association. Sue was involved in Strata 799 until earlier this year. The whole family has season passes to the Alpine Resort.

The lifestyle of living year-round on the mountain, while challenging, is rewarding, the Walkers agree. "It's a very happy house," says Sue. It's a dream come true, adds Al. "When I was in my teenage years I visited a ski cabin on Grouse Mountain (in the Lower Mainland). I decided right then that I wanted to live on a mountain," he said. "Plus it's a fantastic opportunity for the boys."

Photo: Susan Quinn



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ACCOMMODATIONS
& EVENTS GUIDE

Photo courtesy Neil Havers and Mount Washington

This winter Mount Washington is hosting special events all winter long; from the romantic to the ridiculous, from competitive to just plain fun! Check out the events below and join in the fun!



**LET'S HAVE FUN
OUT THERE!**

Dec 11 Grand Opening of The Boomerang Chairlift! Be one of the first to ride our latest lift - The Boomerang! (conditions permitting)

Dec 22 Carols By Candlelight
Come and sing your favorite Christmas Carols outside by candlelight!

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Service
A multi-denominational service.

Dec 25 Santa On The Slopes
Dress up like Santa and get a FREE lift pass for the day!

Dec 26 Coca Cola Torchlight Parade and Fireworks An entourage of lights down the Whiskey Jack run followed by a spectacular fireworks display!

Dec 31 New Year's Eve Parties
Come out and celebrate the start of 2005! We've got five separate parties going on.

Jan 3-7 Senior's Week
Special deals for Senior's and a contest for the oldest skier or snowboarder.

Jan 7-9 Columbia Brewery Avalanche Awareness Weekend Come out and learn more about Avalanche Safety.

Jan 10-14 Kokanee Winter Festival
1/2 Price Full Day Lift Tickets & Trail Passes!

Jan 13-15 Snow Carving Contest
Compete for free by carving a sculpture or your company logo into snow.

Jan 15 Heli Hansen Showtime Challenge Riders and skiers compete on the Resort's biggest, most challenging jump, showing off big air and big tricks.

Jan 17-21 Rossignol National Ski/Board Week Half-price Midweek Discover Skiing, Boarding, and Cross-Country packages.

Jan 22 Atlas Snowshoe Romp
Strap on a pair of Snowshoes and partake in this year's FREE fun-race.

Jan 29 Fat Teddy's Mountain Rodeo Party Grab your lassos and come on out!

Jan 29-30 Cascadia Cup Biathlon
A regional race that attracts competitors from BC and Washington State.

Feb 6 18th Annual Herb Bradley Coca-Cola Classic This fundraiser for Vancouver Island Adaptive Snow Sports is open to all and attracts both skiers and boarders.

Feb 12 Wood Cup Race & Banquet
A fun but competitive race open to all those involved in the forestry industry.

Feb 13 Corporate Luge Challenge
Whether you luge or not - enter a team and scream your way down the all-natural track - anything can happen!

Continued on page 17



Mount Washington Phone Directory (Area Code 250)

Ambulance	911
Catering	334-5757
Central Res.	1-888-231-1499
Chain Rentals	338-5527
Fire - to report a fire	792-1209
Fireweed's Restaurant	334-5706
General Store	334-5745
Police EMERGENCY	911
Police NON-EMERGENCY	338-1321
Raven Lodge	334-5764
Real Estate (Rick Gibson)	334-7503
Resort Info	338-1386
Security	334-5753
Security (after hours)	792-1204
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The first thing you need to consider is how many people are in your party. If you have 25 people who want to stay together in the same place you need to look at a large chalet. If you have 25 people who do not need to stay together or you are a family or small group, a condo or townhouse may suffice.

Having said that, what is a Chalet? A Chalet is a stand alone home that could be a duplex and have a suite upstairs and/or downstairs. The Alpine Village has more than 50 Chalets and Foster's Place has more than 20 Chalets.

A Townhouse has at least one wall shared with a neighbour but has no one living above or below you. Townhouses can have

two to five floors, and an entry directly into the home from the outside. There are a number of Townhouses in the Alpine Village and Parkview Place is drive-to access from Henry Road.

A Condo is in a building of two or more floors with anywhere from 4+ suites. Blueberry Hill, Creekside House, Mountainside Lodge and Paradise Ridge are drive to via Henry Road, have under building parking and an elevator thereby making them wheelchair accessible. Ptarmigan Ridge has parking in front and no elevator and Deer Lodge has underground parking and an elevator. There are approximately 6 Condo buildings in the Alpine Village.

So, now that we'd defined the types of dwelling available we need to address location.

There are two distinct locations available on Mount Washington. One is the Alpine Village and the other is drive-to via Henry Road, Foster's Place and Alpine Road.

The Alpine Village is a quiet, park-like setting with lots of space and lovely trees between the homes. The Alpine Village requires either foot access or a quick ride on the Snow Cat in the winter, and has full road access in the summer. This is THE place for the maximum "alpine get away experience" and a safe place to play in the snow for children of ALL ages!

Price is another factor you may want to consider. Since there is everything from budget shared accommodation to luxurious handcrafted log chalets, pricing is a matter of personal preference. Please refer to the Accommodation Guide in the centre of your Marmot or the web site www.mtwashingtonaccommodation.com.

Other factors you may want to consider are amenities. Paradise Ridge is the only building that has a pool. Paradise Ridge, Mountainside Lodge and Deer Lodge each have a common hot tub. Several other properties also have their own hot tubs and a number of homes have a sauna.

Some rentals provide cleaning services and some do not so it is important to decide whether or not you want to clean and do laundry before you leave, or whether you'd rather leave that job to someone else.

Remember that all homes on Mount Washington are owned by people, just like yourselves; families who share a common love of mountain life.

When looking for the holiday retreat of your dreams be sure to check the accommodation guide provided in The Marmot Newspaper and the accompanying web site; www.mtwashingtonaccommodation.com This gives you a vast selection of private listings to choose from, along with information on how to contact rental companies on the mountain.

