

The Red Deer River Naturalist



May 2022 Editors: Myrna Pearman & Susan van der Hoek



CENTRAL ALBERTA May Species Count 2022 Sat. May 28 & Sun. May 29

We invite you to help us document animals and flowering plants in Central Alberta! You can count in your own backyard, in a nearby park or natural area, or even by driving the backroads. We are interested in everything, from insects and spiders to amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

This event provides a great way for you and your family to document wildlife in your own backyard, or get out into nature.

Tally sheets can be downloaded at www.rdrn.ca. Completed sheets can be scanned and emailed to: judy.boyd@shaw.ca or Mail your tally sheet to: RDRN office, Box 785, Red Deer, Alberta, T4N 5H2.

You can also drop off your tally sheets at Kerry Wood Nature Centre Attention: Judy Boyd.

To avoid overlap and duplication, all participants are encouraged to register where they are counting with Judy Boyd

403-358-1098.

HOSTED BY
RDRN
RED DEER RIVER NATURALISTS



SUMMER BIRDING SCHEDULE WITH CHRIS OLSEN

- May 7:** Bower Woods—meet on the street across from 37 Selkirk Blvd
May 14: Migratory Bird Day—Raven Brood Trout Station (meet at the picnic shelter)
May 21: Alix Lake Nature Trails—meet at the campground
May 28 and 29: RDRN May species count (see poster and RDRN website)
June 4: Riverbend Upper trails—meet in the main parking lot
June 11: Kuhnen Park (Blackfalds)—meet in the day-use parking lot
June 18: Radar Hill - RR 260 access (see the *Alberta Discover Guide* app)
June 25 & 26: Bjorge Family Farm/Ferry Point Campout (see page 3)
July 2: Springbrook Community Park—meet in parking lot just before the Red Deer airport
July 9: J.J. Collett Natural Area—meet in the parking lot
July 11: Kin Canyon—meet in the Rotary parking lot
July 23: Ellis Bird Farm
July 30: The Narrows at Buffalo Lake—meet in the first parking lot
August 6: Michael O'Brien Wetland—meet in the Safety City parking lot
August 13: Red Deer Polytechnic south trails—meet in the southwest parking lot
August 20: Cow Lake—meet in the campground parking lot
August 27: Hazlett Lake—HWY 11a west, take last right hand turn before QE2, park in private gate.

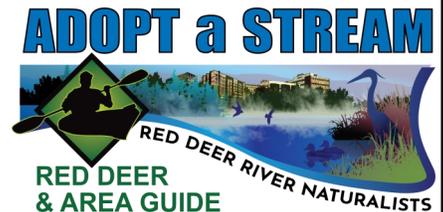


Use the *Alberta Discover Guide* (app or free magazine), the *Birding Trails Alberta* website or a mapping app on your mobile device. Call Chris (780-581-4430) if you have questions. Attend only if well, wear appropriate clothing and footwear as required by the season, carry water and an energy snack, and advise the group leader of medical issues. **Local trips depart at 10:00 AM and finish by about noon.** Note: bird list and details about past trips are posted on the RDRN website. We also recommend checking the RDRN website for updates and possible changes to these trips.

RDRN PROGRAM UPDATE

RDRN has been very busy over the past months!

ADOPT-A-STREAM PROGRAM: Thanks to the hard work of Don Wales, we are launching this program, hopefully in partnership with the City of Red Deer and the Waskasoo Environmental Education Society. The Adopt-A-Stream program is a stewardship opportunity for individuals, families, organizations and schools to learn about, appreciate and care for the creeks in Red Deer as well as the section of the Red Deer River that flows through the city. Don has been working over the winter with Doug Pedersen to develop a large Adopt-A-Stream guide. The editing of the guide is almost complete and we hope to have it printed in time for the Red Deer River Clean-up on June 4. An official launch of the program is anticipated to coincide with the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up on September 24.



HABITAT STEWARD PROGRAM: Thanks to the design talent of Doug Pedersen and funding support from the Red Deer and District Community Foundation, we have relaunched the Habitat Steward program! We've already had 15 landowners, representing almost 700 acres, sign up. We are enclosing an application form with this newsletter. We hope that RDRN members who conserve habitat will participate and/or share the form with their like-minded friends and neighbours. We will continue to grow and promote the program over the coming months. We will soon be delivering signs to those who have signed up.



