

Nature Alberta

C E L E B R A T I N G O U R N A T U R A L H E R I T A G E



THE WONDERFUL MILK RIVER IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA. SEE THE FEATURE STORY (PAGE 24). IAN GARDINER

feature article

A Day at Writing-On-Stone



MONARCH BUTTERFLY; SEE THE STORY, PG 32. DEBBIE GODKIN



"THE BULL ELK HAS A WILD 'RUT' LOOK IN HIS EYE..." SEE JOHN WARDEN'S ARTICLE, "BEING THERE," PG 16. JOHN WARDEN

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MANY THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

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FALL ISSUE: **AUGUST 31**
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Nature Alberta is composed of natural history clubs from across the province. The aims of the Federation are:

- (a) To encourage among all Albertans, by all means possible, an increase in their knowledge of natural history and understanding of ecological processes;
- (b) To promote an increase in the exchange of information and views among natural history clubs and societies in Alberta;
- (c) To foster and assist in the formation of additional natural history clubs and societies in Alberta;
- (d) To promote the establishment of natural areas and nature reserves, to conserve and protect species, communities or other features of interest;
- (e) To organize, or coordinate symposia, conferences, field meetings, nature camps, research and other activities whether of a similar or dissimilar nature;
- (f) To provide the naturalists of Alberta with a forum in which questions relating to the conservation of the natural environment may be discussed, so that united positions can be developed on them, and to provide the means of translating these positions into appropriate actions.

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Editor's Page

BY DENNIS BARESCO

CHARITIES VERSUS POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Canada's tax system is very complicated and keeps getting more so, especially for non-profits and charitable organizations (like Nature Alberta) which have limited resources to spend on ploughing through the forms as well as often hard-to-understand and confusing rules. The latest is the reporting rules to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) concerning any "political activity." Difficult or not, Nature Alberta is working on ensuring we're handling and tracking this to the best of our ability.

According to CRA, "A registered charity may pursue political activities only if the activities are non-partisan, related to its charitable purposes, and limited in extent." Partisan means actually supporting or promoting a particular political party, so by extension I assume "non-partisan" means not doing that.

But what do they consider a political activity? "A political activity is any activity that explicitly communicates to the public that a law, policy or decision of any level of government inside or outside Canada should be retained, opposed, or changed." It does not include talking to government representatives or writing letters to ministers on behalf of the organization.

In reality, any political activity Nature Alberta is involved in is extremely limited in extent, especially relative to the whole of what we do. Financially, a rough estimate seems to indicate, at most, 1/10th of 1% of our annual budget – which is statistically insignificant and only 1/100th of CRA's allowable amount. As well, virtually everything Nature Alberta does is related to our charitable purposes. Plus, in all the years I've been associated with Nature Alberta, I cannot recall a single instance where we actually supported or promoted a particular political party.

However, given the political climate of the day in Canada, all organizations – okay, all environmental organizations – have to be vigilant, considering that environmentalists and enviro-groups have been slandered, threatened, intimidated, ridiculed...you name it.

And let's face it: for anyone who follows issues – environmental, social, cultural, etc. – it isn't too difficult to figure out who to vote for or not vote for; no group on any side of the spectrum has to spell it out.

That does remind me of what has turned out to be one of the great ironies of the decade. In reference to a number of highly respected foundations, all of which work

for the wholistic betterment of our country, Conservative Senator Mike Duffy once said: "They are all anti-Canadian" (quoted in the Huffington Post 03/13/2012).

YOU CAN'T MAKE THIS STUFF UP!

The following tale is from an article by Geoff Dembicki in The Tyee, May 30, 2013.

"What good is it to save the planet if humanity suffers?" This was a statement by Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson at the oil company's annual meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Tillerson suggested that "billions of poor people will remain in poverty longer if humankind attempts to cool the climate by lessening its dependency on oil."

Last summer, Tillerson argued that humankind will "adapt" to global warming, and that there are "much more pressing priorities."

Such comments were the reason environmental author and activist Bill McKibben called Tillerson the most "reckless man on the planet" in a viral Rolling Stone essay (though that arguably may be an exaggeration).

Exxon Mobil (which, in Canada, owns Esso and Imperial Oil) earned \$44.9 billion in profits during 2012. [Your Editor will leave you to decide what motivated Tillerson's comments]

THE NATURALIST

Recently, your Editor read an old but most interesting opinion piece

by Barry Lopez called "The Naturalist"; it was published in the Autumn 2001 issue of *Orion* magazine. According to Wikipedia, "Barry Lopez is an American author, essayist, and fiction writer whose work is known for its humanitarian and environmental concerns." *The San Francisco Chronicle* described him as the U.S.'s "premier nature writer." I shall leave you with two paragraphs from that essay. Ponder and enjoy.

"The modern naturalist, acutely even depressingly aware of the planet's shrinking and eviscerated habitats, often feels compelled to do more than merely register the damage. The impulse to protest, however, is often stifled by feelings of defensiveness, a fear of being misread. Years of firsthand field observation can be successfully challenged in court today by a computer modeler with not an hour's experience in the field. A carefully prepared analysis of stream flow, migration corridors, and long-term soil stability in a threatened watershed can be written off by the press (with some assistance from the opposition) as a hatred of mankind.

"When I am by the river, therefore, I am simply there. I watch it closely, repeatedly, and feel myself not apart from it. I do not feel compelled to explain it. I wonder sometimes, though, whether I am responding to the wrong question when it

On the Covers:



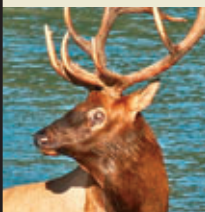
FRONT COVER

Beautiful and secluded, the Milk River in Southern Alberta has long been a place for canoeists and photographers. The river valley and surrounding prairie are equally interesting – though it can get extremely hot in the valley on a cloudless summer day! Ian Gardiner's photo is a favourite view. Astute readers may remember this photo from the Spring 2010 edition of *Nature Alberta*, where it graced the back cover. It is worth repeating! See the Feature Story by Earl Stamm, page 24.

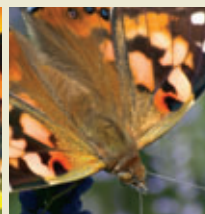
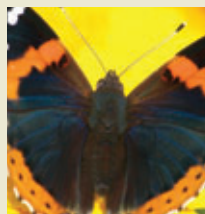
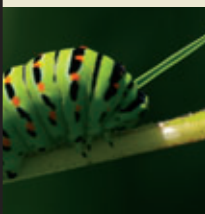


INSIDE FRONT COVER

Butterfly watching has become a very popular active sport/recreation. Debbie and Alan Godkin have certainly added Lepidoptera to their list of watchable and photographable wildlife. This time, a Monarch Butterfly feeding on lilacs – with the added bonus of a bee hovering alongside. Debbie's column on Monarchs and other butterflies (pg 32) explains it all.

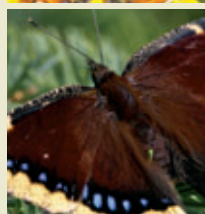


Regular readers will know that John Warden takes his nature photography seriously – that like all good photographers, he wants his photos to tell a story, to illustrate nature beyond the normal. That takes patience, skill and of course the luck of being in the right place at the right time. The reward? This bull Elk in the Athabasca River. Read more in John's column, "Being There" on pg 16.



