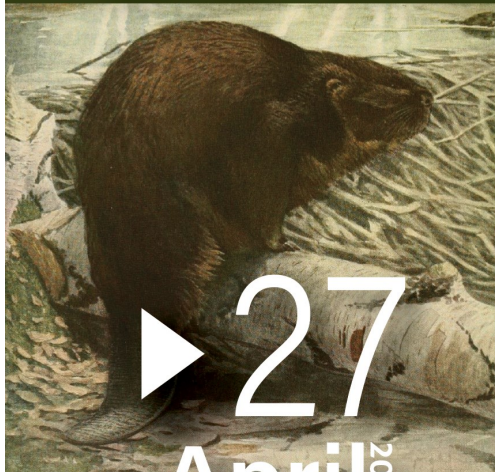


The Red Deer River Naturalist



March 2023

Editors: Myrna Pearman & Susan van der Hoek



▶ 27
April 2023
7:00 PM

Can Beavers Turn Parachutes into Umbrellas?

Enjoy **Non-Alcohol
Wine & Cheese**
Tonight Sponsored by
Creative Landscape
& Design

**KERRY WOOD
NATURE CENTRE
RED DEER**



Photo by John Ulan



Dr. Glynnis Hood



Dr. Glynnis Hood



Dr. Glynnis Hood

Beavers are one of the world's greatest comeback stories. This talk takes you into the remarkable world of the second largest rodent on Earth and explores how it has managed to survive and flourish against all odds, including daring parachute adventures. Beavers not only engineer the ecosystem, they also dramatically change the ecological communities that depend on beaver-modified landscapes. During this talk, you will travel the globe with one of the world's most enterprising species.

Dr. Glynnis Hood is an ecologist, Vice Dean, and Professor of Environmental Science at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus in Camrose. Prior to signing on with the university, she worked for 24 years in various protected areas, from Canada's west coast to the subarctic. In July 2007, she left a 19-year career with Parks Canada's warden service and followed her passion for teaching and research. Her research interests include aquatic ecology, wildlife biology, and human-wildlife interactions. She is the author of *Semi-aquatic Mammals: Ecology and Biology* and *The Beaver Manifesto*. Her first children's book, *A Cabin Christmas*, was released in November 2022.

SPONSORED BY



All are Welcome



RDRN is pleased to be partnering with and supporting students at Red Deer Polytechnic. Five groups of students gave interesting and engaging presentations about their research projects at our March meeting. Their amazing profs were on hand to support them.

We would like to say a special thank you to Alan Barker, owner of Little Caesar's Pizza, for providing pizzas to the students and board members prior to the meeting. Your generosity is appreciated!

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

CATHY STEELE

I grew up in a military household and we moved around every three to four years, living in Ontario, NWT, Germany and Alberta. My family instilled a love of travel, exploring and an appreciation of nature and culture. I met my husband at Red Deer College, where we both completed Bachelor of Arts degrees at U of A in Recreation Administration. We have lived in Halifax, Victoria, White Rock, Calgary and currently in Lacombe. We spent twenty years in Calgary raising our three children. We have always participated in outdoor activities including hiking, biking, camping, downhill skiing and water activities. We know that we have been a positive influence on our kids and extended family and friends with our love for the outdoors.



My husband has always been knowledgeable about birding and wildlife and I developed an interest in wildflowers. Most of our knowledge and experience has been from actively pursuing outdoor interests on our own time. I picked up a camera two years ago to assist with our bird watching and hiking adventures and love observing and exploring in nature. I feel that promoting conservation areas and parks is very important for wildlife, native species and cultural significance.

My professional background is varied. After University I worked with provincial and national organizations developing occupational standards and certification programs. I now work as a sales rep across the prairies for various companies serving mostly garden centres, greenhouses and other independent retailers.

