

THE PARKLAND NATURALIST



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It Pays to Look Again

Saturday, May 14, 2011. Another blustery day. Not the kind of day you would like to go out for enjoyment, but the dog has to have her walk. Properly dressed for the weather, we went to a much-visited place, "Nadeau pond" in St. Albert, close to Big Lake and the Sturgeon River. Apart from the usual collection of duck species, a rather large number of Franklin's Gulls were on the water, frantically feeding on a newly hatched type of aquatic insect.



Through the binoculars I watched them for a while, and then continued my walk. After all, they are only Franklin's Gulls, right? Yet the several hundred gulls were interesting to observe. When I looked again, I spotted this "other" gull, with no eye-ring and a yellow-tipped bill!

What the heck is this? I thought, and suddenly my mind rewound, 48 years to be exact, to a similar blustery day in September 1963 on the North-Sea beach in Holland where I saw my first (and only) Sabine's Gull.

Photos by Ludo Bogaert



It was duly reported to the editor of *het Vogeljaar* ("the Bird-year"), who returned my message with the remark that "rare bird" observations of the sort could not easily be accepted – could I please describe the observation with more detail? That I did. Now, 48 years later, I am looking at not only one but seven Sabine's Gulls in breeding plumage, mixed within the Franklin's. How about that for National Migration Day? I thought. The walk back to the vehicle was done in record time, and I was back even faster with the camera (which of course I did not have with me) to get some sort of proof.

The next day, May 15, I went back for another look. The Sabine's were still there, now eight in total, as well as a flock of about 40 Red-necked Phalaropes twirling around like mad in their typical feeding frenzy. On Monday, May 16, the Sabine's were gone and the number of Franklin's Gulls was reduced to a few dozen. The food supply had obviously run out, and they had continued their migration to their Arctic breeding grounds.

Ludo Bogaert

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Box 1111, Edmonton, AB T5J 2M1

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On the cover

Snowy Owl by **Gerald Romanchuk**

President's Message

It hardly seems possible that I have been on the job for 2½ years. For the most part, it has been a rewarding experience. It has allowed me to get to know individual club members much better and has enabled me to meet and interact with many interesting people, especially when getting speakers for our monthly meetings. This year, members seem to be more willing to become involved in running the club. As a result, all of the executive positions have been filled. As well, people have come forth to do other jobs, which has helped me immensely. For fear of omitting others, I would like to cite just two examples of people coming forward.

Recently, when our longstanding e-mail coordinator Morvyn Patterson could no longer send mass e-mails, we had a major problem. James Fox stepped up and said that he would do it. James's kind of attitude is very helpful. The second thing was when Brian Stephens stepped down as field trip coordinator, it left a big hole because Brian not only organized the field trips, he ran them as well. We thank Brian for the tremendous work he

did for a number of years. Presently, Ann Carter has stepped up to be the field trip coordinator, and we now have a pool of experienced birders who lead the field trips. This division of labour has made the job

less onerous for the coordinator and also has allowed other members to contribute to the running of the club. According to Ann, attendance has been good and attendees now sign a waiver form, so everyone is happy.

Shelley Ryan, who now leads the Bug and Spider Group, had a couple of successful field trips last summer, and we hope there will be more in the coming year.

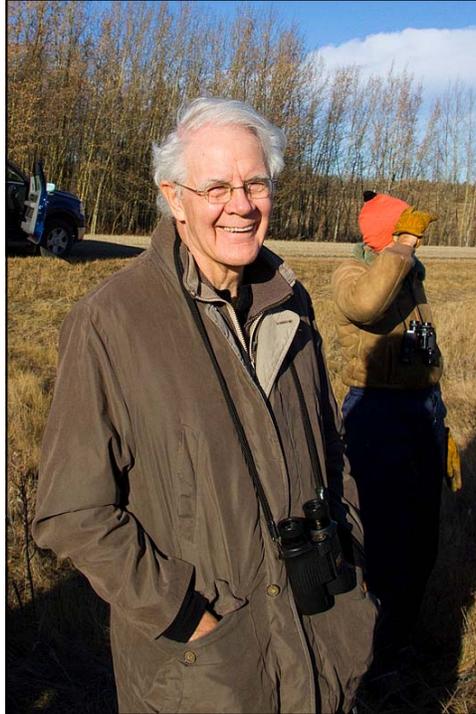
The monthly speaker series has shifted from the Royal Alberta Museum to The King's University College. While there are a few bugs to iron out (such as speakers not using the microphone), the college meets our present needs and is much more affordable than the

RAM. Presentations are on the third Friday of each month through April 20th.

The Edmonton Nature Club banquet is coming up on Saturday, March 24, in the Faculty Club at the University of Alberta. We have a special speaker this year in Bridget Stutchbury, who according to Lu Carbyn is on the cutting edge of environmental research. Lu has worked hard to get Bridget to come here, and has gotten the university involved to help defray the costs.

The Snow Goose Chase was held on April 28 and 29. Bob Parsons states that he spends two hours a day from January first to the end of April organizing the event. This year Blair Rippen volunteered to help Bob. The buses for inner-city children, as well as the public buses, have been very well received and appreciated. Without Bob's dedication and commitment, the Snow Goose Chase would cease to exist. All volunteers are appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Ramsey



Our President, Ron Ramsey

Councillor Linda Sloan



*Sharing your passion
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Edgar T. Jones

November 22, 1922 – September 28, 2011

Alberta lost more than a great conservationist when Edgar T. Jones passed away recently. Ed Jones led a very adventurous life. He joined the Air Force at an early age during World War II and piloted a Lancaster Bomber on 29 missions. His love of flying continued after the war, when he started Fort McMurray Airways and became a bush pilot. Ed produced nature films and lectured at hundreds of schools, towns, and cities throughout the province. He also participated in the Audubon Screen Tours and personally narrated his movies in over 250 cities in Canada and the United States. He hosted *Alberta Outdoors*, a popular weekly television program on CFRN. His nature photographs were marketed through agents in New York and London, and they were published in books and magazines in many countries.



Edgar T. Jones - Photo by Bob Gehlert

Ed was a founding member of the Edmonton Bird Club and co-founder of the Alberta Wildlife Foundation. He pressured the Alberta Government to place all hawks and owls on the protected list, and was instrumental in the preservation of Wagner Bog. The property at Hastings Lake that he donated to the province became the Edgar T. Jones Natural Area under the Special Places 2000 program. During his lifetime, Ed personally banded more than 117,000 birds, a remarkable feat considering it was done without the help of subpermittees or financial assistance.

In recognition of his achievements, Ed received two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Order of Canada, the Order of the Big Horn, the Emerald Award, and Edmonton's Salute to Excellence Award, as well as an honorary degree from the University of Alberta.

As an impressionable young teenager, I was fortunate to meet and become friends with Ed. He taught me how to band birds in his backyard and how to identify the warblers in their drab fall plumages. We

went on many trips together – “assignments,” we called them – to band birds and photograph nature. One of my most memorable times was when we were standing on the north shore of Last Mountain Lake at sunset and a small aircraft flushed thousands and thousands of ducks, geese, and cranes into the air. We estimated there were more than half a million

birds circling above our heads and then settling back down again. Ed commented that never before in his life had he seen so many birds in one place, and I felt happy to have shared that moment with him.

My most memorable quotation from Ed? Well, that had to be when we were sitting on the back deck enjoying Ed's favourite treat, lemon meringue pie, and he said, “You sure have a wonderful selection of dead trees in your yard.” I took that as a compliment, as it was meant to be. After all, dead trees are the homes for many of the birds and animals Ed loved so much.

Ed Jones encouraged me to take the path in life that I did, and influenced the development of my deep interest in the natural world and the conservation and preservation of our environment. Many will miss him.

Bob Gehlert



Wagner Bog Orchid

Elke Blodgett

Awarded the Edmonton Nature Club Conservation Award

March 26, 2011

Elke Blodgett reminds me of the saying, “No prophet is honoured in his [or her] own country.” She has been likened (albeit jokingly) to a mosquito, a nuisance, an irritant, repeatedly stinging local authorities when they don’t live up to their environmental responsibilities. However, and this is probably a testament to how much she has been able to achieve in raising the environmental awareness of the authorities and the community, she is now beginning to be recognized as a beneficial insect!

Elke has been a passionate and persistent citizen environmental advocate in the St. Albert area for almost 20 years, focusing particularly on issues to do with Big Lake and the Sturgeon River.

Born in Germany just before World War II, Elke lived in various European countries and the United States before settling in St. Albert in 1966. In caring for the welfare of aquatic and other environments, Elke has followed in her father’s footsteps. (An environmental water engineer, her father was involved in bringing back fish to many polluted rivers of Europe such as the Rhine, and also invented a way, still in use, to reduce air pollution from coal-burning power plants.) Her childhood experience also honed her intimacy with nature. Like many other Germans who experienced poverty during and after the war, her family supplemented their diet with wild-harvested foods. To this day, Elke still seeks out wild foods, berries, mushrooms, and greens, and teaches others to do the same. She particularly enjoys passing this information on to the younger generation.

But Elke’s perspective on the environment is not utilitarian. Elke is also an artist, a sculptor, and brings artistic sensibilities to her appreciation of the natural world. Yet it is likely her well-developed sense of a moral obligation to protect the environment and its living inhabitants that has kept Elke going through years of contentious, frustrating, and sometimes disappointing environmental advocacy. As fellow conservationist Barbara Collier puts it, “The fact that most levels of government fail to do what is right [regarding the environment] is the impetus that drives Elke on in her battle to respect and save nature.”

Elke doesn’t go in for the big “Save the Whale” challenges – rather, she concentrates on local issues that would probably escape the attention of many of us, where she feels she can really make a difference. She patiently monitors breaches of environmental rules and regulations – which of course demands a good knowledge of such rules, much poring over paperwork – by observation and photography, and reports them, often being prepared to take further action if the authorities fail to do so. Here are some examples of her work:

She initiated legal action over a leachate spill from the former Riel sewage lagoons into the Sturgeon River. Her private prosecution was taken over by the federal government.

She was instrumental in getting action on a major oil and gas spill into the Sturgeon. This resulted in the formation of the STAMP (St. Albert and Area Multi-stakeholder Project) working group, of which Elke was a member and which involved industry and environmentalists cooperating to prevent such spills in the future.

She has reported and gotten action on several instances of river pollution from discharges of road runoff and illegal contamination by salt, gravel, shale, and mud.

She has reported on Sturgeon River fish kills.

Elke is not just concerned about aquatic pollution. She has long been an advocate of relocating the power lines that cross the Sturgeon near the mouth of Big Lake, having documented the bird kills resulting from these badly located lines. (Big Lake is a major staging lake for waterfowl, and the provincial government has recently created a provincial park around it.) Elke is also a guardian of local forests and has frequently reported vandalism and illegal logging in the well-known White Spruce Forest on the north shore of the lake. Thanks in large part to Elke and other dedicated environmentalists, this 170-year-old forest has just now been acquired by the City of St. Albert as a Historic Resource that will be protected from development.



For many years Elke has called for a by-law in St. Albert that would promote the health of all trees, public and private, native and cultivated. She also advocates against the non-essential use of pesticides.

One of Elke's bigger campaigns was her opposition to the Western Bypass Road that links St. Albert to Edmonton but crosses very sensitive natural areas adjacent to the mouth of Big Lake. In 1996–1997 she organized a 10,000-plus signature petition against the road alignment. This put the brakes on the project for a while by requiring an extensive environmental impact assessment. However, municipal politicians were determined to have their way, and it was a short-lived victory. The road alignment was moved only a short distance further east. Elke also lost her fight against infill development on the Big Lake floodplain by Genstar.

More information on several of these issues can be found on Elke's website (elkeblodgett.net), which she maintains as an excellent educational resource.

