

EDMONTON NATURE NEWS

Autumn 2008



EDMONTON NATURE CLUB

<http://enc.fanweb.ca/>



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Submissions

Submissions may be sent to:

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On the cover:

Are you ready for the Christmas Bird Count season?

A group of birders hit the trail during last years Elk Island count.

President's Message

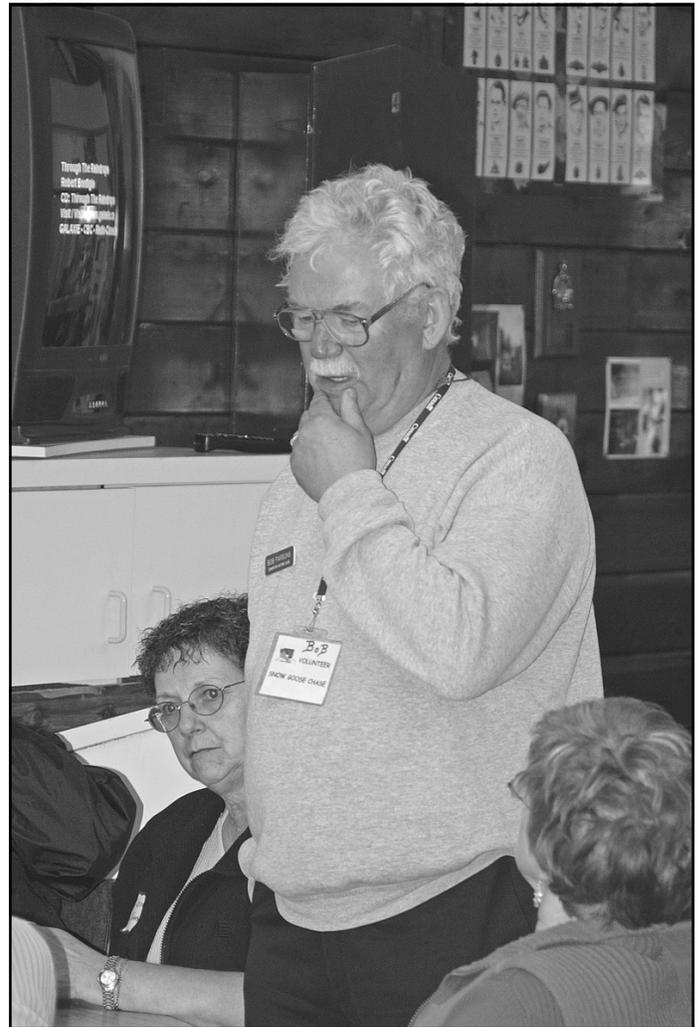
Well, the chair seems to fit as I contemplate a return to the executive. The recent AGM called for some new executive members but the position of president was not filled so I stepped forward again to fill the role. It seems to be a sign of the times in many societies and associations that there are very few people willing to step up and volunteer. I have to wonder why this is the case? Perhaps there are more demands on family time, maybe it is just a simple fact that many consider attending meetings, etc. just too time consuming. I assist in running a group of restaurants, so I know all about managing time efficiently!

The Edmonton Nature Club has always been a well-run operation and as I get to know everyone on the executive I am impressed with our upcoming year. Programs are planned through to mid-March, Katie Calon has stepped up to organize the banquet and the indoor meetings seem to be full of interest for every member. The biggest concern is the fact that the Royal Alberta Museum is going to undergo major renovations soon, so we as a group, need to find alternative digs for meetings, possibly after March.

The various study groups have some keen personnel, except for the bugs and insect group. This group usually has two or three outings planned for the summer. I have masses of equipment in my storage area so please step up and help the kids enjoy the outdoors. As you know we excel at this with five busloads of inner-city school children taking part in the Snow Goose Chase every year!

The past year has seen some excellent outings. The plant study group is very active and Brian and Gerald have been involved with all the birding activities.

Jeanne Jones will always be on my mind as I marvel at the nature that surrounds us and I hope that Ed will continue to play an important role in the club. His knowledge



Bob at one of his favourite events, the Snow Goose Chase.

and humour are awe inspiring and we should all be grateful for what both of the Jones' have done for our club.

Plans are going ahead for next years Snow Goose Chase and we will be running buses on both days for the paying public. I expect a huge turn out for the inner-city children's event, we do it well and there is a lot of fun to be had out there in the Tofield area. The Brooks and Milk River May Species Counts, both multi-club activities, are set to go again this year. If you are involved in any May count, promote it as best you can, they're a great time and always very educational.

I look forward to any suggestions or ideas you might have, it's going to be a fun year!

Thanks to all those who volunteered this past year and we will see you soon.



It's not all for the birds with Bob, he's an avid butterflyer as well.

Bob Parsons, President ENC

Editor's Message

In the last issue, I made a big deal about people stepping up to volunteer for the club's executive. The response wasn't exactly overwhelming, but I would like to acknowledge the people that did come forward.

First of all, **Bob Parsons**, our new President has to be commended for taking on the job. Bob has, and continues to do so much for the club (especially the huge task of organizing the Snow Goose Chase) that no one was really expecting him to become the new President. But when no one else was willing to do it, he generously volunteered.

We did get one new person to serve on the executive, **Katie Calon**, who has agreed to look after some of our special events - the pot luck dinner at the Christmas Bird Count tally and our annual banquet. Thank you Katie for taking on these important tasks.

Ron Ramsey has been taking care of communications and refreshments for the past few years and this year he has added programs to his portfolio. Ron will be arranging for speakers for the monthly meetings at the museum. Thanks Ron, we'll be looking forward to some great presentations in the new year.

The rest of the executive is pretty much the same as last year. Everyone on the list on page 2, really deserves special recognition. They all continue to do awesome work and our club couldn't function the way it does without the contributions of everyone on that list.

Now, as for this issue, you may notice it's very "birdy". I apologize to all the plant and insect enthusiasts and all those that enjoy other aspects of nature, but I haven't received any submissions pertaining to those subjects.

