

The Red Deer River Naturalist



September 2026

Editors: Susan van der Hoek & Jesse Hay



Genetic Diversity and Population Structure of Coastal Wolves Across the British Columbia-Alaska Border

24 September 2026
7:00 PM
Kerry Wood Nature Centre
Red Deer



Michelle Hoang is a Master's student at the University of Alberta in the Boyce Lab. She is studying population genetics of coastal wolves in Northern British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska. Michelle also works as a Resource Management Officer at Elk Island National Park, as part of the Wildlife Active Management team. She recently led a wildlife road mortality study and continues to contribute to wild boar management, carnivore connectivity, elk population demography and human-wildlife conflict projects. Outside of work and research, Michelle enjoys climbing, cycling, hiking and photography. She resides in Edmonton, Alberta, with her partner, 3 cats, dog and a turtle.



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All are Welcome

Photos provided by Michelle Hoang

MAY SPECIES COUNT RESULTS



Highlights:

Of particular interest was the sighting of a Common Nighthawk. Although they are common around the area, the last time one was included in the May species count was 2015. They are most likely to be seen at dawn and dusk. Several birders also reported a pair of Western Grebes hanging out on the pond at Mackenzie Trails in Red Deer. The early spring season was cool and wet, with the number of flycatcher species lower than in previous years.



Top: Northern Yellow Warbler

Bottom: Great-horned Owlets

Right: Northern Cardinal

Photos by Shelley-Anne Goulet

Central Alberta (Red Deer and Area)

May 23 and May 24, 2026

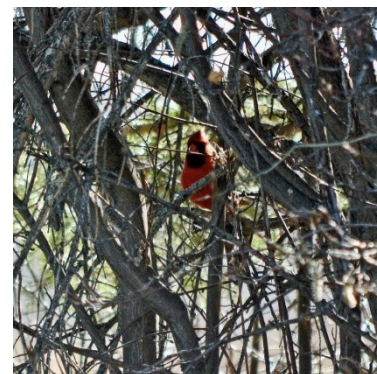
Compilers: John and Shelley-Anne Goulet

Number of Observers - 54		Number of Individual Birds - 9,309		Number of Species - 145	
Canada Goose	923	Spotted Sandpiper	21	Purple Martin	141
Tundra Swan	4	Solitary Sandpiper	5	Tree Swallow	342
Blue-winged Teal	157	Willet	3	Bank Swallow	50
Cinnamon Teal	35	Lesser Yellowlegs	2	Barn Swallow	41
Northern Shoveler	136	Shorebird Species	13	Cliff Swallow	342
Gadwall	275	Bonaparte's Gull	292	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6
American Wigeon	23	Franklin's Gull	124	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3
Mallard	536	Ring-billed Gull	94	Red-breasted Nuthatch	47
Northern Pintail	12	California Gull	4	White-breasted Nuthatch	15
Green-winged Teal	25	Black Tern	136	House Wren	60
Canvasback	38	Common Tern	2	Marsh Wren	9
Redhead	54	Forster's Tern	8	European Starling	424
Ring-necked Duck	11	Common Loon	4	Gray Catbird	3
Lesser Scaup	151	Double-crested Cormorant	65	Mountain Bluebird	44
Bufflehead	92	American White Pelican	65	American Robin	207
Common Goldeneye	42	Great Blue Heron	7	Cedar Waxwing	33
Hooded Merganser	12	White-faced Ibis	18	House Sparrow	143
Common Merganser	15	Turkey Vulture	1	Evening Grosbeak	22
Ruddy Duck	72	Osprey	12	House Finch	20
Ruffed Grouse	6	Northern Harrier	4	Purple Finch	22
Gray Partridge	10	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Pine Siskin	8
Pied-billed Grebe	10	Bald Eagle	7	American Goldfinch	74
Horned Grebe	2	Swainson's Hawk	9	Chipping Sparrow	84
Red-necked Grebe	26	Red-tailed Hawk	46	Clay-colored Sparrow	139
Eared Grebe	117	Hawk Species	1	Dark-eyed Junco	18
Western Grebe	2	Great Horned Owl	4	White-crowned Sparrow	10
Rock Pigeon	128	Belted Kingfisher	1CW	White-throated Sparrow	52
Eurasian Collared-Dove	8	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	14	Vesper Sparrow	14
Mourning Dove	18	American Three-toed Woodpecker	1	LeConte's Sparrow	2
Common Nighthawk	1	Downy Woodpecker	31	Savannah Sparrow	43
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	8	Hairy Woodpecker	10	Song Sparrow	82
Rufous Hummingbird	4	Pileated Woodpecker	7	Lincoln's Sparrow	4
Sora	5	Northern Flicker	25	Swamp Sparrow	2
American Coot	123	American Kestrel	11	Yellow-headed Blackbird	147
Sandhill Crane	4	Merlin	2	Western Meadowlark	25
Black-necked Stilt	19	Western Wood-Pewee	2	Baltimore Oriole	19
American Avocet	32	Least Flycatcher	73	Red-winged Blackbird	932
Semipalmated Plover	3	Eastern Kingbird	18	Brown-headed Cowbird	69
Killdeer	31	Blue-headed Vireo	6	Brewer's Blackbird	219
Long-billed Curlew	2	Warbling Vireo	2	Common Grackle	18
Hudsonian Godwit	6	Red-eyed Vireo	3	Blackbird Species	32
Marbled Godwit	5	Canada Jay	6	Tennessee Warbler	2
Least Sandpiper	6	Blue Jay	23	Common Yellowthroat	4
Semipalmated Sandpiper	35	Black-billed Magpie	142	American Redstart	3
Short-billed Dowitcher	1	American Crow	253	Yellow Warbler	140
Long-billed Dowitcher	3	Common Raven	120	Blackpoll Warbler	6
Wilson's Snipe	12	Black-capped Chickadee	114	Yellow-rumped Warbler	15
Wilson's Phalarope	83	Boreal Chickadee	8	Western Tanager	8
				Rose-breasted Grosbeak	21