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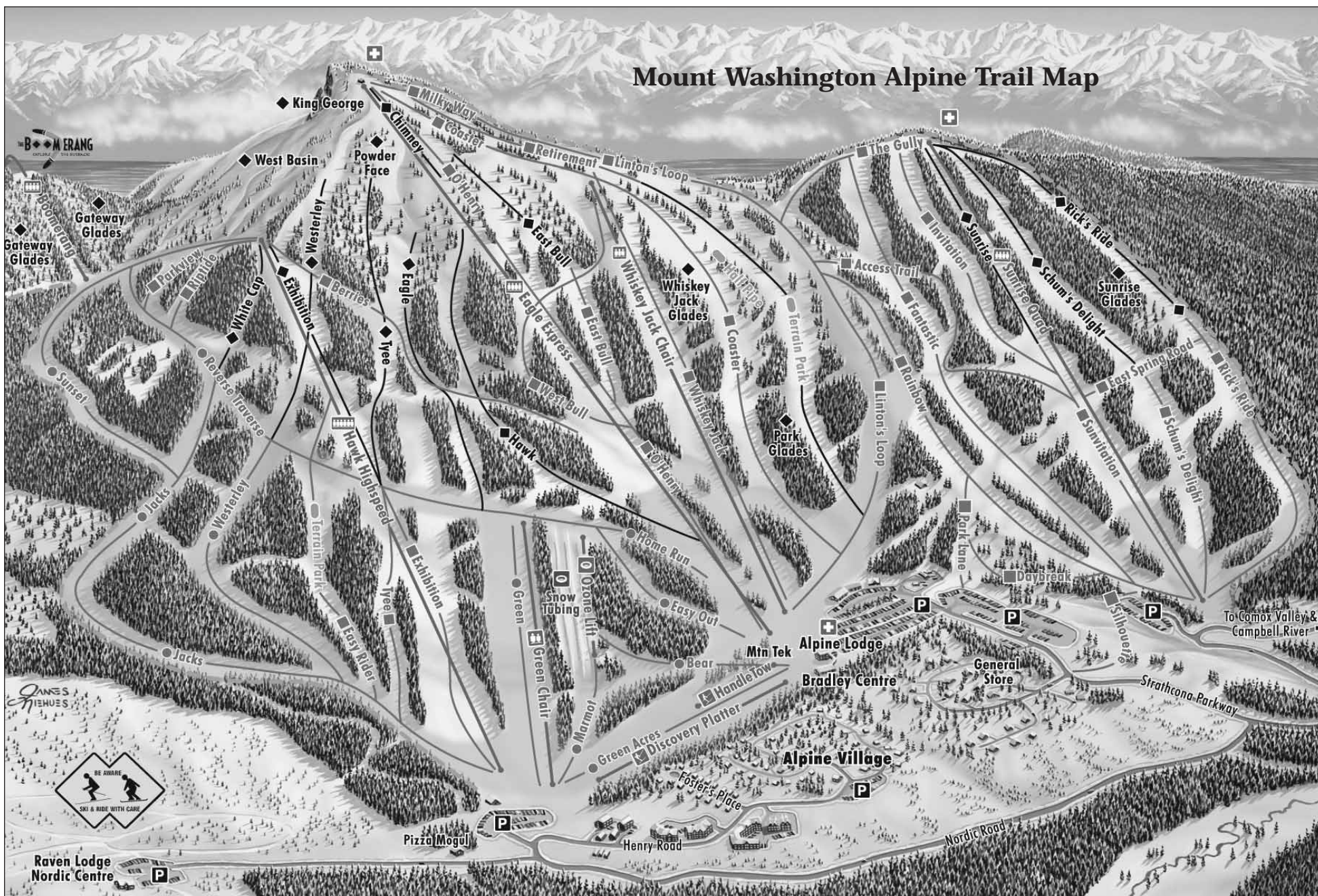
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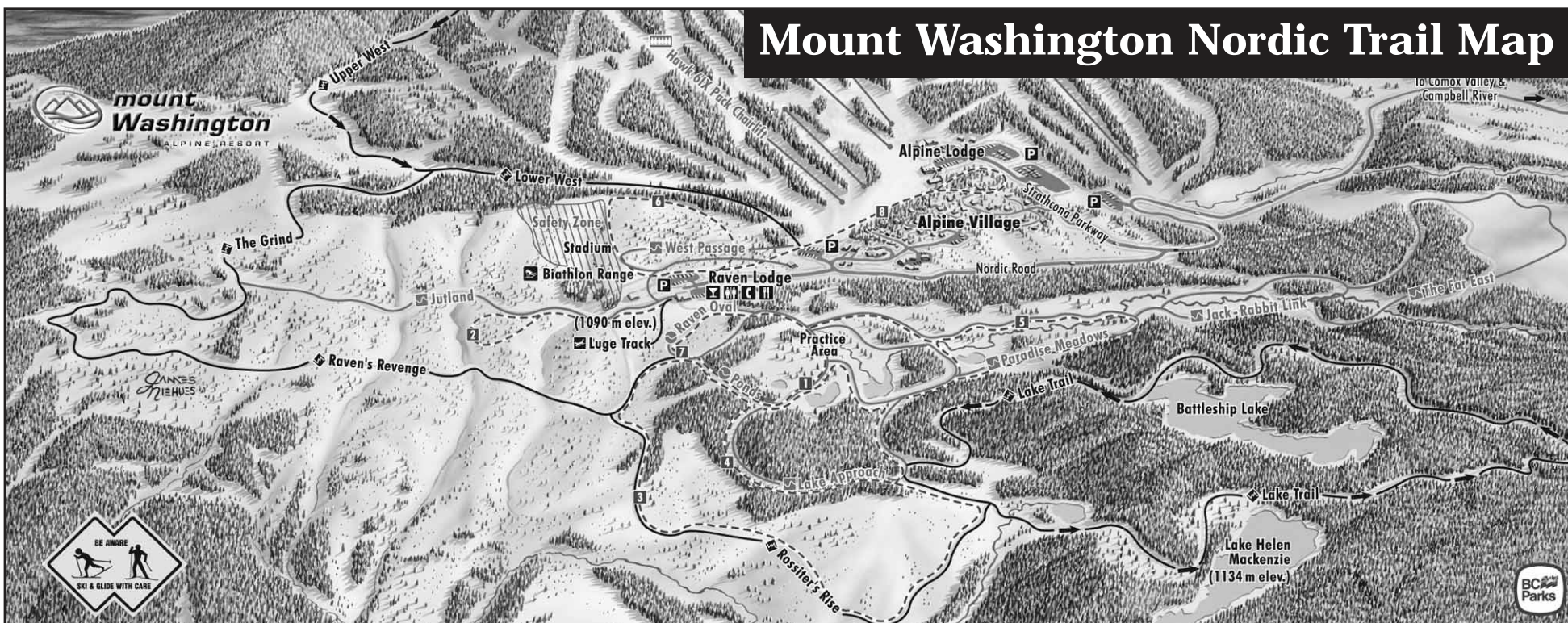
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Events Schedule

continued from page 11

Feb 19 Powerade Skier Cross

Skiers compete four at a time on a downhill course negotiating rollers, tabletops and berms.

Feb 26-27 Telemark Festival

Telemark-specific workshops and clinics on Saturday and the Tele-Cross on Sunday.

March 5 Sprite Super Cross Qualifying

Snowboarders compete four at a time, shoulder to shoulder down an outrageous course in the terrain park featuring rollers, tight berms and huge table tops.

Mar 7-11 Women's Week

Just for women! All week you get a special combination of Alpine Pass, Group Lesson, and a delicious lunch.

Mar 11 Ladies Only Live Entertainment

Mar 11-14 CIBC K2 Juvenile Provincial Championships Events include Slalom, Giant Slalom, and Super G.

March 12 Valhalla Pure Extreme Free Ski Not for the faint of heart, this is an extreme event for extreme skiers, which promises cash prizes for the top contenders.

