The Red Deer River Naturalist
RDRN Established 1906
Editors: Myrna Pearman, Susan Van der Hoek, Judy Boyd
March 2020

Going the Distance: The Local Vacancy Game and How it Changes Dispersal

26
March 2020
7:30 pm
Kerry Wood
Nature Centre
Red Deer

Since 2016, April Martinig has been a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta in the Department of Biological Sciences. Her research explores animal behavioural ecology and the implementation of this knowledge to conservation strategies. More broadly, April studies how consistent variation in individual behaviour, particularly during dispersal, contributes to performance differences across a lifetime in red squirrels. When April is not chasing squirrels, she represents the University as a varsity athlete for the University of Alberta's wrestling team.

All photos provided by April Martining

Everyone Welcome
General Meeting/
Refreshments 7:30 PM
Speaker 8:00 PM

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2019 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: JUDY BOYD, COUNT COMPILER

The 2019 Christmas Bird Count was held on December 22, 2019. We had 86 observers (down from last year's 101) record a total of 49 species (up from last year's 44) and 7536 individual birds (up from last year's 6311.) We also had three Count Week Birds (seen three days before or after the Count Day but not seen on the Day): Prairie Falcon, Townsend's Solitaire, and Western Meadowlark. The highest number of species recorded since 1986 happened in 2004 with 61 species and the highest number of individual birds recorded was in 2005 with 14,540 birds counted.

We had some interesting birds this year. A Brown Thrasher was hanging out at a feeder north of Ellis Bird Farm for the month of December. This was a first for our Christmas Bird Count. In fact, we've never counted a Brown Thrasher during our May Species Count either. This is only the fifth time we've had a Townsend's Solitaire. It was seen during the actual Count in 2007 and 2014, and during Count Week in 2012, 2013 and this year. It was the first time a Western Meadowlark has ever been counted. This bird has been seen coming to a bird feeder south of Rocky Mountain House. Another first for our Count is the Rusty Blackbird. These birds are hard to distinguish from Brewer's Blackbirds but a report and photographs were sent to Edmonton to the Rare Bird Committee and it was agreed that they were Rusty Blackbirds. Again, Rusty Blackbirds have not been seen during our May Species Count either. Rusty Blackbirds are listed as Vulnerable (population declining) for their Conservation Status and their status under the Species at Risk Public Registry (SARA) is of Special Concern.

Walked: 37.25 hr, 70.6 km.
Driven: 38 hr, 1172.6 km
Feeder watched: 85 hours 10 minutes
Snowmobiled: 2 hr, 16 km
Horseback: 1.5 hr, mileage not recorded
Owling: 4 hours

Temperature: +5 to -18 C
Wind speed: 0 to 19 km/hr
Wind direction: variable
Snow cover: 4-20 cm
Clear to partly clear to foggy

Thanks to the 86 observers who counted: Colleen Anderson, Phillip Anderson, Donna Arrison, Larry Bablitz, Ron Biel, Karin Bjorge, Ron Bjorge, Monica Bolin, Judy Boyd, Larry Boyd, Vicky Bratton, Lois Burkinshaw, Phil Burkinshaw, Colleen Caddy, Jerry Caddy, John Caddy, Emma Callihoo, Logan Callihoo, Melanie Callihoo, Ed Cameron, Sandra Cameron, Wally Cameron, June Campbell, Maureen Carey, Wayne Carey, Angela Charles, Brian Charles, Mitchell Charles, Wyatt Charles, Anto Davis, Gordon Davis, Leo de Groot, Morris Flewwelling, Mary Flexhaug, Eileen Ford, Jordan Ford, Laurel Ford, Stewart Ford, Estelle Froese, Blake Gervais, Evan Gervais, Jan Gervais, Karen Gervais, Megan Gervais, Connie Haustein, Colin Hill, Shaye Hill, Carver Hunt, Susan Jensen, Alex Jones, Carol Kelly, Todd Kelly, Sharron Kirby, Tim Kirby, Keith Kline, Linda Kullman, Andrea Lash, Jim Leslie, Claudia Lipski, Addy Long, Cliff Long, Irene McIntosh, Tim McJunkin, Jim McSween, Charles Meggison, Mark Meunier, Ruby Meunier, Bonnie Miller, Sandy Murray, Dorothy Murray, Andy Nokes, Chris Olsen, Myrna Pearman, Rose Primus, Darlene Reimche, Heather Saunders, Del Spenst, Sandra Sutherland, Rick Tallas, Bev Thompson, Jenny Vopni, Althea Williams, Diane Wilton, Doreen Wingert, Kevin Wingert, Sydney Young

DID YOU KNOW?

A Group of American Coots is Called a COVER

By Susan van der Hoek

American Coots have broad, lobed scales on their lower legs and toes that fold back with each step in order to walk on dry land. They congregate in large flocks during the winter, where they exhibit a variety of interesting collective formations while swimming, including single-file lines, high density synchronized swimming and rotational dynamics, broad arcing formations, and sequential take-off dynamics.

