



The Red Deer River Naturalist

Editors: Judy Boyd, Myrna Pearman

December, 2014

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2014

Sunday, December 21

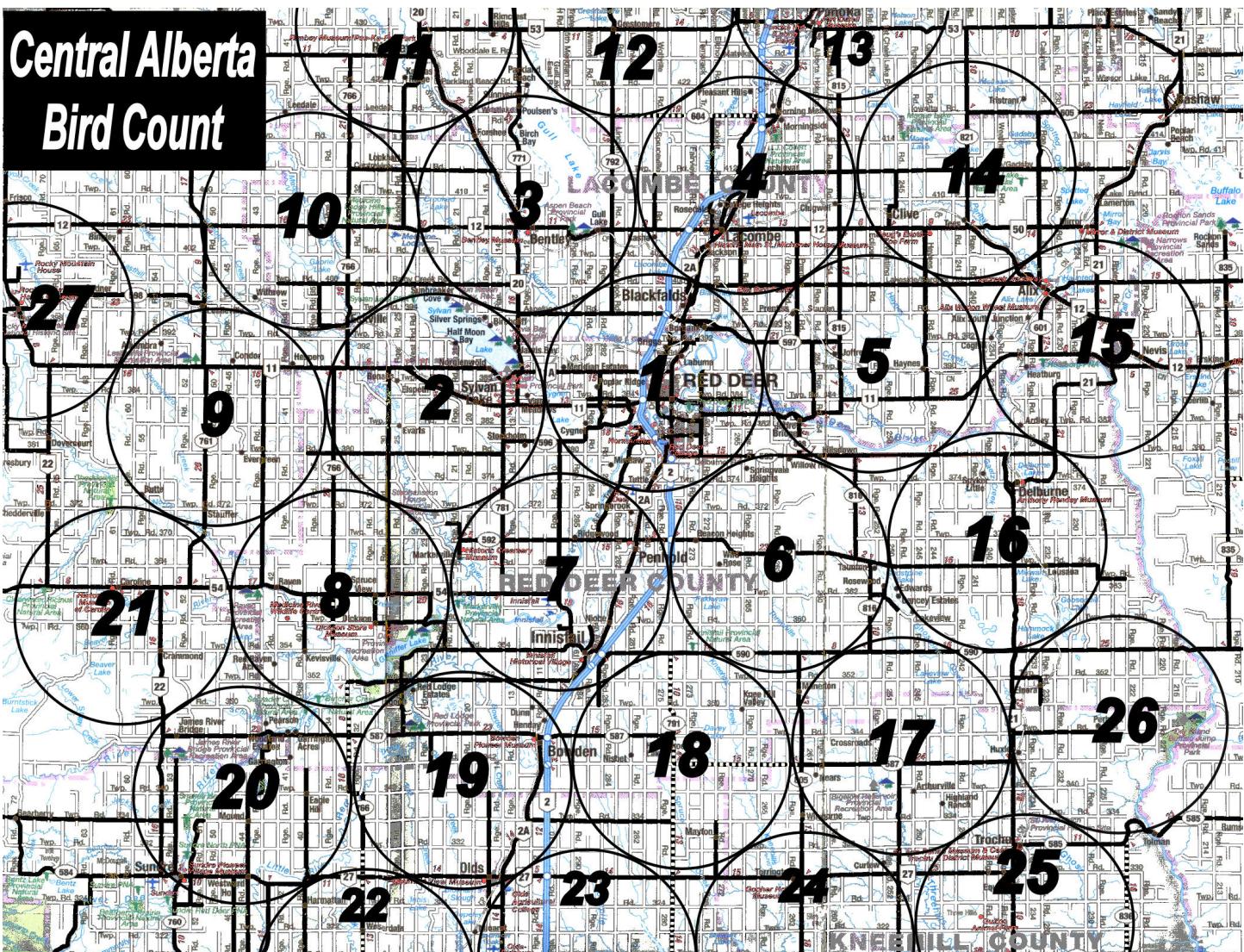
We will be surveying areas in **Central Alberta** to count as many birds as we can. You do not have to be an expert at bird identification. Give us a call and we will try to match you with an experienced counter. Call Judy at 403.342.4150 to confirm that you are counting. There will be a potluck supper at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre at 6:00 p.m. for counters. Bring your own plates, cups, and utensils and a hot/cold dish. Coffee and juice will be supplied.



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Central Alberta Bird Count



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT INSTRUCTIONS

- ◆ Counts must be made during a single calendar day within the official CBC period.
- ◆ CBC 2013 will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You can also *Owl* (count before 9:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m.). There is no minimum time limit, and you can watch your feeders or count birds on foot, by car or using any other mode of transportation.
- ◆ A Count area must fill (preferably) or fit entirely within a 24-km diameter official count circle.
- ◆ It is important to record low and high temperatures, as well as snow and sky conditions.
- ◆ All counters must record hours and kilometres walked/driven/skied, etc.
- ◆ You can also record any interesting or unusual bird seen any time during the Count Week (three days before and three days after the official Count Day). Please make sure, though, that you mark down when and where you saw the bird and what the bird was doing at the time. Add these birds to your tally sheet but make sure it is evident that it is a Count Week (CW) bird.