March 13 Vancouver Island Loppet

This annual cross country race consists of a 30km distance and a shorter recreational category.

March 17 St. Patrick's Day

Come out for a green beverage in Fat Teddy's.

March 19 Piper's Pale Ale After Dark Invitational Night Vancouver Island's best boarders and skiers show off spectacular, hair-raising jumps under the spotlight.

March 20 Dual Moguls Challenge

Brought to you by the Freestyle Club.

March 21 Barq's Snowtubing Festival Everybody loves snowtubing! Contests and games make this the most fun you can have with the kids.

March 21-25 Spring SnoJam

Have some fun with a week of events.

March 21-25 Kidz Spring Break Camp

March 23 Island Farm's Green Zone Poker Run Ski or board your way to the highest hand!

March 24 Old Dutch Obstacle Race

Ski or board a course packed with fun obstacles and features.

March 26 Halfpipe Competition

Boarders and skiers battle the tight competition during this jam session spectacular.

March 26-27 Biathlon BC Cup 5 & 6

The first time a BC Cup event has been hosted by Mount Washington!

March 27 Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt Ski or Board from one clue to the next until you get to the hidden Chocolate!

April 2 Save-on-Foods Dummy Downhill

Participants build dummies which are let loose down a steep run and sent flying over a huge jump.

April 3 Barq's Slush Cup

Participants straight-line down a run, over a small ramp, and onto a deep slush pit.

April 24 The Royal Lepage Comox Valley Snow To Surf Adventure Relay Event

9 member teams race from the top of Mount Washington to Marina Park in Comox on skis, running, cycling, kayaking and canoeing.

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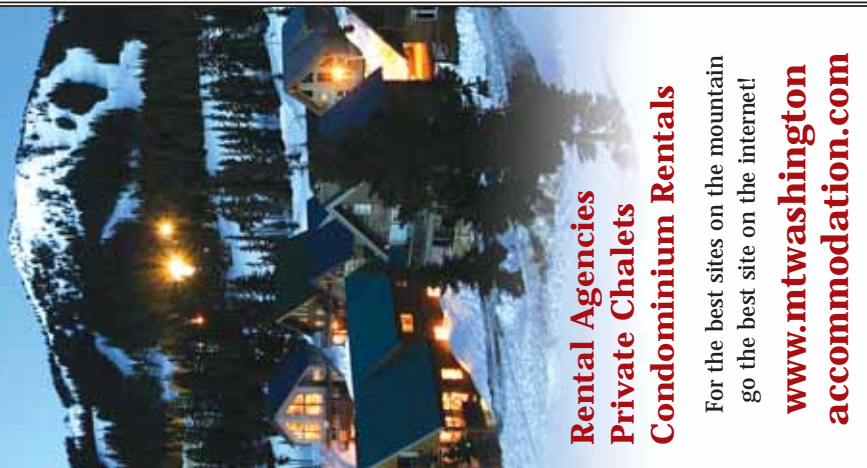
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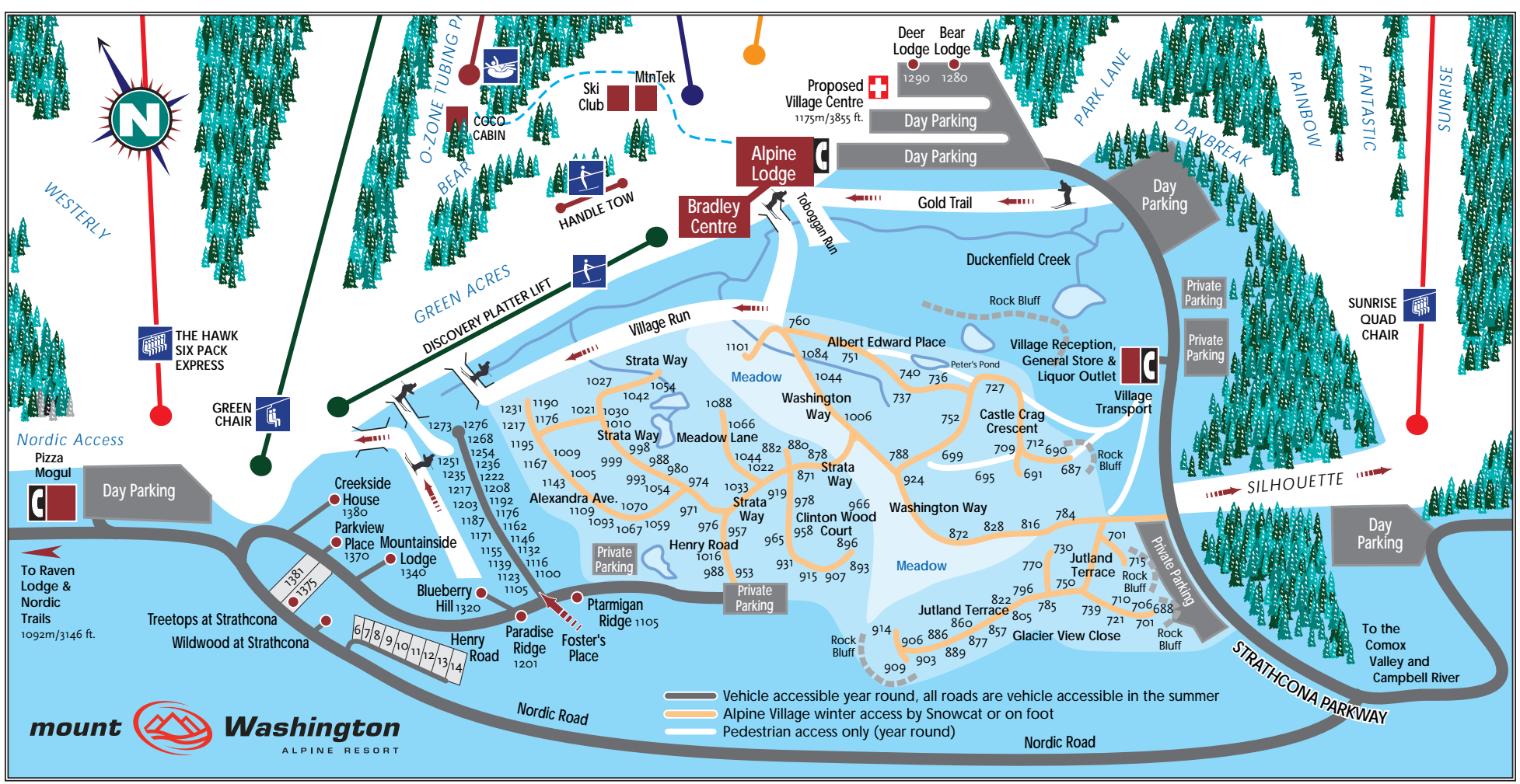
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Sarah Green Aims for the Olympics

Sarah Green, a 17-year-old Victoria biathlete whose home ski terrain is Mount Washington Alpine Resort, was recently awarded a \$500 grant to help to offset her competition expenses this winter.