Pretty much every day, year round, I enjoy nature breaks or nature pursuits. My husband and I have enjoyed relocating back to central Alberta and exploring areas within a few hours or further north such as Lac La Biche and Cold Lake. We bought kayaks within two weeks of living in Lacombe and enjoy that very much.

ED GRAFF

I grew up, played sports, and obtained most of my education in Red Deer. I took two years of an Honours Zoology degree at what was then RDC. Very early in my time at RDC I had the good fortune to become friends with two of my instructors, both of whom shared with me their wealth of knowledge, appreciation and experience in exploring the many natural venues that surround us in Central Alberta.



My wife Laverne and I were invited to join the RDC Outdoor Club, where I met the founder, Don Wales. This meeting complemented my ever-growing love and appreciation for the natural history of the backcountry and the many trips we took laid the foundation for a lifestyle that Laverne and I enjoy to this day; exploring, appreciating and learning about the natural world that surrounds us.

Upon completion of my two years at RDC, Laverne and I moved to Edmonton, where I attended the U of A to complete my degree. I then enrolled in a Bachelor of Education in Secondary Sciences and Mathematics and graduated in the spring of 1981.

That fall, I started teaching at the Innisfail High School and enjoyed a 32-year career there. Like my mentors, I started an outdoor club that over the years introduced many, many students to the natural history of our area through the activities of hiking, canoeing and skiing in our natural areas.

I now work at the Bowden Institution, teaching science and mathematics.

As a new board member I look forward to making new acquaintances and the opportunity to reconnect with board members that I have had the pleasure of knowing for many decades.

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE: Started in 2016 as a competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. The CNC is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal. <https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>



- I would like to welcome Cathy Steele and Ed Graff to the RDRN board!
- Our March 23 meeting, which featured RDP students, was very informative and, for me, very exciting in terms of youthful enthusiasm.
- Our new and improved website is up and running! Thanks to Anto and her helpers, Susan and Myrna, for their hard work on the upgrade. Be sure to check it out at www.rdrn.ca.
- I think everyone is anxiously awaiting spring and looking forward to the arrival of the migratory birds.
- As always, I encourage everyone to get involved and let your voice be heard. Please email rdrn.nature@gmail.ca. Finally, thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers. We could not operate without you!

FLOWER FOCUS WITH DON WALES

April 19—Kerry Wood Nature Centre—10:00 AM
Wildflowers of Central Alberta (Part 2)

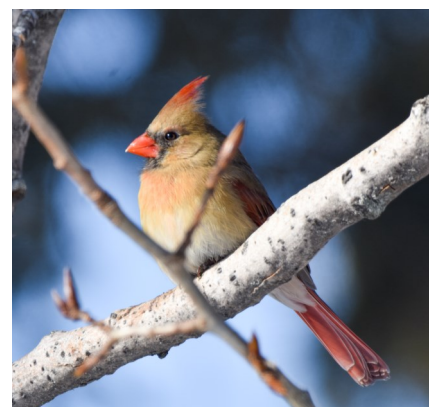
Presented by Caroline Harris

Photo by Don Wales



HAPPY BIRTHDAY DOROTHY DICKSON! *Dorothy, a distinguished and nationally recognized naturalist, champion for nature and long-time member of RDRN, recently celebrated her 96th birthday. Thank you, Dorothy, for your significant contributions to nature (especially our National and Provincial Parks) and to RDRN!*

Red Deer had an unusual visitor this winter. Tanya Wierenga took this image of a female Northern Cardinal on February 24th. It was also seen twice by Jan Speelman, on March 17th and 19th.



IN THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS! BY DON AUTEN

The American Marten, also called the Pine Marten, is another member of the Weasel family. They are dependent upon mature spruce forests so are mainly found in the Boreal Forest in northern and western Alberta. Like all other animals, they need protein and—while they will eat anything they can catch—mostly prey on voles and Red Squirrels. The location where I got this photo had a mixture of spruce and poplar



with a fair bit of grass in the undergrowth—a perfect habitat for Red-backed Voles.

