

# Go West, eh?

Trivia for travellers **BY LOUISE PHILLIPS AND SHERI RADFORD**

Alberta is named for Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, wife of a governor-general of Canada and fourth daughter of British Queen Victoria and her consort, Prince Albert. Queen Victoria chose the name British Columbia, partly because the Hudson's Bay Company called it Columbia after the Columbia River, which was named for a ship, which was named for the English colonies in America, which were named for Christopher Columbus. Got that?

The hardworking beaver on our five-cent coin harks back to the early days of the Hudson's Bay Trading Company, which hunted the critter for fur hats, thus opening up the West to European settlement. The other national symbol with Western roots: Mounties in red coats and wide-brimmed hats policed the Prairie from Fort Calgary as the North-West Mounted Police.

As Scotland has the Loch Ness Monster, so Canada is home to its cousin, Ogoopogo. Since the 1800s, this giant sea serpent has been spotted in BC's Okanagan Lake, but incontrovertible proof of its existence has yet to surface. Also on the still-to-be-proven list: Sasquatch (Bigfoot). Cryptozoologists have been chasing this large, smelly, ape-like creature for more than a century. The best place to look? BC's Harrison Hot Springs.

These legal oddities fall into the "better safe than sorry" category of lawmaking:

- » In BC, it is illegal to kill a Sasquatch, a creature largely regarded as mythical.
- » Victoria street entertainers are not allowed to give balloon animals to kids.
- » Alberta businesses must provide rails for tying up horses.

The world often views Canadians as humble, but we love to brag about our giant objects. A few of the West's quirky claims to fame: the world's largest hockey stick and puck (Duncan, BC), fly rod (Houston, BC), standing cuckoo clock (Kimberley, BC), mallard duck (Andrew, AB), beaver (Beaverlodge, AB), dinosaur (Drumheller, AB), sausage (Mundare, Alta) and Easter egg (Vegreville, AB).

**Orcas** Misnamed killer whales along the Pacific Coast are threatened due to long breeding cycle and environmental hazards. **Whooping Cranes** About half the world's 320 known "whoopers" breed at Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta. **Woodland Caribou** Oil and gas exploration, and poaching, threaten the 7,000 animals left in Alberta.

**Spirit Bears** A recessive gene accounts for the one-in-10 black bear born a ghostly white, only in the Prince Rupert area of Northern BC. **Spotted Owls** Only about 20 of Canada's most endangered bird species are left, in the few old-growth forests of Southwestern BC. **Marbled Murrelets** A chunky auk, also endangered due to loss of old-growth habitat.

» From Alberta's Mt Athabasca in the Columbia Icefield, water flows to the Pacific Ocean on the western slope, the Arctic Ocean on the northeast, and the Atlantic Ocean on the southeast.

» Hoodoos are found in BC near Kamloops and in Alberta near Drumheller. The name "hoodoo" comes from the word "voodoo" and was given to the eroded-sandstone formations by European settlers.

» While Banff boasts Canada's most famous hot springs, naturally occurring, super-hot mineral waters bubble up near Jasper, too. Find them all over BC's Harrison area, Kootenay region, Vancouver Island's west coast and Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands). **RM**

Vancouver is the top destination city in the Americas, say readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* (2010). Vancouver is the world's third-most-liveable city and Calgary comes in at Number 5; accolades determined by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which, by its own admission, does not consider the cost of living.



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