INSIDE BACK COVER

It's been a couple of good years for butterflies and photography in the Godkin yard near Westlock AB – Mourning Cloaks, Painted Ladies, Red Admirals, Blues,



Skippers...butterfly watching could keep one very busy over the summer! See Godkins' column on Monarch Butterflies (pg 32) and Anise Swallowtails (pg 39).



BACK COVER

A rock hillside with junipers and sparse vegetation: a typical scene in Waterton Lakes National Park but exciting when the hillside is filled with lounging Bighorn Sheep. Photographer Rick Price takes lots of photos in Waterton and invariably comes up with peacefully thrilling shots, including this one of a group of Bighorns on Bears Hump (or Bear's Hump, depending on the source). Bears Hump was known by the Piikani (Blackfoot) as Bear Mountain for its hump-like appearance.

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comes to speaking “for nature.” Perhaps the issue is not whether one has the authority to claim to be a naturalist, but whether those who see themselves as naturalists believe they have the authority to help shape the world. What the naturalist-as-emissary intuitively, I think, is that if he or she doesn’t speak out, the political debate will be left instead to those seeking to benefit their various constituencies. Strictly speaking, a naturalist has no constituency.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you for the [complimentary] “E-Nature Alberta” issue [Spring 2013; Vol 43, #1]. And for printing my big tree story [“My Big Tree”; pg 21]. But my interest is more wide spread than just trees. The reason I was “fighting” for saving the big tree was the Great Horned Owls who were nesting in the tree for many years till the Black Bear took the cavity over for a few years. But the bear is gone (hunters) and the Owls are back. I always was good for the Birds, lol. I was banding birds in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. I attach an old picture, with me taking a bird out of a mirror net.

HELMUT AMELANG



ALBERTA ISSUES IN BRIEF

Bad Birders, Bad Photographers

Greg Wagner recently posted on Birds Calgary (www.birdscalgary.com) about the unethical behavior of some birders and photographers, citing examples at Frank Lake which is an Important Bird Area and an Environmentally Significant Area within the Municipal District of Foothills. The lake is extremely popular with the public for all sorts of recreation, conservation and educational programming. It is truly, as Greg wrote, “the goose that laid the golden egg.” And it can remain so, “if people show some respect for the area and follow a few basic rules (eg. dogs on leash during the nesting period from April 1 to July 1).”

Unfortunately, some unethical photographers have on occasion

waded/rafted into the reed beds to get better photos, particularly of White-faced Ibis and Black-crowned Night-Heron. They seem blind to the fact that what they are doing is illegal and destructive (or they just don’t care?).

The good thing is: wildlife watchers are the best eyes to help stop this and other stupidities. Pat Bumstead posted an excellent message with sound advice:

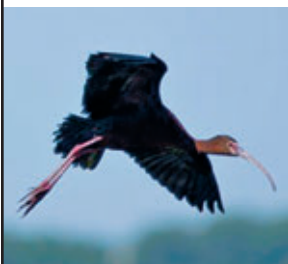
“Most of our Canadian bird species are in serious trouble throughout their ranges. Bird watchers are the ones out in the field, and can cover far more territory than Fish & Wildlife officers. If you see someone wading through nest sites, baiting owls, stealing eggs from a nest or anything else that threatens the birds, speak up for them! If we don’t, there might not be any birds to watch.

“Put the Report a Poacher number 1-800-642-3800 in your cellphone. If you see idiot photographers endangering the birds for the sake of a picture, make note of the following and give Report a Poacher a call:

- Date, time and location of offense
- License plate number of vehicle
- Vehicle description, including any identifying features, dents, stickers, etc.
- Description of person(s) involved
- Description of evidence at the scene, or evidence of the crime that the violators took with them
- Details of the violation.”

Sound advice, for sure!

Information from Birds Calgary (www.birdscalgary.com); May 31/13.



WHITE-FACED IBIS

DAN ARNDT / BIRDSALGARY.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM



MAKING A HASTY RETREAT!

GREG WAGNER / BIRDSALGARY.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM

Another Aerial Insectivore at Risk

At its spring meeting held in Winnipeg from April 28 to May 3, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed the Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) as a Threatened species. Having declined by as much as 98% since 1970, the Bank Swallow joins several other formerly common and widespread species of aerial insectivores that COSEWIC has recently assessed as being at risk: Barn Swallow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Eastern Wood-

Pewee, and Olive-sided Flycatcher. All but the Eastern Whip-poor-will are found in Alberta. At the same meeting, COSEWIC reconfirmed that Northern Bobwhite remains Endangered, while the “Queen Charlotte Islands” subspecies of Northern Goshawk remains as Threatened. Visit the COSEWIC website to learn more about all 29 species of flora and fauna that were assessed at the meeting.

From: Bird Studies Canada BSC Latest News May 17, 2013 (BirdStudiesCanada@bsc-eog.org)



AN ADULT BANK SWALLOW AT ITS NEST SITE.

EJDZE/WIKI COMMONS

Pollutants Threaten Iconic Canadian Bird

The future looks uncertain for one of the most beloved symbols of the Canadian wilderness, according to a new report from Bird Studies Canada. The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey 1981-2012 reveals troubling trends for the Common Loon. Pollution (in the form of mercury and acid precipitation) is the suspected cause.

Currently, Common Loon pairs are successfully producing enough chicks to maintain a stable population. Unfortunately, Bird Studies Canada's research shows that their reproductive success (defined as the annual number of young raised to six

weeks of age) has significantly declined since 1992. And the trends indicate that even worse news may be around the corner. If the current rate of decline continues, Common Loon numbers are expected to begin decreasing within two decades.

“We are approaching the tipping point. Annual reproductive success may soon drop below the minimum level required for these birds to sustain their numbers,” says Bird Studies Canada scientist

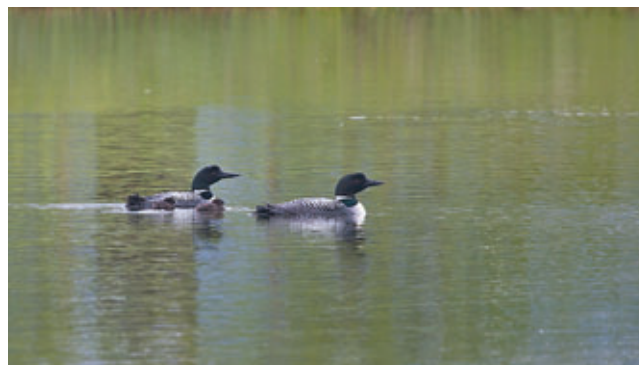
Dr. Doug Tozer, the lead author of the report. “Because 95% of the world's Common Loons breed in our country, Canadians have a critical role to play in monitoring and conserving loon populations.”

Individuals can make a difference by supporting loon and lake research and conservation, and participating in Bird Studies Canada's Citizen Science programs.

More detailed analysis can be found in the paper, *Common Loon*

Reproductive Success in Canada, published this spring in Avian Conservation & Ecology.