Elke is of course pleased that the province has created the Lois Hole–Big Lake Provincial Park, but she anticipates some challenges with environmental protection of the park, given its proximity to a large metropolitan area. You can bet she'll continue with her watchdog duties, making sure its zones and regulations and permitted uses are being complied with, and making suggestions for its welfare.

As you might guess, Elke is not afraid to speak up in public. She has made numerous presentations and submissions to St. Albert City Council, Edmonton

City Councillors, the provincial and federal governments, developers, and committees. Advocacy doesn't usually come without opposition, and Elke has often not won popularity contests (the mosquito effect again!), but, recently, Elke has begun to obtain the recognition from the local community that she deserves.

The City of St. Albert has named a naturalized area adjacent to the Sturgeon River that serves as a migratory bird nesting and feeding area "Elke's Peninsula." On March 5, 2011, she received a United Nations International Women's Day Award for her environmental activities from the St. Albert Bahai. Perhaps the recognition she appreciated the most, however, came from school-children: in June 1998 she was named Environmental Hero by Grade 5 students from Sir Alexander

Mackenzie School in St. Albert. In the same month and year, she was a finalist in the Alberta Foundation for Environmental Excellence individual commitment category (the Emerald Awards).

Elke isn't going to rest on her laurels. Meanwhile, her achievements and inspiration as an environmental leader to date should be recognized beyond municipal borders.

Congratulations, Elke!

Patsy Cotterill



*Elke receives her award from Patsy Cotterill
Photo by Katrina Cameron*

Nomination Letter for Robert Turner Appreciation Award

I'd like to nominate club secretary Jaye Lee for this year's Robert Turner Appreciation Award.

Jaye Lee, for lack of a better term, is a rock. I mean this in the most flattering way. Jaye is hard-working, solid, and dependable. She is the kind of rock-solid person on whose efforts our club is built.

Jaye has been secretary of the Edmonton Nature Club since its formation and was also secretary of the former Edmonton Bird Club for several years. Jaye served as secretary of the interim executive that was formed to preside over the merger of the Edmonton Bird Club and the Edmonton Natural History Club. There were a number of extra administrative tasks and duties that needed to be looked after during the merger and Jaye, efficient as always, did a lot of the work.

Jaye has been working with Marg Reine on organizing and submitting material from all three clubs to the Provincial Archives of Alberta. They're getting all the stuff that's been stored in folks' basements to a more appropriate place.

Jaye has been volunteering for the Snow Goose Chase since the beginning. It's not always easy "herding cats" but she cheerfully helps out with the

inner-city children on the buses.

Jaye is always an important voice of reason at the club executive meetings. Some of us tend to come up with "pie in the sky" ideas and Jaye makes us come down to earth and make sure anything that comes up is really practical. She's also very good at keeping meetings to the agenda. It can be easy to go

off topic, but too much of that makes for very long sessions which no one really likes. So, while none of us want to get cut short, it's important to the group that someone plays the bad guy and keeps things on track.

It's very important that a group such as ours has people who are willing to work in the background and do the somewhat anonymous jobs such as secretary. These people don't get the

name or face recognition of the president or even a field trip leader. The Edmonton Nature Club is very lucky to have a secretary like Jaye. She is not only willing to work on administrative tasks, but she does them very, very well. Jaye Lee is a very deserving recipient of the Robert Turner Appreciation Award.

Gerald Romanchuk



*Jaye receives her award from Gerald Romanchuk
Photo by Katrina Cameron*

Conservation of Whitebark and Limber Pine

An intriguing tale of two endangered trees and how they relate to grizzly bears, squirrels, and Clark's Nutcrackers

The inaugural talk of Edmonton Nature Club meetings for the 2011/2012 season took place on Friday, October 21, at King's University College. Patsy Cotterill introduced the speaker, her colleague Joyce Gould, Science Coordinator with the Parks Division of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Joyce has a PhD in conservation biology and is an expert on the management of protected areas and the conservation of rare plants.

In her introduction, Joyce described the five species of pine trees that grow in Alberta: the two-needled jack and lodgepole pines and the five-needled whitebark, limber, and western white pines. She noted the jack and lodgepole pine are widespread and very numerous, while the other three species are all endangered – the western white pine, in particular, with fewer than fifty trees in Alberta.

The topic of her talk was the whitebark (*pinus albicaulis*) and limber pine (*pinus flexilis*).

The whitebark pine is long-lived and slow-growing at high elevations, often around tree line, where it associates with subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce. The whitebark pine has an extensive range along the western flanks of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, extending as far north as the Willmore Wilderness Area. The limber pine is also long-lived and slow-growing, usually on rocky slopes at lower elevations, and it extends onto the grassland foothills in the southern part of the province. The range of the limber pine in Alberta is more restricted, with the northernmost trees located at

the David Thompson Highway.

The various species of pine tree differ in the circumstances under which they propagate. Both the lodgepole and jack pine require heat, typically a forest fire, to open their cones and release the seeds. Both whitebark pine and, to a lesser extent, limber pine rely on the Clark's Nutcracker to propagate. These birds open the cones with their beaks; pick out the seeds, which they can store in a throat pouch (up to 150 seeds at a time); and then hide them, often underground, in seed caches. A single nutcracker may store 35,000–80,000 seeds for the coming winter. Those seeds not retrieved may germinate, providing a mutually beneficial relationship for the nutcracker and the whitebark pine tree.

The seeds of whitebark pine trees (termed pine nuts) are large and nutritious. Squirrels also gather cones in the fall and store them in middens to be eaten later. Research in Yellowstone National Park has shown the pine nuts are favoured food for both grizzly and black bears, whether collected directly from the tree or scavenged from squirrel or nutcracker caches.

Both species of pine tree are affected by the white pine blister rust and by the mountain pine beetle. The white pine blister rust is a fungal disease that cuts off the nutrient supply to the tree. As it takes 50–60 years for these trees to produce cones, infected seedlings and young trees do not reach maturity. The mountain pine beetle attacks mature trees and, consequently, reduces the number of trees capable of producing cones. Joyce noted that suppression of fire adds to the difficulties facing these two pine species, as they need open areas; without fire, they are out-competed by more shade-tolerant species.

Although there may be more than 20 million whitebark pine trees in Alberta, only 20% may be capable of producing seeds. More research is needed on threats to these trees and their impact on the ecology of the whitebark and limber pine ecosystems in Alberta. Joyce showed several photos of Waterton National Park with the skeletal remains of whitebark pines dotted across the mountainside. She commented that the Clark's Nutcracker is no longer found within the park. We hope that these fine trees, such an integral part of the mountains, together with their associated fauna, will not be lost to the Alberta landscape.

Alan Hingston



Clark's Nutcracker - Photo by Ann Carter

Snow Goose Chase 2011

An army of volunteers assist in another great event!

Before sitting down to write my yearly report, I usually glance over articles written for previous Chase outings. I've seen from the past three or four years no mention of frozen lakes, snow-covered trails, water run-off in Kallal Meadow, or Amisk Creek almost overflowing onto the bridge! This year's event, held April 30–May 1, will be memorable for the aforementioned situations. Despite these and other hazards not noted here, the passengers in eight buses for inner-city school children and low-income family organizations, plus the three buses for the paying public, all had an enjoyable and memorable day at the Tofield/Beaverhill Lake area east of Edmonton.



Photo by Gerald Romanchuk

Once again the Tofield Community Hall was the centre of the morning's activities, where various exhibits and displays were set up. The local Junior Forest Rangers group was around to assist and they all did a great job, marshalled by Treva Piekema, my assistant and liaison in Tofield. We were very fortunate to have John Acorn present

this year and he made the morning fun all the more invigorating, posing for photos, chatting with the kids and adults, and generally just being the Nature Nut! The wetland area behind the Nature Centre was quite busy, and two great volunteers, Lynn Chandler and Bill Gluth, did a fine job explaining the importance of wetlands. Ray Cromie was at Francis Viewpoint with the Barred Owl demonstration. Everyone was pleased to see him after his recent health scare. It would appear from letters I received that his display will live for a long time in the kids' memories! Stacey Hunt from Fish and Wildlife Vegreville had his bird-scare cannon firing on all cylinders, eliciting much shock and laughter from all those who stuck around to hear the big "boom."



Tofield Junior Forest Wardens with Treva Piekema and John Acorn.

The usual enthusiastic group of scouts were out all week, trying to pinpoint where the Snow Geese were resting and feeding up. This year, the buses only had to make the short trip out to the area north of Ryley to see the many thousands of geese out in the fields or swimming around the many ponds and sloughs. Sandhill Cranes seemed to be everywhere this year, and there were two locations where Jim Lange and Bob Gehlert found Great Horned Owls on nests close to the road. Ted Hindmarsh slept in his van for the weekend, while he kept us up-to-date on geese movements. Overall, I think people in most buses saw close to fifty species throughout the day, but I have to agree with Curtis Manly, who said, "It looks like the species diversity was there, but numbers did not seem as high as previous years. I tend to think that the late spring

breakup we all experienced this year, coupled with the large number of small water bodies, may be contributing factors.” Strong SE winds before and after the weekend might have resulted in certain bird species overflying the area altogether.

The three buses for the general public were, as usual, all booked solid. Thanks must go to Barb Rowe, who again looked after the bookings in a characteristically determined fashion! The focus for these buses is mostly on birding, and I thought Gerald Romanchuk summed it all up nicely – “There are usually a few familiar faces, folks that come out every year. For some of them, it’s almost the only birding they do. Several others are complete novices, just starting to explore the world of birding.”



Jordan Lange easily displays a Great Horned Owl under the watchful eye of the Edmonton Valley Zoo handler.

All of this could not happen without the many volunteers who stepped up to help. Club members, students from the University of Alberta and other local educational institutions, and of course Fred Martin, who continues to amaze me and others with his powers of persuasion – door prizes, water, juice, and cookies were all willingly donated by various businesses in St. Albert. I have learnt much from Fred – just plead poverty and the good cause, and the goodies will roll in. I tried that at Staples and it worked!

Finally, let’s give a huge thank-you to our sponsors and supporters. This year, Lisa Szabo approached the TD Bank Friends of the Environment, who made a very generous donation. Enbridge Pipelines and the downtown Rotary Club, along with Cummings Andrews McKay (lawyers), also made wonderful donations. Synergy, UMC Financial, and Ducks Unlimited

Canada provided much-needed funds for the many packed lunches, and the Wildbird General Store organised a raffle with the help of a donation from Michelle and Curtis Manly. Vanita in the Tofield town office was a wonderful help again this year, and the girls at the Tofield Nature Centre made sure there were snacks for everyone!

Will we be doing all this again next year? You betcha! Enjoy the rest of the year, and here’s to Tofield and the Snow Goose Chase, April 28–29, 2012.

The Inner City Outings

Close to 14 different Edmonton groups packed into 8 buses took part in this year’s Snow Goose Chase. Local Tofield schools were also involved in the various activities on the Saturday. A big thank you must go to Treva Piekema, Don Delaney, and Lisa Priestly, who actively encouraged local school children to take part through school presentations. The Community Hall was quite packed at times, and all enjoyed the various exhibits. Peter K. Heule, Life Sciences Outreach Technician and Bug Room Coordinator from the Royal Alberta Museum, was a big hit as usual, gently handling snakes, scorpions, and other insects. His Elvis-style hairdo continues to impress the kids! The Valley Zoo hawks and owls display was amazing as usual, and I feel sure the memories will last for a long time. Exhibits devoted to bugs, beetles, bird carving, and the formation of watersheds all created much interest. I think the following quotes (next page) from letters I received highlight many of the kids’ thoughts.



Bob Parsons,

September, 2011

Photos by Gerald Romanchuk



Snow Goose Chase 2011

Bob Gets Mail

Dear Bob Chase:

I loved the trip that we went on. My favourite part was when I got to pet the owl. It was so soft like a fluffy pillow. I felt sad when I was told the owl was partially blind cos it was hit by a car. The snakes were too slimy but I liked Peters hair cut. Thank you for coming to help out. Without you this trip would not have been possible.

