

The Red Deer River Naturalist



February 2024

Editors: Myrna Pearman & Susan van der Hoek



MONITORING NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL NEST BOXES: EXPERIENCES AND HIGHLIGHTS OF CITIZEN SCIENCE OWL BANDERS

7:00 PM
KERRY WOOD
NATURE CENTRE
RED DEER
REFRESHMENTS SERVED



▶ 27
FEBRUARY

2025



Brett Bodeux has an MSc in Conservation Biology from the University of Alberta. After 12 years in environmental consulting and working as a professional biologist, he became the Information Coordinator for the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute in 2022.

Brett has a lifelong passion for birds of prey, especially owls, and he has been monitoring nest sites since 2016. In 2018, Brett became a raptor bander and now dedicates much of his free time to researching owls.

ALL ARE
WELCOME



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CENTRAL ALBERTA 2024 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Date: December 22, 2024

Compilers: John and Shelley-Anne Goulet

Highlights: There were a few species this year that were not seen during last year's count. Some of those species were Cedar Wax-



wing, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Mourning Dove, Prairie Falcon, Hoary Redpoll, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Common Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Great Gray Owl, Northern Shrike, Brown Creeper, Bufflehead, White-winged Crossbill, and American Tree Sparrow. Count Week Species included an additional 25 White-winged Crossbills, 150 Bohemian Waxwings, 1 Juvenile Northern Goshawk, 8 Gray Partridges, 2 Eurasian-Collared Doves, 1 Northern Shrike, 2 Snow Buntings and 5 Sharp-tailed Grouse. A White-throated Sparrow has been seen at Riverbend Trails

throughout the months of December 2024 and January 2025 by John and Shelley-Anne Goulet and Cliff Long. A Killdeer was also seen at Riverbend trails on December 14, 2024. Cliff Long also reported on eBird a large flock of American Robins (over 65) at Riverbend. He also reported a Barrow's Goldeneye on eBird December 20, 2024.

Mammal Species seen during the count included both White-tailed and Mule Deer, Red Squirrels and a pair of Northern Flying Squirrels.

Participants: 82; **Areas Covered:** Zone 1 (Red Deer); Zone 2 (Sylvan Lake); Zone 3 (Gull Lake); Zone 5 (Joffre); Zone 7 (Penhold); Zone 8 (Dickson, MRWC); Zone 13 (Ponoka); Zone 14 (Clive); Zone 15 (Alix); Zone 16 (Delburne); Zone 17 (Bigelow Reservoir); Zone 18 (Davey Lake); Zone 19 (Bowden/Olds); Zone 20 (Eagle Hill); and Zone 26 (Dry Island Buffalo Jump). **Start Time:** 8:00 AM; **End Time:** 7:20 PM. **Weather:** Temperature +6 to -10 C. Wind Speed: 0 to 19 km/hr. Wind Direction: Variable. Cloud cover: Foggy to partly cloudy, then clear later in the day. **Team Distance/Hours:** Team Hours spent on Feeder watch was 67.75 hrs. Team Hours (Other) Cross Country Skiing was 1 hr. Distance travelled was 2 km. Team Hours spent on foot walking was 22 hrs. Distance travelled by foot was 47.22 km. Team Hours spent driving was 48 hrs. Distance travelled by vehicle was 1,472.4 km. In summary, total team hours = 138.75; while total team mileage = 1,521.62. Number of species: 49; Number of birds: 4,977; Number of Count Week Birds: 194; Number of Count Week Species: 8.



Canada Goose	101
Mallard	343
Lesser Scaup	2
Common Goldeneye	86
Bufflehead	1
Common Merganser	16
Ruffed Grouse	3
Gray Partridge	74
Rock Pigeon	551
Eurasian Collared Dove	7
Bald Eagle	10
Prairie Falcon	1
Great Horned Owl	3
Great Gray Owl	2
Downey Woodpecker	61
Hairy Woodpecker	20
Northern Flicker	24
Pileated Woodpecker	12
Merlin	1
Northern Shrike	2
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
Mourning Dove	3
Horned Lark	24
Canada Jay	8
Black-billed Magpie	402
American Crow	45
Common Raven	242
Black-capped Chickadee	702
Boreal Chickadee	26
Bohemian Waxwing	665
Cedar Waxwing	9
Red-breasted Nuthatch	97
White-breasted Nuthatch	65
Brown Creeper	1
American Robin	10
House Sparrow	638
Sparrow Species	1
American Tree Sparrow	2
Pine Grosbeak	19
House Finch	55
Purple Finch	3
Common Redpoll	33
Hoary Redpoll	5
White-winged Crossbill	13
Pine Siskin	3
Snow Bunting	487
Dark-eyed Junco	15
Blue Jay	80
Total Individual Species	4977
Total Bird Species	49