CW - count week

A Rare Visitor!

A Northern Cardinal was also spotted in May near Pine Lake. Considered primarily residents of eastern Canada (with a small breeding population in Manitoba). Seeing Northern Cardinals this far west is a lucky sighting indeed!



DID YOU KNOW with SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

A group of salamanders is most commonly called a **congress**. Other less common collective terms for them include a **herd** or a **maelstrom**. The word Salamander means 'fire lizard'. We have two Salamander species in Alberta. The Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*) and the Western Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma mavortium*).

The Long-toed Salamander has a dark brown, grey, or black body, a bright yellow or greenish stripe down its back, white or bluish flecks on its sides, and an unusually long fourth toe on each hind foot. This salamander lives in the Rocky Mountain regions of the province and can occasionally be found in the foothills. This amphibian is sensitive to habitat alteration and degradation from development. There are two subspecies in the province. It is nocturnal and spends much of its time underground. Long-toed salamanders are meat-eaters. Adults eat small bugs, spiders, worms, and slugs. Young salamanders live in water and eat tiny water bugs, tadpoles, and sometimes other small salamander larvae. Eggs are laid in ponds and lakes in early spring. The Long-toed Salamander is designated as Sensitive under the Alberta Wildlife Act.



Long-toed salamander – photo by Jesse Hay

The Western Tiger Salamander has dark spots and stripes often creating a net-like pattern over an olive-green, grey, or black background; it may become relatively uniform in colour and spotted with age; it has a broad flat head with small eyes. Western Tiger Salamanders are one of the largest salamander species in North America. This salamander is nocturnal and lives mainly underground, in short-grass prairie, aspen parkland, and southern regions of the boreal forest. There are two subspecies in the province. They are voracious, opportunistic carnivores that eat almost any moving prey they can fit in their mouths. Their diet changes depending on their life stage, shifting from aquatic microcrustaceans and insect larvae when young to terrestrial insects, worms, and small vertebrates as adults. Eggs are laid in ponds and lakes in early spring. The Western Tiger Salamander is designated as a Species of Special Concern under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

If you are interested in viewing a Western Tiger Salamander you can find one at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre. Join in their Meet the Creature events or try viewing it towards evening in its habitat. You can also phone and ask when feeding time is and ask to view it then.



Western Tiger Salamander - Photo courtesy of Kerry Wood Nature Centre

NATURE CENTRAL



Thank you
Amber
Welcome Irina!



Our Nature Central Coordinator, Amber Breitenbucher (right), is passing the reins to Irina Sheridan (left). Amber has had to resign due to her increasing workload as a Biologist, so Irina has stepped in to take her place. We thank Amber for her months of leading the program, and welcome

Nina, who is a RDP graduate, and keen naturalist, educator and photographer, as our new Coordinator. Head to naturecentral.org or the Nature Central Facebook page for more information on upcoming events!

NEW EDITOR!

After more than 30 years as the Editor of this newsletter, **Myrna Pearman** is handing the torch to **Jesse Hay** – I'm a Wildlife Biologist based out of Red Deer with a passion for birds and primates (especially orangutans!). I've got a long history with the greater Kerry Wood Nature Centre family (I started early by attending *Nature Nursery* as a kid - it comes full circle doesn't it?). I'm more than honoured and excited to continue this publication with the rest of this incredible team that makes it all possible!



Left to right: Doug Pedersen (Graphic Designer/Poster), Myrna Pearman (former Editor/RDRN President), Susan van der Hoek (Co-editor), Jesse Hay (New Editor)

Social Media: 8619 Facebook Members; 299 X Followers; 601 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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