



November 2024

Editors: Myrna Pearman & Susan van der Hoek



Recolonizing Black Bears in the Beaver Hills Biosphere

Over the past several years, the black bear population has been steadily increasing in Elk Island National Park and the surrounding Beaver Hills Biosphere. Bears were once a common resident of the area and are now returning to their previously occupied landscapes which are now highly modified. Sandra MacDougall will summarize her study about the feeding ecology of this bear population and will offer considerations for human-wildlife coexistence.




28 
November 2024
7:00 PM,
Kerry Wood Nature Centre
Red Deer



Photo by Parks Canada

Sandra MacDougall has been a biology instructor at Red Deer Polytechnic since 1995. Sandra worked on grizzly and black bear populations in Canada's north for over two decades, conducted a three-year grizzly bear food habit, habitat use and human-bear interactions research study in Nahanni National Park Reserve, and has collaborated with Parks Canada and the US National Parks Service to conduct field hazard assessments and analyze human-bear conflicts in other northern parks.

Photo by Sandra MacDougall



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All are Welcome

BIRD FOCUS GROUP WITH CHRIS OLSEN

November 9 – Lacombe Lakes – meet in Burman University Phys Ed parking lot

November 16 – Barrett to Gaetz Parks – meet at Rotary Picnic Park, main parking lot

November 23 – Bower Woods – meet on the street across from 37 Selkirk Blvd

November 30 – McKenzie Trails – meet in the main parking lot

December 7 – Riverbend Perimeter Trail – meet in the main parking lot

December 14 – Gaetz Lake and wind-up – meet at the Nature Centre

December 22 – Central Alberta Christmas Bird Count

Trips start at 10:00 AM and local trips usually finish around 1:00 PM. Use the *Alberta Discover Guide*, the Birding Trails Alberta website or your favorite mapping app. Dress appropriately, carry water, lunch/an energy snack, bear spray and insect repellent. Advise the leader of any potential medical issues. Call Chris (780-581-4430) if you have questions.

DID YOU KNOW: BY SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

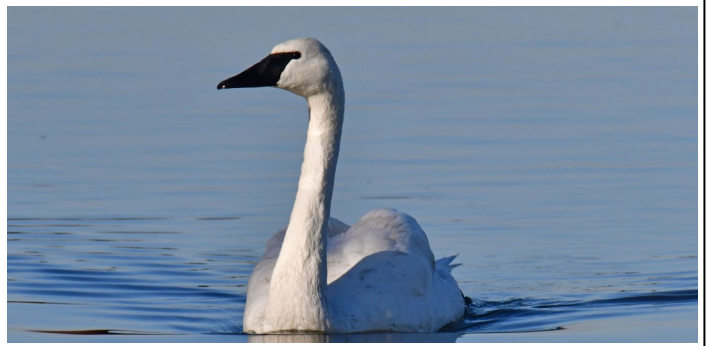
A group of swans are called a bevy, herd or bank (when landing) and a Trumpeter Swan is sometimes referred to as a fanfare. There are three swan species in North America. The Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) and Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*), also known as the Whistling Swan, are native. The Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) is a Eurasian species that has been introduced and now breeds in some areas. Only the Trumpeter Swan, which has a trumpet-like honk, breeds in Alberta.

Trumpeter Swans breed on wetlands in remote Alaska, Canada and the northwestern U.S. They arrive in northern Alberta around the middle of April. Nesting occurs in May and eggs hatch in June. Like other swans, they often mate for life and both parents participate in raising their young. Young swans (cygnets) do not begin to fly until September. In October, they begin their journey south to Yellowstone National Park area in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Some also winter on ice-free coastal and inland waters.

Ideal breeding habitat consists of shallow water bodies with plenty of pondweed, sedges and invertebrates, emergent vegetation for nesting, and minimal human disturbance.

Trumpeter Swans are our largest native waterfowl, stretching to 4 ft 6 in. – 5 ft 5 in. in length, with a wingspan of 6 ft 2 in. to 10 ft 2 in., and weighing more than 25 pounds. Getting airborne requires a lumbering takeoff along a 100-yard runway. Despite their size, they are as elegant as any swan, with a graceful neck and snowy-white plumage.