Continued on page 4



RDRN was pleased to present the first Habitat Steward sign to Joan Olafson of Lacombe. Joan is continuing a long-held family tradition of land stewardship, with an 80-acre section of their farm being protected as wildlife habitat. This area, which has never been grazed or cleared, represents a rare patch of old-growth forest in Central Alberta. Our thanks to Joan and her family for protecting this habitat! Shown presenting the sign is (from left) Graeme Gissing (Education and Program Coordinator), Joey Temple (RDRN Nature Central liaison), Myrna Pearman (interim Habitat Steward coordinator), Joan Olafson and Dr. Natalia Lifshitz (RDRN Naturalist-In-Residence).

RDRN is grateful to the Red Deer and District Community Foundation for providing funding support to cover the cost of the signs.

INTRODUCING OUR SUMMER TEAM!

We are very pleased to introduce our summer team, Graeme Gissing and Dr. Natalia Lifshitz. Both are experienced biologists and educators, and both bring a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to their jobs. Dr. Lifshitz will be our Naturalist-In-Residence for the summer while Graeme will be our Education/Program Coordinator for the next 18 months. They will each be working an average of two days a week. We are grateful for a CIP grant to support their employment (see Board Notes). Be sure to check out both the RDRN (rdrn.ca) and the Nature Central websites (naturecentral.org) for details on their activities and programs. They will also be very active on social media over the next few months, so be sure to follow them. We have an exciting and busy summer planned!

GRAEME GISSING—EDUCATION/PROGRAM COORDINATOR: I have been fortunate to have had an early career as an avian research ecologist that took me to some of the most spectacular ecosystems on the planet, such as the Canadian Arctic, the windswept plains of Patagonia, and the arid Andean highlands of the Atacama Desert. It



was these truly awe-inspiring and transformational experiences that solidified my passion for both avian ecology and the conservation of nature that continues to this day. In the subsequent phase of my career, I transitioned into teaching and for about ten years have served as a teaching faculty member at colleges and universities in both Canada and the United States. Most recently, I combined my life-long dedication to conservation and education in the non-profit sector and served as Director of Education and Outreach (North America, Asia, Africa programs) for a wildlife conservation organization in Southern California.

In addition to my current position as a Biology Instructor at Red Deer Polytechnic, I volunteer my time and skills to create and implement empowering environmental education, economic development, and female empowerment projects for underserved communities in Africa and Asia. In a similar vein, I also work with on-the-ground conservation partners in Africa to both reduce bushmeat poaching and combat the illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn. As a hobby, I have recently become, quite admittedly, completely addicted to wildlife photography.

DR. NATALIA LIFSHITZ—NATURALIST-IN-RESIDENCE: I was born and raised in Mexico City, and developed a great passion for animals at a young age. Having ducks and dogs at home, I was fascinated by animal behavior, which led me to pursue a career as a biologist at UNAM (the National Autonomous University of Mexico). During my undergrad, I participated in a study with blue-footed boobies, led by Dr. Hugh Drummond from the Ecology Institute at the same university, and discovered the wonderful world of behavioral ecology. After that, I focused on coloration of birds in the context of mate choice. I worked with Blue-footed and Brown Boobies for my undergrad and Masters' theses. While working with all these amazing seabirds, I got to live in small remote tropical islands around Mexico for long periods of time and have countless stories to tell.

In 2013, my husband Edgar and I, with our little dog Pacha, moved to Edmonton so I could pursue my PhD at the University of Alberta, in the lab of Dr. Colleen St. Clair. I studied the effects of urban pollution on the coloration of Tree Swallows. I obtained my PhD in 2019 and have since worked in various areas of science, including teaching, nest-sweeping, wildlife biologist for Environment Canada, and am currently the scientific advisor for Ellis Bird Farm. When I'm not doing something biology-related, I am an avid tennis player and a great fan of craft beer.