I'd love to see a column or maybe a photo essay on a favourite plant or insect group. If you've been out photographing flowers, or butterflies, or frogs, or anything along those lines, please consider putting together a few of your photos, writing a few lines, and sending them in.

Maybe you've done some traveling, you could write up a report on your trip. It doesn't have to be a long story and it doesn't have to be about an exotic locale. Look at **Dan Stoker's** entertaining article on Long Island Lake in this issue for some inspiration.

Another idea would be to write up a review of any ENC presentation, event, or field trip that you've attended. A glowing review of a field trip led by yours truly would surely get published!

The back cover features photos from two of our members, **Bert Yeudall** and **Bonnie Ogden**, it'd be great to see some more people send in their work.

Sooooo, please consider submitting material for the next issue!!!

Gerald Romanchuk, Editor



I needed a space filler and couldn't think of anything better than a Great Gray Owl!

Councillor Linda Sloan



*Sharing your passion
for nature and working
to enhance our
City's conservation.
Call me to share your
concerns and thoughts.*

496-8122

EMAIL: linda.sloan@edmonton.ca
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In Memorium: Jeanne Jones 1925 - 2008

Members of the Edmonton Nature Club were saddened to learn of the sudden death in October of **Jeanne Jones**, wife of **Edgar Jones**, famed Birder, Bird Bander, Photographer, and Lecturer.

She is fondly remembered as **Edgar's** constant and cheerful helpmate. They were the recipients of many awards, together they were presented an **Emerald Award** for environmental excellence and **The Order of the Bighorn**, Alberta's most prestigious environmental award.

Jeanne's other interests were as a very active and devoted member of the **Order of the Eastern Star, Areme Chapter Eleven**. She was also an active member of **The Red Hat Society** where she was known as the Court Jester.

We shall miss her.

Peter DeMulder

Memories of Jeanne:

During happy hour when out camping we sometimes talked about reincarnation. When asked "If there really is reincarnation, what kind of a bird would you like to come back as"? Without hesitation, **Jeanne** would emphatically reply Ruddy Duck!!

Her 'call-name' when using the CB radio was also Ruddy Duck. Whenever I see a Ruddy Duck now I will always think of **Jeanne** and wonder.



Bouchard Lake June 02, 2007

Jeanne Jones - Photo: Bob Gehlert

This could be Ed's last year for banding birds. He banded over 117,000 birds in his career. Few people realize that it was **Jeanne** who untangled and removed most of those birds from the mist nets.

Bob Gehlert

At left, a Ruddy Duck. When I first joined the Edmonton Bird Club, **Jeanne** asked me for a print of one of my Ruddy Duck photographs. Considering her husband's stature as a famous bird photographer, I was very flattered. Reading Bob's account, the request makes more sense.

This ones for you Jeanne!

Gerald Romanchuk



60th Edmonton Christmas Bird Count: Sunday, December 21/08

CALLING ALL BIRD ENTHUSIASTS!!

Why not participate in the Edmonton Christmas Bird Count?

From the Audubon website:

From December 14, 2008 through January 5, 2009, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas will take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists will head out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house in the middle of winter.

Each of the citizen scientists who brave snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count make an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

The data collected by observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long-term perspective made possible by the Christmas Bird Count is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat - and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

In the 1980's CBC data documented the decline of wintering populations of the American Black Duck, after which conservation measures were put into effect to reduce hunting pressure on this species. More recently, in 2007, the data were instrumental in the development of two Audubon State of the Birds Reports - Common Birds in Decline, which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years, and WatchList 2007, which identified 178 rarer species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii that are imperiled. These two reports helped scientists and policy-makers to both identify threats to birds and habitat,

and promote broad awareness of the need to address them."

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

New participants register at the **John Janzen Nature Centre** (adjacent to Fort Edmonton Park) or **The Wildbird General Store** 4712 - 99 St. Edmonton www.wildbirdgeneralstore.ca. Check the maps to find out what zone you are in. You will then be contacted by your zone captain.

Past participants will be contacted before the count by your **Zone Captains**. If you don't get a call, register at the "Birds of Christmas" talk at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, or call the specific Zone Captain listed in this pamphlet.



Bush Beaters in action - Photo: Dolores Smithson

HOW DO I DO IT?

Participants watch and count the maximum number of birds for each species seen in the day. You may do this either as a **Bush Beater**, a **Feeder Watcher**, or as an **Owl Prowler**. **Bush Beaters** walk through the parks and streets within a defined area in their zone. **Feeder Watchers** record the maximum number of each bird species seen at any one time at their home. The **Owl Prowlers** head out and watch or listen for owls at night and dawn. **Zone Captains** will instruct new participants how to report results.

A nominal fee of \$5.00 is requested of Bush Beaters only, and is collected by the Zone Captain. For Bush Beaters who are under 18 years of age, or are already members of *Bird Studies Canada*, the count is free.

This year's count is dedicated to the memory of **Jeanne Jones**, long time participant who organized our CBC potluck dinners for many, many years.

Kim Blomme, Edmonton CBC Compiler

Ed Mah-Lim; A Birder with a Special Talent

The hobby of bird identification has many followers. Although we can categorize the skills of individuals from the experienced and dedicated to the novice, the casual, or the driven “zealots”, nothing impresses me more than the, competent, dedicated student of nature who, like hunters, finds pleasures in the pursuit of a hobby that brings man closer to nature.