Green plans to compete in the Provincial Team selection in Vanderhoof, the Canadian Nationals in Edmonton and will be in Vernon twice to compete in BC Cup competitions. She has recently been named to the Biathlon BC Senior Development Squad for 2004-2005. Her goal is to compete in the 2010 Winter Olympics to be held at Whistler, B.C.

The Vancouver Island Mountain Sport Society (VMISS) was formed in the summer of 2003 by a group of local mountain recreation people who have a passion to see Vancouver Island athletes at the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. The society's primary objective is to provide financial support for the development of individual athletes (and clubs) involved in training and competition for Alpine and Nordic mountain-based sports. This newly

formed society will assist young athletes in gaining the necessary experience to compete at a higher level.

Michael Pitcher, Chairperson of VIMSS, says, "Sarah is the perfect candidate for us to fund. She is an honour student who has a passion for her sport and will be an inspiration to others."

Last winter, Green skyrocketed in improvement and results, fluctuating between first and second in the BC Cup circuit races, winning top overall shot at the Cascadia Cup races at Mount Washington, and again earning a spot on the Provincial Team, in both cadet and civilian races. She competed at the North American Championships/Canadian National Biathlon Competition, and at Canadian Cadet Nationals. Green placed fourth and fifth in the individual events at Canadian Nationals, and won both the Sprint and the Individual races the following week at Cadet Nationals, where she also won the Miriam Bedard Trophy as the 2004 Outstanding Senior Female Biathlete.

Besides being an honour roll student, as an air cadet Green has won multiple

awards for first aid and public speaking. She balances her summer biathlon training around a full-time job and her winter race and training schedule around schoolwork and part-time employment. Even with that impressive schedule she finds time to volunteer as a CRD park warden (the youngest in the province), and as a DARE youth representative with the RCMP. She is also a Silver Level Duke of Edinburgh award recipient, currently completing her Gold Level.

"It is great to be recognized and supported by my home training area, and to feel that the Mount Washington community has embraced both Biathlon and my commitment to the sport," says Green. "On a larger scale, gaining a vehicle for supporting local high performance athletes is a hugely important step in the longer-term goal of placing some BC athletes on the podium in 2010.

"I'd like to thank VIMSS for their confidence in me, and other Vancouver Island athletes. I hope we all make you proud."

Mount Washington to host a major Biathlon Event

Mount Washington Alpine Resort will host a Biathlon North American Cup race Feb. 25-27, 2005. It's the highest level biathlon competition ever to be hosted in B.C., says event organizer and Courtenay Biathlon Club member Joe Bajan.

The race will attract close to 100 biathletes from across Canada and the United States, including some who should be competing in the 2010 Winter Olympics at Whistler, B.C., Bajan said. This will be a perfect opportunity to see some of the best athletes in North America competing in

one of the toughest sports-before they become famous, he said. "Mount Washington management is a great supporter of the sport and club," he said. "With their careful planning and work on the range and trails we have the largest biathlon range in B.C. and the first up to international standards. This competition is a step up the ladder to hosting other high profile events and getting the Olympic training centre built (at the Resort)," he said.

What exactly is biathlon? Bajan has a simple explanation: "Ski like mad with a rifle on your back in a 20-kilometre race; Ski like mad, stop in the range for 30 seconds to squeeze off five shots (and don't miss the target!), then ski like mad again."

The race got a boost in October when HostingBC, part of the 2010 Legacies Now program, invested \$10,000 in the Cup: the highest amount permitted for this level of competition under the new hosting policy, Bajan said. The money was part of HostingBC's commitment to invest \$225,000 in 12 communities to assist them in hosting 17 major sporting events in 2005.

An initiative of the province of British Columbia and the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation, 2010 LegaciesNow is the lead organization for sport in B.C. and works in partnership with community-based organizations to develop and support participants and athletes "from playground to podium". "These funds help host the competition and help leave a legacy for the sport for years afterwards," Bajan said. "I'd like to encourage the public to come and watch the competition," he said. "It's free-no admission charge. Come up and get personal with future Olympians at Mount Washington."

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Photo courtesy Mount Washington Alpine Resort

IN MEMORIUM Alex Linton

Resort Founder and Visionary

The man who first spied the pristine snow of Mount Washington and envisioned a family ski resort for the mile-high peak, has passed away.

The weather was perfect one Sunday in February, 1975 when Alex Linton, a Campbell River businessman, was driving home after a day of skiing the Kandahar at Forbidden Plateau. He looked out the window and spotted Mount Washington in the distance. His first thought was to marvel at the massive blanket of snow looming in the distance.

Wondering how deep the snow was on the backside of the mountain, which was hidden from sight, Linton finished his drive and called friend Henry Norie to see if his new helicopter might be available in the morning for a look around the mountain. The next morning, Linton spotted natural bowls, lots of vertical and tons of snow - and he began to dream.

Last year Linton celebrated the 25th anniversary of his dream - Mount Washington Alpine Resort - along with thousands of other visitors. However, in September the flags at the Resort were flying at half staff to honour Linton's memory. Linton died in September of kidney disease. He had suffered from back problems for a number of years and went to the hospital with a sore back.

"They treated the back and they didn't realize it was the kidneys," said Peter Gibson, a longtime friend of Linton's and president of Mount Washington Alpine Resort. "He was 83, and he had a full life." Linton was a downhiller all the way, says Gibson. He skied Forbidden Plateau in the

early days of that Resort, and even drove bus tours up to Forbidden.

"When I was 14, 15, 16 years old I did a lot of skiing with his daughter Pat," Gibson related. "Pat went on to cross-country ski with the national cross-country ski team." Linton's dedication to Mount Washington was evident from the first time he spotted the mountain's blanket of snow. The day after his fateful drive home, he and Norie were in a helicopter a few hundred feet above the mile-high summit. Norie, who didn't ski, was infected by his colleague's enthusiasm - such was the charm of Alex Linton. Flying back to Campbell River, Linton and Norie formed a plan that would see them shaking the hand of the Chairman of the Board of land owners Crown Zellerbach a mere 16 months later. That sealed the land purchase and Mount Washington Ski Resort Ltd. was born.

In December 1979 the world began to flock to the snow-choked ski hill. Now, 25 years later, the Resort has far surpassed even Linton's dreams, Gibson said. "I think Alex saw a family ski hill that his family would assist him in running. He saw a small, little village (the Alpine Village) with twinkling lights. I don't think he foresaw a year-round resort at all," Gibson said. "It was his dream to get the thing started, and it wouldn't have started without him. But I think the current dream is far beyond what he envisioned."

Linton leaves behind his wife Alma, son John, daughters Pat, Jeannette and Leslie, numerous grandchildren - and legions of skiers who respected the man and his vision.



Strathcona Nordics Offer Expanded Programs

Mount Washington boasts of a strong, family-oriented Nordic skiing club that is also known for its racing programs. The Strathcona Nordics are Vancouver Island's cross-country ski club. The Nordics are a non-profit society dedicated to skier development and the promotion of the sport for fun, fitness, recreation and health.