From: “Focusing on Wildlife” focusingonwildlife.com. (Jul 10, 2013)



RICK PRICE

The Jackpine Mine Report: Sounds like Satire?

The long awaited Report of the Joint Review Panel (JRP) on Shell Canada's Jackpine Mine Expansion Project (east of Fort McKay and the Athabasca River) was released mid-July. Most of the Panel's report describes how the project will result in severe and, in many cases, irreversible harm to the environment and indigenous cultures. An environmental impact study by Shell found that the Jackpine project will also result in air pollution that, when combined with other mines in the area, will exceed benchmarks in the region.

The JRP Report states:

"The Project, in combination with other existing, approved, and planned projects, would likely have significant adverse cumulative environmental effects on wetlands; traditional plant potential areas; old-growth forests; wetland-reliant species at risk and migratory birds; old-growth forest-reliant species at risk and migratory birds; caribou; biodiversity; and Aboriginal traditional land use (TLU), rights, and culture. Further, there is a lack of proposed mitigation measures that have proven to be effective with respect to identified significant adverse cumulative environmental effects."

The Panel also recognized that old-growth forest habitat has "high biodiversity value and that the loss of this habitat in the RSA will negatively affect wildlife that are

old-growth forest specialists, many of which are species at risk (e.g., Canada warbler and woodland caribou)." According to a First Nations press release, the Jackpine Mine expansion would disturb 12,719 hectares of land (including thousands of hectares of wetlands) and destroy 21 kilometers of the culturally significant Muskeg River.

As well, in October 2012, Nature Canada expressed its concerns to the Joint Review Panel noting in particular the threat of tailings ponds to migrating Whooping Cranes, the permanent loss of wetland and old growth habitat and its impact on many declining or threatened species of birds such as Olive-sided Flycatcher, Canada Warbler and Yellow Rail, and the lack of evidence that reclamation is effective in restoring biodiversity.

For the Whooping Crane, a loss of just a few members of its population can have devastating effects. Due to the small population size of Whooping Cranes, the Panel found there would be significant negative effects on the species if some birds were to mistake the project's tailings ponds for a safe place to land.

All that terrible potential damage could only lead to one conclusion: the Panel approved the project. Why? Because of "significant economic benefits for the region, Alberta, and Canada." The Panel considered the negative effects

"to be justified and that the Project is in the public interest." In reality, only a few paragraphs of the Panel's 413 page decision addressed or described the economic benefits that justify the project.

Twenty conditions were put on the project, along with over eighty recommendations which the provincial and federal governments will at least consider before giving their final approval.

In an *Edmonton Journal* article (July 13, 2013), Environment Minister Diana McQueen said: "There's a lot of work that has to be done by the Environment Department and Shell has a lot of work to do to move this project forward." McQueen stated that the project will get a "thorough review" by her department.

The Joint Review Panel was appointed by the federal Minister of the Environment and the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board (now the Alberta Energy Regulator). According to the Panel criteria: "The Joint Review Panel members shall be unbiased and free from any conflict of interest relative to the project and are to have knowledge or experience relevant to the anticipated environmental effects of the project." Panel members were: J. D. Dilay (Chair); A. H. Bolton; and L. J. Cooke.

For the full report: www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/document-eng.cfm?document=83066

Above information from Nature Canada and the JRP Report

Blog on Science Cuts

A York University librarian, John Dupuis, has posted a blog titled *The Canadian War on Science: A Long, Unexaggerated, Devastating Chronological Indictment*. The blog is “a chronology of all the various cuts, insults, muzzlings and cancellations that I’ve been able to dig up,” said Dupuis. His aim is to show the Harper Government’s “campaign to undermine evidence-based scientific, environmental and technical decision-making.”

The post has been very successful, and Mr. Dupuis has updated

it with new links. He has two theories regarding why his post ended up being so successful: a) Many people didn’t know the extent to which the Harper Government “has its eye on science”; and b) Lots of people already did know and said: ‘Now we have it all in a list.’ Mr. Dupuis’ blog was reported by *The Tyee* (see <http://thetyee.ca/Blogs/TheHook/2013/06/10/Canada-Science-Cuts-Blogged/>).

In a September 2012 address to a Carleton University campus audience, as reported in The Hill

Times (www.hilltimes.com), long-time former Progressive Conservative pollster Allan Gregg summed up the situation following the 2012 omnibus bill:

“This was no random act of downsizing, but a deliberate attempt to obliterate certain activities that were previously viewed as a legitimate part of government decision-making – namely, using research, science and evidence as the bases of policy formation... It also amounted to an attempt to eliminate anyone who might use science, facts, and evidence to challenge government policies.”

Onefour Opportunity

The Harper Government has recently announced the closure of the federal Onefour Research Farm in southeastern Alberta, south of Manyberries. Below are “Briefing Notes” from the Alberta Wilderness Association’s website (www.albertawilderness.ca).

“First established in 1927 as the Dominion Range Experiment Station, Manyberries, the Onefour Research Farm is primarily provincial land under long term lease for research purposes to the federal government. Onefour encompasses about 17,000 ha within the Dry Mixedgrass Natural Subregion of the Grassland Natural Region.

“The current federal lease for the research farm operations does not expire for some time, however the federal government may choose

to surrender the lease back to the province of Alberta at any time. AWA believes the announcement, the time we have before the lease expires and the pending South Saskatchewan Regional Plan provide both threats and opportunities for conservation of this vastly important native prairie grassland.

“The opportunity exists to ensure Onefour receives protected area status whether it ends up under federal or provincial management. Under the existing lease arrangement with the Federal Government, designating this area as a National Wildlife Area makes sense. Vitally needed prairie research could continue. In addition, grazing could continue providing an opportunity for local ranchers. The existing

research and livestock facilities would continue to be used.

“The already designated heritage rangelands adjacent to the research farm would facilitate the transition of the research farm lands to protection under the Alberta Government. If Alberta will designate and protect the area, co-management much like the Milk River Management Committee, by ranchers, government, grazing academics, and conservationists would succeed based on experiences in other rangelands in this part of Alberta.

“Well known for its importance to species at risk, the Onefour Research Farm provides safe and secure habitat to at least 23 federally listed species and many more that rely on this area, including the Yellow-bellied Racer, Mountain Plover and Yucca plant.”



There Be No Dragons Here: Mixing Myth with Reality

BY LORNE FITCH

On the margins of the old maps where exploration was sketchy and the details dodgy the cartographers would note: "There be dragons here".

It is evident from the legends and the illustrations there must have been quite a population of the beasts in the empty abyss beyond the reaches of pens and knowledge.

That dragons existed on the peripheries of the known world and in the outer edges of our minds might have indicated they were in trouble earlier than anyone knew. For any creature, once it is out of sight it becomes out of mind quickly and the eventual slide to oblivion starts. It is dangerous for us to rationalize a creature can always live somewhere else, when those living somewhere else think the same way. I'm sad I never got to see a dragon; they were gone long before my time. Sure, I know they were dangerous, anti-social, reptilian creatures that had awe-inspiring pyrotechnic displays but who can say they

aren't just a little bit intrigued with them.

