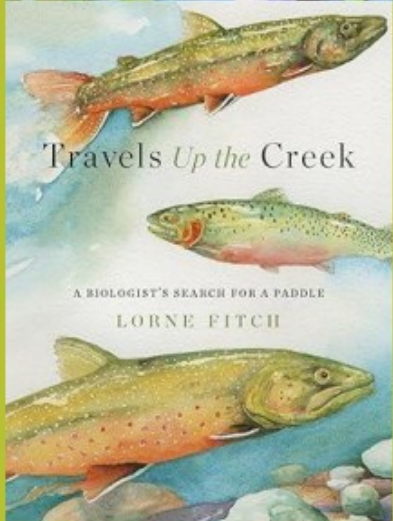
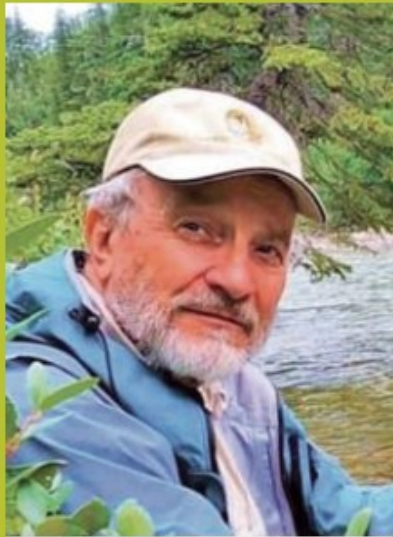


The Red Deer River Naturalist



January 2025 Editors: Myrna Pearman & Susan van der Hoek

RDRN AGM and Evening with Lorne Fitch



JANUARY 23, 2025
KERRY WOOD NATURE CENTRE
RED DEER

Join us for our 2025 Annual General Meeting, Owl and Lifetime Achievement Awards presentations, as well as a special wine-and-cheese evening with Lorne Fitch. Co-sponsored by RDRN, Friends of Kerry Wood Nature Centre and Freshwater Conservation Canada, this event will feature Lorne reading from his new book *Travels Up the Creek*.

AGM - 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

WINE AND CHEESE: 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM

RDRN AWARDS PRESENTATIONS: 7:00 - 7:15 PM

LORNE FITCH READINGS: 7:15 PM to 8:30 PM

Lorne Fitch is a writer, retired biologist and advocate for environmental stewardship. In his new book, Lorne explores human-nature connections, imploring us to safeguard imperiled species and threatened places. Lorne, through his writings and activism, inspires change through education and a touch of righteous anger.

All are welcome
Only Members may vote

Sponsored by



RDRN 2024 OWL AWARD

RICK TALLAS

By Rod Trentham

In November 2021, Rick was suddenly thrust into the Presidency from the Vice-President's position after the difficult Zoom era of Covid. As the President, he lowered the temperature and had us take a moment to breathe.

On the advice of Don Wales, Rick introduced the Consent Agenda approach to meetings, with committee reports being submitted one week prior to the board meeting for review. This approach reduced the length of our board meetings and AGM. Rick did a lot of preparation for these consent meetings, including an incremental review of the Policy and Standard Operating Procedures manuals. He would select small chunks and then assign the Board their homework to review and make changes, walking us through this process. Some of the policies dated back to the 90s, others to the early 2000s.

Rick purchased a new computer for the RDRN and upgraded Microsoft Office 365. His proficiency with the Access database streamlined the management of our membership database. He also worked with Peggy Birse, who RDRN hired for one year as our Recording Secretary, with the successful CIP application to help support Nature Central (NC) and the Habitat Steward program. During the summers when we had NC staff, Rick attended meetings and events and provided support as required.

In May 2022, Rick had a serious health episode while riding his bike near Lacombe. He was treated in Red Deer and quickly rushed by ambulance to Edmonton where from May 1 – 25, following heart surgery, he was nearly lost to his family and friends. Fortunately, he then quickly recovered was back to chair a special RDRN meeting on June 5. He continues to chair all our regular meetings and works diligently behind the scenes

to ensure that our organization runs smoothly.

