

Relationship Between Coloration of Tree Swallows and Metal Pollution



▶ 28

November 2019

7:30 pm

Kerry Wood

Nature

Centre

Red Deer

Dr. Natalia Lifshitz will be sharing her findings about the relationship between coloration of Tree Swallows and metal pollution, and the potential to measure this using digital photography.



All Photos by Natalia Lifshitz

Natalia Lifshitz was born in Mexico City and has been an animal lover since her early years. Natalia has an undergrad in Biology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where she worked with the iconic Blue-footed Boobies on a tiny island in the Mexican Pacific, followed by a Masters in Ecology in the same University, where she worked with sexual selection in the Brown Booby. In 2013 Natalia moved to Edmonton, AB to pursue her PhD in Biological Sciences under the supervision of Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair (which she recently finished). Natalia worked with Tree Swallows to investigate the effects of metal pollution on their plumage colour, with particular interest in using this metric to monitor environmental quality non-invasively. Natalia resides in Edmonton with her husband and their tiny dog Pacha. In her free time, Natalia enjoys photography, playing tennis and traveling.

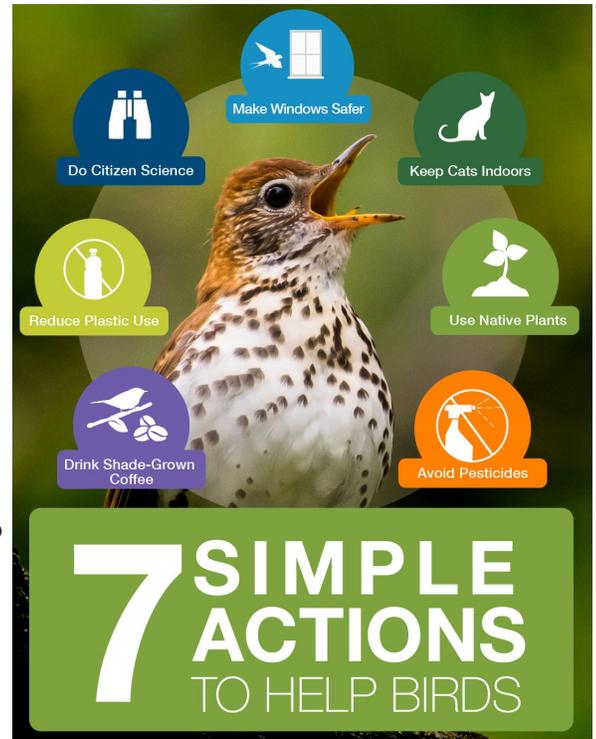
Sightings/Announcements/
Refreshments 7:30 pm
Speaker 8:00 pm

SPONSORED BY



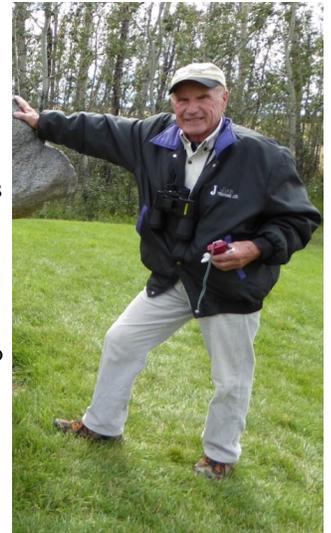
SEVEN SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP BIRDS

- 1. Make Windows Safer, Day and Night:** Simple adjustments to your windows can save birds' lives.
- 2. Keep Cats Indoors:** Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives. Outdoor cats kill more birds than any other non-native threat.
- 3. Reduce Lawn by Planting Native Species:** Most lawns are toxic ecological deserts. Think of the wildlife habitat they could support if NatureScaped!
- 4. Avoid Pesticides:** Look for organic food choices and don't use harmful pesticides
- 5. Drink Coffee That's Good for Birds:** Shade-grown coffees are delicious, economically beneficial to farmers, and help more than 42 species of North American songbirds.
- 6. Protect Our Planet From Plastics:** 91% of plastics are not recycled. Most plastics take 400 years to degrade.
- 7. Watch Birds, Share What You See:** Bird watchers are one of science's most vital sources of data on how the ecological world is faring.