There is sadness in the reality we wiped out the dragons. They gave real purpose to dragon slayers, to maidens who required saving, to those that housed, fed and supplied dragon slayers and to the tellers of dragon stories. Dragons kept various locales free of wood choppers, poachers, trespass graziers, miners and those who felt wandering everywhere with every type of conveyance was their god-given right. They defined the wild, gave measure to it and kept human pressures from overwhelming wild places. This dragons did with their presence and, some said, their magic.

Governments needed the magic of dragons; several agencies kept their budgets inflated for dragon control. Dragons were, to turn a phrase, the golden goose to inspire annual

allocations for personnel, equipment, administration, travel and training. Then, of course, there were the conferences and workshops to share information on dragon control methods. The last thing these people wanted to see was the end of dragons. It was clear sustaining dragons, while managing the threat, kept people employed, productive and the economy charged.

But, there was ambivalence towards dragons on the part of government. Too much focus on dragons also allowed a view of what government wasn't doing, such as managing landscapes with a sense of balance and stewardship. Dragons and their implied threat kept the populace focused on them; governments have always needed to deflect the attention of their citizens away from such things. It allows government to work away unimpeded and unobserved



Lorne Fitch is a Professional Biologist, Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary and a retired Alberta Fish and Wildlife Biologist. He is a well-known speaker, writer and photographer, living in Lethbridge AB. "There Be No Dragons Here" is the ninth in a series of articles by Lorne.

on things that needn't trouble an unwashed electorate. Things like expanding this and that, doing it here and there and everywhere, pushing things through quickly, watering down the rules, keeping citizens out of the process and engaging in spurious claims, self-promotion and deflection. Ironically it was those very actions, of short-sighted politicians and their business henchmen who revered the dollar as sovereign, which led to the demise of dragons.

I suppose the direct and spinoff benefits of dragons, their value added nature, could be assessed by economists to create a clearer picture of the role of dragons to the economy. It likely wouldn't have been surprising to find dragons were worth more alive than dead, although that's now of cold comfort to dragons. Now that they're gone we honour them largely as a distraction, on flags, insignia and coats of arms. What the world really needs is live, fire breathing dragons, dragons that frighten, entertain and give rise to the substance of myths and stories.

The real myth is we can do without them, that the pavement and suburbs and fragmentation of former dragon habitat ennobles and gives our lives meaning. We are not merely the random genetic crosses of hormonally driven parents; we are also part and parcel of the place we live and what shares



that place. Paradoxically, those natural features and forces we find so threatening are the same forces that formed and molded us. In ways often too complex to grasp, those forces of nature can preserve and renew us. We are who we are because of dragons; our lives were enriched when they still roamed the land. The gap, the emptiness, now creates a void in our lives that cannot be filled simply with stories, substitutes and silly cartoon dragons.

To some of our ancestors, dragons were revered as representatives of the primal force of nature. They represented a domain where humans weren't king, a magic place where we walked in the knowledge we weren't dominant. Dragons were said to be wiser than humans; we won't ever be able to test that assumption but based on the behavior of our race the answer seems self-evident. These creatures were often associated with water, even protective of water. Now, as we have used up many of the inherent possibilities of our world, especially its water resources, it's clear we could use dragons again as protectors of watersheds.

Some thought dragons guarded precious treasure, or

incorporated gems into their anatomy. Perhaps they engendered a certain restraint in our use of natural resources, a thoughtfulness not evidenced

today. The lure of the treasures, of economic benefits, overcame our fears and we slaughtered dragons. We constantly kill the things that make us rich, not realizing it is with their lives that we are enriched.

Dragons were gone long before we understood their role in the landscape, the linkage to other phantasmagoria, and their value to us. Dragon's blood was reputed to provide properties of wisdom and strength. We humans could stand more of the former. It is likely dragons were part of natural disturbance mechanisms, using their fire breathing nature to create niches for other creatures. But we really don't know much about them. All we have are a few anecdotal references, usually from dragon slayers, about their bad behavior. One thinks the dragon slayers were not an unbiased lot in their observations.

We didn't map their distribution; their biology and ecology are mysteries, and their population size and characteristics are unknown. Dragons likely needed space, big space, and we encroached on their living space and divided the land into smaller and smaller islands of habitat. Even the tiny fragments, the isolated specks of habitat were

too inviting to leave for them. Obviously pressures on dragons and their habitats affected recruitment and their numbers dropped beneath critical thresholds for population viability. Once populations plummet so precipitously extinction is the next stop on the largely one-way train.

No record exists of efforts to reverse the trend towards extinction of dragons. Perhaps our ancestors' efforts paralleled ours, in modern times, with status reports, policy frameworks and recovery planning for endangered species; fine words, hollow intents and masterly inactivity. If the present is a mirror on the past the debate likely raged over the "real" number of dragons, a denial of their imperiled state and concern dragons were impeding economic development. A thin veneer of concern was layered over a core of rampant resource exploitation, while dragons silently slipped into oblivion.

Extinct: the word sounds like a hammer hitting an anvil. There is a cold finality to extinction. When the fire goes out it can never be rekindled. Second chances have come and gone, the opportunities to deflect the trajectory used up, and the dice cannot be rolled again. Neither our technology nor our prayers will avail us of creating another dragon. Perhaps when another heaven and another earth have risen, the chance may come around again. But, the loss is in our time and effectively that is

for eternity. No dragon will ever rise again to confront our reality, remind us we were fellow travelers or challenge our ability to keep all the pieces. They only exist in myth and fantasy and there only by a slim thread of memory. There be no dragons here anymore and we are poorer for it.

Dragons came from moondark and shadow, mystical and ethereal sources. They are by far the most potent of all the mythological beasts, just as imperiled species here are often the most potent manifestation reminding us of our failure to maintain intact landscapes. If imperiled species had the strength of magic and the sheer power to enchant and fascinate, as dragons do, we would still possess them in healthy, sustainable populations, even in our busy world and its busy landscape.

Of one thing we can be sure, dragons have gone missing. Other creatures, some as iconic as dragons and perhaps more charismatic may shortly follow; Grizzly Bears, Sage Grouse, Caribou and Westslope Cutthroat Trout, to name a few. Then there are the uncharismatic, non-iconic microfauna plants, insects and amphibians that disappear, unnoticed. Will we let all of these suffer the same fate as dragons, to slip through our fingers, beneath our consciousness, out of our memory and through the cracks in our careless world? Dragons may be mythical, but extinction isn't. It is also forever. And the reality is.... forever is a long, long time.



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BOOK REVIEW

The Warbler Guide

Warbler fans now have a new reason to rejoice, because finding and identifying these colorful little birds will be easier than ever thanks to *The Warbler Guide* by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle. This is truly the definitive guide to all things warbler and will be a welcome addition to any birder's library.