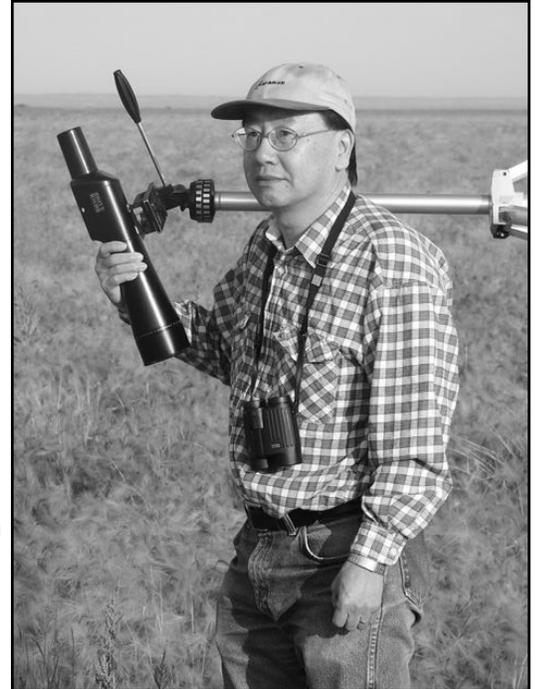
There are many good birders in the Edmonton area, and I meet some of them almost daily in The Wildbird General Store. However, one person stands out when it comes to identifying shore birds. He is Ed Mah-Lim, a Chinese Canadian with exceptional talents. For some reason few people of Asian origin seem to have taken up the hobby of birding in North America – at least I have not met many. That makes Ed a person of note before even picking up his binoculars.

I have had the good fortune to accompany Ed Mah-Lim on numerous outings in the last two years. As it was, those trips came before my eye operations (excuses) and he served me well in being my second pair of eyes! Most of our trips have been to Beaverhill Lake. This shy, reserved man is exceptional in applying patience and skills to teasing apart the riddle of separating “peeps” of different species, whether in the drab non-breeding plumage of summer/fall, or the more spectacular breeding “uniforms” of spring. He will spend hours going over each individual in a flock, while feeding along the mud flats. This is why in the last few years – to my knowledge – he is the only one to have spotted European Ruff/Reeve (on 5 different oc-

casions) in the Beaverhill Lake area.

How did these birds get here? Why is he the only one to identify them? No easy answer to the first question – but to the second we need to realize how much of a challenge it sometimes is to get really good at becoming an “expert”.

Other birders will come and go, but Ed Mah-Lim spots this particularly rare species because he has developed a very critical search image and provides us all with the benefit of his skills. Though he has a photographic memory for details, he unfortunately does not keep notes. I



Ed Mah-Lim - Photo: Lu Carbyn

have asked him to send me an email after his trips in 2008, so that we could share these observations with a larger audience.

At left is a brief summary of what was seen on specific dates along the East side (Mundare Beach). Each trip was short and area specific; usually spending from about 0930 to about 1230 along a short stretch of the mud flats/waters edge. These are by no means exhaustive records on numbers – there was no attempt in getting population data for this group of birds at the lake.

Lu Carbyn

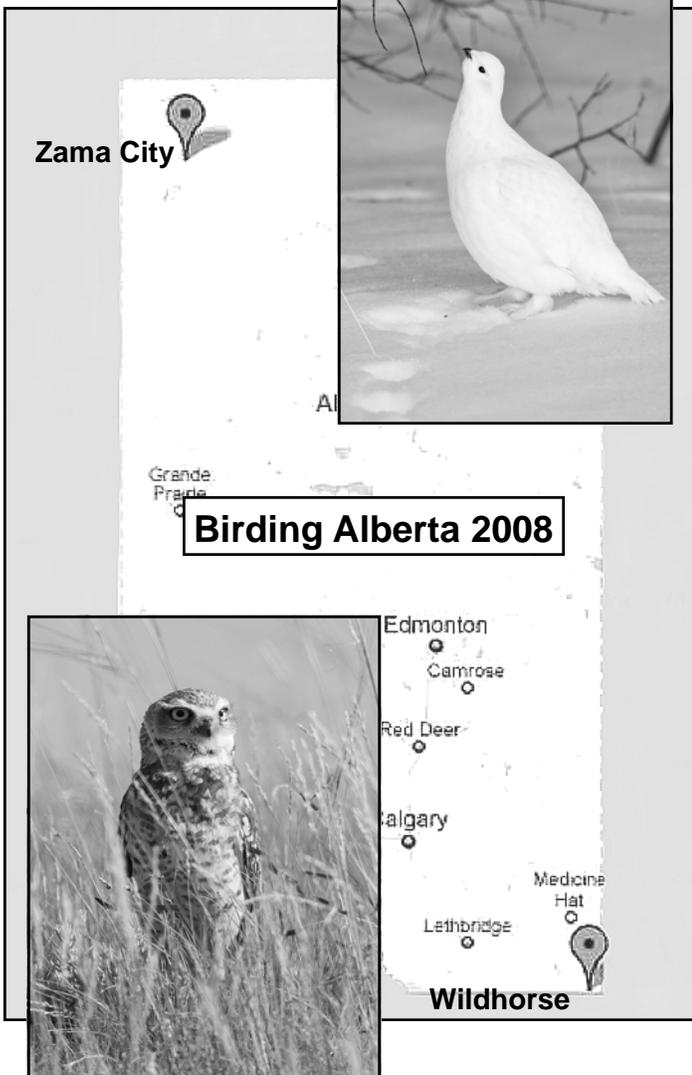
	17-Aug-08	24-Aug-08	31-Aug-08	7-Sep-08	19-Sep-08	21-Sep-08
Semipalmated Plover	40	300				
Semipalmated Sandpiper	30	60	40	6		
Least Sandpiper	50	25				
Black-bellied Plover	30	75	100	40	70	20
Lesser Golden Plover		10	6	3	50	2
Red Knot		1				
Least Sandpiper			20	30	20	1
Buff-breasted Sandpiper				1		
Pacific Golden Plover					1	
Killdeer	1					
Baird's Sandpiper	200	400	500	400	200	5
Pectoral Sandpiper	40	30	40	6	10	8
American Avocet	8	5	10	70		
Greater Yellowlegs	6	25	5		3	7
Lesser Yellowlegs	40	80	60			
Upland Sandpiper	1					
Marbled Godwit	10					
Stilt Sandpiper	1	1	30	30		
Sanderling		1	20	12	20	6
Dowitcher species	500	40	12	20	70	
Wilson's Phalarope	20	20	3			
Red-necked Phalarope	8	10	20			
Western Sandpiper	1		1	1		

Upcoming Monthly Presentations at the Royal Alberta Museum

The Birds of Christmas, December 19, 2008

Edmonton count compiler, Kim Blomme, will prepare us for this year's Christmas Bird Count. Come out to register for the count and meet your zone captain.