Only 100 years ago the Trumpeter Swan was on the brink of extinction due to hunting and habitat loss. Fortunately, due to the efforts of dedicated landowners and wildlife managers, the population is recovering; but the species is not yet in the clear. The Trumpeter Swan remains the world's rarest swan and is designated as a "Threatened" species in Alberta. One of the largest conservation sites for Trumpeter Swans is located in Lois Hole Provincial Park on Big Lake.



IN THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS WITH DON AUTEN

November is one of the more exciting months in nature in my opinion due to the whitetail deer rut! The bucks have been going through changes starting in the spring in preparation for the breeding season. Their antler growth started in May and they shed the velvet from their horns in early September when the horns harden. At this time, the bucks are ready to start establishing a pecking order among themselves. They will start sparring with each other to test their strength and fitness. When the rut starts, the strongest and fittest bucks will have the most opportunities to pass on their genes.

Another buck activity that starts in September and increases as the rut approaches is the making of rubs. This territory-marking behaviour entails the bucks using their antlers to rub on a tree until the bark is removed. As they are rubbing, a scent is deposited from specialized glands located in their forehead. A quick sniff by other deer will tell them who made the rub and when it was deposited. Scent is a very important method of communicating for all wildlife and quite often a rub will end up being used by multiple bucks leaving their scent just to let everyone know they were there. Sometimes, bucks will use fence posts instead of a tree and I have noted some fence posts being used year after year. It was at one of these posts that I set up a trail cam and captured photos of this behavior.



MAY SPECIES 2024 COUNT: Thanks to Shelley-anne and John Goulet for being our new Count Coordinators. Susan van der Hoek kindly transposed the data into a Word document. The 2024 May Species Count summary is on page 3.

Number of Observers - 47

Number of Individual Birds - 11,279

Number of Species - 142

Snow Goose	26	Greater Yellowlegs	10	Bank Swallow	23
Canada Goose	843	Willet	9	Barn Swallow	39
Tundra Swan	4	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Cliff Swallow	454
Blue-winged Teal	448	Franklin's Gull	7	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	13
Cinnamon Teal	9	Ring-billed Gull	18	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Northern Shoveler	462	Black Tern	148	Red-breasted Nuthatch	9
Gadwall	258	Common Tern	6	White-breasted Nuthatch	27
American Wigeon	37	Forster's Tern	1	House Wren	83
Mallard	611	Common Loon	6	Marsh Wren	5
Northern Pintail	62	Double-crested Cormorant	28	European Starling	570
Green-winged Teal	32	American White Pelican	21	Gray Catbird	9
Canvasback	31	Great Blue Heron	4	Mountain Bluebird	24
Redhead	118	White-faced Ibis	2	Townsend's Solitaire	1
Ring-necked Duck	38	Turkey Vulture	2	American Robin	280
Lesser Scaup	306	Osprey	8	Cedar Waxwing	6
Surf Scoter	2CW	Northern Harrier	10	House Sparrow	141
Bufflehead	100	Bald Eagle	3	Evening Grosbeak	23
Common Goldeneye	46	Swainson's Hawk	3	House Finch	31
Common Merganser	9	Red-tailed Hawk	47	Purple Finch	23
Ruddy Duck	61	Great Horned Owl	4	Pine Siskin	43
Ruffed Grouse	9	Belted Kingfisher	2	American Goldfinch	117
Gray Partridge	8	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	11	Chipping Sparrow	106
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Downy Woodpecker	35	Clay-colored Sparrow	170
Horned Grebe	28	Hairy Woodpecker	14	Dark-eyed Junco	6
Red-necked Grebe	69	Pileated Woodpecker	7	White-crowned Sparrow	8
Eared Grebe	280	Northern Flicker	13	White-throated Sparrow	69
Rock Pigeon	119	American Kestrel	20	Vesper Sparrow	17
Eurasian Collared-Dove	7	Merlin	3	LeConte's Sparrow	6
Mourning Dove	16	Olive-sided Flycatcher	1	Savannah Sparrow	83
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	8	Western Wood-Pewee	12	Song Sparrow	83
Rufous Hummingbird	1	Least Flycatcher	122	Lincoln's Sparrow	11
Sora	21	Eastern Phoebe	2	Swamp Sparrow	6
American Coot	172	Say's Phoebe	2	Yellow-headed Blackbird	176
Sandhill Crane	15	Eastern Kingbird	48	Western Meadowlark	28
Black-necked Stilt	17	Blue-headed Vireo	2	Baltimore Oriole	34
American Avocet	42	Warbling Vireo	19	Red-winged Blackbird	1,145
Killdeer	43	Red-eyed Vireo	15	Brown-headed Cowbird	95
Upland Sandpiper	1	Loggerhead Shrike	1	Brewer's Blackbird	206
Long-billed Curlew	2	Canada Jay	3	Common Grackle	27
Marbled Godwit	21	Blue Jay	22	Ovenbird	5
Least Sandpiper	8	Black-billed Magpie	167	Northern Waterthrush	5
Semipalmated Sandpiper	30	American Crow	335	Tennessee Warbler	18
Short-billed Dowitcher	12	Common Raven	98	Common Yellowthroat	12
Wilson's Snipe	33	Black-capped Chickadee	109	American Redstart	5
Wilson's Phalarope	248	Boreal Chickadee	2	Yellow Warbler	244
Spotted Sandpiper	24	Purple Martin	135	Blackpoll Warbler	1
Solitary Sandpiper	6	Tree Swallow	462	Yellow-rumped Warbler	23
				Rose-breasted Grosbeak	24