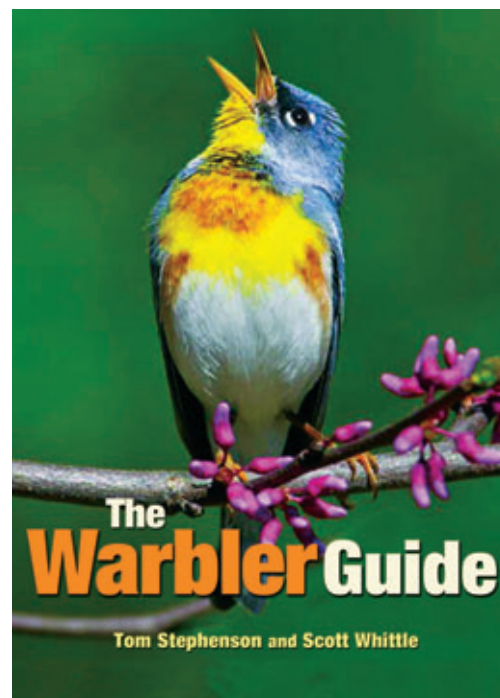
So, what's new in *The Warbler Guide* (which covers all fifty-six species in Canada and the US)? Just about everything. The front portion of the book is a combination of a master class in bird-watching (chapters on *What to Notice on a Warbler*, *Aging and Sexing Warblers*, and *How to Listen to Warbler Songs*) and an introduction to visualizing and hearing songs and calls (*Understanding Sonograms*, *Learning Chip and Flight Calls*). These sections are followed by a series of innovative *Quickfinders* that present side-by-side profiles, undertails, full body views, and song sonograms so readers can quickly and easily identify the warblers they've seen in the field.

And then it's on to the species accounts section of the book. The authors include dozens of photos for each species highlighting the overall jizz of the bird, as well as a *Distinctive Views* section that emphasizes identification markings. Bulleted text provides quick takes on identification from the side, below, and above. Additional

photos show birds in flight, typical behaviors, and reveal interesting tidbits. Separate sections consider *Comparison Species* and instruct readers on *Aging and Sexing* by season, while detailed seasonal distribution maps and bar graphs show where and when species are most likely to be found.

The final and perhaps most unique section of the species accounts is an in-depth look at songs, chips and flight calls for the species and its comparison species. This section is particularly useful for bird-watching in the late spring when birds are more likely to be heard than seen. A companion audio package is available separately via www.thewarblerguide.com.

Rounding out the text is a list of similar non-warbler species, a quick overview of hybrid warblers, and a description of warblers in flight. Readers will appreciate a chance to test their new warbler id skills with a brief quiz section, as well as



By Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle.
Drawings by Catherine Hamilton. Paper Flexibound | \$29.95 | 560 pp. 1,000+ color illus. 50 maps. ISBN: 9780691154824; eBook | ISBN: 9781400846863

the informative appendices listing measurements, habitats, and behavior.

The publication of *The Warbler Guide* will be followed by the release of a companion app that includes 360° views and audio files in time for spring migration 2014. An eBook version of the book is also available.



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Nature Alberta NEWS



Interns Needed

Nature Alberta (NA) is hiring part-time student Bird Conservation interns. If you are a continuing post-secondary student in Alberta, have a love of nature, and are looking for relevant work experience, send us your resume!

We are hiring multiple positions province-wide, for work in our bird conservation program. No experience necessary, but must have an interest in conservation and a willingness to work outdoors in variable conditions. Most positions require some field work,

either within provincial parks or other rural sites. You must have a class 5 driver's licence and access to a vehicle, as these positions will require travel within Alberta. Hours are part-time and very flexible.

This is a fun and easy way to add important experience to your resume, increase your knowledge of Alberta's wildlife, and be more competitive in the job market. Please email resumes to birds@naturealberta.ca.



CORRECTION

In the Spring 2013 edition ("On the Covers" pg 3, and the Inside Back Cover), "Votier's Flats was misspelled as "Voitier's Flats. It just goes to show: you can't trust everything on the web which, in a number of cases, uses the latter – and wrong! – spelling. Your Editor thanks proofreader Val Scholefield for pointing this out and persisting (including phoning Fish Creek Provincial Park for confirmation), even after I had insisted on the wrong spelling.

FSC Certification for SLS

Nature Alberta sent a letter of support on July 15 for Spray Lakes Sawmills' (SLS) continuation in the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Management Certification within their Forest Management Area (FMA). Nature Alberta stressed their support and need for ongoing conversations on the "Protected Areas Gap Analysis" and "High Conservation Value Forest Assessment." Nature Alberta also wished SLS "continued success in this important journey to FSC certification."

In a July 16 response, SLS's Stewardship Forester Jason Mogilefsky stated that they will be hosting a protected areas meeting this fall "to develop a go forward plan regarding the exploration of a protected area candidate(s) in the Red Deer River ESA." Nature Alberta will be contacted with more details. Jason also said that SLS will "be giving careful consideration to your feedback regarding enhanced stream buffers for headwater streams containing at risk fish species and will be following up with a response."

The Point of Contact for Nature Alberta's representation will continue to be Sandra Foss.

Don't Forget to Count Butterflies!

The Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild's (ALG) butterfly project is on until November 15, 2013. ALG wants to know how many live butterfly species you can observe in Alberta. Contestants must submit all of their observations to the eButterfly website and submit a species list to the ALG Butterfly Big Year committee by Nov. 15, 2013.

The Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild website (www.biology.ualberta.ca/uasm/alg/) gives more details on this competition and how to submit your sightings on eButterfly. ALG reminds contestants that they must obtain their own permits and permissions to enter protected areas or private lands.



Issues Management

Nature Alberta is often asked to comment on its position on a specific environmental issue or give its support to the position of another organization. Being involved in such actions requires time and resources that may take away from other priorities. Therefore, NA wants to be strategic in what it responds to.

A Board-approved Terms of Reference and an Issues Policy were developed by the old Issues Committee in 2001 and 2007 respectively. As a review and update, the NA Strategic Relations Team, with input from the Directors at the April Board

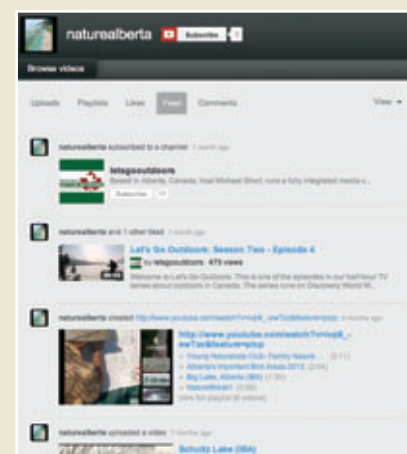
meeting, has drafted a process and protocol on assessing issues for Nature Alberta actions. The results should be ready by the September Board meeting for review and approval. A number of policy and position papers dealing with issues already exist; however, as part of this new process, feedback will be requested on any position papers that Nature Alberta should develop because they are missing or for any existing papers that should be updated or are no longer relevant.

President Ted Hindmarch is the Interim Chair of the Strategic Relations Team.

Nature Alberta & YouTube

Cheyenne Kean, Nature Alberta's Communications Specialist, wants you to know that Nature Alberta has its own YouTube channel now. All kinds of "good stuff" is there for you to view. Visit:

youtube.com/naturealberta



New Checklist Available

The Grasslands Naturalists, in partnership with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, have published an excellent new "Southeastern Alberta Bird Checklist." The checklist contains 347 species, forty more than the 2003 list. It has been divided into two regions: Prairie and the distinctly different Cypress Hills Provincial Park (Alberta). The list includes Abundance, Breeding Status and Seasons during which the species is found.