Gerald Romanchuk will present: **Birding Alberta 2008: From Zama City to Wildhorse.** During the past year Gerald has been birding right across the province & found over 280 species. He photographed birds like Willow Ptarmigan up north at Zama City & Burrowing Owl in the south-eastern corner of Alberta near Wildhorse. In this presentation he'll share photos & stories from these and other birding spots throughout Alberta.



Gerald has been an active member of the Edmonton Nature Club, watching & photographing birds & wildlife for the past 10 years. His photos have appeared in several publications & he recently won the grand prize in the Alberta Conservation Association's photo contest.

Turkey Vultures Nesting East of Edmonton

January 16, 2009

Wayne Nelson conducted his Master's and Ph.D. research on the behaviour and behavioural ecology of Peregrine Falcons at Langara Island in the Queen Charlotte Islands, Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, and has continued these studies to the present.



Turkey Vulture in flight - Photo: Wayne Nelson

He worked for 25 years for the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, primarily as a habitat and wildlife biologist. Prompted by occasional public reports about vultures, in 2003, he and two Fish and Wildlife colleagues began to solicit public reports of vultures in east-central Alberta and concluded that season with 9 nests, all in abandoned farm buildings.



Turkey Vulture on nest - Photo: Wayne Nelson

Upon retiring 2 ½ years ago, Wayne took the vulture project into retirement with him. In 2008, twenty-three active vulture nests were visited, and he and Rick Morse began wing-tagging nestling vultures. His talk is about the natural history of Turkey Vultures in east-central Alberta, at the northern edge of their breeding range.

Ron Ramsey, Program Co-ordinator

Book Review: Bees, by Candace Savage

Greystone Books 2008. \$28.00

So much gets out in print these days that it is sometimes becomes difficult to find gems that really stand out above the rest. Well, Candace Savage has done it again. This exquisite little book (127 pages) on the biology of bees is a fitting sequel to the many other books published, over the years, by this Canadian author.

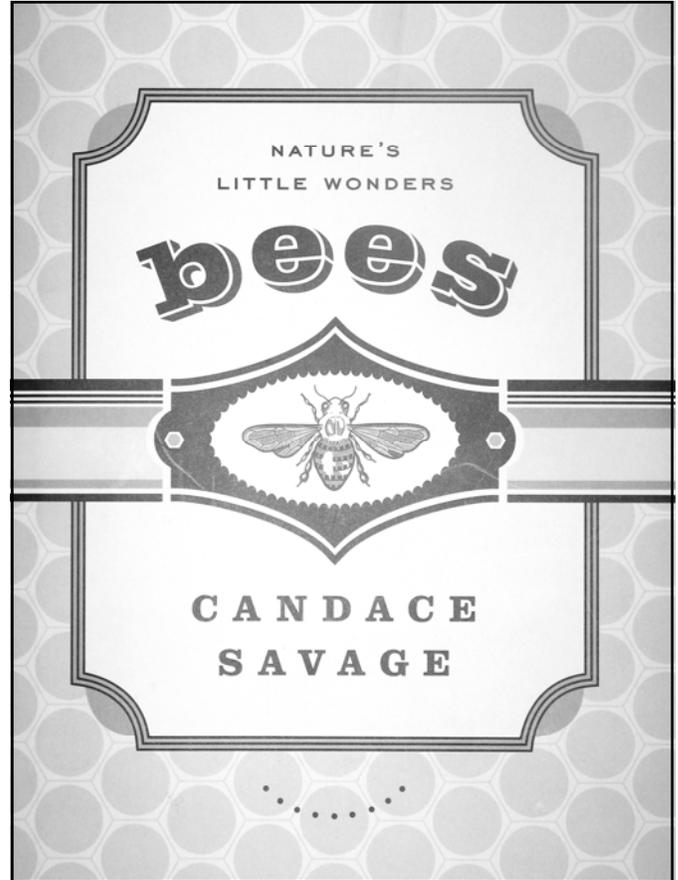
It is not only about the basic biology of bees, but also describes, in a very readable manner, the ingenious experiments conducted to explore the many fascinating aspects of the socio-sexual partitioning of worker responsibilities in swarms of bees, food gathering and nurturing of the hives and social organization.

The book also delves into conservation and outlines the many problems faced by bees to cope with climate change, pesticides, invasive species and exotic diseases.

I found the cover bland and unimpressive (never judge a book by its cover). However, the authoritative text is complemented by enchanting works of art and delightful historical illustrations. I found the references to the classical research carried out by Karl von Frisch very moving, as I had the distinct pleasure of attending this pioneer's Nobel Laureate's lectures when he was an old man and I still a very young student.

You can read this book in several hours and come away with a wealth of useful information. I highly recommend it as a stocking stuffer this Christmas for those interested in nature, science and conservation.

Lu Carbyn



Who Am I?



Is there enough information here to identify this bird?

If you look closely, there should be. Send your guesses to the editor, and we'll discuss the results in the next issue.

Brainbusters

Rearrange the letters for each of the five 'mystery birds' below to see if you know your birds.



1. NTRE
2. ORNBI
3. THHSUR
4. LERBWAR
5. NRIKBDIG



Turn Over to See Answers

1. Tern 2. Robin 3. Thrush
4. Warbler 5. Kingbird

Misty Ridge 2008 Raptor Monitoring Report

Spring 2008

- Note: during times of heavy, low cloud or inversion conditions (due to low pressure), or under clear skies & light winds (high pressure) there is very little movement. Good weather for birders equates to poor birding & when it's windy it's good birding due to the requirement of surface winds.

Based on observations made in Feb.2007 I decided to start monitoring the 3rd week of February once again. On February 23, 2008, I made the first visit to the Vega Natural Area & Misty Ridge Ski Hill and found one of the mated pair (presumed to be the male) of Bald Eagles at the nest which was full of snow. The Athabasca River which runs past the nest site was still completely frozen except for a couple patches of dark ice. I have no information as to whether this pair overwinter in the region.

