



The Red Deer River Naturalist

Editors: Myrna Pearman, Judy Boyd and Susan Van der Hoek

December 2018

2018 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



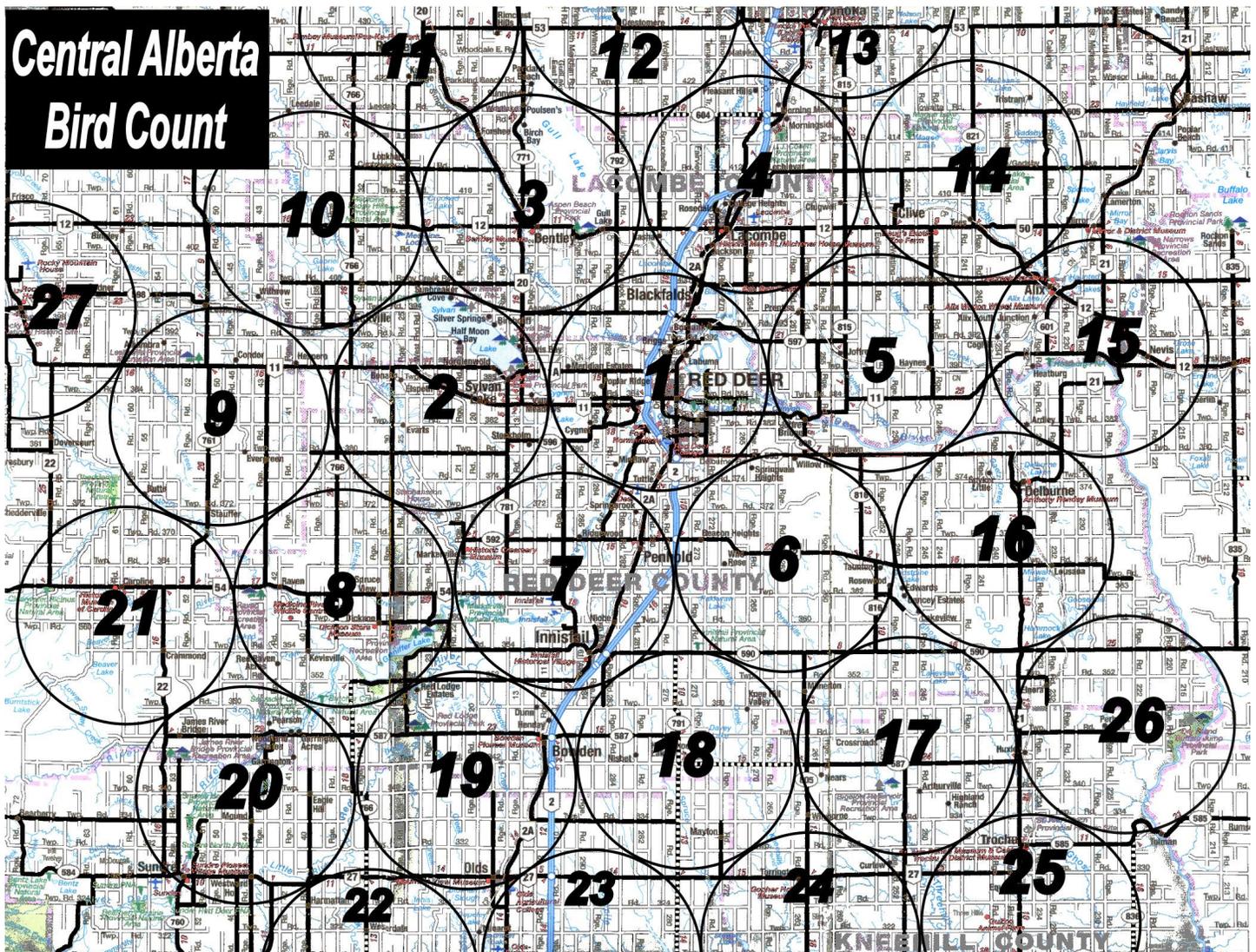
Photo by Richard Hoeg

Sunday, December 23



Join other Central Alberta birdwatchers by participating in the longest-running and most important bird census in the world. Contact Count Coordinator, Judy Boyd (403-358-1098) for tally sheets and count instructions.