Your friend Iana

Dear Sponsors:

I had a lot of fun on the Goose Chase. My favorite part was when we went to the lookout and someone saw a mouse and a rabbits foot. There were lots of army ants. The marshland was great, some lovely birds singing all the time.

The bloodsuckers were amazing but my favorite was the owl. I enjoyed the lunch but did not like the lettuce so took it out. My name is Evelyn, I have 2 sisters one lives here one in Vietnam. I hope to do it again next year, will you be there?

Dear Bob Chase:

Thanks for the great trip, it was awesome! I liked all the exhibits and learnt a lot about birds. The food was great and the games on the bus fun. The beaver walk was amazing, especially walking around the pond in the snow. I want to have another field trip now.

From Ken, Oliver School

Hi Bob:

We were so lucky to go on the trip, thanks for paying for it. We learnt a lot about nature and wild animals. The sandwich was very good and we had lots of juice. I met the Nature Man and he was so funny! I liked the gun by the field, I learnt when a bird enters the crop Kaboom. Wow, that was loud. The man with the owl, I would like him to be my uncle. I hope to do it again, I love field trips to places I have not been to before.

Thanks for all, Wing Lu, aged 9



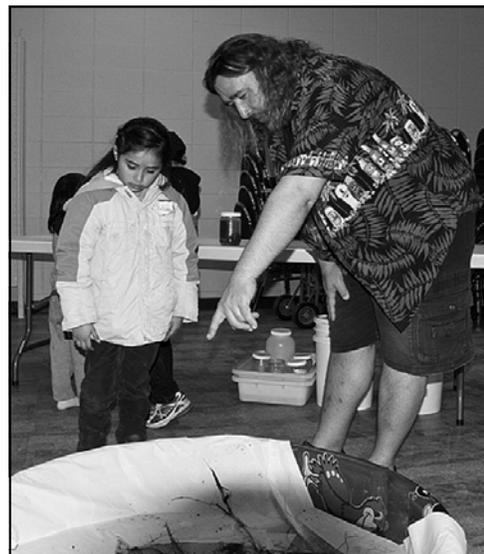
Ray Cromie and Friends

Photos by Gerald Romanchuk



Snow Geese

Mike Jenkins and Friends



Future Members of ENC



Photos by Gerald Romanchuk



Michelle and Curtis Manly lend a hand.

Conservation Corner: Is hunting unethical?



Recently a member took exception to the fact that the Edmonton Nature Club had engaged a speaker for its winter program who was affiliated with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). Their objection was that the ACA is funded by hunters. A well-known local biologist responded to the complaint, observing that the ACA (founded in 1997) devotes much of these funds to the acquisition and conservation of habitat. Moreover, hunting and fishing fees put more into wildlife welfare coffers than conservation donations from birdwatchers do!

The issue raises another question: is hunting itself automatically bad and unethical? Kevin Van Tighem, several-generation Albertan, naturalist, outdoorsman, and author, who has spent much of his career in management of various of our western national parks, says a resounding no. At least, not if it is done ethically.

Admittedly, many of us, especially women, find it unpleasant to kill animals. As animals ourselves, we have a natural empathy for them, and it seems to counter natural justice to kill them when there are so many of us and so few of them. We even prefer our grocery meat nicely processed and packed so its animal origins are scarcely recognizable. Yet most of us recognize that there are times when it is ecologically desirable for animal populations to be reduced.

It is not that nature cannot take care of itself in the absence of human intervention; it is that humans have at once created conditions in which certain species can flourish while simultaneously reducing the amount of habitat that is available to them. White-tailed deer are an obvious example. They thrive in the bushy parkland habitats that settlers created through the suppression of fire in grasslands. But at the same time these habitats are progressively shrinking with human expansion. In protected natural areas with boundary limits deer populations have become so high that the vegetation has been severely degraded; they and other species are at risk of starvation. The situation in Point Pelee National Park exemplifies this widespread problem. Elk Island National Park is a local example, where culls and/or relocation of bison and moose are necessary to preserve the health of this small reserve. The heavy mortality of moose at Elk Island, due to parasites, including ticks, is likely also a consequence of their high populations in a confined space. It could well be argued that where animal overcrowding is concerned, two solutions are preferable to mass culls: hunting and the creation of more habitat, both of which ACA aims to promote. I recall TV images of mass killings when cattle were not economical to maintain, and observing funeral pyres in the U.K. at the height of the foot-and-mouth outbreak.

Hunting is surely more ethical than mass animalicide which grossly devalues both the animals and their human killers. Hunting involves the idea of a “fair chase” – it gives the animal at least a sporting chance of getting away!

I am not a hunter and I have spent all but eight of my forty years in the Prairie Provinces in cities, so I know little about living off the land. All my experience of the land has been as a recreationist/biologist and as a steward of small natural areas near settlement. Nevertheless I consider myself to have a cultural connection with nature and a deep personal interest in conservation. Therefore, when it comes to opinions such as hunting and land ethic I defer to people such as Van Tighem. He believes that hunting, at least if done in the natural way, on foot, requiring real contact with and knowledge of nature, is not only ethical but also honourable. He writes in *Home Range: Writings on Conservation and Restoration*, “I believe that done well, with skill, ethical restraint and humble respect for the animals we hunt and for the nature of the predator-prey relationship, hunting is an honourable part of our culture.... The universal compact between predator and prey requires that prey must have a fair opportunity to escape and the predator must exercise skill and craft. This is how predation makes both the deer and the wolf stronger, elk and cougar cannier, and mallard and peregrine swifter. Predation is nature’s way of honing both predator and prey to their finest edge.” It appears then that hunting done honourably may provide benefits to human and animal societies that go beyond the mere provision of funds for the acquisition of conservation lands.

Van Tighem points out that in the 1930s and 1940s populations of game, having earlier recovered from indiscriminate hunting before and early in the 20th century, were at a new low as a result of habitat loss. It was then that organizations such as Ducks Unlimited and the Alberta Fish and Game Association arose to lobby government to acquire and protect habitat. They were followed later by the more strictly conservation-focused organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, CPAWS, the Alberta Wilderness Association, and the Canadian Nature Federation.

When I think about ethical hunting, the Inuit, before European contact, immediately come to mind. They used (to a certain extent still use) skill, ingenuity and

perseverance to capture their prey. When environmental conditions went against them, they took the consequences, they starved, like other animals have to. They were self-reliant and exploited no other human communities in order to make their living. The same could be said of other cultures such as the Kalahari Bushmen of South Africa, or the Plains Indians, who lived off an abundant and renewable resource, the bison. To trash hunting – and indeed the eating of meat – is to trash whole cultures. (Van Tighem argues that it is more ethical to eat wild game than factory-farmed meat. For those of us who eat non-organic meat regularly, I ask, philosophically speaking, is it more ethical to eat meat from animals raised in intensive feedlots or crowded, foul-smelling factories than to hunt?)

Of course, things are different now. We can’t all hunt, we would drive everything to extinction in no time; there must be rules and regulations and restrictions. Only populous species should be hunted. The methods and circumstances of hunting should be controlled. Van Tighem denounces the cowardly, inhumane practice of spring bear baiting, and is sarcastic about the kinds of hunters, whom he calls “allergic to nature,” who want their hunting experience convenient and sanitized. But done properly, he maintains there is still a role for hunting. Looking into a future where he fears hunting will be outlawed, Van Tighem would mourn the loss of his ability to hunt as one of us might mourn the loss of a favourite species or natural place.

Of course, living ethically is a tricky business in today’s globalized world where our lifestyles have far-reaching and often unknowable consequences on all other communities, human and non-human. But one thing seems clear. The natural world is imperiled and we must cooperate with everyone who is working towards conservation to achieve this common objective. Time is too short and there are too many genuine detractors out there to do otherwise.

Patsy Cotterill

Reference: Kevin Van Tighem, 2000. *Home Range: Writings on Conservation and Restoration*. Canmore. Altitude Publishing Canada Ltd. (I thoroughly recommend this beautifully written book to everyone who cares about nature in general and in Alberta in particular.)

Book Review

***Prairie: A Natural History* by Candace Savage**

Candace Savage has been a prolific author since graduating from the University of Alberta with a degree in English in 1971. She has written over two dozen books, running the gamut from natural history to cultural history

to children's stories. The first book I can recall by Candace Savage is *The Wonder of Canadian Birds*, published in 1985, an entertaining and well illustrated account of 55 better-known species in Canada. Then followed a sequence of books on bird and mammal icons: eagles, wolves, grizzlies, peregrines, and wild cats. In 1995

she authored a well received title: *Bird Brains: The Intelligence of Ravens, Crows, Magpies, and Jays*. As noted in the foreword, her aim was to "delve deeper," which she did by speaking to experts in the field and carefully reviewing the scientific literature, which she condensed into a non-technical account for lay readers.

Which brings me to *Prairie: A Natural History*, originally published in 2004 and updated in 2011 with a new preface and refreshed "state of the prairies" information. It is good to see the title back in print, and the preface is a fine piece of writing. The book is well illustrated with photos, and the maps are models of design and presentation. Above all, Savage's research is detailed and scientifically up-to-date as she describes and explains the complex interplay between the physical environment, flora and fauna, and human effects on the prairie landscape. By way of diversion, aspects of prairie natural history are illuminated by sidebar content which might be factual or allegorical.



Geographically, the prairies extend from central Alberta to central Texas and from the Rocky Mountain foothills to the Mississippi River, forming an area of grassland habitat that occupies the heart of the North American continent. Early chapters explain, in detail, the influence of geology, soils, and climate in determining vegetation, and how grasses are best adapted

to make the most of limited and unreliable resources. Variations in temperature from south to north, and precipitation from west to east, determine the "gradients of grass" and the different ecoregions within the prairies.

A chapter focuses on the importance of water and the changes it brings, often ephemeral, but of great signifi-

cance to many species. In the Edmonton area we are surrounded by "prairie potholes" and know only too well the vagaries of precipitation in recent years. An interesting section describes how the spread of settlements and the planting of shelter belts allowed introduced species to compete with the native prairie fauna. As is well known, the prairies are the most altered and least protected habitat on the continent. More than 60% of the bird species that depend on the prairies are declining in abundance. Although the great conversion of prairie to cropland is past, native prairie is still being lost or degraded by various forms of development. Savage looks at the various challenges facing the prairies currently and the conservation status of those grasslands that remain.

Prairie: A Natural History is highly recommended for a full understanding of the prairie ecosystem. The book is published by Greystone Books, an imprint of Douglas and McIntyre Publishers, and costs \$34.95 CDN.

Alan Hingston

Brooks/Lake Newell May Species Count, May 21– 22, 2011

Anticipation was high as 35 participants from Alberta and B.C. checked into Tillebrook Provincial Park, the traditional headquarters for the Brooks/Lake Newell May Species Count. The count is a joint Calgary-Edmonton initiative, now in its 13th year, and again sponsored by Cenovus Energy, TransCanada Pipelines, and Ducks Unlimited (DU) Canada. Linda Hajash, our liaison in Brooks, did another fine job putting up flyers and posters and talking to the local media.

As usual, we had the customary eight zones, each zone having a captain and a willing band of spotters. This year, we all missed Milt Spitzer, who was birding in China with his charming wife, but his Zone 8 was well represented.

Early scouting reports from Ben Velner and Gerry and James Fox indicated very wet conditions in the fields and some impassable roads that criss-cross the native grasslands. Ponds and sloughs were overflowing, and most reservoirs were topped up, resulting in a lack of gravel bars and sand spits. Late spring migration was discussed at the Friday night meeting, and some thought strong south-east winds might result in some migratory species overflying the area altogether. The weather was acceptable over the long weekend, mainly cloudy conditions and some light drizzle. Some gale-force winds have been experienced in the past, but winds were not too strong this year.