By my next visit, February 29, both the male & female were sitting at the nest with one bird occasionally working on the nest, also 2 immature Bald Eagles were seen flying over the area. On March 8, with light 15km/h SSE winds, +8C there was no movement of any raptors.

March 12, migration had started in full with 9 adult Bald Eagles & 2 adult Golden Eagles observed. Winds were west 40-50km/h, +3C. April 12, was my last visit for the spring due to other demands for my birding time. Along with the nesting pair, 5 immature Bald Eagle, 3 Sharp-shinned Hawk, 7 Northern Harrier, 4 Red-tailed Hawk and 2 Rough-legged Hawks were observed. Weather conditions: +3 to +15C, SSE 20-25km/h winds.

Fall 2008

Again this year, I decided to make a few early trips at the beginning of September to see what other raptors were being missed. My first visit was September 7 with 1 Bald Eagle adult, 1 Broad-wing Hawk, 2 Northern Goshawk, 4 Sharp-shinned Hawk and 1 dark morph Red-tailed Hawk seen. Winds WNW 10-40 km/h +11C and clearing after mid-day thunderstorm.

Return visit September 11 with 3 adult & 2 immature Bald Eagle, 1 Northern Goshawk, 4 Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1 Northern Harrier, 4 Red-tailed Hawks, 3 buteo species. Observed. Winds 15-30km/h, +24C sun/cloud.

September 13 except for a very brief look at a Northern Goshawk which flew out of the trees at ground level near the Vega Natural Area there was no movement due to a High Pressure system replacing a cold front which passed through the day before.

September 21, 2 Bald Eagles, 6 Red-tailed Hawks, 4 Rough-legged Hawks & 1 Northern Harrier were seen. Winds NW 15km/h +7 to +15C, 40% cloud cover.

September 27 observations, 6 Bald Eagles, 2 Sharp-shinned Hawk, & 2 Rough-legged Hawks, winds SE-SW 15km/h +5 to +15C.

Next visit was October 7, 3 Bald Eagles & 2 dark morph

buteos were seen however the weather was not favorable with very light winds, +19C and sunny skies.

An Edmonton Nature Club field trip on October 18 hit the jackpot despite an ever changing weather forecast given the day before. With an adult Bald Eagle flying over the McDonald's in Westlock setting the stage we then encountered a Golden Eagle sitting in a stubble field along Highway 18, approximately 20 km west of town. A Northern Harrier & several Rough-legged Hawks were observed prior to our arrival at Misty Ridge. The birding continued to improve with another 14 Bald Eagles, 1 immature & 1 sub-adult Golden Eagle, 1 possible Harlan's Hawk, 6 Rough-legged Hawks & 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk observed at the site. Winds W 20-25km/h, 10-60% cloud cover -3C to +8C. This was the best day of the fall observation time for 2008.



Golden Eagle

The following day, October 19, only 4 Bald Eagle, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, and 1 Northern Goshawk were seen due to a cold front passing through, winds SE 25-30km/h sunny skies.

Another visit October 21 had good results with 12 Bald Eagles (both adult & immatures) along with 3 Rough-legged Hawks. Winds NW 40-60km/h, 10% cloud cover +8C.

Alan Hingston, Dan Stoker & myself made a visit on October 28 despite a forecast of very light winds and were shutout except for an adult Bald Eagle which flushed out of a tree along the Athabasca River. The same bird was seen a couple more times during the afternoon but no raptor movement took place. 2 Bald Eagle adults were seen sitting in the trees along the river at the Vega Natural Area when Dan & Alan stopped for a visit in the afternoon.

On November 1, The elusive Pygmy Owl of Misty Ridge was heard calling 4 times over a period of 15 minutes from 13:30 to 13:45 hrs & was located sitting horizontally on a large limb high up on a dead aspen tree along the west edge of the ski hill. It then flew out to another large poplar on the hill itself before flying off into heavy cover.

I often have either observations of the bird or hear the calls in the fall along the Athabasca River. There are some birders who question these sightings as usually it is when I am alone that they occur!

A final trip November 14, under very low light levels & heavy cloud cover produced no raptors of any kind, only a White-breasted Nuthatch & Pileated Woodpecker.

Listed are the 2008 Spring and Fall totals

<u>SPRING</u>	<u>FALL</u>
Bald Eagle - 30	Bald Eagle – 52
Golden Eagle -2	Golden Eagle – 2
Northern Goshawk - 0	Northern Goshawk – 5
Sharp-shinned Hawk- 3	Sharp-shinned Hawk – 11
Red-tailed Hawk – 4	Red-tailed Hawk – 11

Rough-legged Hawk – 2	Rough-legged Hawk – 20
Northern Harrier – 7	Northern Harrier – 3
American Kestrel - 0	American Kestrel – 1
Broad-winged Hawk – 0	Broad-winged Hawk – 1

I generally make 2-3 trips per week if time & weather conditions match and arrive approx. 9-10:00 AM & stay until 16:30-17:00 hrs. with a 4 km walk along the river below the hill while waiting for winds & temperatures to rise. In spring this can be productive with ample signs of wildlife in the area: Moose, Whitetail & Mule Deer, Lynx, Fisher, Ermine, Mink, Wolf & Coyote tracks. In the fall Black Bear can be seen in the same area. With access to the inside of the building it allows for viewing even during cold blustery conditions which I assure you is a real treat.

Compiled by: **Jim Lange** Nov.18,2008

Long Island Lake - A Quick Escape Into Nature

My wife Mary and I recently escaped from St. Albert to head 90 minutes north past Westlock in the direction of Cross Lake Provincial Park to do some fall kayaking and birding. Our goal was to find and explore a place called Long Island Lake. According to our neighbours, who had spent some summer vacation time at a municipal park there, it was a neat little spot. Certainly worth a visit, even out of season. We decided to find out for ourselves.