IN MEMORIAM: FRANK WEBER

Frank Weber was born in Graz, Austria on August 13, 1929 and passed away in Montreal on October 17, 2019. Frank lost his wife, Lilli, when their daughters were young (about 8 and 10). Frank discussed with them the choice of hiring someone to assist them or all working together. The girls chose working with Dad and each night they would light a candle for Lilli who was greatly missed. The girls had finished school and stayed in Montreal when Frank was asked to come to Prentiss to help build the Union Carbide plant. Frank never missed spending Christmas with them. He moved to Montreal this year when his health declined. Frank joined the Red Deer Ramblers hiking club in 1998 and was still hiking at age 86. He was very active with the Parkland Ski Club had skied many of the difficult trails we hiked. He travelled a few times to Kelowna as a volunteer to teach the blind to ski. Frank was also active in Yoga, the Garden Club and the RDRN. He helped friends when needed, remembered birthdays and could always be counted on for a good laugh. He will be missed by many who knew him. Messages of condolence can be left at Mt Royal Cemetery, Montreal. His two daughters wish to thank folks in Red Deer for "your wonderful friendship, you were his family for so long."



2019 HANDS ON ALBERTA HARE HUNT

Join ABMI this fall for their second *Hands on Alberta Hare Hunt!* The transformation of the White-tailed Jackrabbit and Snowshoe Hare from mottled brown to almost pure white can seem like it happened overnight. Use NatureLynx to take part in your very own "Hare Hunt" and upload sightings of hares within your community—have their coats changed colour yet? The "hunt" goes until November 15th. More info at <https://naturelynx.ca/Missions/57/details?>



LYNDA'S "BIG HUMMER"

By Del McKinnon, Purple Martin Conservancy

In September, Lynda Seidl of Falun noticed a "big fat" hummingbird coming in regularly to her sugar water feeder. What, we wondered is "big" or "fat". . . and big or fat relative to what? As Lynda's mentor for her large Purple Martin colony, we wanted to help with identifying this bird. How tough, we thought, would it be to identify a 'fat' hummingbird?

Over the next five weeks, Lynda's daily humming updates and exchanges were fun times. A time of avian sleuthing. As time went on, the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds all left, but the "different" hummer stayed on. At our request, Lynda documented everything about this hummer, noting feeding times, flight patterns and favoured perching twigs. She often chuckled at the hummer's defense of her feeding area. Black-capped Chickadees were not allowed, as the "different" hummer buzzed and click-scolded every intrusion. Robins were harassed and even Lynda herself suffered some buzz-click attacks. This was one scrappy, healthy hummer! There seemed to be "a bit o' the fighting Irish" in her makeup. But would she pose for an identification shot—NO!

On cool September mornings, Lynda would heat the feeder's sweetened water. Shortly after 7:00 A.M., her "different" hummer would arrive for a warm breakfast. Then Lynda, wrapped in a heated blanket, would sit outside by the feeder with her camera, trying to get a photo. Lynda has "a bit of the Irish" too, an attitude that inspired us to tag her as "Miss Irish."

The two "Irish" finally negotiated a form of cease fire in week five. Lynda learned that she was to remain still and silent, and wear no white. She had to remain about 3 metres away from the hummer's feeder in order to deflect early morning irritations.

This writer still consistently doubted the existence of a different hummer, so continued to poke and prod Lynda for proof. Did we have a GM (genetically modified) hummer? Although Lynda sent several videos of the bird, none were conclusive. And pointing a camera in its direction sent it away.

Then, at 3:31 PM on September 24, the hummer finally cooperated and she was able to capture the first still photo. The bird was a female Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*). I had spent time working on Saltspring Island, where Anna's were common, so I was quickly able to confirm its identity. However, Central Alberta is well out of the species' normal West Coast range.