CBC SPECIES	2019	2018
Canada Goose	1971	137
Mallard	1091	53
Lesser Scaup	0	1
Bufflehead	1	0
Common Goldeneye	58	237
Common Merganser	5	1
Gray Partridge	0	60
Ruffed Grouse	4	26
Great Blue Heron	0	1
Bald Eagle	12	12
Northern Goshawk	1	1
Rough-legged Hawk	3	5
Rock Pigeon	360	510
Eurasian Collared-Dove	10	27
Great Horned Owl	3	7
Short-eared Owl	0	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	0
Belted Kingfisher	2	2
Downy Woodpecker	103	131
Hairy Woodpecker	44	52
American Three-toed Woodpecker	0	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	2	0
Northern Flicker	17	27
Pileated Woodpecker	20	14
Merlin	1	0
Prairie Falcon	1 CW	1
Northern Shrike	8	0
Canada (Gray) Jay	9	7
Blue Jay	122	200
Black-billed Magpie	459	458
American Crow	2	25
Common Raven	229	254
Black-capped Chickadee	844	939
Boreal Chickadee	16	24
Red-breasted Nuthatch	22	49
White-breasted Nuthatch	81	91
Brown Creeper	1	4
American Dipper	1	0
Townsend's Solitaire	1CW	0
American Robin	1	0
Brown Thrasher	1	0
European Starling	15	19
Bohemian Waxwing	368	1297
Cedar Waxwing	5	0
Snow Bunting	432	121
American Tree Sparrow	0	11
Harris's Sparrow	0	1
Dark-eyed Junco	12	22
Western Meadowlark	1CW	0

	2019	2018
Rusty Blackbird	9	0
Pine Grosbeak	71	17
House Finch	153	95
Red Crossbill	1	0
White-winged Crossbill	16	99
Common Redpoll	82	685
Hoary Redpoll	1	0
Pine Siskin	210	11
Evening Grosbeak	1	0
House Sparrow	655	548
Total individuals	7536	6311

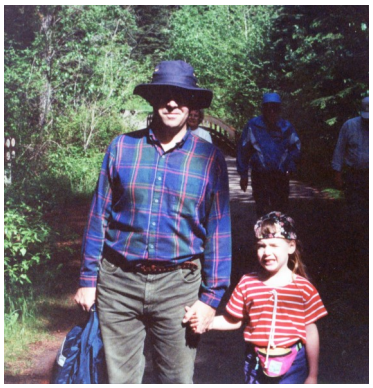
The MOLLY BANNISTER DRIVE EXTENSION MOMENT!

By Rod Trentham

After 28 years—since the days of the late Michael O'Brien doing timed driving tours—RDRN, the Bower Sisters, many other organizations, the Bower and Sunnybrook neighbouring residents and Red Deer citizens have expressed fierce opposition to a Molly Bannister Drive Extension and the devastating impact it would have on this beautiful south section of Waskasoo Park. The meandering Piper Creek escarpment and the Bower Natural Area would be totally compromised by this needless 4-lane arterial road—50 metres wide plus collateral construction damage. Now it is **LETTERS, LETTERS** and **more LETTERS** from you and your list of contacts. It was voted off in an 8 - 1 decision on January 27, 1997.

This is the **MOMENT!** Melcor now owns the Bower Farm and they want the MBDEx alignment gone forever. If you have questions: rod.trentham@gmail.com or 587-377-5555.

Senior Planners: Christi.Fidek@reddeer.ca kimberly.fils-aime@reddeer.ca
Council: mayor@reddeer.ca buck.buchanan@reddeer.ca mchael.dawe@redddeer.ca tanya.handley@reddeer.ca vesna.highham@reddeer.ca ken.johnston@reddeer.ca lawrence.lee@redddeer.ca frank.wong@reddeer.ca



Then RDRN President Rod Trentham with his daughter Annemarie (6) on an outing to where Molly Banister Drive would go through the Piper Creek Escarpment next to the Bower Natural Area, 1994.

Photo by Sherry Scheunert

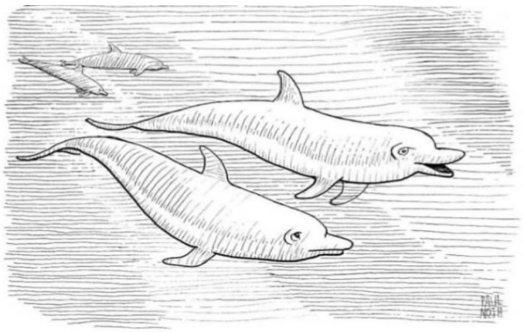
FLOWER FOCUS *WITH* DON WALES

Wednesday, March 18

Kerry Wood Nature Center - 10:00 AM

Flowers of the Northern Cascades

The Alberta Invasive Species Council (AISC) 7th Annual Conference and AGM will be on **March 24 & 25th, 2020** at Lacombe, AB. Get all the latest information on invasive species, including feral pigs, aquatic invasive species and much more. Details at https://abinvasives.ca/aisc-conference/



"If I could do only one thing before I died, it would be to swim with a middle-aged couple from Connecticut."

RDRN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Standing from left: Keith Kline, Anto Davis, Don Wales, Tony Blake, Robert Kruchten

Seated: Rod Trentham, Susan van der Hoek, Sarah Grass, Ariane Inman

Missing Daryl Beck, Cliff Soper, Rick Tallas

Photo submitted

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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