The final tally was 159 species, a tad below the yearly average of 165 species. As one will read later in this report, some species we normally count were missing this year, but overall it was a good count in unstable conditions.

A pair of Burrowing Owls was spotted west of Rolling Hills, but in the same area Whimbrels were hard to find this year (only 20 or so). Hawks were seen in very good numbers, and the few woodlots in the count circle produced the usual suspects...Least Flycatchers, a few warblers, and again this year many Swainson's Thrushes. White-faced Ibises were hard to find due to lack of suitable habitat, but Baird's Sparrows seemed to be everywhere; the song was instantly recognised by all taking part. Gray-cheeked

Thrushes were observed in the campsite, but no Wood Thrush this year, even though I was up early every morning – I missed last year's sighting because I slept in! I passed on counting in the DU Medicine Wheel project, spending some time in the Tide Lake area east of Brooks instead. Numbers were also low in the



Photo by Michelle Manly

DU Circle E Project, and the Contra Costa Project numbers were also average. Curtis and Michelle Manly know the Medicine Wheel area very well, but they experienced the lowest number of birds since the count started. Michelle was again doing her "Birdathon," and we all wished her well. As it turned out, her final number was down this year, indicative of the general situation that weekend.

Saturday evening we held our traditional beer, wine, and food social, and all participants were keen to talk about their birding and plant study day. Various door prizes were handed out, including a small garden shovel to the team who counted the most Shovelers...congrats, Arthur Wieckowski*! I displayed my new "Coming to Brooks to count ducks" T-shirt, but no-one took a photo!

(* See colour photo of Northern Parula by Arthur Wieckowski inside back page.)

New species this year include Black-headed Grosbeak, Magnolia Warbler, and a Saw-whet Owl seen the Monday after the count. Low numbers include Horned Grebe (22), Whimbrel (20), Lark Bunting (2), McCown's Longspur (4), and American White Pelican (153), quite amazing as it has the lowest number ever. Missing species this year include both phoebe species, Hooded Merganser, Wilson's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow, Turkey Vulture, Peregrine Falcon, and four "peeps" species. Some Brooks species records were broken; notables include Wilson's Snipe (222), Marsh Wren (380), Robin (799), Catbird (23), Brown Thrasher (31), Baird's Sparrow (170), Song Sparrow (61), and Tennessee Warbler (34).

Bob Parsons

Past President of the Edmonton Nature Club and Brooks/Milk River Count Coordinator



Above Photos by John Manly



Wilson's Snipe

DC



Marsh Wren

DC

The First Bald Eagles Nest in River City

They survived a near-tornado and tolerated the building of a hiking trail close to the nest, but how will they react to invasive visitors next spring?

Since 2000, I have kept an eye out for nesting activity of Bald Eagles along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton. On its eastern boundary with Strathcona County, there was a huge stick nest in a tall poplar. During winter, an adult female eagle was often perched nearby, and in early April of 2004, I obtained a glimpse of a second, slightly smaller eagle. Upon spotting me, he chattered in protest. Several days later, looking through binoculars, I could see the white head of an adult sitting low on the nest. Retreating at once, I was elated to have found the first occupied Bald Eagle nest in River City (Whiley & Dekker, 2005).

That spring I did not visit the area again until May 25. Approaching behind a belt of trees, I took care to stay out of sight until I could just view the nest, screened by leaves. The binoculars revealed that there was indeed a bird on the nest, sitting low as if brooding eggs. But the thrill of discovery quickly changed into disappointment when the occupant turned out to be a Canada Goose. Apparently, the eagles had abandoned the nest.

In subsequent years there was usually one adult eagle hanging around the same site, but I saw no evidence of a mated pair again until March of 2009. The nest was in a difficult spot for observation, and I did not approach too closely. In June, watching through the telescope from across the river, I discovered that the nest contained two eaglets.

Unfortunately, on July 18, 2009, the area was hit by a near-tornado. When I checked the nest site two days later, the local devastation was shocking to see. Many trees had been uprooted or broken, including the tall poplar. On the ground below, a great packet of branches lay buried under broken trunks and debris. The parent eagles were still in the area, but there was no sign of the young. About 500 metres downwind, I found a secondary wing feather, its broken shaft still in the blood-gorged growing stage. I feared the worst.

On July 26, at least one of the two eaglets had evidently survived the storm. Flying on and off, its wings looked feather-perfect. But where was its sibling? On August 9, there was still only one youngster around, and I had given up all hope of ever finding out what had happened to the other one. Then, on August 16 and again on August 30, two immature eagles were soaring overhead. And one of them was missing a secondary wing feather.

In September and October, the young were usually absent while the adult eagles stayed around. I was wondering whether they would build a new nest. In past winters, I had seen an eagle carry a branch nearly a metre long. By the end of November, there was a nest under construction in a mature poplar tree, close to the broken stump (Dekker, 2010).

As it happened, during the previous summer Strathcona County had built a riverside hiking trail in the area. It was posted and fenced to keep out motorcycles and snowmobiles, which had earlier done much damage to the terrain. But instead of following a route along the outside edge of the riverbank poplars, the contractors cut a path right through the grove of trees. Unfortunately, the nest was now in full view from the trail.

On April 3, my first visit of 2010, it was apparent that the nest had been greatly enlarged. I could just make out the white bonnet of a brooding adult, and on June 6, the fluffy heads of two chicks protruded above the nest rim, while the female eagle was perched on a branch above. Presently, the male arrived with a fair-sized silvery fish.

Later that month, when the river crested and ran brown with silt and debris, I wondered how the eagles managed to catch any fish at all. Interestingly, I twice saw them bring in a small prey item that appeared to be a ground squirrel. In one instance, the eagle's claws were trailing a long strand of grass.

On July 1, the female brought a fish that looked like a pike of about 30-40 cm. By this time the chicks could feed themselves and took turns eating. They were generally well behaved and docile, gazing about sleepily, quite different from other young birds of prey such as peregrines, which never seem to keep their heads still. Long periods went by without any action at the nest. For instance, on July 10, I watched for five hours and saw no food deliveries at all. By the middle of the month, the youngsters were jumping up and down, exercising their great wings and climbing into the branches above the nest. On July 31, both of them had fledged.

During the summer of 2010, very few hikers were using the new trail and most of them showed only a passing interest in the big nest, high in the poplar tree. And the eagles, which had initially been very shy, seemed to have become less alarmed by the occasional visitor.

But this changed the following summer. The pair of eagles was back at the same site and this year there were three eaglets standing on the nest rim in good view.

The news spread quickly via a photo website on the internet.

On July 30, I met five different camera-toting birdwatchers there, and all of them walked right up to the nest tree. Despite the increased attention, the young fledged successfully. However, what this kind of human disturbance will do next spring, when the eagles are in the early stages of nesting, is a critical question.

Another negative aspect of the new trail was that it attracted more and more dog walkers. One day I met two parties of women who had eight dogs between them, including three Rottweilers with a nasty attitude.

Upon complaining to the County naturalist about aggressive canids, I was told that the trail might be posted as dogs-on-leash-only. As to my suggestion that a sign should be placed near the eagle nest advising people to keep their distance, thus far there has been no response from Strathcona officials.

Whether the eagles will stay in this vulnerable spot is a matter of speculation. As long as the adults are not shot at by vandals, they may become even more tolerant of people. This has happened in British Columbia, where some pairs nest along busy roads and in city backyards.

Recently, I received a letter from Environmental and Open Space Planning, Planning and Development Services, Strathcona County, indicating that “Strathcona County has set aside 2012 capital funds to repair the trail erosion along the “River Valley Trail.” They further stated, “We will be working very closely with Sustainable Resources to create a mitigation plan that will not only meet their guidelines but also the needs of the trail users and the surrounding wildlife.”

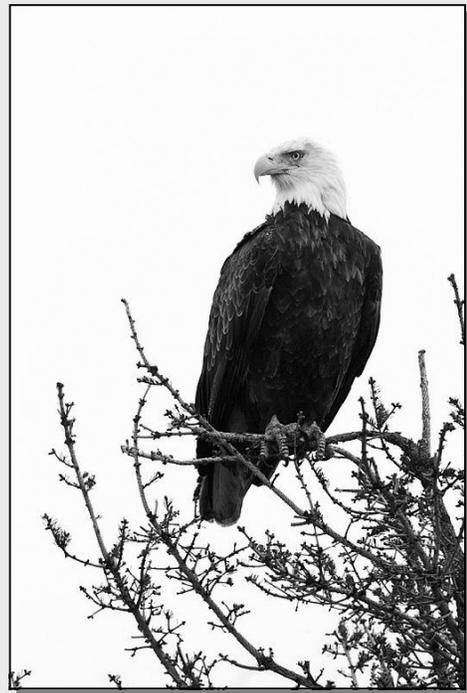
By way of comparison, it is interesting to note how other countries are dealing with their precious eagles. After a century of absence, the White-tailed Sea Eagle began recolonizing **Denmark** in the late 1990s, and by 2010 the population had increased to 37 breeding pairs. To protect occupied nest sites, all human activity is prohibited within a radius of 300–500 metres, but viewing platforms have been set up at a safe distance (Ehmsen et al., 2011). In **Holland**, which now can boast of two occupied eagle nests, public access is even more restricted. So it is in **Scotland**, where Sea Eagles were reintroduced a number of years ago.

Dick Dekker

Literature cited:

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- Dekker, D. 2010. First Bald Eagle nest in River City downed by summer storm. *Nature Alberta* 39(4):35–36.
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Photo by Gerald Romanchuk



Bald Eagles breed locally throughout Alberta. They began nesting within the city limits of Calgary in 2004, and there is now at least one occupied site on Big Lake in St. Albert. The movement of these majestic birds into the provincial capital marks a new high in their recovery and can be credited to growing tolerance of these formerly persecuted predators.

Summer Visitors

In South Edmonton our yard backs onto the White-mud Creek ravine. In the winter we have our share of birds, including a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers. The birds are attracted to three well-maintained feeding stations. However, special summer visitors are attracted to some unique habitat in our backyard. In

landscaping our new yard nine years ago, my wife and I decided to elevate our patio by using a dry-rock wall. My lack of wall-building ability has caused the rocks to sag a bit over the years, but the Red-sided Garter Snakes seem to enjoy the cavities within the wall. The wall

also happens to face southeasterly, ideal for the snakes' early-morning warm-up. In *NatureScape Alberta* (2000), Myrna Pearman and Ted Pike suggest that a "messy" yard attracts wildlife. Our backyard is attractive to wildlife.

Over the past five or six years we have managed to attract these snakes several times. This year we had at least three adult snakes and by the beginning of August, we noticed a youngster in the mix (see picture). Knowing little about the habits of snakes, our plan was simply to leave them alone, to the extent that we closed the path along the retaining wall to any traffic, except to weed and water the perennial flower garden along it.

NatureScape suggests keeping kids and dogs away from snakes at all costs. However, our visitors were quite an attraction for several of the neighbourhood kids. We supervised their visits; the main direction we gave was "sssh!" A few times things got a bit out of hand when one of the six-year-olds would jump onto the path and try to look into the crack of the rock wall into which a snake had disappeared. The kids' enthusiasm for the snakes, which increased

with the arrival of the young snake, really added to our own enjoyment. By the end of the summer, the kids understood that if we scared the snakes, they would leave. They would just "move their house" to the ravine. I knew this advice was having an impact when I heard the three-year-old, his finger to his

mouth, reminding the older kids to "sssh."