Central Alberta Bird Count



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT INSTRUCTIONS



- ◆ Counts must be made during a single calendar day within the official CBC period.
- ◆ CBC 2018 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.
- ◆ 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.

Tally sheets must be received by Dec. 29. You can drop sheets off (Attn: Judy) at KWNC, mail to RDRN Box 785, Red Deer, AB T4N 5H2, or email to rdrn.nature@gmail.com. Put "CBC" in the subject line.

BIRD FOCUS

December 1: Gaetz Lake Sanctuary. Meet at KWNC at 1:30 PM. Refreshments will be enjoyed after the walk.

HISTORY OF THE CBC

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.



Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than kill them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Chapman and 27 dedicated birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California. Those original 27 counters tallied around 90 species.

Today, between December 14 through January 5 each year, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wild-life census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation actions.



INSECT FOCUS

Wednesdays • KWNC • 10:00 AM — 12:00 PM

January 16, 2019: *Lepidoptera*

February 20: *Diptera*

March 20: *Hymenoptera*

April 17: Field trip and review

May 15: Field trip

FLYING SQUIRRELS



Story and Photos by
Leo de Groot

Flying squirrels have been visiting a sunflower chip feeder at our home in Sunbreaker Cove, Sylvan Lake, for six out of the last seven years. In the winter, they tend to appear between 7:00 and 8:00 PM, after full night has set in. They are first seen gliding in from one tree to another in the gloom of our house lights. Usually only one squirrel, recognizable by his dark tail, comes to feed, but at times a second has joined it on the feeder.

This year, for the first time, we saw four of them at once, but the last two remained high in the trees, leading us to think that the dark-tailed one is perhaps provisioning the others.

CBC INSTRUCTIONS: HOW TO COUNT LARGE NUMBERS OF BIRDS

If hordes of birds are coming and going from your yard, counting them all can be a challenge. 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.

To ensure that no duplication occurs, please register to count with Judy at 403-358-1098.

2018 OWL AWARD TO BOB KRUTCHEN

By Tony Blake

The Owl Award is presented annually to an RDRN member in recognition of their long and dedicated volunteer service to the organization and its values. What values? It doesn't hurt to consider what motivates us to join the RDRN and volunteer our time. It goes without saying that we value Central Alberta's natural heritage, but there are many other things. We—especially the Directors—work as a team. Being part of a team means that we respect each other as people, we share our talents and resources and we enable each other. The support of our team makes great things (even courageous things) possible.

This year we have picked Bob Kruchten to receive the Owl Award because this quiet and capable individual exemplifies our team values so well.

Bob is about as Albertan as you can get: he was born on a farm near Daysland (east of Camrose), graduated from his local high school and attended universities in Edmonton and Calgary. He worked as a teacher for 35 years in several Alberta school districts.

Bob's second career, and the one we are most familiar with, was managing the book store at Kerry Wood Nature Centre. He was the bookstore manager for 19 years, retiring earlier this year. Shortly after starting at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre, Bob became an RDRN Director. When I asked Bob what led him to the RDRN, he told me nature could never be ignored if you came from a farm. Abusing the land has serious long-term consequences, so it only makes sense to respect natural processes and value sustainability.

A typical answer from Bob is short and to the point. He has always been there whenever we needed something to make a project complete. When a problem presented itself, he'd be the one who spoke up and said "I'll take care of it." He has never let us down.

Thankfully Bob is still very much involved with RDRN. This year he agreed to be our new Treasurer. The next couple of years will be challenging and I for one am delighted to have his business skills and general wisdom working for us. Thank you, Bob, for all you have done, and thank you for continuing to be the rock we all lean on.



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 7:30 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. The deadline is the last Friday of the month.

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<http://wearenaturalwise.blogspot.com>

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Photos, unless noted otherwise, by Myrna Pearman