The drive north up highway 2 and then highway 44 is pleasant enough and my rear end is well enough padded that I can survive an an hour and a half car ride, no problem. Unfortunately, we went all the way to the municipal park at the north end of the lake, as recommended by our neighbours. It was gated and closed for the season when we showed up on October 3rd. We drove the north shoreline, peaking down various driveways to cottages hoping to find some life. We did. We came across a very nice

lady that said, "Sure, you can launch those things here!"

Suffice it to say, the rest was bliss. Two hours of paddling a long and narrow lake spotted with mallards and ringed with beaver lodges is a joy in the fall. Some highlights included a flock of Tundra Swans, a lone Belted Kingfisher and a drab, winter-plumaged Common Loon that seemed to ignore our presence. The cascade of yellow leaves made floating mats that we cut through with ease. I took lots of photos. We eventually found where we should have launched, the dock and beach at Larkspur, a little village at the south end of the lake.

If you want to share the experience, we posted the pictures, including a couple of corny videos on the internet. Go to <http://picasaweb.google.com/stoker.dan> and enjoy the experience as a slide show.

Dan Stoker



Mary Stoker paddling on Long Island Lake - Photo: Dan Stoker

Birding Field Trip Reports

August 23, Beaverhills Lake Area

We had 18 people out for an Edmonton Nature Club field trip to the Beaverhills Lake area today.

We started out on the east side of the lake at Mundare Beach & saw a Merlin sitting on a fence post finishing off it's brunch as we pulled up. We set out for the rapidly re-treating water to look for shorebirds.

Things have been awfully dry out there & every week the lake seems to shrink more & more.

Anyway we took the loooooong walk out to the wet stuff & saw Black-bellied, American Golden, & Semipalmated Plovers, Avocet, Willet, Pectoral, Baird's, Semipalmated, & Least Sandpipers.

An Adult Bald Eagle, a juvenile Harrier, & at least one & possibly two Peregrines were spotted. Some of the group also saw a female or immature Bobolink in the grass on the way out.



ENC members on the mud flats at Beaverhills lake

After a lunch break we headed out around the south side of the lake. Another Merlin & a Kestrel were seen, followed by a Turkey Vulture on Twp 514.

Lots of ducks & yellowlegs at the Amisk Creek Bridge, as well as a Cormorant & a flock of Pelicans.

When we stopped at the old quarry south of Tofield we saw a few birds, but a steady stream of large gravel trucks & the dust they were stirring up kept the stop quite brief.

This quarry really needs a better name. I propose "Parsons's Quarry" in honor of Bob Parsons who was the first person that I heard of to suggest it as a good birding spot. Apologies to anyone else who birded the spot previously.

Our last stop for the day was Joseph Lake. Tons of ducks & gulls & a few shorebirds. We were also treated to another Peregrine that stooped on prey but, luckily for the prey species, missed the target.

I'm probably forgetting a few birds & didn't mention all the common stuff, but it was a pretty darn good day with lots of cool birds & great company.

Gerald Romanchuk, Trip Leader

September 6, Various Lakes SE of Edmonton

22 members of the Edmonton Nature Club toured through Lookingback, Bittern, Coal, Miquelon & Joseph Lakes today. We saw lots of nice birds but the days highlight was easy to pick out - we saw a juvenile SABINE'S GULL at Miquelon. Out of the 16 people that were still out, it was a lifer for 12 & a new Alberta bird for 3 others. The bird was seen from the main beach area, foraging with several Bonaparte's Gulls.

Our day started at Lookingback Lake, where we saw both Tundra & Trumpeter Swans. We hit some rain showers so instead of a planned walk at Joseph Lake we decided to

kill some time in the vehicles & drove towards Bittern Lake. On the way we found a few shorebirds; Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral & Baird's Sandpipers. Also had a large flock of American Pipits right beside the road.

At Bittern Lk we saw a large flock of Barn Swallows with a few Bank Swallows mixed in. A very cooperative LeConte's Sparrow perched up on a fence wire so we all could get a good look. Also saw Marsh Wren & Common Yellowthroat.

On to Coal Lake where we added White-fronted Goose, Pelican,

Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Long-billed Dowitcher, & large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds with at least one Yellow-headed mixed in.

Next stop was Miquelon where we saw the already-mentioned gull. The last stop was at Joseph Lake, where some duck hunters were working & most of the birds were on the far side of the lake. We did get some nice looks at Black-bellied Plover, American Avocet, & Baird's Sandpiper. We tried hard to pick out some other warblers out of a large flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers but came up empty.

Throughout the day we saw lots of ducks, most of the common species. There were several Red-tailed Hawks out & about, but we only found 1 Swainson's Hawk. As I said earlier, lots of nice birds, but one very cool bird definitely made our group's day!

Gerald Romanchuk, Trip Leader

September 13, Beaverhills lake

Eleven of us headed out to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory Saturday with excellent fall weather. Generally the birding was quiet but over the day we saw Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, Merlin and Northern Goshawk.

The trail in to the BBO yielded Black and White Warbler, lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Clay-colored Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Hairy Woodpecker, and the ubiquitous Black-capped Chickadees.

The BBO staff had a Swainson's Thrush and Black-billed Magpie in the nets, the latter providing a challenge for banding and weighing. While we were there, chickadees, Yellow-rumps and Orange-crowns, Lincoln's Sparrow were banded.

Water levels are quite low all around. We stopped by the Ryley area looking for gulls and shorebirds: some Long-billed Dowitchers, Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, assorted ducks, Eared Grebes, Cackling Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, Wilson's Snipe but just Ring-billed and Franklin's Gulls. Pipits & Lapland Longspurs were about.

On the way back we stopped at Hastings Lake -- lots of Bonaparte's Gulls.

Over the day just over 40 species.

Special thanks to the crew at the BBO!

Brian Stephens, Trip Leader

September 27, Elk Island NP

On Saturday I joined 8 other members of the Edmonton Nature Club for a nice day of fall birding out at Elk Island NP.

