

FINDING THE RIGHT HIKING TRAIL FOR YOU

New edition of guide book that originated in 1971
now on shelves

By Kevin Gill

Brian Patton and Bart Robinson have hiked further in the Rockies and seen more of its scenery than most of us can even imagine.

They are the authors of the Canadian Rockies Trail Guide, which was originally published back in 1971.

The book has sold 230,000 copies since then and the eighth edition hit bookstores in March. It now covers 229 trails and has something for everyone, encompassing the longest and shortest trails for hikers of all abilities.

The guide describes trails in: Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Waterton lakes, Mount Robson, Mount Assiniboine, Peter Lougheed, Elk Lakes and Akamina-Kishinena Parks.

Patton and Robinson were obviously busy when they did all the initial work to put the guide together in the early 1970s. For the first edition the pair split up, only doing a few trips together, and hiked all the trails included in that edition in one summer.

They were highly dependent on the weather but fortunately Mother Nature was on their side.

"It wasn't a bad summer for weather," said Patton, who makes his home in Invermere, B.C. "I've seen some summers that we simply just wouldn't have been able to do what we did."

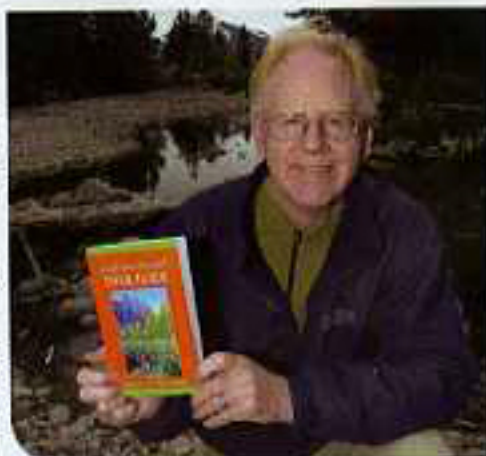
Patton has kept track of how far he has actually hiked to measure and describe trails for the book over the years and said it probably totals at least 4,000 kilometres.

A lot of the trails the authors have measured turned out to be different distances than had been recorded previously.

"We realized that a lot of the distances on the trails were pretty bad back in those days," he said.

"Wardens would (sometimes) just estimate them from riding on horseback."

Patton and Robinson measured all



Bart Robinson, one of the authors of The Canadian Rockies Trail Guide, the eighth edition of which recently hit shelves in bookstores.

| PHOTO BY PAM DOYLE

the trails accurately by pushing a trail wheel (essentially a bike wheel that measures mileage) while hiking. In addition to trail distances, elevations and descriptions, there are also trail logs that tell the reader exactly what they'll see at certain point along the way on their hikes.

The new edition is the first major revision to the book since it was virtually rewritten cover to cover in 2000. Many of the changes in the book reflect modifications to policies and changes to the landscape itself.

Robinson, who is now a resident of Canmore, said that for each edition they are always checking in with the warden service to see what the status is on trails.

"Trails are constantly changed or decommissioned due to Parks' policies or changes," he said.

Hiking so many kilometres over the years is something Patton has enjoyed tremendously, especially these days when escaping from the fast pace of our society is sometimes difficult.

"I just enjoy moving through the landscape," said Patton. "Everybody always talks about how they want to go into space or the moon or something like. I always feel that right here on Earth if you're just out in the backcountry in the mountain parks — when it's peaceful and you're by yourself — it's a unique experience."