For a copy, contact Grasslands Naturalists or the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program: 403-529-6225; mhip@natureline.info; or by mail: Box 2491, Medicine Hat AB, T1A 8G8. The list is also available at the Nature Centre in Elkwater AB.

Alberta Conservation Association Board Meeting

BY SANDRA FOSS

As Nature Alberta's representative on the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) Board, I met with the ACA Board in Rocky Mountain House in early June, for our regular Board Meeting, Strategic Planning session, and site tours of some lands listed in the ACA Discover Guide.

We had a day of site tours with ACA staff in the Rocky Mountain House/Caroline area along the North Raven & Raven Rivers, and several small lakes in the areas. These are all protected areas, either owned by ACA and partners, or land under landowner agreements, to help the lands along the creeks and rivers recover from cattle damage. ACA now installs fencing and leases the land, paying the landowners enough money to make it worth their while. ACA does weed control, posts signs and manages access.

For the first time, we had sun, could walk around and through the areas (other years, monsoons dominated!). The day finished with a "Meet & Greet" BBQ at one of the sites, with a few invited guests: local conservation officers, anglers, a grant recipient. Previous years, we toured the Peace River and Lethbridge areas, saw local sites, and met ACA staff working in each of those offices.

This year's site is a very pretty area in the foothills, with rolling hills, agricultural lands, and numerous petroleum well sites. The North Raven River (Stauffer Creek) starts as a smallish creek, with many bubbling springs

and crystal clear water. We saw numerous clumps of glorious, golden Marsh Marigolds, a couple of little brown Wood Frogs (*Rana sylvatica*), and a Water Shrew (*Sorex palustris*), only the second one I have ever seen. There even was a young Great Horned Owl. There were lots of fish in all the places we looked, and many anglers on Birch Lake, a stocked lake with aerators to keep it from freezing to the bottom in winter. We heard about a variety of interesting methods used to control thistle in the areas where springs abound; the water table is high and chemical control is not a viable option. Handcutting and pulling by volunteers has not worked well, so a stem borer is being trialled, to see whether that will be effective.

The Board Strategic Planning day was spent reviewing and discussing the updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the province, and also doing the annual review of ACA's Grant programs. The MOU update has been ongoing for some time, but it did not have the Program Agreements completed yet. Hopefully, these will be ready soon. The MOU is to lay out the work ACA does, and what Environment & Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD)



SAYS SANDRA: "AMAZING HOW CLEAR THE NORTH RAVEN RIVER IS - LOTS OF SPRINGS FEEDING IT!" WWW.AB-CONSERVATION.COM

staff do, and how/where they will work together. At the Board Meeting, many of the Committees' Terms of Reference were reviewed and updated. Changes to the accounting for non-profits, as well as the assimilation of a 'for profit' company (Karvonen Films) into the ACA (a registered charity) books caused extra work and challenges this year, so the Finance & Audit Committee was unable to review the 2012/13 audited financial statements at the meeting.

Some reminders: Karvonen photos of a wide variety of wildlife are available to member groups by request to ACA, and the film footage is also available. Free magazine subscriptions are available; check the website: www.ab-conservation.com. ACA has a Demonstration Ranch, west of Nanton, and group tours can be booked: Call Glen & Kelly Hall, 403-646-5813. www.albertadiscoverguide.com/site.cfm?grid=F3&number=36. In the paper guide it's on page 122, and it is property F3-36. The 2013 Pheasant festival has sold out for hunters, but there will likely be events for others too; again, check the web site.

Summer ED Change

President Ted Hindmarch has announced that, over the summer months of July and August, our Executive Director Petra Rowell will be reducing her time at the office. For these summer months, Vid Bijelic will be acting Executive Director.

Public Pastures, Public Interest

Nature Alberta is one of the forty-five provincial, national and international organizations that have signed on to support the 6 Principles of the Public Pastures-Public Interest (PPPI) document, *A Vision for the Future of Saskatchewan Heritage Rangelands*, that PPPI released in March 2013.

PPPI is a citizen-based organization devoted to maintaining all of Saskatchewan's public grasslands as healthy prairie ecosystems and working landscapes. The organization was founded on principles of retaining, protecting, and managing the province's Crown grasslands, including the PFRA community pastures, as vital elements of the public trust

every bit as precious as its northern forests and lakes.

PPPI came about as a result of the Harper Government's decision to dump the huge land base that was the PFRA Community Pastures – a land base that includes some of the largest remnants of protected native prairie in the world. PPPI supports the retention of public ownership of these Crown lands. The lands are a public trust, belonging to all Saskatchewan people and Canadians. Through the federal PFRA program, Canadians across the country have contributed to the strength and upkeep of these lands.

PPPI recently had to clarify some erroneous media and



LONG-BILLED CURLEW: A THREATENED GRASSLAND BIRD. HAMILTON GREENWOOD/PFRAPASTUREPOSTS.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM

individuals' statements about the group, including about its funding. PPPI is not financially supported by other organizations. Funding has come from fundraisers and concerts, small individual donations, the "Prairie Passages" fund-raising dinner with Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, and the pocket of its own members.

PPPI notes that the pastures aren't merely agricultural land. They are a conservation issue, a land tenure issue, an agricultural issue, a First Nations issue – all with economic, social and cultural implications for the people who live in these areas. There are a great many issues at stake, which is why the unseemly rush by the Harper Government to get rid of the land has upset so many people.

A fine *Briarpatch* magazine article by Laura Stewart, "Voice for the Grasslands" (July 1, 2013) can be found on the Nature Alberta Facebook page, or at: <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-voice-for-the-grasslands>.

Prairie Festival a Big Success

The first Prairie Appreciation Festival was held on June 8 and was truly a big success. It was open to anyone, and about eighty people – rural and urban – attended on Geoff and Melanie Watson's ranch five kilometres north of Elkwater AB, on the edge of the Cypress Hills. They took part in a full day of activities, including a bug safari in a marsh, the spectacular wildflower display, how to track Burrowing Owls, learning about water development in the grasslands and a wind-up barbeque at Camp Apistoke.

The Festival (which was free for attendees, except for a fee for the barbeque) was co-sponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Prairie Conservation Forum, along with Cows and Fish, Southeast Alberta Watershed Alliance, and Operation Grassland Community.

It is hoped that the Prairie Appreciation Festival will be an annual event; considering the success of the first one, that is a strong possibility! If you have any questions about the festival, please contact NCC Conservation Coordinator Rob Gardner: rob.gardner@natureconservancy.ca; or 403-580-7368.



JOHN WARDEN

Close to Home: Nature Photography in Alberta Being There

BY JOHN WARDEN

"I saw that," I said to Murray Phillips.

Murray is a wonderful Canadian painter whose work focuses on capturing the elusive beauty of the western wilderness. He lives in B.C., but a lot of his work is from Banff, Jasper, Kananaskis and Waterton. Murray has long white hair, a huge white beard and a twinkle in his eye. He's very personable, amiable even and passionate about his work. He's easy to talk to and we were chatting as I stood in front of one of his canvasses at an art show in Edmonton. "I was right there," I said wistfully, remembering the incident.