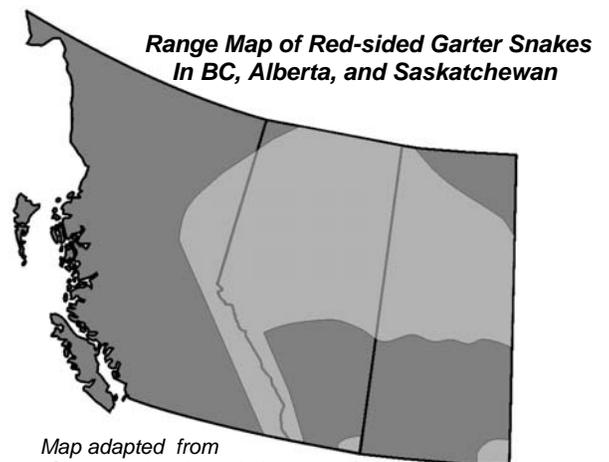
We enjoy our summer visitors as much as we enjoy the woodpeckers. We are happy to give them a home and equally happy that the snakes now have several young friends who enjoy them and are learning how to treat them with

respect – nobody touched a snake.

The picture of the adult and young was taken on August 23, 2009, the last day (as it turned out) that we saw any snakes. The kids understand that the snakes have gone to the ravine to spend the winter with other snakes. I hope I have not misled them. In fact, I would like to know what happens to Red-sided Garter Snakes in winter and how to make our backyard an improved snake habitat.

Sol Sigurdson

Website with more information: <http://www.ab-conservation.com/>
(type red-sided garter snake in the search box)



Two snakes slither through the garden wall. Photo by Sol Sigurdson

Editorial Messages

Past-Editor's Message

Big news for *The Parkland Naturalist* – it will finally come out in a timely and regular fashion! The reason is that we've found a new editor. Dawne Colwell is taking the reins with this issue.

Dawne is a creative person who enjoys working with graphics and is well suited for this job. When I approached her with the idea of taking over the *PN*, she was very keen, and was pleased to have a way to contribute to the club.

I'd like to thank Judith Johnson for her past work on *PN*, and for agreeing to continue on with copy-editing and proof-reading. Judy's sharp eye for detail is a huge help! I hope to assist in a small way and advise Dawne on any questions she has. I'll also try to help with acquiring material. Looking forward to a new *PN*,

Gerald Romanchuk

New Editor's Message

I wish to thank Gerald for his kind words, and I hope to keep up his good work. The format for *The Parkland Naturalist* will stay the same, as it has been very well received.

I also wish to thank Judy Johnson for agreeing to continue on as copy-editor, and I am grateful that Gerald will help with advice and acquiring articles. He has also kindly agreed to let me use his photos for *The Parkland Naturalist*.

Please feel free to contact me with your ideas, stories and photos. I can be reached by email at colwelld@shaw.ca

I hope to publish four issues of the *PN* yearly: January–March, April–June, July–September, and October–December.

Dawne Colwell

Edmonton and Area Christmas Bird Counts

There are ten Christmas Bird Counts in the Edmonton area; six are included in this issue of *The Parkland Naturalist*. This year the count was dedicated to the memory of Edgar T. Jones, a founding member of the Edmonton Bird Club and co-founder of the Alberta Wildlife Foundation (see page 5).

Fort Saskatchewan CBC December 17, 2011 Compiled by Art Hughes

We had 14 participants for the annual CBC, and 29 species were counted.

Canada Goose 2	Black-capped Chickadee 141
Mallard 15	Boreal Chickadee 12
Common Goldeneye 276	Red-breasted Nuthatch 9
Bald Eagle 1	White-breasted Nuthatch 5
Northern Goshawk 2	Brown Creeper 2
Merlin 1	Golden-crowned Kinglet 4
Rock Pigeon 1181	European Starling 20
Great Horned Owl 1	Bohemian Waxwing 976
Downy Woodpecker 11	Pine Grosbeak 71
Hairy Woodpecker 6	Red Crossbill 8
Black-backed Woodpecker 2	White-winged Crossbill 39
Pileated Woodpecker 2	Common Redpoll 688
Blue Jay 28	Pine Siskin 12
Black-billed Magpie 399	House Sparrow 369
Common Raven 71	

Photo by Don Delaney



Bohemian Waxwing

Edmonton and Area Christmas Bird Counts

Edmonton CBC, December 18, 2011

Compiled by Kim Blomme

We had two big highlights. One was our second-ever Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. The other was a first-ever for the Edmonton count, Clay-colored Sparrow. We also had American Kestrel and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, both of which are fairly rare for the Edmonton count. We had a total number of 132 people in the field and 325 feeder watchers. Total species, 55. Total number of birds seen, 22,620. High count of House Finches, 941.

Canada Geese 47	Hairy Woodpecker 54	Bohemian Waxwing 2009
Mallard 479	Black-backed Woodpecker 1	Cedar Waxwing 80
Common Goldeneye 14	Northern Flicker 43	American Tree Sparrow 1
Gray Partridge 56	Pileated Woodpecker 49	White-throated Sparrow 1
Bald Eagle 2	Northern Shrike 3	White-crowned Sparrow 1
Sharp-shinned Hawk 2	Blue Jay 489	Dark-eyed Junco 177
Cooper's Hawk 2	Black-billed Magpie 2223	Clay-coloured Sparrow 1
Northern Goshawk 4	American Crow 57	Snow Bunting 136
Rough-legged Hawk 1	Common Raven 446	Gray-crowned Rosy Finch 1
American Kestrel 1	Black-capped Chickadee 3744	Pine Grosbeak 306
Merlin 11	Boreal Chickadee 62	Purple Finch 3
Gyr Falcon 1	Red-breasted Nuthatch 485	House Finch 941
Rock Pigeon 3860	White-breasted Nuthatch 246	Red Crossbill 30
Great Horned Owl 11	Brown Creeper 13	White-winged Crossbill 121
Boreal Owl 1	Golden-crowned Kinglet 8	Common Redpoll 1498
Northern Saw-Whet Owl 3	Townsend's Solitaire 18	Hoary Redpoll 6
Yellowbellied Sapsucker 1	American Robin 64	Pine Siskin 152
Downy Woodpecker 298	European Starling 114	Evening Grosbeak 11
		House Sparrow 4409

Stony Plain CBC, December 18, 2011

Co-ordinated by Stan Kozyra

Total participants: 12

Total species: 18

Total individual birds: 2,883

Photo by Brenda Olson



Boreal Chickadee

Photo by Gerald Romanchuk



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch

St. Albert CBC, December 27, 2011**Compiled by Alan Hingston**

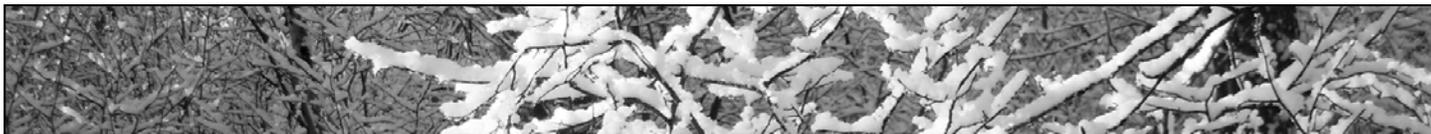
We had 168 participants for the 21st annual CBC. The numbers of total participants and feeder watchers set new records. 38 species were counted.

Bald Eagle 1	B. C. Chickadee 803
Cooper's Hawk 1	Boreal Chickadee 15
Northern Goshawk 1	Red-br. Nuthatch 88
Rough-legged Hawk 1	White-br. Nuthatch 52
Merlin 3	Brown Creeper 1
Gray Partridge 25	American Robin 30
Ruffed Grouse 3	European Starling 1
Eur. Collared-Dove 3	Bohemian Waxwing 839
Rock Pigeon 588	Dark-eyed Junco 86
Great Horned Owl 4	Snow Bunting 14
Snowy Owl 4	Pine Grosbeak 57
Downy Woodpecker 98	House Finch 92
Hairy Woodpecker 13	Red Crossbill 4
Northern Flicker 6	White-winged Crossbill 1
Pileated Woodpecker 17	Common Redpoll 652
Blue Jay 148	Hoary Redpoll 28
Black-billed Magpie 585	Pine Siskin 9
Common Raven 263	American Goldfinch 1
American Crow 4	House Sparrow 828

Strathcona County CBC, December 27, 2011**Compiled by Jim and Dianne Goodwin**

We had 92 enthusiastic county birders enjoy a mild winter day for the 24th annual Christmas Bird Count in Strathcona County. 39 species were counted.

Canada Goose 6	Brown Creeper 2
Merlin 3	Red-breasted Nuthatch 22
Gray Partridge 4	White-breasted Nuthatch 92
Ruffed Grouse 19	Townsend's Solitaire 1
Rock Dove 302	A. Robin 4
Great Horned Owl 1	European Starling 2
Saw-whet Owl 1	Bohemian Waxwing 1357
N. Hawk Owl 2	Dark-eyed Junco 22
Northern Flicker 10	Snow Bunting 111
Downy Woodpecker 103	Northern Cardinal 5
Hairy Woodpecker 63	Purple Finch 3
Pileated Woodpecker 23	House Finch 26
Northern Shrike 1	Red Crossbill 5
Blue Jay 161	White-winged Crossbill 45
Magpie 386	Pine Grosbeak 246
Crow 27	Pine Siskin 48
Raven 123	Common Redpoll 1152
B.C. Chickadee 1482	Hoary Redpoll 3
Boreal Chickadee 35	Evening Grosbeak 8
	House Sparrow 504

**Wabamun CBC, January 1, 2012****Compiled by John and Peggy Folinsbee**

We had 27 participants for the annual CBC. Big **Thanks** to John and his wife Peggy for organizing the count and for hosting several of us for an awesome hot lunch! 36 species were counted.

Redhead 30	American Crow 1
Scaup 20	BB Magpie 97
Common Goldeneye 21	Red-breasted Nuthatch 13
Hooded Merganser 1	Brown Creeper 2
Am Coot 1	White-breasted Nuthatch 24
Northern Goshawk 3	Black-capped Chickadee 991
Rough-legged Hawk 3	Boreal Chickadee 72
Ruffed Grouse 5	Northern Shrike 7
Northern Hawk Owl 1	Golden-crowned Kinglet 3
Downy Woodpecker 32	Pine Siskin 7
Hairy Woodpecker 22	Snow Bunting 740
Pileated Woodpecker 6	Pine Grosbeak 197
Northern Flicker 1	Evening Grosbeak 81
Three-toed Woodpecker 1	Common Redpoll 415
Rock Pigeon 51	Hoary Redpoll 2
Blue Jay 93	White-winged Crossbill 61
Gray Jay 26	Red Crossbill 9
Common Raven 150	Bohemian Waxwing 72

Opal CBC January 2, 2012**Compiled by Gerald Romanchuk**

We had 21 participants for the annual CBC. This year we added 3 new species: American Robin, House Finch, and Red Crossbill. Great Gray Owl was missed for only the second time in 8 years. 34 species were counted.

Ruffed Grouse 3	Boreal Chickadee 4
Northern Goshawk 2	Red-breasted Nuthatch 5
Rough-legged Hawk 2	White-breasted Nuthatch 12
Merlin 1	Golden-crowned Kinglet 4
Rock Pigeon 274	American Robin 1
Snowy Owl 2	European Starling 8
Northern Hawk Owl 6	Bohemian Waxwing 376
Downy Woodpecker 22	Snow Bunting 127
Hairy Woodpecker 9	Pine Grosbeak 181
Black-backed Woodpecker 1	House Finch 1
Pileated Woodpecker 2	Red Crossbill 6
Northern Shrike 3	White-winged Crossbill 7
Gray Jay 9	Pine Siskin 1
Blue Jay 38	Common Redpoll 518
Black-billed Magpie 278	Hoary Redpoll 9
Common Raven 111	Evening Grosbeak 37
Black-capped Chickadee 234	House Sparrow 484

Field Trip Reports

ENC Cross Lake and Area, March 10, 2012

Twenty-six members of the Edmonton Nature Club set out for Cross Lake Provincial Park on Saturday, March 10, 2012. First stop was the St. Albert Airport area, where we looked for a darkly marked Snowy Owl that had been seen there, but instead found a nice adult male which, ahem, the lead car completely missed and for which layers upon layers of excuses were developed as the day progressed.