At the Astotin beach area we found a large flock of Robins, a few Juncos, White-crowned & White-throated Sparrows. Out on the lake, besides some of the common duck species, C. Loon, Red-necked, Western, Horned, Eared, & Pie-billed Grebes, DC Cormorant, quite a few Barrow's Goldeneyes, 50 or so Hooded Mergansers, a couple of Surf Scoters, Ring-billed & Bonaparte's Gulls, a bull Moose, & even a Bison swimming out to one of the islands were all spotted.

On the Shoreline trail Downy, Hairy, & Pileated Woodpeckers, BC Chickadee, WB Nuthatch, Ruby & Golden-crowned Kinglets, Orange-crowned Warbler, & Swamp Sparrow were seen.

We didn't see much on the Sandhills trail, but did hear some elk bugling.

Walking out to the south-west end of Tawayik Lake, we got a few shorebirds: Black-bellied & Semipalmated Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Pectoral & Bairds Sandpipers. We also got a nice look at a Rough-legged Hawk & a small group of A. Pipits.

Gerald Romanchuk, Trip Leader

November 8, Wabamun Lake

17 of us set off from Spruce Grove for the Wabamun area. We started at the Wabamun townsite pier - cold and windy but we did pick out Western Grebe and Red Throated Loon. A juvenile Bald Eagle took up the usual post overlooking the bay.

A visit to the provincial park and the overlook gave us good looks at ducks and geese along with Pine Grosbeak, Bohemian Waxwings, Hairy and Downy woodpeckers.

Down at the Keephills Ponds we had 3 adult Bald Eagles, numerous ducks and a fly over of Tundra Swans.

Just east of the Sundance plant we are pretty sure there was 1 Trumpeter Swan.

We finished up the main trip at Seba Beach with Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Red and White-breasted Nuthatches.

All told we had 31 species.

Brian Stephens, Trip Leader

October 18. Misty Ridge

The day started well, saw a Bald Eagle fly over the MacDonalds in Westlock while we were having breakfast & then a Golden Eagle, a Harrier, & a couple of Rough-legs on the way to the ski hill.

While we were waiting for the birds to start moving we took a walk down to the river. It was pretty quiet, Mallards & Common Goldeneye on the river, Canada Geese flying over, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped & Boreal Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatch, & Brown Creeper in the woods.

We did enjoy looking at lots of animal tracks along the river. There were signs of wolf, coyote, bear, beaver, moose, deer, & what looked to be a fair-sized flock of cranes.

After climbing back up the hill, we shared a well deserved pot-luck lunch & settled in to watch for some raptors. The birds put on a good show, we had 10 Bald & 2 Golden Eagles, 4 Roughies, a probable Harlan's, & a Sharpie. Not up to K-Country standards, but pretty good for this area!

On our way to Jarvie for a fall dinner (yeah, we ate well!) We picked up a large flock of Snow Buntings & then a few Robins right in town.

Thanks go to Jim Lange for leading a great trip & arranging access to the ski hill.

Gerald Romanchuk

Wildbird General Store Fall Bird Sightings Report



Aug.13/08 to Nov.20/08

Waterfowl

Several Trumpeter Swans were reported aside from those breeding in Elk Island National Park. I observed an adult at Mundare Beach (east side of Beaverhill Lake) on August 14, and another adult August 31 on Bouchard Lake east of Clyde, while a third sight-

ing came from Looking Back Lake near New Sarepta, where John Folinsbee thought it had spent the summer there. A Tundra Swan was also sighted there at the same time & both species were seen together by ENC members on a field trip September 7.

On October 2, a flock of approximately 45 Tundra Swans landed on Cross Lake & they were reported to be in high numbers at the same time period on Big Lake. Barrow's Goldeneye were in high numbers on Astotin Lake this fall - personal observation & ENC trip September 27 results. Hooded Mergansers (50) were observed on Astotin Lake during the ENC trip to Elk Island .

A lone White Pelican was seen over the Athabasca River valley north of Misty Ridge on September 13, making it the first sighting of that species at the site (personal observation). The ENC trip to Misty Ridge on September 21 observed 8 Common Mergansers on the river while Fred Whiley located a lone Horned



Black Scoter

Grebe still at Cross Lake on September 29. The highlight of the fall was the sighting of a Black Scoter on Beaumaris Lake seen by Witek Gierulski and many other birders!

Raptors

A Turkey Vulture southwest of Tofield August 12-13 was probably the highlight for the early part of the fall. The bird was seen by Tofield resident Pat Jones while she was delivering mail for Canada Post. She reported the observation to myself on August 14 & said it was feeding on a dead skunk! Possibly the same bird was seen on Twp Rd.514 along the east side of Beaverhill Lake by ENC members on a field trip August 23.

Peregrine Falcons were observed quite regularly at Beaverhill, attracted by all the shorebirds gathered on the mud flats especially along the east shore. I had a wonderful look at a Peregrine sitting on a fence post , August 14 as I drove down to Mundare Beach. Sharp-shinned Hawks were observed in low numbers on most of my early fall monitoring days at Misty Ridge. I did see 2 immature along Prospect Creek, south of Cadomin August 23 & an immature flew past my home in the Athlone district of north Edmonton November 10.

An adult & immature Cooper's Hawk were reported from Aspen Gardens August 25 by Jack Clements. A total of 5 Northern Goshawks were observed at Misty Ridge this fall as well as the first Broad-winged Hawk sighting for the site September 7.

Bald Eagles (52) & Golden Eagles (2) were observed at Misty Ridge between September 7 & Oct.23. The ENC trip to the area October 18 started on a good note with the sighting of an adult Bald Eagle flying over the McDonald's in Westlock followed by the sighting of a Golden Eagle sitting in a stubble field along Highway 18 near the Pembina River crossing 18km west of Westlock. By the time we arrived at Misty Ridge a Northern Harrier and several Rough-legged Hawks had been seen. It only got better as the day progressed as Bald Eagles (14) Golden Eagles (1 immature & 1 sub-adult) along with more Rough-legged Hawks, & several Sharp-shin Hawks. Although we did not hear or see the Pygmy Owl, several Brown Creepers were heard. Of course the highlight of the trip was the finish in Jarvie with the Harvest Fall Supper & the sighting of a few Robins next to the hall.

