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Management the key for game association

BRUCE CAMPBELL OKOTOKS WESTERN WHEEL

Fish and game associations in the Foothills area stress that management is the key to ensure there are plenty of habitat, fish and wildlife resources for all Albertans.

The Okotoks Fish and Game Association as well as its sister association in High River held a presentation on the challenges and issues regarding wildlife management in the Foothills and surrounding area by Brent Boukal, a biologist for Alberta Environment and Parks, on March 30 at Crystal Shores Beach House.

"We like to share ideas in terms of management, but at the same time, we are interested gaining information on what you are seeing, what you are experiencing to provide the best management," Boukal said. "As a biologist, our team deals with things with fur, feathers and scales. A lot of work in this area is dedicated to game,



PHOTO BY BRUCE CAMPBELL, OKOTOKS WESTERN WHEEL

Brent Boukal, a biologist with Alberta Environment and Parks, gave a presentation on wildlife management at Crystal Shores Beach House on March 30.

but we also deal with habitat management."

David Osmars, of Okotoks Fish and Game, said in a prepared statement there were several issues that stood out in the wild management units surrounding Calgary.

"We are very fortunate that Okotoks and High River are situated in an area that allows for significant wildlife recreational opportunities." Osmars said. "However, the interest of the various stakeholders is often not

aligned."

He said for example, hunters might was more deer for hunting opportunities, whereas landowners, ranchers and municipalities might prefer fewer deer and have concerns regarding hunting activity on private land and around municipalities.

"Managing the population of deer, elks, bears, cougars and wolves that live in close proximity or within our communities is a constant balancing issue for our (Alberta's) wildlife biologists," Osmars said. "Wildlife managers use a broad range of tactics including the adjustment of hunting and fishing regulations to balance the issues of the various stakeholders."

Those bears include the grizzly variety. Osmars said there is a sow grizzly with a den within 10 kilometres west of Okotoks.

Some of those management tactics include the adjustment of hunting and fishing regulations, such as catch and release, possession limits for fish and game, season timing duration, public land access stipulation and others.

Key wildlife management issues for the Province of Alberta are:

- 1. Ensure the wildlife management decisions are made on an informed basis, by knowing fish and game population and the challenges they are facing, such as whirling disease in fish or chronic wasting disease in deer.
- 2. Simplify and enhance the regulations dealing with fish and wildlife.
- 3. Maintain or increase recreation opportunities.
- 4. Provide a fair and objective assessment of the state of fish and wildlife



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