- ◆ We need the tally sheets before Dec. 29. You can either drop it off to Judy at the Nature Centre or mail it to RDRN, Box 785, Red Deer, AB T4N 5H2. You also have the option of emailing your tally in to rd.rn@hotmail.com. Make sure you put Christmas Bird Count as the subject of your email.

Some problems you might encounter:

Too many birds to count. If hordes of birds are coming and going from your yard, they may be difficult to count individually. Don't give up! Instead, count a subgroup of 10 or 25 birds and see how large that group looks. Then make several visual "sweeps," counting how many such groups are in view. Multiply the number of sweeps by the size of your subgroup (e.g., 5 sweeps x 10 birds/sweep = 50 birds) To get the best estimate, repeat this procedure at various times throughout the day, and average your results.



THE ADVENTURES OF “ALBERTA GOLD”

Story and Photos by Dennis Smith



July 23, 2014. Wow !! What an amazing day this was !! My good friend AllieCat and I arrived at the TELUS Communications Tower in Highland Green at about the same time and set up our tripods, cameras, scopes, etc. A kindly local neighbour stopped by to tell us that there was a young falcon on the roof of a taxi cab just around the corner. Sure enough, there he was. I guess he was tired of flying and just wanted to catch a cab (LOL). The baby then flew off of the taxi cab and hopped onto the front steps of an adjacent house. We got very close to him hoping to lure him off the steps, onto the lawn, and then hoping he would take flight back toward the tower. But no such luck. It was at this point Allie called Judy Boyd (JB) for assistance. (JB works for Medicine River Wildlife Centre and is our Red Deer River Naturalists representative, a true Wildlife Whisperer & our very good friend.)

In the meantime, Allie and I actually got within inches of him and he got defensive but didn't move. He then decided to wander in the opposite direction and into the backyard where he perched on a fire pit. JB arrived a few minutes later to “net” the little guy and we all walked him back to the tower compound for release.

Prior to releasing him, JB very carefully examined the little guy; he appeared totally unscathed but was very scared by all the strange events happening to him. JB determined him to be a little male by his size. Soon after his release, he was back near the tower base, calling for Mom and Dad.



Take special note of those intimidating talons on such a young bird (he is only 6 to 7 weeks old).

What an absolute thrill of a lifetime it was to see and to be with this little guy, so up close and personal, even if only for a short period of time.

This little guy later became very well known as “Alberta Gold,” named for his adventure with the taxi cab. The remaining three babies were aptly named by our faithful forum chatters: Cobalt-Sky (another little male); Allie (female) and Dusty (female). Sexing of the fledglings is determined by their size, with female raptors being noticeably larger than the males. None of this year's RDRN TELUS Tower nestlings were banded.

UPDATE September 28th, 2014 - There have been no additional Peregrine Falcon sightings for over a week, so it is all but confirmed that our four young fledglings and the two parents have all migrated south for the winter (not unlike a lot of Canadians do at this time of year, Ha Ha).

Please visit our 37-page RDRN TELUS Tower Peregrine Forum for detailed regular reports of the tower news from this past summer. The above story and photos begin on page 23 of that forum. The link is
<http://www.raptorresource.org/forum/index.php/topic,1859.0.html>



We also invite you to check out Summerfly's Shutterfly link for current and additional photos and videos from the last few years. That link is <https://suumerflys.shutterfly.com/> (yes, LOL, the spelling is correct)

FLOWER AND BIRD FOCUS

There will be no Flower or Bird Focus meetings in December.

January 21, 2015 - Flower Focus will be on Peas and Carrots- *Fabaceae* and *Apiaceae*.



BEAM ME UP, SCOTTY



This Snowy Owl was found injured and emaciated by Jill Higgins at Rochon Sands Provincial Park on November 4. With the help of Claudia Lipski, the owl was caught and transferred to Medicine River Wildlife Centre where it was rehabbed back to health. It was released back where it was found on November 24.

Photo by Bonnie Mullin

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The Red Deer River Naturalists, the first natural history organization to be established in Alberta, was incorporated as a society in 1906. The objectives of the society are to foster an increased knowledge, understanding and appreciation of natural history, and to support conservation measures dealing with our environment, wildlife and natural resources.

Annual membership is \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.

Regular meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of most months at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre, 6300-45 Ave., Red Deer, AB. Non-members are welcome.

Members are encouraged to contribute to this newsletter. Deadline is the last Friday of the month.

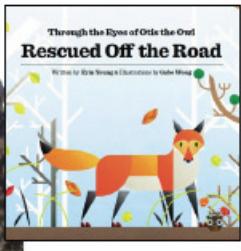
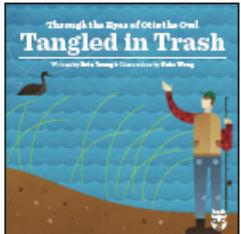
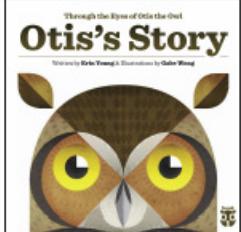
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