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL AGM! RDRN partnered with the Friends of Kerry Wood Nature Centre and Freshwater Conservation Canada (FCC) to host a successful AGM and wine-and-cheese evening with Lorne Fitch on January 23, in celebration of his new book, *Travels Up the Creek*. Lorne's readings were both poetic and poignant, and his presentation ended with a thoughtful discussion about the coal issue. A petition calling for a stop to coal mining was circulated for participants to sign.

RDRN also presented two very special awards at the event—the Owl Award to President Rick Tallas and a Lifetime Achievement Award to Judy Boyd. Lesley Peterson, Executive Director of FCC, gave an update on the organization (formerly Trout Unlimited) and explained their goals and objectives. Our thanks to our partners and to all the volunteers who made the evening such a success! *Photos by John Goulet*



Freshwater Conservation Canada

DID YOU KNOW? WITH SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

The two most common collective nouns for a group of eagles is “a soar of eagles” and “a convocation of eagles.” When a number of eagles are soaring together, the group is called “a kettle of eagles.”

Alberta is home to two species of eagles, the Bald (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the Golden (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Twice a year these magnificent birds use a narrow strip along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains as a migration highway. In the spring, most migrate north to the Yukon and Alaska where they breed during the summer.

The Rocky Mountain Eagle Research Foundation is an Alberta non-profit charitable organization. It is dedicated to the study of migrant and resident eagles and other birds of prey in the mountains of Western Canada.

In addition to its scientific work, the Foundation is committed to educating people about birds of prey. These efforts will help protect birds and their prey foods and habitats for the future. Their mission is to increase knowledge of Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle and other raptor migration in Western Canada. Visit <https://eaglewatch.ca/> for more info.



NATURE CENTRAL WITH ABBEY VAN HEUVEL



On January 25th, thirteen participants joined Nature Central for a winter hike to Radar Hill, including several members from the Red Deer Ramblers. We spotted tracks from weasels, coyotes, squirrels and snowshoe hares, along with bedding sites from grouse, mule deer and moose. It was a great day outdoors, finished off with a cup of hot chocolate. A big thanks to everyone who joined us!

Upcoming Trips (all trips start at 1:00 PM)
Saturday, February 22—Kinvig ACA/DU property
Saturday, March 22—Innisfail Natural Area
Saturday, April 26—location TBA

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.



FLOWER FOCUS WITH DON WALES FLOWERS OF CANYON COUNTRY, SOUTHERN UTAH (WITH A QUICK LOOK AT SWISS FLOWERS)

Wednesday, February 19

10:00 AM Kerry Wood Nature Centre



Photos by Don Wales

IN THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS

WITH DON AUTEN: AMERICAN GOSHAWK

One of the least common and seldom seen hawks in Alberta is the American Goshawk (formerly called Northern Goshawk). I was lucky that this juvenile stopped by my trail cam that I had set up to attract Lynx. In Alberta, American Goshawks and Lynx prefer the same habitat—the boreal forest.

American Goshawks are strictly forest dwellers, and their main prey are grouse, snowshoe hares and squirrels. Their short broad wings and long rudder-like tail gives them the superb aerial agility required to pursue their prey at high speed through the trees.

American Goshawks have been described as the most aggressive and ill-tempered bird species in the province. They will not hesitate to attack any wildlife or humans who venture too close to their nests!



Social Media: 3,130 Facebook Members; 309 X Followers; 510 Instagram Followers

The Red Deer River Naturalists, the first natural history organization to be established in Alberta, was founded in 1898 and incorporated 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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Our thanks to McElhanney for generously donating the printing of this newsletter and NOVA Chemicals for covering postage costs.



Cover poster by Broken Arrow Solutions

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