The club is based at Mount Washington and offers a range of recreational to racing programs for cross-country skiers of all ages, abilities and interests. Last May the club hired a full-time professional head coach, Dave Battison, who has expanded club programs and opportunities with a long-term goal of sending skiers and officials from Vancouver Island to the 2010 Winter Olympics at Whistler, B.C.

Battison brings with him a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the club. Before moving to the Comox Valley he was head coach of the Rocky Mountain Racers club in Canmore, Alta., where he coached many elite athletes who achieved national team status and competed at the highest levels, according to a Strathcona Nordics press release.

Battison was a professional triathlete for six years and he has experience coaching skiers and athletes in a variety of sports including skiing, mountain biking and endurance racing. He is a fully certified Level 3 coach, but says his mission with the Nordics is not restricted to racers. "I am thrilled to be part of such an enthusiastic club with so much potential," he said. "I look forward to working with skiers of all ages and abilities, and am committed to help them reach their goals - whatever they may be."

Some of the programs available through the club include Rabbit Ski League (skills-based lessons for children aged four through 12 years), Devo and Junior Racer programs, Adventure Program (offering other Nordic recreation opportunities such as telemark skiing,



The Strathcona Nordics are a non-profit society dedicated to skier development and the promotion of the sport for fun, fitness, recreation and health.

backcountry trips, avalanche awareness and snowshoeing), High Performance Race Team and Senior and Masters Race Teams for adult racers. There are also programs geared for the more recreational adult Nordic skier, such as Master Beginner and Intermediate programs.

The club also offers an Introduction to Biathlon program and a Backcountry program that enables skiers to explore the terrain around Vancouver Island. The club and its activities are organized and run by volunteer effort and supported through membership fees, fundraising and sponsorships.

For more information on the club, visit them on the World Wide Web at <www.strathconanordics.com>.



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In Profile: Eric Meertens

New Mount Washington Operations manager

Taking care of operations at Mount Washington Alpine Resort has just become a three-person job.

Mike Klein has been promoted to Director of Operations and two more positions have been created: Maintenance Manager and Operations Manager. And to staff the positions, the Resort looked to the old and the new: Lift Operations Manager George Trousdell was promoted to Maintenance Manager, and Erik Meertens was lured from Sun Peaks Resort to take on the new Operations Manager position.

"I break things and George fixes them," Meertens explains. "Wait - that should be 'my guys break things'..." Trousdell has worked at Mount Washington since 1981; he started out as a lift operator, worked his way into lift maintenance and spent 15 years a lift maintenance supervisor. In his new job Trousdell looks after lift and vehicle maintenance, electrical and building maintenance and utilities.

Trousdell says one of the challenges of his new job will be making sure all the equipment at Mount Washington is up and running all the time, and running safely - as well as ensuring the people working on the equipment are competent and doing a good job. Another challenge is planning for expansion; taking a larger role in bringing new equipment to the Resort or expanding

the Resort's fleet of vehicles, Cats and groomers.

Trousdell was the go-to guy for the new Boomerang chairlift this summer, as C-TEC brought in its own crew to install the lift. That's part of his new job, he explained, is to deal directly with manufacturers and suppliers. Challenges aside, Trousdell said he still finds his job enjoyable after all these years. "Working on the mountain as long as I have, it's so enjoyable and it's a great work environment. I meet new people every year."

He also gets to ski, snowboard and go snowmobiling in the winter, and mountain biking in the summer. He can often be seen on his off-days at Mount Washington, partaking in the Resort's recreational activities. "With the change in seasons it's like having two jobs," Meertens says.

Meertens may be new to Mount Washington's payroll, but his is a familiar face to many who work at the Island Resort. "I've known most of the guys in the operations department at Mount Washington for years, through industry trade shows and conferences," he said. "I also have a best friend that was in my wedding, who now works under me." He moved here in the summer after Klein offered him the job.

Meertens learned to ski at Mount Washington many years ago, before leav-

ing the Island. "I told my Mom I was taking a year off to ski at Lake Louise. I ended up staying 10 years." He started as a lift operator in 1984 and climbed through the ranks. "I've done a lot of the jobs that I now manage," he said.

Meertens spent nine years at Sun Peaks Resort near Kamloops, which has more terrain and more skier visits than Mount Washington (although Mount Washington has a larger population base from which to draw customers, if both the Comox Valley and Campbell River are taken into account). He brings some unique experience to Mount Washington.

For instance, the first goal Klein set for Meertens when the new employee arrived was to create a fire protection plan for Mount Washington. "I'm fairly well-versed in that after spending the summer I did two years ago in Kamloops," Meertens said. The wildfires that hit the Okanagan came within three kilometres of Sun Peaks: the Resort had to be evacuated once, and employees had their homes evacuated more than that,



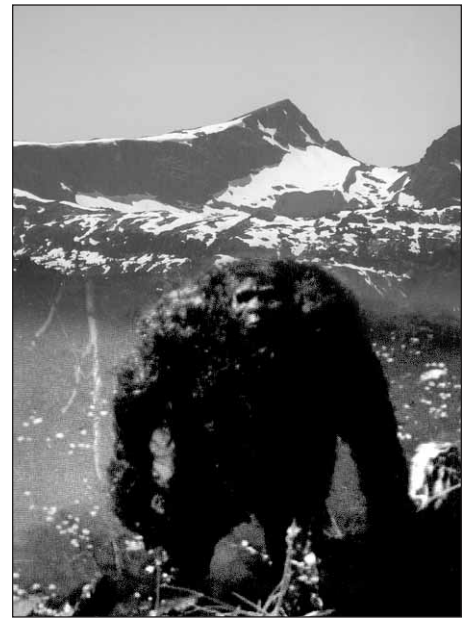
Lift Operations Manager George Trousdell is promoted to Maintenance Manager.

he said. "One bad wind blowing the wrong way... "I was thrown into the fire, so to speak. It brought to light what dangerous things are out there. It was a pretty scary summer."

In addition to the fire protection plan, Meertens has had 23 employees go through a \$100 Wildfire Training Course which entitles them to legally respond to a wildfire; he has also bolstered the Resort's firefighting equipment. Meertens has also instituted some new recycling processes in the maintenance shop to complement what the Resort has already been doing.

Meertens plans to spend his first year at Mount Washington watching how things work, before considering making changes. One goal he has, though, is to ensure his staff gets the extra training they need to do their jobs effectively, he said.

EDITORS NOTE: *The fire protection plan above is strictly regarding forest fire, or wildfire. This is NOT a residential or structural fire plan.*



Are You Ready for the Yeti?

Scotland has its Loch Ness Monster. The Okanagan has Ogopogo, and Victoria's Cadboro Bay has Caddy the Cadborosaurus. Does Mount Washington have its Sasquatch? Some would say yes.

The puzzle of the sasquatch has been ongoing since the first white man settled the West and heard stories from the Native population about strange and elusive large, hairy creatures, according to author Thomas Steenburg in *In Search of Giants: Bigfoot Sasquatch Encounters*. Such stories have endured, and people continue to see these cryptozoological (reported but unconfirmed) creatures.