Attending a conference at the Banff Springs Hotel, I had gone back to my hotel room around

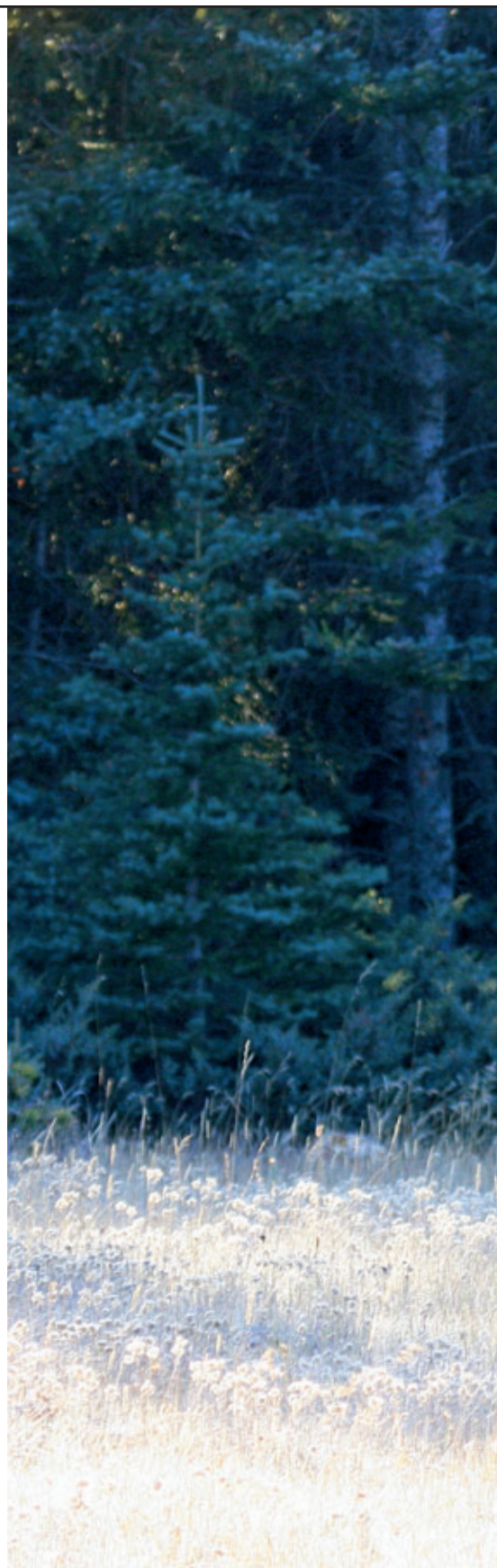
4:00 PM. I happened to glance out the window and there was the scene as captured in Murray Phillips' painting. It was one of those moments. The October light cast warm, yellow-gold, rays over the Banff Springs Golf Course and the Bow River. Downstream, a big bull Elk with a massive rack was standing guard in the middle of the river while his harem waded across. The Elk were lit up by the light coming from the west, while the river behind them faded to darkness. Lighting conditions like this are called 'chiaroscuro' (light/dark) and for painters and photographers it doesn't get much better.

For me though, there were several problems. The Elk were quite a distance away, at least half a kilometer or so, and I was still dressed in a suit. My cameras though, were right



MURRAY PHILLIPS: "THE WILDERNESS HAS PROFOUND LESSONS FOR US IF WE WILL MAKE THE EFFORT TO SLOW OUR PACE AND BE SILENT AND LISTEN; JUST GO INTO THE WILDERNESS AND START TO LISTEN."

WWW.MURRAYPHILLIPSART.COM. WWW.RAINCOAST.ORG





HE CARRIED A MASSIVE RACK OF ANTLERS AND IN THE COOL MORNING AIR, HIS BREATH WAS STEAMING. JOHN WARDEN



...A YOUNG BULL WITH A NICE RACK, BUGLING AS THE SNOW FALLS AROUND HIM. JOHN WARDEN

there beside the bed. I had to try! Pulling my tie off, I jumped into blue jeans and running shoes, grabbed my camera bag and I was away, sprinting through the hallways and down the stairs of the Banff Springs Hotel.

Once I was out onto the golf course the pathways led me to

the Elk. I got within camera range just as the last of them scrambled up the bank of the Bow River.

Phillips' painting is really quite wonderful, it's a large piece and he has elegantly captured the lighting and the drama of the river crossing.

"I almost had that picture," I said to Phillips. And that's one of the differences between photography and painting.

The following year, I went back to Banff, looking for the Elk crossing the river; I was ready, excited. I was in the right place at the right time, but one of the golf course

attendants said he didn't think the Elk used that route anymore.

I walked the river bank hoping, but no luck. I finally found the herd down at the far end of the golf course. By then, it was cold, overcast and the light was fading. The bulls were bugling though, a wild, exhilarating sound. And then it started to snow. Perfection. I was definitely in the right place at the right time and I got the shot. Not of the Elk crossing the river, but of a young bull with a nice rack, bugling as the snow falls around him.

That's the thing about being out there in nature. You might not get what you want, but by being open to the possibilities, by taking the time to really see the potential of the moment, there's always something.

Another morning I was into Jasper National Park at dawn and came across a couple of cars parked along the side of the highway, usually a sign that someone has seen something interesting. I stopped and sure enough, there was a big bull Elk in the meadow, standing guard over his harem. It was still too dark for photographs but I walked over to the edge of the meadow, standing back in the bush to wait for more light.

The big bull was amazing. He carried a massive rack of antlers

and in the cool morning air, his breath was steaming. He was agitated, bugling and running around the meadow trying to keep his harem together.

Then people started showing up. A videographer set up his tripod, and then two still photographers wearing camouflage clothing and balaclavas appeared ninja-like out of the bushes. Cameras were whirling and clicking away, there was a flurry of activity and then suddenly everyone was gone, the Ninja photographers melting into the morning shadows.

I decided to wait. It took about thirty minutes or so, but when the light came up, I got the shot and it's a great shot.

It was another day at Jasper when I finally got my 'Elk crossing the river shot'. Late one afternoon, I was coming out of the Lake Annette loop by Jasper Park Lodge. I looked down from



HE WAS AGITATED, BUGLING AND RUNNING AROUND THE MEADOW...

JOHN WARDEN

a viewpoint and saw a herd of Elk on the far side of the Athabasca River. They were just about to cross. I parked my car and was off on foot, scrambling down the river bank, through the trees and bush to try and 'be there' in the right place at the right time.

I got the shot. It's not the panoramic view that Murray Phillips captured in his painting, but that's his. Mine is a tighter shot with a long lens. The bull Elk has a wild 'rut' look in his eye, the river water is streaming off of his flanks and he's looking back to make sure that the last of his harem got across the river okay.

Painters and photographers, we see the same things and go to the same places and this time, by being there, I got the shot.



www.jwardenphotography.com

John Warden's website (www.jwardenphotography.com) is definitely worth a visit for excellent photos of wildlife and landscapes in Alberta and beyond. John also posts articles on his blog (<http://jwardenphotography.blogspot.com/>) from previous *Nature Alberta* magazines.

Drop in and say hello!