CW - count week

WE NEED YOU!

Casino Volunteers: We are looking for volunteers to help out at our casino on February 18 and 19, 2025. Please email us if you can help out for a few hours. rdn.nature@gmail.com

Board Members: We are needing more board and committee members. We invite anyone interested in nature to join us! rdn.nature@gmail.com

RDRN Social Media: 2,933 Facebook Members; 316 X Followers ; 501 Instagram Followers

FLOWER FOCUS WITH DON WALES:

We welcome Don Wales back after a needed break.

THE FLOWERS OF SCOTLAND AND SWITZERLAND

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20
10:00 AM KWNC



REMEMBERING JOAN HEPBURN

By Rod Trentham

Joan joined the RDRN Board in 1994. She was passionate about social justice and environmental issues. Joan took over as RDRN president in 1995 and continued through 1996 -- and remained active on the Board as past president. Issues were roiling. The Klein government had ended regional planning, cut municipal funding and cut government services across the board and decentralized the environment department.

The collapse of Special Places 2000, the Sunpine clear-cut giveaway, boating regulations, among others were some of the issues during Joan's time as president. At one meeting in Red Deer "Environment" and Forestry minister Ty Lund yelled at Joan like a big bully. Toward the end of her term she was involved in RDRN's public campaign against the protection of the Molly Banister Drive Extension; City Council voted 8 – 1 on January 27, 1997 to "finally" remove it. Joan received the 2004 RDRN Owl Award for her significant contribution. Our thoughts are with her family.

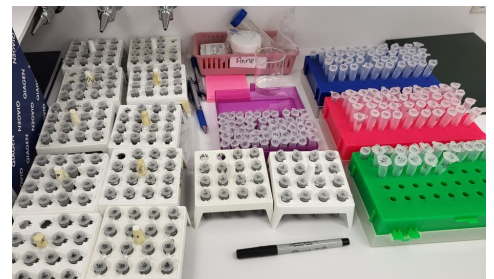
Image: Joan, standing on the left, was instrumental in obtaining funding for RDRN's NatureScape Alberta book.



RDP BEE RESEARCH UPDATE: ANNE DEMPSEY

Over the summer, Dave collected and pinned hundreds of local native bee samples with the help of several volunteers. This semester, Anne has recruited six students to work on a set of 182 bees. The DNA has been extracted from the collected bees and now students are beginning to amplify the DNA. Over the next month and a half, we will amplify the bee DNA through PCR. Around the end of November, we will begin sequencing the DNA to determine which species we have. Next semester, Anne will be recruiting an additional six students to complete the remaining 200 bee samples that Dave collected.

Photo by Anne Dempsey



The Red Deer River Naturalists, the first natural history organization to be established in Alberta, traces its roots to the Northwest Entomological Society, founded in 1898. 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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