He also put together a list of passwords for Board members to access the board portal on the RDRN website as well as the RDRN information on the Community Foundation's site. He also worked diligently to organize meeting minutes, agendas and reports for the years 2021 to 2023. He sorted them into sleeves in three binders, where they will be housed in the Red Deer and District Archives.

Together with our Treasurer, Bob Krutchen, Rick was able to obtain a RDRN Mastercard and set the accounts up to accept e-transfers, thus making it easier to accept membership renewals and donations.

Rick worked with the Communications Committee on rebranding the RDRN "look" that had been in use since 1976. RDRN hired Doug Pedersen to design a new RDRN logo and letterhead, as well as logos for Nature Central, Habitat Steward and Adopt-a-Stream. Rick also worked with the committee to develop a new brochure as well as a pop-up banner. He also took the initiative to order RDRN pins, t shirts and vests for board members and summer staff as well as to sell at the monthly meetings.

Rick's liaison work in the community on behalf of RDRN—including with the Community Foundation of Central Alberta and Warren Sinclair—has been pivotal to the current success of RDRN.

Rick is passionate about environmental issues like the loss of natural habitat and is pragmatic in his response on behalf of RDRN. He has written letters to the powers that be on issues ranging from development proposals in Red Deer to the "problem" grizzly bear hunt.

We are very fortunate to have Rick leading us. Thank you!



DONATION: Red Deer River Naturalists have been given \$500,000 by anonymous donors. RDRN is very grateful for this donation and extends a heartfelt thank you to the donors for their generosity.

The marketable securities donation has been directed to the **Red Deer River Naturalists Fund for Nature**, an endowment fund held with the Community Foundation of Central Alberta (CFCAB).

"This remarkable donation demonstrates the way that philanthropy can be used as a smart financial strategy for both donors and charities," said CFAB executive director Erin Peden in a statement. (right). "The Community Foundation exists to provide future-focused options for agencies in our region. We were thrilled to facilitate this donation, and to continue our work with the Red Deer River Naturalists to develop a strong fiscal foundation for their future."



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: JUDY BOYD

It is our great pleasure to present a **RDRN Lifetime Achievement Award** to Judy Boyd. Judy worked tirelessly on behalf of RDRN from 2001 until her retirement in 2018. We are grateful for the hundreds of hours she spent (and thousands of kms driven) on behalf of RDRN. Thank you, Judy!

HIGHLIGHTS:

RDRN Board Member: 2001-2018

RDRN President: 2003-2005

RDRN Secretary: 2001 -2002, 2006-2015, 2017-2018

Leader, Monday Birding Trips (2001 – 2008)

Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator for Central Alberta (2004)

Co-editor of the Central Alberta Bird Checklist (2005)

Co-Chair of the Nature Canada Conference (2006)

RDRN Rep on Hazlett Lake Committee (2006, 2010, 2014, 2015)

RDRN Rep on Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary Committee (2005-2022)

Red Deer River Cleanup Committee (2001-2007)

Habitat Preservation Committee (1999-2006)

Summer Field Trip Committee (2000-2006, 2010, 2012) [A total of 327 outings!]

Leader of the Young Naturalist Club (2003-2005, 2009- 2013)

Editor of the Central Alberta and Red Deer Birding Trails Guides (2009 and 2018)

Federation of Alberta (FAN - Now Nature Alberta) representative for RDRN (2004-2006)

Member of the FAN Board of Directors (2006-2009)

Oversaw the Peregrine Falcon web cameras (2010-2013)

RDRN Webmaster (2016-2017)

Count Coordinator for the Central Alberta Christmas Bird Count (2000 – 2023) [approx. 480 hours]

Count Coordinator for the Central Alberta May Species Count – (2001-2023) [approx. 360 hours]

Count Compiler for Nature Alberta's Provincial May Species Count (2005 – 2021) [approx. 476 hours]

The above years of service to RDRN was in addition to the years she spent as the Nature Nursery coordinator at Kerry Wood Nature Centre, her volunteer time at Medicine River Wildlife Centre, her personal documentation of Great Horned Owl and hawk nests, and the many other hours she spent exploring and teaching about nature.

