



A painting by Anne Jones, Columbia Wetlands.

# Natural inspiration

## Art Gallery of Golden teams up with Wildsight for a celebration of the Columbia Wetlands

BY CAROLYN GRANT

THE VALLEY

February 2 is World Wetlands Day, and in celebration of that event, the environmental group Wildsight and the Art Gallery of Golden are mounting a major exhibition featuring artists from up and down this valley — and a few from further afield.

Ellen Zimmerman, a longtime Wildsight member is organizing the show, along with Bill Usher, Executive Director of Kicking Horse Culture/Art Gallery of Golden. The theme is the inspiration the artists themselves draw from the Columbia Wetlands, and the show will feature paintings, sculpture and other media.

The show opens on January 31 and runs through to March 28.

Zimmerman has been passionate about the Columbia Wetlands for many, many years and says now more than ever there is a need to protect this magnificent natural wonder.

"20 years ago it was thought of as a mosquito infested swamp," she said. "I don't think you'd find anyone who would admit to thinking that today. But the thinking behind the art exhibit was to perhaps open the eyes of people we may have missed in the past. We are hoping to reach out to a different set of eyes and ears through art and hope they will fall in love and care about the wetlands.

"The stimulus for this exhibition is World Wetlands Day, something we don't often mark because of winter. Most of the world is not frozen over on World Wetlands Day."

The Columbia Wetlands are a world RAMSAR site, an organization whose mission is the conservation and wise

use of all wetlands.

Getting RAMSAR status was significant, Zimmerman says, but it doesn't lessen the pressure development is putting on the Columbia Wetlands.

"There is a significant level of pressure from development. The tributary streams that feed the wetlands are under constant pressure."

Bill Usher, Executive Director of Kicking Horse Culture/Art Gallery of Golden, believes that the exhibit will create a long-lasting effect. "Artists derive inspiration from the Columbia Wetlands and create lasting legacies from that inspiration," he said. "The gallery exhibit, print catalogue and the website exhibit will all facilitate long-term appre-

*"I have friends whose ranch sits above this wondrous view. Hiking with them there I feel privileged to share in the reverence of a space not only valued by them, but of the Shuswap nation so many years before."*

ANNE JONES