FLOWER FOCUS MAY 18 @ 10:00 AM KWNC Wildflowers of Central Alberta

Due to a technology glitch in April, this program has been rebooked. Caroline Harris will be delivering this presentation in person, showcasing the flowers found in and around her rural property.



June 25 & 26 Ferry Point Weekend Details: Ferry Point Campground (RR 184 north of Twp Rd 434). Please let Judy know if you are planning to attend (403-358-1098). You can attend for one/either or both days.

Saturday: A birding trip will start at 10:00 AM from the campground. Pack your own lunch and drinks for the day. A potluck supper will be held in the evening. We should see Turkey Vultures and possibly White-faced Ibis as well as all the usual suspects. Avril Mogensen will be giving an afternoon talk about Indigenous stone tool making.

Sunday: Nature walks will be offered. Zoey Zapisocki will be on hand to identify wildflowers and range plants, and Lucas Erickson will lead a trip for those who would like to look for garter snakes.

Board Notes

By Peggy Birse, Managing Director

RDRN is excited to announce the formation of a new committee (Engagement and Outreach) headed by Board member, Joey Temple. This committee will provide opportunities for engagement and education to community citizens and stakeholders. Through an environmental literacy lens, the committee will offer events and projects to citizens to build literacy and appreciation for the natural environment, biodiversity and ecological integrity of Central Alberta. Thanks to Joey and the other committee members: Myrna Pearman, Don Wales, Caitlyn Howard Lawrence and Rick Tallas. The Engagement and Outreach Committee has responsibility for

RDRN's Nature Central Program for 2022 and 2023. The Communications Committee (Anto Davis, Susan van der Hoek and Myrna Pearman) continue to work with Doug Pedersen to develop the new RDRN branding, including a new brochure and logos for our various programs.

We have funded a mapping program to complement Nature Central, to be released in mid-May.

We were delighted to learn of the Government of Alberta's approval of our Community Initiatives Program application, providing matching funding in the amount of \$34,235 towards two summers' work for a Naturalist-in-Residence, 18 months for a part-time Education/Program Coordinator, and printing costs for the Adopt-A-Stream guide.



RDRN PROGRAM UPDATE CONTINUED

NATURE CENTRAL: Interim Coordinator, Myrna Pearman, was able to visit, document and write about several protected areas over the winter.



Celebrating our Wild Alberta Parklands



She coordinated, with Joey Temple and Rick Tallas, the hiring of our summer team. She also oversaw, with Ed Karpuk and Tony Blake, an exciting mapping project that will be launched later in May. We are pleased that Nature Central has been featured in the most recent issue of *Nature Alberta* magazine and in the SAPAA (Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association) newsletter.

Judy Boyd (left) with Jim and Bonnie Potter at the entrance to Potter's Seep, one of over 170 protected areas in Central Alberta awaiting discovery and enjoyment this summer!



DID YOU KNOW: By Susan van der Hoek

A group of frogs is called an **army, colony or knot**. Alberta has four frog species. The **Boreal Chorus Frog** (*Pseudacris maculata*), shown at left, is a small, smooth-skinned tree frog found in forest openings around woodland ponds and on the northern tundra. The **Columbia Spotted Frog** (*Rana luteiventris*) is a large brown true frog. The **Leopard Frog** (*Rana pipiens*) is a green or brown true frog with large, light-edged spots. The **Wood Frog** (*Rana sylvatica*) is a moderate-sized, true frog with prominent dorsolateral ridges. True frogs are smooth and moist-skinned, with large, powerful legs and extensively webbed feet. They vary in size, ranging from small to large. Many of the true frogs are aquatic or live close to water. Frogs are carnivores as adults, eating insects and occasionally small vertebrates. However, as tadpoles they are herbivores, eating algae and decaying matter.

Social Media: 622 Facebook Members, 282 Twitter Followers and 304 Instagram Followers

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 PM on the fourth Thursday of most months by Zoom. 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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Our thanks to ABACUS Datagraphics for generously donating the printing of this newsletter and NOVA Chemicals for covering postage costs.

Cover Poster by Doug Pedersen

Photos, unless otherwise noted, by Myrna Pearman

