

# my summer vacation



n. The Center has several fire-research projects under way in the which only a few will be mentioned

st few weeks were spent travelling the portion of the park that was acy road and doing stand composition of all distinguishable forest types. isted of getting out of bed at some our in the morning and driving to a d region of the park, whereupon we pro

ly, stopping every few miles when for reasons known only to himself, y "right here". Then we would pass of Off around and exit the vehicle, ying the equipment appropriate for er task, walk a few yards into the and measure the height, diameter of a specimen of every variety of tree ere. Then, following some specula- Dr. Wein on the fire history of that area and its effects on the existing fauna, we would return to the van, epeat this cycle for the rest of the s exciting and stimulating routine everal weeks interrupted only by in- trips to Ft. Smith to buy groceries lies, attend to correspondence and ccellaneous tasks, and, most impor- use the intemperate showers.

ormation generated by this exercise eing used by Mohamed El-Bayoumi les Dutcher to update a digital data which is stored information on the aquatic systems and biological of the park. Properly maintained, this be used for both day-to-day fire ment purposes and to allow the rm biological predictions that are y for long-term Park management s.

end of June, this data was largely e, and we began to work on other Dr. Kiyoko Miyanishi began her f willow encroachment on the s of the Peace-Athabasca delta, and

left for one of what was to be three trips to the delta, accompanied by Ken and Gigi. This delta is the largest fresh-water delta in the world, and is home to most of the buffalo in the park. There is some concern that dwarf willows are encroaching on the meadows that are grazing lands of the buffalo, and her project involves the study of this process and the feasibility of using prescribed burning to halt this encroachment. This involved camping in meadows on which one struck water with every step, dredging up hundreds of bucketfuls of sludge from the bottom of a creek to be used to simulate silt depositions during flooding, working in close proximity to herds of buffalo, and a couple of encounters with overly curious (or hungry!) black bears. (Final score: FSC 1, Bears 0, may he rest in peace). That this work got done at all is a testament to the abilities and commitment of the indefatigable Gigi, of Ken, who fortunately was (and presumably still is) the rugged outdoors type, and the indomitable Kiyoko, who, we hope, will at least get professional recognition for her ordeal.

On July 1, Mark Lutes, our token sociologist, bade a reluctant farewell to the wilderness and took up residence in Ft. Smith in order to proceed with his project. The extent to which forest fires are suppressed and the manner in which this is done are very contentious issues in this area. Many members of the community, particularly natives and metis, supplement their income by hunting and trapping. They view this as an integral part of their culture and lifestyle, and to them forest fires can threaten this way of life by destroying their traplines or hunting areas. They want more suppression than the fire control organizations are presently willing to carry out. Others in the community see fires as a natural and necessary part of the environment, and some see money spent on protecting traplines as a waste. Mark's task was to study the attitudes of various individuals and groups in the community towards forest fires and fire management, while attempting not to get involved in any

disputes with the more opinionated members of the community.

Later on in the summer we were visited by other members of the Center who were pursuing their own research projects. Dr. Ian Methven and Judi Beck joined us for a couple of weeks to study the behaviour and effects of fire in jack pine stands. This information will be used in the development of a 'functional state-dependent stand/fuel model'. It is suggested that the readers contact one of these people if a clarification of this phrase is desired.

We were then joined for the duration of our visit by Richard Morin, a Surveying Engineering student who was attempting to use satellite imagery to discern cover types (i.e. kinds of vegetation). This information would then be used to further update the data bank discussed earlier. Richard's field work involved 'ground truthing' which apparently means looking at satellite-generated pictures covered with seemingly arbitrary colors, then walking through the actual area to verify or discover what these colors mean.

We were also joined by Thomas Ferguson, a PhD. Anthropology Student from the University of Alberta. She was in Ft. Smith to study the traditional native patterns of resource use, which is thought to involve the use of prescribed burning of meadows and woodlands to alter and improve their environment.

To bring this story to a close, we all returned from our adventure safe and (at least physically) sound, and with a new appreciation for our northern culture and environment. We also gained invaluable experience in the arts of field research and wilderness survival. In short, I would recommend this experience to anyone who has even a passing interest in anything involving our northern environment or society.

The Wood Buffalo National Park research program will be continuing for at least three years, and there are several other projects occurring here on campus and elsewhere in New Brunswick. The Center is presently looking for interested and qualified students as research assistants for the coming summer or to conduct their own research projects. The Center's interdisciplinary approach will accommodate fire-related research in practically any field of study, so feel free to contact the Center if you have any ideas or are just curious about the program. There is also funding available through the Northern Canadian Studies Committee for any research in the North in any discipline. For more information or application forms, students can call or drop by the Fire Science Center (room 3, Head Hall, 453-4509). These applications are due by the end of November.