I could tell by the tracks that this marten was utilizing this area frequently, so it was worthwhile to set up a camera trap. Over a period of time, I was able to get a handful of nice photos.



Don also sent us this picture that he took of Wolverine tracks, north of Rocky Mountain House

BIRD FOCUS WITH CHRIS OLSEN

Outings start at 10:00 AM unless otherwise noted. Directions, maps and details are posted on the RDRN Calendar of Events. Be sure to check the calendar for schedule changes or destination updates. We're an inclusive group that learns from each other and birders of all skill levels are welcome!

April 8—Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary – meet in the Nature Centre

April 15—Maskepetoon Park – meet in the playground parking lot (Kerry Wood Drive/Oak Drive)

April 22—Wainwright Sharp-tailed Grouse Watch – Advance registration required—contact Chris

April 23—Tofield Snow Goose Festival. Advance registration required—contact Chris

For more information about the festival, go to <https://tofieldalberta.ca/visiting/events/snow-goose-festival/>

April 29—Heritage Ranch – meet in the first parking lot

May 6—Bower Woods – meet on the street across from 37 Selkirk Blvd

May 13—Raven Brood Trout Station – Central Alberta Birding Trails map – meet at the picnic shelter

May 20—Alix Lake Nature Trail – meet at the municipal campground

May 21-26 Boreal Birding Tour – Whitney Lake, Cold Lake and Lac La Biche

NATURE CENTRAL NEWS WITH CAITLYN LAWRENCE



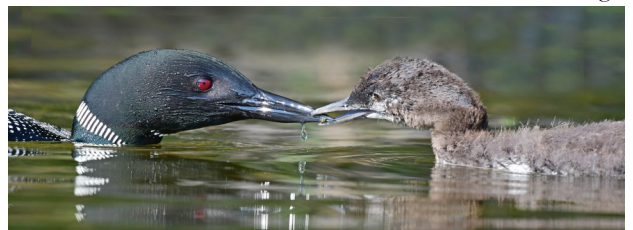
On March 11, Nature Central (NC) held a snowshoe event at the NCC Lockerby property, located northwest of Pine Lake. This parcel consists of native aspen parkland and old hay fields.

It was a beautiful day with lots of snow. With the permission of Brian Stackhouse, a nearby landowner, we explored a parcel of land which NCC will be acquiring. We took advantage of a road being snowplowed in order to move out an old cabin. We followed old moose tracks around the property and observed a vole run and dig through the snow. We had six participants come out to enjoy the day.

We are pleased to announce that Cathy Steele has joined the Nature Central Committee and we have hired Abbey Van Heuvel as our summer Naturalist-in-Residence. Nature Central will be hosting lots of hikes, paddles and other events over the summer so stay tuned to NC and RDRN social media for upcoming events.

DID YOU KNOW: BY SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

A group of loons are called a raft, waterdance, cry or asylum. There are five species of loons in North America. The Common Loon, *Gavia immer*, nests in Alberta. Loons are aquatic birds, the size of a large duck. Their plumage is largely grey or black, and they have spear-shaped bills. Loons swim well and fly adequately, but are almost hopeless on land because their legs are placed towards the rear of their bodies. Loons often return to the same lake year after year. Despite being conspicuous while out on open water, they tend to be secretive around their nests, which are located along the shore. Both members of the pair put great effort into caring for and protecting two, rarely one, eggs and young, although females incubate more than males. It is the male rather than the female that chooses the nest site. During the breeding season, loon males and females will fight for territory. If the fight is won by the invader, the other territory member accepts the new loon as their partner. Shockingly, territory takeovers often involve the intruder killing the chicks, and male-to-male fights often result in the death of the territorial male. Loons feed on mostly small fish but will also consume crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic insects, leeches, frogs and sometimes aquatic plants such as pondweeds and algae. Loons winter on the coast.



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 PM on the fourth Thursday of most months at Kerry Wood Nature Centre. 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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