Mysteriously, no hard physical evidence has been produced, says Steenburg: no bones, no carcasses, no burial areas. Just the odd footprint.

Mount Washington is a perfect place for a sasquatch to live, if one takes stock of information contained in myriad documented sightings. Think about it: plenty of berries and small critters for food (depending on if one believes sasquatches are herbivores or carnivores), and unending miles of bush territory to claim - and in which to hide from human contact. And the frequency of black bear sightings on the mountain gives the sasquatch a perfect cover: many sasquatch sightings have been proven to be bear sightings, further confusing the matter.

A few years ago a noted Comox Valley wildlife biologist was hiking through Paradise Meadows when he spotted footprints that he felt could not have been made by human nor animal. He made plaster casts of the footprints, but failed to find any other evidence. This is just but one sighting at Mount Washington. How many others have gone unreported because someone thought their buddies would think them "a little tetches in the heid" to mention it?

So next time you're out in the woods around Mount Washington and you feel like you're being watched, look quickly-it just might be Sasquatch!

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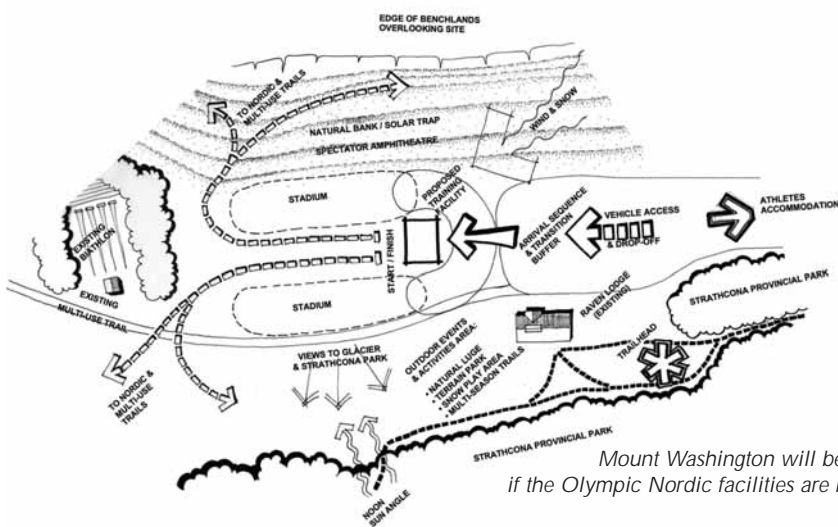
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Nordic Training Facility

continued from page 3

snow to go above the trees before they can set tracks. Lyster's Nordic groomers are playing an increasingly important role, as teams such as the junior nationals look to Mount Washington for spring training.

The biathlon club recently landed a Biathlon North American Cup, including \$10,000 in 2010 Legacies Now funding (through Hosting BC) that will be used for pro timing equipment. The week-long cadet nationals are slated for March, too. "By holding these events this year we'll be able to hold a bigger race (next year)," Lyster said. It's a natural progression toward a World Cup before the 2010 Olympics.

"If their (Whistler's Olympic Nordic venues) aren't ready, we want to be ready so we'll be able to hold it," he said. Mount Washington invested in a new, full-size Cat groomer this season, getting rid of the small machine that had served them well in the past. "Hopefully that will improve our trail conditions over what they've been in the last few years," he said.

All little changes, but collectively, they translate into a world-class Nordic program. "We're looking at changing the

demographics," Gibson said. As baby boomers get older, the Resort's thinking is they will turn to activities that keep them fit but are less risky than something they might have been involved in as 20-year-olds, he added.

"A lot of people are getting into cross-country skiing because of the fitness aspect of it," Lyster said. Triathletes are using the Nordic facilities as part of their cross-training activities; rowers from the University of Victoria are coming up and skiing as part of their cross training, he said.

The Resort is also seeing growth in other activities at Raven Lodge, such as snowshoeing from the lodge into the trails running through Strathcona Park.

This year a company from the central Island, Arctic Light Kennels, is offering dog sledding tours along Raven's Revenge (this will also be the resort's first and only dog run - also new for 2005).

Night life at Raven is also expected to grow, what with the road into the lodge being paved during the summer. "We're going to see a lot more people, even if it's just people coming up to check us out," Lyster predicted. The lodge is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for rentals, lessons and luge. The restaurant is open Thursday through Sunday from 5-9 p.m.

Olympic Nordic Dreams

Things are progressing, albeit slowly, on Mount Washington's Olympic front, says Don Sharpe, Director, Business Services for the Alpine Resort.

Sharpe presented the mountain's plans for capitalizing on the 2010 Winter Olympics at the Vancouver Island Economic Summit in Nanaimo in November. "We were trying to get the message out, letting people know what the mountain's intentions are," he said. "We've been proactive, we've been pursuing this even before the announcement was made. We wanted to be part of (Whistler's successful bid) so we took some initiative. We've got something we think will be a positive legacy for the Island.

"The Resort wants to build a state-of-the-art, dedicated training centre and accommodations for athletes and coaches to meet and work together to increase the quality of training and development for the betterment of the athlete. Although the Mount Washington Island Training Centre is only a concept right now, ideally it would include a weight training fitness centre, classrooms, office space, sport science lab, athletes' lounge and accommodations close to Raven Lodge. "It's only a footprint, and that's all it is," Sharpe said. "It's a concept, not an actual building."

The concept has the support of the Comox Valley's Spirit of 2010 committee, and the Resort received a boost last year when it was named a national training site for Cross-Country Canada.

While Mount Washington Alpine Resort has developed this concept, Sharpe stressed that it could be an Island-wide benefit. "We're going out and talking to people about a dream and how we see it unfolding," he said. "The way we understand it, any funds assigned out of the Olympics will be matching funds" so they have taken their dream to municipal councils in the event they will

have to return asking for funding, he explained. Already they have support from local governments in the Comox Valley, Campbell River and Gold River. Sharpe hopes other communities down-Island will jump on the bandwagon, too.

The Comox Valley Spirit of 2010 committee - of which Sharpe is a member - is planning a special event for Feb. 12, which marks five years before the opening of the 2010 Winter Olympics. "It's all about keeping up the spirit of the Games, the spirits of the community," he said.

Summer in Review

continued from page 4

This was the first time the Resort had both the Hawk and Eagle chairlifts running with specialized chairs for mountain bikes, which made the difference. In the past just the Eagle was open, and the terrain was mainly for expert riders. The Resort hosted two huge mountain bike events: the VPS event saw 600 Norco riders visit the new terrain over one July weekend. That set the tone for the rest of the year, which culminated with the B.C. Cup MTB finals. Over 400 riders came out for that event." B.C. Cup (representatives) told us it was their best finals ever." Mount Washington has been talking informally with Sun Peaks and Whistler/Blackcomb about developing a consortium to promote mountain biking as a destination sport in B.C.