Vindicated, Lynda's happy face was projected Alberta-wide with the listing on the Alberta Rare Bird Alert. Requests for viewings and photographs ensued. Myrna Pearman was able to get the photographs shown here, on Saturday October 5.

Now there were questions: 1) Why was an Anna's on the wrong side of the Rockies? 2) Why had it erred in its fall movement? 3)

was the route taken possibly through the "Peace Gap"? 4) Was there a hummer's way out without human intervention? 5) If intervention was needed, how would it be carried out?

"Miss Irish" was adamant that this bundle of attitude would be saved. Since this was Alberta's second experience with a fall Anna's, some direction for handling the situation was available: in 2016, an Anna's in the Hinton area was successfully captured and returned to the west coast. The little army involved at Hinton told us that they would happily assist.

On October 4, 5 and 6, Lynda noted a change in the bird's feeding forays, from 18-23 minutes between feedings to 8-12 minutes. The bird was feeding at twice the previous rate. At 6:01 PM on October 7, Lynda wrote "She's gone. Haven't seen her all day."

Two days later, an Anna's was observed at Beaver Mines in southwest Alberta. Was this individual Lynda's Anna's? We all hope so. It is possible that the Crowsnest Pass, then the Columbia River basin to Washington State may have been a possible way "home." All wish her well!



DID YOU KNOW?

By Susan van der Hoek

A group of mallards is known as a "suit" or a "sord."

The latter term comes from the archaic verb "sord" meaning "to rise or soar up in flight."

OXFORD LIVING DICTIONARIES

FALL BIRDING TRIP SCHEDULE

By Keith Kline

November 2: Bower Woods - Meet at 10:00 AM across the street from 37 Selkirk Blvd. in the green space.

November 9: McKenzie Trails Recreation Area - Meet at 1:30 PM in the main parking lot. This walk will end with coffee and cake at Kerry Wood Nature Centre.

FLOWER FOCUS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20

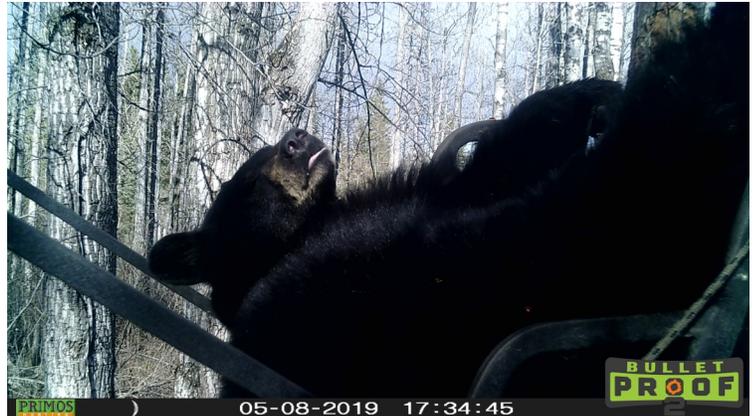
KWNC

10:00 AM — 12:00 PM

**DESERTS OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
WITH
DON WALES**



Canada Lynx are typically solitary, but this trail cam managed to capture three individuals together. Northern Alberta.
[#CameraTrapTuesday](#) [#AlbertaMammals](#)



We received this image (above) last week from a resident near Athabasca. He set a trail cam beside his hunting stand last May (he uses the stand to watch and photograph bears, not to kill them) and discovered that the bears LOVED this stand to hang out in—to lounge and relax! He will write an article about these bears in his stand in an upcoming issue of Nature Alberta.



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.

Box 785 Red Deer, AB T4N 5H2
Phone/Fax: 403.347.8200

rdrn.nature@gmail.com www.rdrn.ca
<http://wearenaturalwise.blogspot.com>

Our thanks to NOVA for underwriting the cost of newsletter printing



**Cover
Poster by
Doug
Pederson**

Photos, unless otherwise noted, by Myrna Pearman