Then we set off to the north country, on our way to meet Ray Cromie and his band of banders, Mark Demers and John Moore. North of the Dapp corner on Sec. Hwy 801, Gerald Romanchuk spotted a Northern Hawk Owl, and we were able to reach Ray to come down and band it. It was a patient owl, waiting a good 20 minutes for Ray to show up from parts further north. We then moved on to a second Hawk Owl by Duck Lake on the Flatbush Road, which had been present there for at least a week. Two other Hawk Owls that were found the previous Saturday were not seen this time around.

We then set out for lunch and a hike in Cross Lake Provincial Park, during which I attempted to set a record for longest hike without any birds whatsoever, but the record was slightly saved by some Ravens, Boreal Chickadees, Gray Jays, and a heard-only Brown Creeper at the last. Not many Hare tracks in evidence, but we did have one set of probable Lynx tracks at the weir at Cross Lake and probable Otter track there too.

A final stop at Lu Carbyn's wildlife property was productive, with close-in views of many boreal resident species.

Also seen at several stops along the way were the first Starling migrants I've picked up this year and Canada Goose probable migrants, even if they did just come from Calgary. In total, we had 18 bird species, as well as Mule Deer, Moose, Red Squirrel, Coyote, and Jackrabbit.

Steve Knight

Total Species: 18

Canada Goose	Common Raven
Rock Pigeon	Black-capped Chickadee
Snowy Owl	Boreal Chickadee
Northern Hawk Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch
Downy Woodpecker	Brown Creeper
Hairy Woodpecker	European Starling
Gray Jay	Pine Grosbeak
Blue Jay	Common Redpoll
Black-billed Magpie	Hoary Redpoll

ENC Goldbar Park, February 25, 2012

About 5 more folks than I expected showed up in the snow today. So, a total of 6 of us birded Goldbar. If it wasn't for the wind, it would have been a nice snowy day, still we had a nice walk. Nothing out of the ordinary bird-wise. Our list wasn't hard to keep track of:

Canada Goose	Black-billed Magpie
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
Common Goldeneye	White-breasted Nuthatch
Rock Pigeon	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Downy Woodpecker	Bohemian Waxwing

I went back out again in the afternoon to shoot snowy ducks and talked to a dog-walker who had seen an eagle, but I didn't see it myself.

Gerald Romanchuk

Total Species: 10

Photo by Janice Hurlburt



Ray Cromie bands a Hawk Owl on the Cross Lake Field Trip

Field Trip Reports

ENC Owl Prowl, February 11, 2012

From our carpool location, 18 hopefuls headed north of St. Albert on this cold, blustery morning.

In spite of the limited number of birds and species in the rural areas, thanks to the efforts of our leaders Alan Hingston and Peter Demulder, we had a very good day.

The group was treated to views of a large, heavily marked Snowy Owl as well as a single Snow Bunting (no billions here).

We also witnessed farmyard action involving a hunting Merlin which struck a Starling and then was pushed from the yard by Magpies.

The final highlight was a huge flock of Redpolls containing many size and colour variations. The birds were feeding on spilled Canola seed.

Total Species: 11

Merlin	Chickadee, Black-capped
Dove, Rock	Starling, European
Owl, Snowy	Bunting, Snow
Magpie, Black-billed	Redpoll, Common
Raven, Common	Redpoll, Hoary
	Sparrow, House

Afterward, 2 vehicles of birders checked a couple more locations around St Albert and their list included these **9 additional species**:

Woodpecker, Downy	Nuthatch, Red-breasted
Woodpecker, Pileated	Nuthatch, White-breasted
Jay, Blue	Waxwing, Bohemian
Chickadee, Boreal	Grosbeak, Pine
	Dove, Eurasian-collared

Our final bird was a Bald Eagle just north of Devon.

Ann Carter,

Edmonton

ENC Whitemud Ravine, January 28, 2012

Overcast, mild weather saw 34 ENC members explore Whitemud Ravine from Fox Drive to Snow Valley. We kept a leisurely pace spending about 3 hours along the trails. Fortunately the trail had a fresh dusting of snow, so that it was not icy.

Thanks to Richard for leading and the enlightening commentary on various species.

Brown Creeper

Brian Stephens,

Edmonton

Total Species: 15



Chickadee, Black Capped
 Chickadee, Boreal
 Creeper, Brown
 Crossbill, White Winged
 Waxwing, Bohemian
 Grosbeak, Pine
 Jay, Blue
 Magpie, Black Billed

Nuthatch, Red Breasted
 Nuthatch, White Breasted
 Dove, Rock
 Raven
 Woodpecker, Downy
 Woodpecker, Hairy
 Woodpecker, Pileated

Photos by Gerald Romanchuk



Hoary Redpoll

Field Trip Reports

ENC Edmonton Kinnaird Ravine, January 14, 2012

Thirteen of us ventured onto the icy trail in Kinnaird Ravine. The main part of the ravine had lots of Black-capped Chickadees, White- and Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Grosbeaks, plus Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and 4 White-winged Crossbills.

At the river we spotted Common Goldeneye.

Instead of returning up the ravine, we used the trail up to Ada Blvd and followed the north edge of the ravine. Good flocks of Bohemian Waxwings, a few Cedar Waxwings, and House Finch.

At feeder location in back yard on the ravine edge, we found Northern Flicker, WHITE THROATED SPARROW, Common Redpolls. Although not seen, Brown Creeper was heard in the ravine near the base of the stairs. We also had a Prairie Falcon flyover seen from Ada Blvd. Some of us went on to the Grain Elevators just east of St. Albert Trail and Yellowhead Trail hoping to spot a Gyrfalcon. Instead, after an hour or so, a PRAIRIE FALCON arrived and hunted for about 40 minutes. Although we didn't see a catch, we had excellent views of hunting flight. For a while it perched on the edge of the silos preening.

At the grain elevators we also had Mallard and Northern Pintail flyovers.

Brian Stephens, Edmonton

Total Kinnaird Species: 21

Chickadee, Black Capped	Merlin
Creeper, Brown	Nuthatch, Red Breasted
Crossbill, White Winged	Nuthatch, White Breasted
Dove, Rock	Raven
Falcon, Prairie	Redpoll, Common
Finch, House	Sparrow, House
Flicker, Northern Yellow	Sparrow, White Throated
Shafted	Waxwing, Bohemian
Goldeneye, Common	Waxwing, Cedar
Grosbeak, Pine	Woodpecker, Downy
Magpie, Black Billed	Woodpecker, Hairy

ENC Hawrelak Park and Bittern Lake, November 19, 2011

On Saturday morning, 11 ENC members braved the -30C wind chills for a walk in Hawrelak Park. For the most part, the birding was pretty routine – chickadees, woodpeckers, magpies, jays, etc. There were a few highlights – a Lesser Scaup flew over the parking lot, a fair-sized flock of Pine Grosbeaks came into the cherry trees near Picnic Shelter 1, a flock of Cedar Waxwings just down from the feeders, and a N.Goshawk that flew over the trail south of the park.

After a nice warm lunch at Tim's, 10 of us went for a drive south towards Bittern Lake. Things were fairly quiet, we did see a large flock of Redpolls and a couple of small groups of Snow Buntings. On the SE corner of Bittern, we pulled out a scope to check out a white shape sitting on a distant fence post. It turned out to be, of course, the ever-elusive plastic bag bird! A little further up the east side, we scoped another distant white lump with better luck – this one was a Snowy Owl. We called it a day after that, but did add a Bald Eagle on Hwy 21 near Hay Lakes.

Gerald Romanchuk

Male Pine Grosbeak



Photo by Gerald Romanchuk

Field Trip Reports

ENC Wabamun, November 5, 2011

Twenty-five of us headed out to the Wabamun area yesterday – another cool, clear and sunny day. Our route went from the town dock in Wabamun to the Provincial Park, Ironhead golf course, the NE Bay at Keephills, and the east side of Genesee Lake, with return to Edmonton via Hwy 627 to the south of Stony Plain. Quite lot of change since last week, with much more ice on Lake Wabamun making for more challenging viewing of waterfowl there. However, the cooling ponds at Keephills and Genesee were still ice-free and provided excellent viewing.

We tallied a total of **52 species for the day:**

Loon, Pacific (1)	Coot, American
Loon, Common	Killdeer
Grebe, Horned	Gull, Bonaparte's
Grebe, Red Necked	Gull, Ring-Billed
Grebe, Eared	Gull, Herring
Grebe, Western	Dove, Rock
Goose, Canada	Owl, Northern Hawk
Goose, Cackling	Woodpecker, Downy
Gadwall	Shrike, Northern (2)
Wigeon, American	Jay, Gray
Mallard	Jay, Blue
Pintail, Northern	Magpie, Black-Billed
Teal, Green-Winged	Crow, American
Redhead	Raven, Common
Duck, Ring-Necked	Chickadee, Black-capped
Scaup, Greater (1)	Chickadee, Boreal
Scaup, Lesser	Nuthatch, Red-breasted
Bufflehead	Nuthatch, White-breasted
Goldeneye, Common	Robin, American
Goldeneye, Barrows	Starling, European
Merganser, Hooded	Grosbeak, Pine
Merganser, Common	Grosbeak, Evening (1)
Duck, Ruddy	Crossbill, Red (1)
Eagle, Bald (8)	Redpoll, Common
Hawk, Red-Tailed (1)	Sparrow, House
Hawk, Rough-Legged (3)	Swan*

*Swan (species unidentified on field trip – both Tundra and Trumpeter present on Longhurst Lake, south of Stony Plain en route back to Edmonton in the evening). Thanks to everyone for a very enjoyable day – and to Ann Carter for organization.

Martin Sharp

ENC Opal, October 15, 2011

Thirteen of us modified our route based on a number of sightings a little further north. Instead of going direct to Opal, we worked our way north just east of Hwy 2 as far as the north end of Wakamao Lake. Throughout this leg we had numerous Rough-legged Hawks. Although we had quite a few sightings of small passerines we were unable to pin them down, although behaviour suggested Longspurs.

The temperature rose as we headed east to Birch Lake, which gave us excellent views of 50+ Tundra Swans, and 4 juvenile White-winged Scoters.

From there we headed towards Opal. We were separated for a short section, and one group spotted a Northern Goshawk.

At Opal we were immediately rewarded with a female Black-backed Woodpecker and a

Gray Jay. We also heard Brown Creeper, Junco, and Boreal Chickadee.

Gray Jay



Photo by Gerald Romanchuk

Brian Stephens,

Edmonton

Total Species: 34

Goose, Greater White-fronted
Goose, Snow
Goose, Canada
Swan, Tundra
Wigeon, American
Mallard
Teal, Blue-winged
Shoveler, Northern
Pintail, Northern
Teal, Green-winged
Scaup, Lesser
Scoter, White-winged
Bufflehead
Harrier, Northern
Goshawk, Northern
Hawk, Red-tailed
Hawk, Rough-legged

Coot, American
Gull, Bonaparte's
Gull, Ring-billed
Dove, Rock
Woodpecker, Downy
Woodpecker, Hairy
Woodpecker, Black-backed
Jay, Gray
Jay, Blue
Magpie, Black-billed
Crow, American
Raven, Common
Chickadee, Black-capped
Chickadee, Boreal
Creeper, Brown
Starling, European
Sparrow, American Tree

Field Trip Reports

ENC Misty Ridge Fall Colours September 24, 2011

Thought I would give you a report on our trip yesterday now that we have had time to digest our wonderful Flatbush supper! More on that later. There were 9 participants on a sunny warm day. High was approx. 22C, clear blue skies and light winds. No good for migrating raptors but great for a relaxing walk along the Athabasca River below the ski hill. Highlights were immature Golden Eagle (which I missed flying over the building just as I unlocked the door to allow for washroom access), Red-tail Hawk (1) immature Harlan's Hawk, several Kestrels, Bald Eagle adult near the Vega Ferry, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Pileated Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Canada Geese, Lapland Longspur (1) and several Dark-eyed Juncos.