RDRN would like to thank Rod Trentham for working with Judy to summarize her impressive years of service.



DID YOU KNOW? WITH SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

A group of lynx is called a gaze or watch. The Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) is found throughout Alberta's forests, mainly in the Boreal Forest Natural Region. It is a medium-sized wild cat with long, dense fur, triangular ears with



black tufts at the tips, and broad, snowshoe-like paws. Its hindlimbs are longer than the forelimbs, so its back slopes downward to the front.

Lynx prey almost exclusively on the snowshoe hares and snowshoe hare population follows a 10-year cycle. Lynx numbers fluctuate dramatically, as populations of the hare, its main prey species, build to a peak and then crash. They will supplement their diet with grouse, voles, mice, squirrels, foxes and carrion if available. Mating occurs during February or March each year, and the young (usually four) are born in April and May.

NATURE CENTRAL WITH ABBEY VAN HEUVEL



On December 28th, twelve participants joined Nature Central for a winter walk at Burns Nature Park. The group, which included four children, explored the trails, learning about the area's history and poplar forest ecology while enjoying lookouts over Sylvan Lake. Along the way, we spotted animal tracks, scat, Black-capped Chickadees and a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers. The walk ended with a cup of hot chocolate, making for an enjoyable afternoon. We have two upcoming trips planned!



Saturday January 25—Radar Hill

Saturday, January 22—Kinvig property (near Elnora)

Please email nir.rdrn.nature@gmail.com if you plan to attend. More details can also be found at naturecentral.org and on the RDRN website/social media.

BIRD FOCUS GROUP WITH CHRIS OLSEN: 2024 SUMMARY

The Bird Focus Group finished our 2024 schedule on Dec 14 with a walk in the Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary. Birders gathered in the Nature Centre afterwards for snacks and a brief wrap-up. Thanks to Rod Trentham and RDRN for a great festive lunch, and as always to Susan van der Hoek for posting our itineraries, route maps, summaries and photos on social media.

In 2024, we participated in 31 birding outings or activities. On 25 birding walks we covered 145 km (average 5.8 km), with 237 participants. Not including the Spring Count or CBC, we saw 144 species, logging all data with eBird. Alix Lake topped the

species count again this year (44), followed closely by Kuhnen Park (42), and Riverbend (38).

Birding weekends this year included the Sharp-tailed Grouse Watch/Snow Goose Festival (Wainwright and Tofield), Ferry Point (camping and road tours), and Medicine Lake (camping, trails and kayaking). Ferry Point was particularly rich, with over 90 species recorded over the two full days.

Bird Focus will pick up again in March with a new schedule of weekly outings. For those planning well ahead, the Sharp-tailed Grouse watch this year is on Apr 26th, and the Ferry Point weekend is on Jun 21-22. Meanwhile, birders that want to share impromptu outings can use the RDRN social media to propose and plan activities.

IN THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS WITH DON AUTEN: AMERICAN MINK

American Mink are semi-aquatic members of the weasel family. Never far from water, they spend time under the ice during the winter, like muskrats and beavers. They are very efficient swimmers and can dive up to 5 m in pursuit of fish and muskrats. Although mink will catch and eat anything they come across, their main diet consists of fish, frogs and muskrats in the water and mice and voles on land. They also catch and eat waterfowl and other birds and their eggs. Mink are nocturnal and very secretive so they are seldom seen by people. This Trail Cam photo was captured in the spring, in the middle of the night, just when the ice on this creek was melting and there was an open patch of water that enabled it to come and go from under the ice.



Social Media: 3087 Facebook Members; 311 X Followers; 508 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 7:00 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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