This summer was also a big one for festivals and weddings at Mount Washington. For the first time, the beer, wine and chocolate festivals all sold out. "That just means we're going to be sold out from now on." The Resort intends to cap attendance at the festivals in order to ensure quality over quantity.

Every weekend, Raven Lodge had a wedding in it, and I believe next summer every weekend in July and August are already booked. People got married at the top of the mountain, and a new wooden deck lookout has been built at the summit that is perfect for ceremonies. Along with the increase in summer activity at the Resort, central reservations more than doubled room night bookings.

The only downside to the summer season was the rain, which started in mid-August-the busiest part of the season-and didn't end until mid-September. "Our biggest challenge is the weather. When the weather turned in mid-August...it was really hard. We rely so heavily on weather, even more so in summertime. Who wants to take a scenic chairlift ride in the rain?"



The completion of Bear Lodge marks the beginning of a new growth period.

Building Boom

continued from page 5

The Resort saw its first building boom ten years ago when Blueberry Hill, Ptarmigan Ridge and Paradise Ridge were built, followed quickly by several others. Then the market went soft for about five years, Gibson said. "As much as prices weren't going down, they weren't going up," he said. "In order to entice a builder to come to the mountain prices had to come up. But we're still pretty inexpensive compared to other recreational areas."

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The Mount Washington
Marmot

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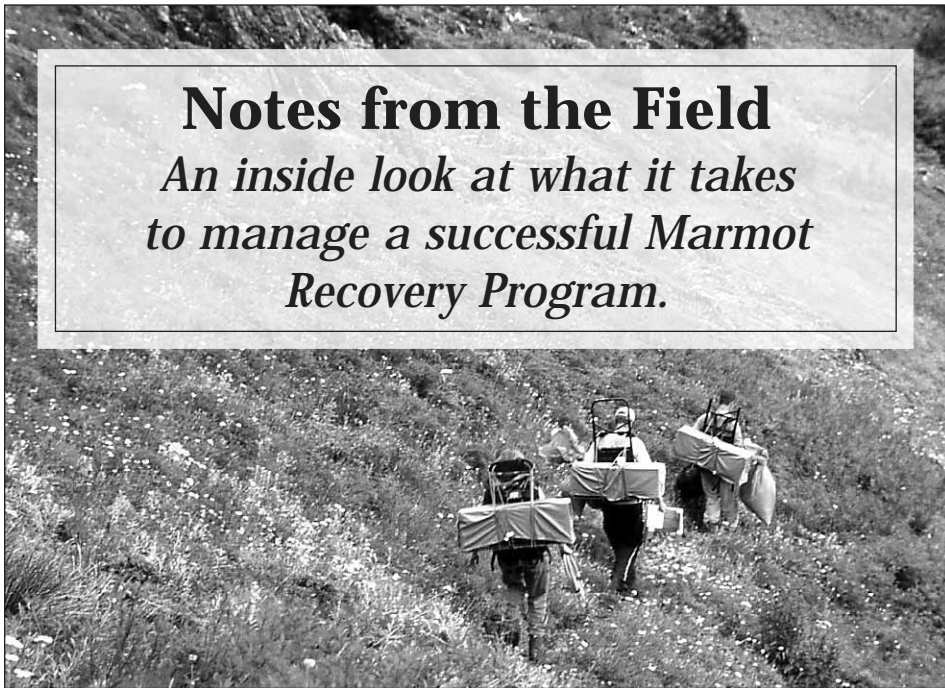
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Notes from the Field

An inside look at what it takes to manage a successful Marmot Recovery Program.



Photos © Andrew Bryant

In the Field

In September, Recovery Team head Don Doyle expressed what we were all feeling: "I just wish they'd all take a Valium and go to sleep!" Everyone involved in the Vancouver Island marmot recovery project was on edge. Most of the wild marmots, including captive-bred ones which had been released, had survived. Fall is one of the times when wild marmots are most vulnerable to predators. We wanted them to hurry up and go into hibernation without a loss of life. They finally did so (without benefit of Valium). Phew!

The wild VI marmot population stood at roughly 18 this spring. During the summer of 2004, 4 were killed (3 of them by predators) and the status of 2 others remains unknown. A total of 11 pups were born in the wild and the population was further enhanced by the release of 9 captive-born marmots.

A captive-born male, Landalt, was released into the wild last spring, into the

Hauling nest boxes into the wild.

loving arms of the wild female KC on Heather Mountain. We're pleased to announce they had 3 pups, making Landalt the first captive-born marmot to breed in the wild. A project victory!

Two females were released at the Mount Washington colony, where there was an overabundance of males and a need for new genetics. And finally, six 2 year olds—

*'Haida' poses for the camera.**Say hello to 'Onslo'*

4 males and 2 females—were released at the Haley Lake Ecological Reserve in July. One couple remained at the release site and the other four, as VI marmots do, went wandering. The other female eventually settled on Green Mountain and we moved one of the wandering males to join her. One male returned "home" to Haley at the end of the summer. The other male was killed by a golden eagle on a neighbouring mountain.

The 8 surviving released marmots are currently hibernating with members of the opposite sex. Final count in fall 2004: approximately 30-35 VI marmots now living in the wild.

Protective Measures

At the Haley release site, field staff monitored the released marmots from July to October, tolerating scorching summer heat, clouds of biting insects, heavy rains, high winds, and freezing temperatures. The animals were all released with the familiar nest boxes they occupied while in captivity. Each nest box was located to give direct access to a natural burrow system. The boxes were protected by mesh enclosures ("cocoon"), electric fencing and fladry (a line strung with flagging tape.)

A series of tents was set up around the periphery of the Haley meadow. Staff rotated sleeping time among the tents. Transistor radios were played in the unoccupied tents to increase the amount of human noise. Staff hung dirty laundry in mesh bags on bushes and trees to increase the amount of human scent in the area. Sounds of hounds were periodically played to deter cougars. The field crew carried "bear bangers" to deter aerial predators. Remote cameras monitored predator and prey (elk, deer) activity.

Captive Breeding: Lots of New Pups

The captive population, in 4 breeding centers, now stands at 93 individuals. A total of 8 litters and 26 pups were born in 2004. This is a healthy increase over last year and the third year of good, reliable reproduction in captivity.

Mesh enclosures help protect Marmot nest boxes in the wild.