At the request of one member we departed Misty Ridge 1 hour ahead of schedule on our way NE towards Flatbush. A brief stop was made at the Vega Natural Area before making an unplanned detour to the Vega Ferry, where an adult Bald Eagle and Mule Deer were sighted. We then picked up our planned route heading north through the Vega Sandhills before heading east to Rge Rd 20 (Athabasca Road). Due to time constraints (5:30 PM arrival time Flatbush Community Complex), a planned stop at Beyette Lake at the north end of the Hubert Lake Wildland was not made. It was interesting to see the progression of the fall colours. At Misty Ridge, the poplars and birch are just approaching their peak colour. Along Twp 635 (runs from Vega Sandhills to Athabasca Road) the Tamarack (Larch) trees on the western portion of the road were still all green, while those on the more open portions were showing signs of change. As we headed north through Hubert Lake Wildland Park, the Tamarack on the west side of the road were just starting to change, while some small trees on the other side of the road were already golden yellow.

As the object of the trip was to see the beauty of the fall colours in the mixed boreal forest, the lack of raptor movement was not a big issue. I know that it is always great to see all the hawks and eagles which can be seen passing through the area, but we can only adjust to the weather offered on that day! From the comments of the guests on the trip, this was a very successful day followed by one of the best Fall Harvest Suppers offered anywhere (always a toss-up between Jarvie and Flatbush for top billing - Cost \$10.00). We arrived back at Westmount at 9:00 PM.

Jim Lange, Tour Leader



Pileated Woodpecker



Mule Deer

Photos above by Gerald Romanchuk



Female Kestrel

DC

Field Trip Reports

ENC Elk Island, September 10, 2011

Sixteen members spent the day in many locations at Elk Island. The highlight of the day was a Sabine's Gull on the west side of Astotin Lake. It spent quite a while close to us over the water, affording excellent views. The weather was clear, light wind, and not too hot. We visited the Bison Loop, roadsides stops to Astotin Lake (east side), Moss Lake trail, the Sand Hills management road, the north lakes, and the west side of Astotin Lake (Administration Road). Altogether we found 60 species, but we had one empid flycatcher that we were not certain of, possibly Alder.

Brian Stephens, Edmonton

Total Species: 60

Grebe, Horned	Gull, California
Grebe, Red-necked	Gull, Sabine's
Pelican, American White	Woodpecker, Downy
Cormorant, Double-crested	Flicker, Northern
Goose, Greater White-fronted	Woodpecker, Pileated
Goose, Canada	Flycatcher, Alder (?)
Gadwall	Jay, Blue
Wigeon, American	Magpie, Black-billed
Mallard	Crow, American
Teal, Blue-winged	Raven, Common
Shoveler, Northern	Swallow, Barn
Canvasback	Chickadee, Black-capped
Redhead	Chickadee, Boreal
Duck, Ring-necked	Nuthatch, Red-breasted
Scaup, Lesser	Nuthatch, White-breasted
Bufflehead	Creepers, Brown
Goldeneye, Common	Kinglet, Ruby-crowned
Goldeneye, Barrow's	Robin, American
Duck, Ruddy	Starling, European
Harrier, Northern	Waxwing, Cedar
Hawk, Sharp-shinned	Warbler, Orange-crowned
Hawk, Red-tailed	Warbler, Magnolia
Grouse, Ruffed	Warbler, Yellow-rumped
Coot, American	Yellowthroat, Common
Crane, Sandhill	Sparrow, Song
Killdeer	Sparrow, White-throated
Yellowlegs, Lesser	Junco, Dark-eyed
Snipe, Wilson's	Blackbird, Red-winged
Gull, Franklin's	Siskin, Pine
Gull, Bonaparte's	
Gull, Ring-billed	



Magnolia Warbler

Lesser Yellowlegs



Photos by Gerald Romanchuk

Ruffed Grouse



Wildbird General Store Bird Sightings Report

November 30, 2010 to December 2011

Hawks



Rough-legged Hawk: Peter Haddock sighted 1 hunting over Kallal Meadows (Beaverhill L.) Dec. 5, 2010. They are a common migrant through the region in the latter half of April and again in late Sept. and most of Oct., with most wintering from

the Calgary area S. into the United States. I located 1 along Sec. 661 at Rge Rd 30 (E. of Neerlandia) on Nov. 1. Gerry Beyersbergen and I located an immature at the Jct of Sec. 801 and 663 on Nov. 8. On Oct. 23, Don Delaney recorded seeing 30+ on a drive to Mundare Beach on the E. side of Beaverhill L. Unfortunately, the starting point was not listed; however, still an impressive report! **Northern Harrier:** female near Misty Ridge Nov. 8 seen by Gerry Beyersbergen. **Harlan's Hawk:** immature seen at Misty Ridge Sept. 21 by Jim Lange; Mundare Beach Oct. 11 by Don Delaney; adult at sec. 661 E. of Neerlandia Oct. 15 by Janet Watkinson and Jim Lange. **Goshawk:** immature hunting pigeons at the Gov't Terminal Jan. 3 reported by John Acorn. Many sightings from the Gold Bar area, where they would have been hunting ducks on the open water at the outflow from the Water Treatment Plant. Janet Watkinson and I had a distant view (several kilometres away) of 1 flying over the Athabasca R. valley at Misty Ridge Oct. 15. **Cooper's Hawk:** seen in Kinnaird Ravine Dec. 9, 2010, by Richard Knapton and Pat Marklevitz; immature at Beaverhill L. during The Wildbird General Store weekly Hawk Survey April 10; final sighting S. of Cross L. May 7 by Jim Lange. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 3 seen at Sec. 661 and Rge Rd 24 (Westlock/Barrhead County line) April 16 by Janet Watkinson and Jim Lange; immature reported overwintering in Devon Jan. 1–15; another overwintering record from Landsdowne Jan. 29 by Martin Sharp. Common and widespread in spring and fall songbird migration period. **Peregrine Falcon:** reported back at the U. of A. Clinical Science Bldg April 1 by Del Huget; at Astotin L. in Elk Island Park May 14 by Marcel Gahbauer. Various observations this spring and fall from locations with shorebird concentrations. **Gyr Falcon:** adult intermediate dark gray

morph sitting on power pole along sec. 661 E. of Neerlandia Dec. 28, 2010, seen by Jim Lange; adult light gray morph at Sundance Plant (Lake Wabamun) Jan. 1 seen by Percy Zalasky and Dan Stoker; Again at Sundance, Jan. 21; gray morph at 91 St. and Yellowhead seen Jan. 18 by Fred Whiley; immature seen at Gold Bar Mar. 31 by Gerald Romanchuk; Peace River Oct. 29 and Nov. 12 by Mike Blom; Calgary area Nov. 12; Grande Prairie Nov. 25 by Syl Bourdages. One observed several times starting just after noon and again around 2:25 PM harassing pigeons at the Gov't Terminal Dec. 1, 2011, by Jim Lange. **Golden Eagle:** immature seen at Misty Ridge Sept. 24 by Edmonton Nature Club (ENC) trip; immature at Misty Ridge Oct. 8 by Jim Lange; 2 in Willingdon area Oct. 9 by Gerald Romanchuk; South Cooking Lake Oct. 17 by Del Huget; adult at Misty Ridge Nov. 8 by Gerry Beyersbergen; **Bald Eagle:** seen at Kallal Meadows Dec. 5, 2010, by Peter Haddock; adult at Sec. 801, 6 km S. of Cross L. Jan. 4; adult flying over Misty Ridge Jan. 19 and another perched along Sec. 61 and Rge Rd 25 by Jim Lange; Hinton Landfill Jan. 24; 2 adults and 1 immature NW of St. Albert Mar. 12 and 14 seen by Andy Dufrene; adult at Sec. 661 and Rge Rd 23 Mar. 13; 17 adults migrating over Misty Ridge Mar. 31 by Jim Lange; 14 adults and 3 immature migrating over Misty Ridge Nov. 8 by Gerry Beyersbergen and Jim Lange. **Turkey Vulture:** first report from the Viking area Mar. 30; 3 N. of Elk Island Park May 14 seen by Marcel Gahbauer; pair SW of St. Michael May 12; Victoria Settlement May 18; 1 at Wakomao L. May 29 seen by Jim Lange; 2 seen at Coal Lake on Aug. 27 ENC trip led by Brian Stephens.

Photo by Gerald Romanchuk

Turkey Vulture



Owls

Great Gray Owl: seen in the Stony Plain area Nov. 30, 2010; Cross Lake area Dec. 1 by Ray Cromie and group; 2 near Peno Dec. 24; Cross Lake Dec. 26 by Lu Carbyn and Jayne Carre; Goodridge L. area Dec. 28 by Jim Lange; 2 in Opal area by Ray Cromie and group; Hillsborough Estates (Gibbons area) Jan. 30 by Ted Hindmarch; 1 on Sec. 801 at Long Island L. turnoff Jan. 30 and another 7 km S. of Cross L. on Sec. 801 Feb. 2 by Jim Lange; 8 seen during a large driving loop from Opal to Athabasca and Calling Lake Jan. 31 by Gerald Romanchuk and group; 1

seen on Sec. 801 and 663 Jnct. on Mar. 6 by Gerald Romanchuk and Steve Knight; 15 W. of Drayton Valley (Easyford to Entwistle) on Mar. 13 by Ray Cromie and group; 2 in the Opal area Nov. 4, by Ray Cromie and group.

Hawk Owl: seen on Sec. 633 W. of Darwell Dec. 7 by Bill Benford; 3

seen in Opal area Mar. 5 by Gerald Romanchuk; 1 seen on Sec. 801 and 663 Jnct. Oct. 30, another N. of Peat Moss Plant (Goodridge L. area) on Nov. 1 by Jim Lange; Opal area Nov. 2 by Trevor Roper; Genessee area Nov. 5 by Gerald Romanchuk; 2 in Opal area Nov. 12 by Gerald Romanchuk; sighting W. of Hwy 43 on Rge Rd 31 & Sec. 633 on Nov. 21 by Bill Benford; sighting W. of Stony Plain on Rge Rd 14 S. of Sec. 628 Nov. 25 by Donna Bamber; report from N. of Calahoo on Rge Rd 275 N. of Twp Rd 554 Nov. 26 by Don Delaney; by the airport on South Cooking Lake on Nov. 22 by Del Huget. A Hawk Owl observed regularly for 3 weeks on the Alexander Reserve W. of Morinville reported by

Bob Lane, confirmed still there on Nov. 28. Bill Benford located another on Rge Rd 50, 1.5 km S. of Darwell on Nov. 29. This may turn out to be the winter of the Hawk Owl! **Short-eared Owl:** seen on W. side of Beaverhill L. Mar. 26 by Ed Mah-Lim; 3 seen at Mundare Beach (E. side of Beaverhill L.) Oct. 11; and 7 seen at Mundare Beach Oct. 27 by Don Delaney. **Long-eared Owl:** seen in Riverbend Dec. 29, 2010, by Barb Burton; in Devon area Mar. 14 by Sharon Downs. **Snowy Owl:** The winter of 2010/2011 was not a great year for sightings of these northern visitors until they were making the return

trip to the Arctic nesting grounds. A lone sighting was made on the Edmonton Christmas Count Dec. 19; Gerald Romanchuk and Steve Knight sighted 1 N. of Legal Mar. 6; 2 seen in the vicinity of Hwy 21 & 16 Mar. 14 by Willi Braun. This fall we are getting numerous reports, starting with 1 sighting by Dick Dekker Nov. 5 from



Hawk Owl

South Cooking L. Doug Cromie sighted 1 near Villeneuve Nov. 6; Gerald Romanchuk located 1 on the SE corner of Bittern L. Nov. 19; Bill Benford sighted a female west of Hwy 43 on Rge Rd 31 and Sec. 633 on Nov. 21. A report from Lacombe Park (St. Albert) Nov. 27 is the only city record to date. Jim Lange sighted either an immature or female just 1.5 km east of Misty Ridge Nov. 27. Due to poor light conditions and low grey cloud the bird was not visible on top of the power pole until the last minute. Also on Nov. 27, Martin Sharp located a Snowy at Francis Point on the S. side of Beaverhill L. Raymond Lee reported a Snowy Owl on Rge Rd 251 N. of Legal on Nov. 28.

