This will be my first year as a vendor at the Banff Christmas Market at the Warner Stables and I’m busy getting everything ready. Shonna and I checked this event out last year and it became quickly apparent it would be a good fit for me and my whimsical wildlife.

When they opened applications for this year in February, I applied for all three weekends. It’s a popular market and they’re selective. But I’m coming up on thirty years living in this valley, more than twenty as a cartoonist and whimsical wildlife painter, so I didn’t have to sell the local artist angle. But this area is infested with skilled and talented creative types, so that only gets me so far.

And with only one building with available power for my lighting, it limited my placement options.

For these reasons, I tempered my expectations but was delighted to be accepted for the first and third weekend. While it means tearing my booth down after the first weekend and setting up again two weeks later, I’m happy to pay my dues this first year and hope for all three weekends next year.

I keep extensive inventory and sales records for events, especially Expo, so I know what to order. The past couple of years, I did several Mountain Made Markets here in Canmore, and those were worth my while. Unfortunately, this year the Town of Canmore limited the indoor space for vendors to the point that it seemed like an afterthought to the outdoor portion of the markets.

As I’ve written before, my commitments to my daily editorial cartooning and other work means it’s not worth it right now to invest in a tent and all of the other infrastructure for the limited number of outdoor markets in which I’d be able to participate.

There is an upcoming Mountain Made Market at the Canmore Rec Centre that I would have loved to have been a part of, but it conflicts with one of my Banff Christmas Market weekends.

So the only event I’ve done so far this year has been the Calgary Expo in April.

The challenge with this show is that it’s new to me, so I don’t know what to expect for sales. It means I must play the speculation game. I’ve ordered what I think I’ll need, hoping I don’t run out, while trying to avoid ordering too much without another opportunity to sell the stock again until the Calgary Expo in April.

While Banff and Canmore are different towns, we’re part of the same Bow Valley community. With just a twenty-minute drive between them, plenty of people live in one town and work in the other. Some city commutes are much longer than that. So, it’ll be nice to come home each night rather than stay in a hotel like I do for Expo.

It also means I can replenish my stock each day, rather than stuff a whole weekend worth of stock into my booth at the beginning. They’ve also got a setup day on the Thursday, so no early morning time crunch of setup on the first day, and I can take extra time to nitpick the details.

The show has a rustic and cozy Christmas feel to it with over 100 vendors on site. On both weekends, my booth will be in the main stable, Evergreen Hall. They’ve also got the North Pole Pavilion and Candy Cane Lane vendor tents. There are photos with Santa, pony rides, live music and more outdoor vendors.

You can even enjoy a fireside holiday drink at the Fire Lounge and bar. While it’s hard to find a bad view in Banff, the scenery surrounding Warner Stables is stunning, so here’s hoping for clear skies and pleasant weather.

My assigned space is a little smaller than Expo, but larger than that I’ve had at the Canmore Markets. I’ve mapped out my booth setup in advance, but there are always surprises requiring adjustments on site. I’m in a different space for each of the two weekends, which means some minor layout alterations, but nothing difficult.

I’m pleased with where they put me for both weekends.

Just like Expo, this is a paid admission show, so if you’re planning on checking it out, you’ll have to buy tickets online in advance, and choose an arrival time slot. 100 guests are admitted every 20 minutes. Once you’re there, you can stay until closing, of course, but staggering the arrival times helps to ensure it doesn’t get overcrowded and maintains a comfortable, rather than overcrowded feel.

I’m looking forward to introducing my work to a new audience, especially since it’s been months since my last event. I’ll have my usual variety of products, including stickers, magnets, coasters, puzzles and calendars, along with poster, canvas and metal prints in a variety of sizes, provided everything I’ve ordered arrives on time. Fingers crossed.

For more information, scheduling and to buy tickets, check out the Banff Christmas Market website. I’ll be there next week from opening on Friday, November 17th to Sunday, November 19th and again two weeks later from Friday, December 1st to Sunday December 3rd.

I hope to see you there!