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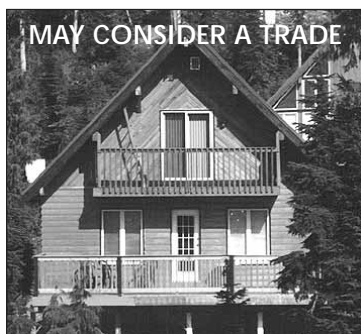
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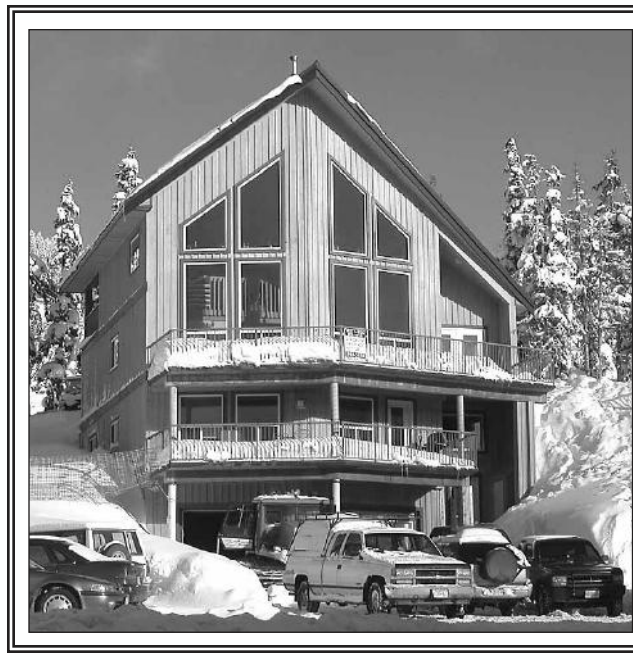
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Her professional designations include, Professional Financial Planning and Certified Financial Planning. Barb is committed to the Comox Valley community. She is a member of the Courtenay Rotary Club serving as a Director for two years. Barb is a Board member of the Comox Valley Art Gallery Society and plans to add the Hospice Society to her community involvement in the near future. For that 'Special One on One' relationship call Barb - 703-4178, 897-2210 (cell) or email barbr@cvcu.com

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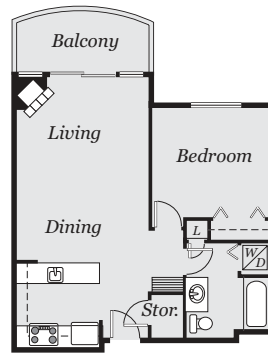
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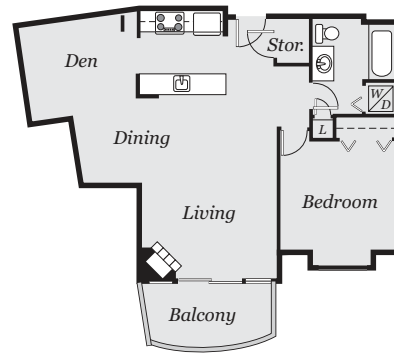
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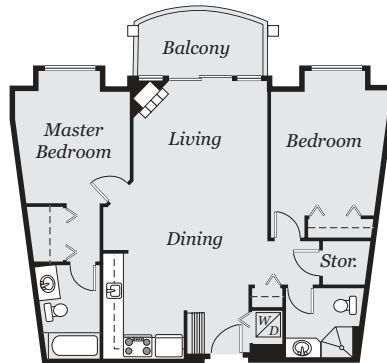
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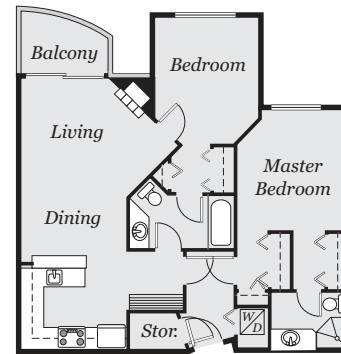
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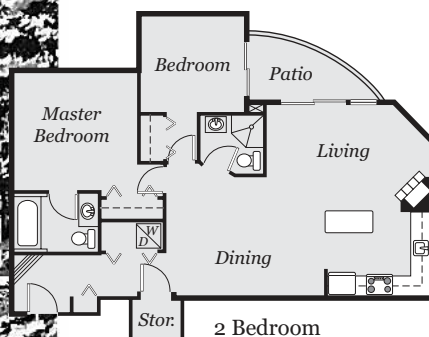
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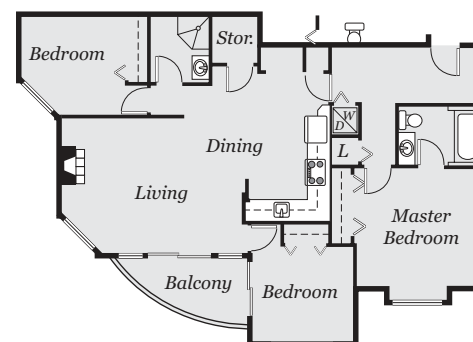
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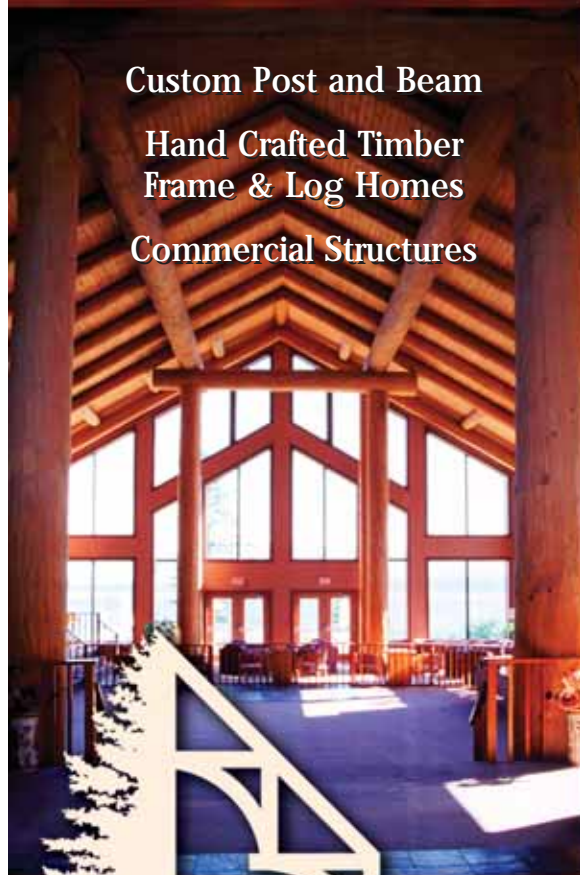
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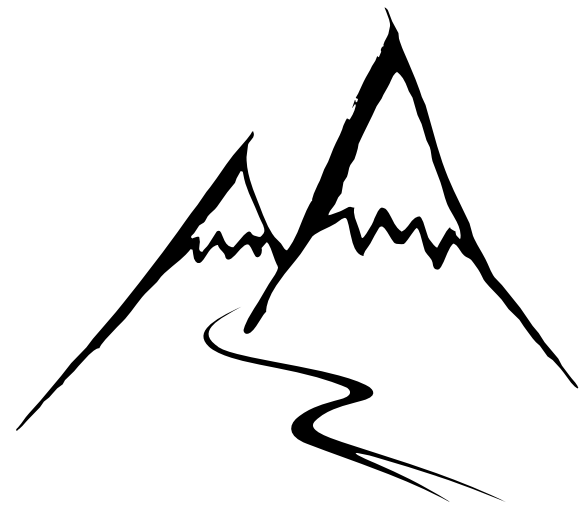
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