Waterfowl

Canada Geese: 7 on N. Sask. R. below Sunridge Ski area Dec. 7, 2010, seen by Janos Kovacs; 1st report for spring 2011 Mar. 12 from W. of Edmonton; 3 flying over Sherwood Park Mar. 15 seen by Eric Wallace; several hundred at Misty Ridge Nov. 8 by Gerry Beyersbergen and Jim Lange; flock flying over N. Edmonton Nov. 13 seen by Jim Lange; 1 at Gold Bar Dec. 3, 2011, ENC trip. **Snow Geese:** spring sightings started around April 21 in the Beaverhill L. area – once again, the Snow Goose Chase buses had to go south of Holden this year to find them, despite plenty of water in the ponds around Beaverhill. There were steady reports of good-sized flocks this fall going into Murray Marsh just NW of the city. Also this fall flocks were going into a small pocket of water in the middle of Beaverhill L. out from Mundare Beach through Sept. and Oct. On Oct. 15, Janet Watkinson and I sighted approx. 1000+ sitting in a field next to Hwy 2 at Vimy. **Trumpeter Swan** and **Tundra Swan:** seen at Longhurst L. S. of Stony Plain along Sec. 627 during Nov. 5 ENC trip: 2 flocks of Tundra Swans approx. 100 each, flying over Misty Ridge morning of Oct. 15 seen by Janet Watkinson and Jim Lange. **Common Loon:** 2 seen at Wakomao L. April 23 by Nerida; Cross L. May 3 by Jim Lange; 1 at Cold Lake Dec. 2, 2011, by Richard Klauke. **Pacific Loon:** seen at Wabamun L. next to Golf Course on Nov. 5 ENC trip; Cold Lake Dec. 2 by Richard Klauke. **Surf Scoter:** 2 at Cross L. May 18 seen by Jim Lange. **Long-tailed Duck:** seen on Poplar L. in NE Edmonton Oct. 30 by Witek; Hermitage Park Sept. 28 by Kurt Brauner. **Harlequin Duck:** male sighted on N. Sask. R. at Beverly Bridge Dec. 3 by Guy Wapple (CN Locomotive Engineer, Saskatoon, SK). **Wood Duck:** seen in Hermitage Park Sept. 29 by Ann Carter. **Eurasian Wigeon:** 4 seen in flooded field near Francis Point April 21 by Ann Carter.

Photo by Gerald Romanchuk



Greater Scaup: seen in Murray Marsh May 4 by Gerald Romanchuk. **Cinnamon Teal:** seen on Atim Cr. & Hwy 44 May 2 by Lu Carbyn and grandchildren. **Hooded Merganser:** 2 seen at Amisk Cr. bridge April 16 by Ed Mah-Lim; 1 seen on N. Sask. R. near Hawrelak Park April 19 by Willie Braun. **Red-breasted Merganser:** 10+ seen at Cold Lake Dec. 2, 2011, by Richard Klauke. **Common Merganser:** seen at Gold Bar Jan. 28. **Green-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler:** seen at Gold Bar Dec. 2, 2010, by Don Delaney. **American Wigeon:** 2 seen at Gold Bar Mar. 31 by Gerald Romanchuk. **Mallard:** 1 seen flying over Misty Ridge Mar. 29 by Jim Lange; 1000+ seen in fields near Misty Ridge Nov. 8 by Gerry Beyersbergen and Jim Lange. **Ruddy Ducks:** 3 albino photographed in a slough S. of Ryley in early Oct. These birds were located several days earlier by Trevor Roper and Marc Demers. **Lesser Scaup:** seen at Hawrelak Park on Nov. 19 ENC trip. **Double-crested Cormorant:** 3 seen in N. Sask. R. at Hawrelak Park April 19 by Willie Braun; 1 seen at Cross L. May 1 by Jim Lange; 3 at Cross L. May 11 by Fred Whiley and Jim Lange. **Spruce Grouse:** male sighted on Twp 635 east of Vega Sandhills Oct. 30 by Jim Lange. **Great Blue Heron:** 2 seen at Sundance Plant Mar. 30; 2 at Wakomao L. April 4 by Nerida; 2 at Hastings L. April 10 by Brian Hornby. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** 50 seen at Bretona Pond Aug. 21 by Ron McElhane. **White-faced Ibis:** seen flying into Lister L. Sept. 30 by Del Huget. **Thayer's Gull:** seen at 170 St. Landfill Oct. 30 by Gerald Romanchuk. **Sabine's Gull:** 1 seen at Kinasoo Beach (Cold Lake) Aug. 26 by Bill Bretsch; 1 immature photographed in flight at Hawrelak Park Oct. 22 by Doug and Jean. **Glaucous Gull:** 1 adult seen in Peace River Oct. 17 by Mike Blom; 4 at Cold Lake Dec. 2, 2011, by Richard Klauke.

Shorebirds

This season it was difficult to find large concentrations of shorebirds in the region due to the high water levels in most of the water bodies where they stop over. Late in the summer some were sighted at Miquelon L. #2 and also in the middle of Beaverhill L. – provided that one had the time and energy to make the long arduous trek out from Mundare Beach!

Black-necked Stilt: 1 reported May 4 near the Camrose Hutterite Colony on Sec. 833 by Ken Hansen.

Hudsonian Godwit: 10 seen May 4 at Murray Marsh by Gerald Romanchuk; 12 seen among other shorebirds at Miquelon L. #2 on Aug. 21 by Gerald Romanchuk. We received no spring records of them other than the May 4 sightings. **Yellowleg,**

Dowitcher, and Pectoral Sandpiper: seen Mundare Beach Oct. 2 by Gerald Romanchuk; approx. 300 Dowitchers seen Oct 10. **American Avocet:** approx. 120 seen on South Cooking L. Oct. 10. **Pacific Golden Plover:** photographed by Steve Knight at Alberta Beach Oct. 9. This is a species which is rarely seen in Alberta, as we get the American Golden Plover through this region. **Black-bellied Plover and Sanderling:** still being reported Oct. 16 from Fort McMurray by Simone Marler.

Note: Greater Yellowlegs and Black-bellied Plover were observed on the coast of Hudson Bay at Churchill, MB, on Oct. 23 by Jim Lange. It had been a warm, dry fall in the area and water bodies were just starting to freeze over.

Photos by Gerald Romanchuk



Hudsonian Godwits



Pacific Golden Plover

Juvenile Black-bellied Plover



DC



American Avocet

DC

Songbirds

Black-backed Woodpecker: seen in Kinnaird Ravine Dec. 9, 2010, by Pat Marklevitz and Richard Knapton; female observed on trail from Hawrelak Park to river, W. of the footbridge, on Jan. 27 by Don Delaney; female at Opal on Oct. 15 ENC trip. **Crow:** seen at the Terra Losa Shopping Centre Dec. 2, 2010, by John Acorn; seen at 99 St. and Whitemud Fwy Dec. 2, 2010, by Brian Hornby; 2 seen at Westmount Shopping Centre Dec. 9, 2010, by Jim Lange; seen in abundant numbers all along the edge of Sec. 661 NW of Westlock on Mar. 31 by Jim Lange. **Horned Lark:** 20 seen NE of Camrose Twp 480 and Rge Rd 191 Dec. 31, 2010, by Don Delaney; 30 along Rge Rd 191 and Twp Rd 501 Jan. 24 by Eric

Photo by Gerald Romanchuk



Varied Thrush

Wallace and Art Hughes; 35 at Amisk Cr. Mar. 14 by Brian Hornby. **Varied Thrush:** seen from edge of ravine near downtown Dec. 30, 2010, by Oryssia Lennie; seen in N. Riverbend area Dec. 30, 2010 (and fed until it disappeared in late March) by Judith Johnson; seen N. of Westlock on Nov. 17 by James Jackson; seen in Sherwood Park in mid-November. **Robin:** flock of 1000+ observed along the Vermilion R. SW of Two Hills April 15 by Richard Klauke; flock of 30+ seen on the trails at Gold Bar Park during Dec. 3, 2011, ENC trip. **Steller's Jay:** two reports (likely same bird) in the Devon area: 1st sighting 5 km N. of Devon Dec. 5, 2010; 2nd report from Conjuring Cr. just SW of Devon Dec. 30, 2010. **Snow Bunting:** 1000+ seen in Mundare Beach area Oct. 27 by Don Delaney; approx. 10,000 seen along Sec. 661 in the Goodrich Lake area NW of Westlock Nov. 4 by Marc Demers, Ray Cromie, and group searching for "Phantom Hawk Owls" reported from the area! **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 4 reported from

W. of Cold Lake April 18 by Carole Hummerstone. **McGillivray's Warbler:** seen at Strathcona Science Park (next to Beverly Bridge) in mid-Aug. by Janos Kovacs (caught during banding operations). **Cape May Warbler:** seen in Millwoods Nov. 6 by Loreley Will. **Lazuli Bunting:** reported in Ft. McMurray May 6 by Mary Anne Bruce. **Cedar Waxwing:** 3 seen in Westridge area Jan. 24 by John Acorn; several in Aspen Gardens May 7 by Jack and Fran Clements; 15 at Broadmoor L. in Sherwood Park Nov. 22 by Eric Wallace. **Rufous Hummingbird:** seen at Brule May 14 by Bob and Linda Morgan. **Harris Sparrow:** reported from Hermitage Park Sept. 30 by Don Delaney; reported from Fort McMurray Oct. 16. **Fox Sparrow:** 2 observed in Edmonton Oct. 4 by Don Delaney. **White-throated Sparrow:** seen at feeder platform on N. Whitemud Trail Dec. 1, 2011, by Willi Braun. **Evening Grosbeak:** abundant in Peace River Aug. 25, reported by Mike Blom. **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** flock of 15 photographed Oct. 27 in the Astotin L. parking lot at Elk Island Park; 1 seen at 91 St. and 124 Ave. in Edmonton Nov. 22 by Fred Whiley (currently still coming to feeders).

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.

Photo by Brian Stephens



Horned Lark

Members' Photos

Pine Grosbeak — Photo by Raymond Lee

Photographed at William Hawrelak Park in Edmonton.



Short-eared Owl — Photo by Donna Bamber

"On Jan 2, 2012, two short-eared owls flew up from the grasses along Twp. Rd 504 east of RR 174 around 3:00 pm. One flew across in front of me while the other perched on a fence post to the right of me. As I was about to take its picture, it flew behind me. It then landed on the fence post directly opposite me (on my left side). I opened my window to take a clearer shot. It stayed there for about 10 minutes while I talked to it. It eventually flew. What a special moment!!!"



Clark's Nutcracker — Photo by Ann Carter

Photographed on the Mt. Edith Cavell trail in Jasper National Park.



Northern Parula — Photo by Arthur Wieckowski

Photographed while on the Brooks/Newell May Species Count.



If you have any photos you'd like to share, please send them to the editor, Dawne Colwell, at colwelld@shaw.ca

Members' Photos

Photo by Brian Stephens



Royal Terns – Baja, March 2011. Found on a beach north of Ensenada.

Photo by Steve Knight



Burrowing Owl

Photo by Don Delaney



Gila Woodpecker