

# Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area

Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area was officially established on December 20, 2000. This natural area covers 12.32 square kilometres (1,233 hectares) preserving a special part of Alberta's natural heritage within the Foothills Natural Region. Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area is home to Alberta's only population of mountain goats outside of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region.

While most of Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas provide settings for nature-based outdoor recreation and exciting places to explore and learn about the natural world, the mountain goats of Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area are very sensitive to disturbance, particularly during the kidding period from May 1 - July 31. Visitation during this period should be limited to minimize stress to newborn kids during their first three months of life.

Natural areas protect special and sensitive landscapes of local and regional significance while providing opportunities for education, nature appreciation and low intensity recreation.

## Site Location and Description

Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area is located in the Upper Foothills about 50 kms northwest of Hinton. The Park includes the Pinto, Hightower and Wroe Creek valleys.

Throughout the natural area, Pinto Creek has eroded a deep canyon through the relatively soft sandstone hills. Ongoing stream erosion has maintained a series of steep cliff faces along parts of the valley. These discontinuous cliffs provide ideal habitat for the mountain goats that reside in this area. Above the cliffs, the valley rounds out into the surrounding forest.

## Significant Features

Pinto Creek Canyon Natural Area preserves the core habitat of the only known canyon-dwelling mountain goat herd in Alberta. This mountain goat herd is recognized for its unique character, small population size, and isolation from other goat populations. The goats range about 2 kilometres outside the boundary of the natural area.

The narrow, steep sided canyon walls of the Pinto Creek Canyon contain many geological features such as cliffs and hoodoos. The cliffs consist of loose sandstone and rocky outcrops, surrounded by a forested plateau consisting primarily of lodgepole pine and white spruce.



Labrador tea and mosses dominate the understory. On the well-drained slopes above the cliffs, grasses such as bluejoint and hairy wild rye are widespread, and shrubs like buffalo berry and wolf willow are common. Aspen is abundant along the cliff edges and in the steep gullies that separate the cliffs.

In addition to the mountain goat herd, moose, white-tailed deer, mule deer and elk use these forests, as well as a variety of foothills bird species. Pinto Creek supports bull trout, arctic grayling and mountain whitefish.

For more information contact 780-865-8264 in Hinton or 780-827-3626 in Grande Cache. To call toll-free from anywhere in Alberta, dial 310-0000 and enter the number.



April 1, 2001

ISBN No. 0-7785-1698-9

Pub No. I/878

R. 27

R. 26 W5M.

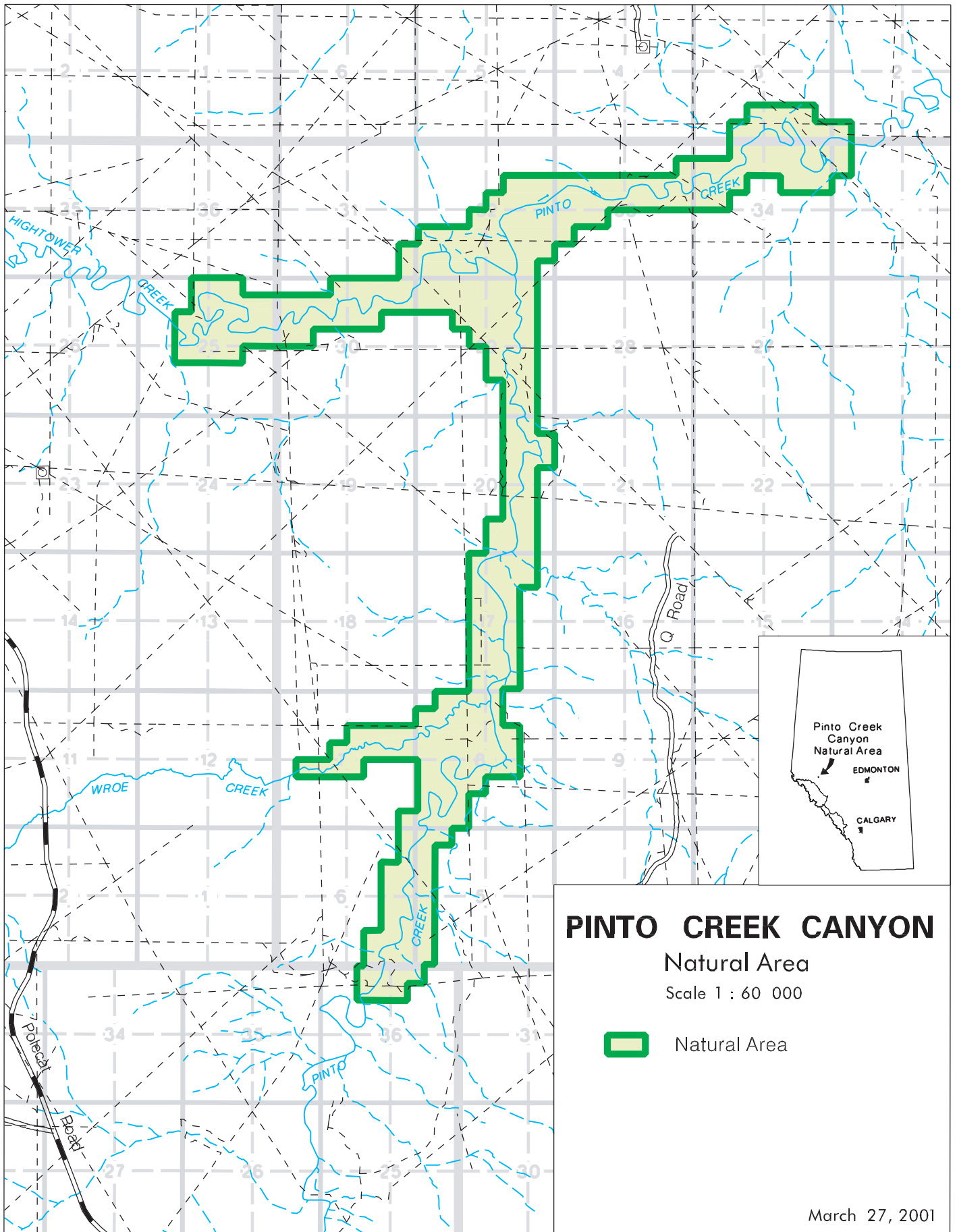
TP 56

TP 56

TP 55

TP 55

TP 54



# PINTO CREEK CANYON

Natural Area

Scale 1 : 60 000



Natural Area

March 27, 2001