The big treat this fall was on November 14 with the sighting of a sub-adult dark intermediate gray morph Gyrfalcon sitting on a power pole along Highway 18, 1km east of Westlock by Fred Whiley & myself. Unfortunately due to heavy traffic & with the camera out of reach in the back of the vehicle, no photos were obtained. Upon returning several minutes later & all prepared the bird was gone!

On November 6 during a walk along the south shore of Beaverhill Lake from the Francis blind to the weir & return, a total of 5-6 Rough-legged Hawks were seen hunting over the dry grassy lake bed. Later that afternoon a Short-eared Owl flew over my vehicle at the north end of Kallal Meadows just before dark.

Roy Fairweather had seen a Snowy Owl just on the outskirts of Tofield earlier in the week, although on a drive to Kingman and east earlier on the morning of Nov.9, I did not see any. Javen Green reported a Pygmy Owl taking birds at his feeder & also reported seeing a Hawk Owl along Sec. 616 east of Breton October 28. Several birders went looking for these birds but were unsuccessful.

However on November 1, at Misty Ridge I located a Pygmy Owl sitting parallel a large branch near the crown of a large poplar tree on the edge of the ski hill. It called a total of 4 times over a 15 minute period between 13:30 & 13:45 hrs. flying up the slope once before flying off into heavy cover in the centre of the hill. This was the only observation I made all fall of the Pygmy.



Northern Pygmy Owl

Gulls

A Sabine's Gull was seen at Miquelon Lake during the ENC trip September 6, while Fred Whiley located an immature Thayer's Gull on Cross Lake August 27. Gerald Romanchuk located a Mew Gull at the ponds on 170St. across from the Waste Man-



Sabine's Gull

agement Landfill immediately north of Yellowhead Freeway on October 9. A number of uncommon gulls have been observed here, likely attracted to the landfill. This fall the highlight had to be a 2nd winter Great Black-backed Gull, a bird normally found on the east coast.

Shorebirds

With the low water situation at Beaverhill Lake this fall it was great for shorebirds if one had the endurance & ability to make the trek through the weeds & then the boot sucking mud. All this while carrying your scope! The rewards were there for those who made it.

Ed Mah-Lim had a number of interesting sightings this fall with Western Sandpipers seen August 31 & September 7. Buff-breasted, Baird's, Least, Semipalmated & Pectoral Sandpipers along with Black-bellied & Semipalmated Plovers were observed on the east shore August 13. Ed also had a Pacific Golden Plover at Mundare Beach Sept.18. Bob Parsons & Bob Gehlert located a Dunlin at Ryley Pond (Hwy 14 & Rge.Rd.180) August 25.

Approximately 20 Baird's Sanpipers were seen at Murry Marsh August 30. They were also observed (2) at Cross Lake on September 2, Tawayik Lake during ENC trip September 27, and 2 on Bouchard Lake along with 8 Semipalmated Plovers by Jim Lange & Fred Whiley.

Others

Heather Ronnes observed a Western Kingbird on the west side of Millwoods August 11 & a Varied Thrush was caught at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory September 12 & observed during an ENC trip there.

A flock of Rusty Blackbirds were seen at Big Lake September 20 as if a tribute to departed St. Albert birder Dave Nadeau. Jack Clements saw a Spragues Pipit in Aspen Gardens August 31.

Several Harris Sparrows were reported this fall with 1 at Hermitage Park September 23 - Fred Whiley, (1) NW of Lamont October 15, (1) Aspen Gardens October 19 - Jack Clements. Also of

note were the 2 Yellow Warblers reported October 15 northwest of Lamont. A lone immature Cedar Waxwing was seen in St. Albert October 10 by Janet Watkinson. Fred Whiley & myself observed a Say's Phoebe at Bouchard Lake September 7.

Only one Townsend's Solitaire was seen and that report was from Sherwood Park by Eric Wallace Oct.13. A couple of Bobolinks were seen near Mundare Beach on August 23 & were also seen by the ENC trip to the area.

Northern Shrike was seen in Riverbend October 19 by Barb Burton & I saw one in the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area November 9. There have been several widely scattered reports of Redpolls being seen. Heather Ronnes had a small group along with several Tree Sparrows in Millwoods October 26 while Alan Hingston, Dan Stoker & myself saw (8) along the Athabasca River below Misty Ridge on October 28. We also saw 3 Pine Grosbeaks in the same area. A single female Lapland Longspur was observed by myself on the beach at Cross Lake September 2. Fred Corbett reported seeing Bohemian Waxwings in the Boyle area Oct.28.

A pair of Northern Cardinals spent the summer in Sherwood Park (location & observer requested not to be given out) however photos can be seen on the bulletin board at the Wildbird General Store. Snow Buntings started to appear in numbers in mid-October with a flock of approximately 100 seen along Highway 661 during the ENC trip as we headed towards Jarvie, & a large flock of approximately 300 were seen on the gravel bars of the Athabasca River at Misty Ridge October 28 by Alan Hingston, Dan Stoker & myself.

A number of Spruce Grouse were observed. On August 23, I located a male in Watson Creek campground at Cadomin, a female at Cross Lake on October 2, (1) Vega Sandhills (1) Vega Natural Area October 19, & Fred Whiley found 3 at Cross Lake on October 29.



Spruce grouse

Just to finish off, approximately 20 Sandhill Cranes were seen near Bouchard Lake August 31 by myself with the main migration flocks going through the Edmonton area the 3rd week of September. On August 14, Leni Honsaker saw 2 Great Egrets on the west side of Hastings Lake although there were no reports of these birds either before or after.

Jim Lange

Jim Lange maintains the Northern Alberta Bird Hotline (433-2473) which is sponsored by the Wildbird General Store and the Edmonton Nature Club.

Members Photos: Backyard Visitors



Bert Yeudall sent in this photo of a Cooper's Hawk that was enjoying the water feature in his backyard.



Bonnie Ogden shares her capture of a young Northern Goshawk finishing off its meal.