A PAIR OF TREE SWALLOWS AT A NEST BOX.

KURT YAKIMOVICH



Eyes on IBAs

Eighth in a Series

Visiting Beaverhill Lake IBA

BY KURT YAKIMOVICH

We rise with the birds...

That was my thought as I dragged myself out of bed at 5 a.m. the morning of my visit to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO, an Affiliate Club of Nature Alberta) – which is situated on the Beaverhill Lake Important Bird Area (IBA), near Tofield – and saw rain outside my window. I also wondered how BBO staff get any sleep! Being a birder comes with a commitment to early mornings, because as they say, the early bird gets the worm. And the early birder? Well, they just get up early.

But all grumbling and bad jokes aside, I couldn't help but be happy when I looked out of the car window on the way and saw some sunshine instead of more rain. It was my second time getting out to Beaverhill, and I can tell you it won't be my last! It is a fantastic area with some amazing biodiversity from birds and insects – including pretty butterflies – to mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. Literally a fantastic biological oasis located close to Edmonton!

The area was originally recognized for its globally

significant waterfowl and shorebird populations, which can still be found in large numbers during spring and fall migrations. But because Beaverhill Lake is highly ephemeral, the original species that earned the area its designation are not present in such huge numbers during the summer staging months.

The area is still incredibly biodiverse, however, especially with regards to its passerine species. Baltimore Oriole, Purple Finch, Least Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird and Slate-coloured Junco are just a few of the species that populate the wooded areas. Many raptor species, including Short-eared Owl and Harrier, use the former lake bed as hunting grounds, and a Ruffed Grouse lek is also located in the area. Despite the lake's variable water levels, a large Ducks Unlimited Canada wetland has been created via a weir, creating ideal habitat for shorebirds and some of the waterfowl that do stage in the area, which include Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler. A recent flight over the lake has also revealed the presence of free



**NATURE ALBERTA
IBA STAFFER
KURT YAKIMOVICH.**



ATTACHING A GEOLOCATOR TO A TREE SWALLOW. A. ROBERTO-CHARRON

flowing water in the old lake bed, suggesting that the lake may fill again and increase waterfowl and shorebird habitat.

I was fortunate enough to visit with BBO's Executive Director, Amélie Roberto-Charron, on my visit. She told me about some of the ongoing projects such as the Tree Swallow geolocator program and the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. The geolocator program consists of attaching a lightweight device onto the rump of a Tree Swallow via nylon leg straps (see photo).

This device then tracks light levels – using some complicated math and advanced technology, I'm sure – and then calculates the coordinates of the bird and effectively tracks its migration route. To retrieve this data the

bird needs to be recaptured, so with the hard work of Amélie, Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry, forty of these devices have been deployed. The hope is that at least 25% of these birds will return to the Beaverhill Natural Area next year to nest, and they can then retrieve the information stored on the geolocators.

The MAPS program involves using mist nets to band birds, and early morning point counts: where you sit in one spot and record the directionality of bird calls. The BBO has three MAPS stations set up around the natural area, which allows them to survey the breeding birds in the area as well as band hundreds of birds during the spring and fall migrations.

If either of these programs sounds interesting to you and you would

like to find out more, contact the BBO! The staff is amazingly friendly and loves to share their knowledge. There are always ways you can get involved, including some awesome annual events. Each year, the BBO hosts the Birding Breakfast near the end of May after spring migration, and Steaks and Saw-whets in the fall. For more information I encourage you to check out their website (www.beaverhillbirds.com) and Facebook page, where you can see photos from previous years and get the details for this year.

If you come out to the area, you can see firsthand all the hard work the BBO has done constructing the numbered nest box grids that help nurture bird populations and contribute to the ongoing research of the BBO and its partners. The



VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF; FROM L TO R: GEOFF HOLROYD, HELEN TREFRY, STEVE ANDERSEN, AMÉLIE ROBERTO-CHARRON, MELISSA CHISOLM, ALEC FOREST, ERIN CAMPBELL, CAROLINE LECOURTOIS, KEVIN METHUEN, ALEXANDRIA BURT, NEIL FOLEY. KURT YAKIMOVICH

BBO has eighteen summer interns conducting various research projects on several different topics and bird species. Their projects range from nest box monitoring to behavioral studies. With the addition of many cheerful volunteers and staff, it becomes a busy place with lots going on. It's evident that the BBO is a bustling, inclusive community and not just a banding lab or designated natural area.

As a new birder I am beginning to appreciate the true meaning at the heart of the Important Bird Areas program as I travel around Alberta. The preservation and promotion of natural habitats for supporting bird life is an amazing thing to be able to take part in. The excitement of discovering the beauty of birds and other wildlife in this province is far greater than I had previously thought! I

have learned a lot since I stepped into the world of birding and conservation in Alberta, and I applaud all those that work so hard in it. It is a worthwhile venture and I am glad to have an opportunity this summer to be a part of it at Nature Alberta through the IBA program.

IS IT STILL A LAKE?

There has been much discussion and controversy over the years about the condition of Beaverhill Lake in relation to its waterfowl value. With the lake being basically and almost continuously dry, several questions need to be asked:

- Does it still meet the IBA requirements?
- Can it still be called a RAMSAR wetland?
- What are the reasons for its deterioration?
- Can Beaverhill Lake be restored? If so, how?

It is a complicated subject, with various stakeholders having various interests and opinions, but the lake is certainly important enough to ask and answer the questions. *Nature Alberta* hopes to start that discussion with the next edition. You can send me your thoughts: wildhavn@memlane.com.

A YOUNG BALTIMORE ORIOLE, WHICH ATE THE BERRIES
OF AN INTRODUCED HONEYSUCKLE WHILE MOLTING.
CONSEQUENTLY, FEATHERS THAT IN AUTUMN ARE NORMALLY
YELLOW OR OLIVE CAME IN RED. SEABROOKE LECKIE

SUMMER 2013

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Berries Turn Birds Red

FROM BIRDWATCHING: WWW.BIRDWATCHINGDAILY.COM (6/19/2013)



Among the bedrock assumptions ornithologists make about the role of color in bird plumage is that redness is an honest indicator of male quality and vigor.

The more vivid the red, the thinking goes, the fitter the individual.

Scientists assume this because birds don't synthesize the pigments that give them their yellows, oranges, and reds. Rather, the birds acquire the pigments, known as carotenoids, from their diet.

The relationship holds up from species to species – so long as the birds eat native foods. That's what researchers from Ohio

State University learned recently when they compared Northern Cardinals in rural and urban settings in central Ohio. Thanks to the carotenoid-rich berries of an abundant introduced shrub, the Amur honeysuckle, even urban Northern Cardinals whose body condition was poor looked bright.

Canadian investigators report in *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology* that the berries of Tatarian Honeysuckle, another widely propagated exotic bush, have a similar effect. At the McGill Bird Observatory in Montreal in August 2006, they captured 15 Baltimore Orioles that were unusually red where the birds normally are yellow to olive.

Jocelyn Hudon, curator of ornithology at Edmonton's Royal Alberta Museum, and colleagues collected feathers from the red orioles, extracted the carotenoids, and compared them with the berries. Rhodoxanthin, a pigment of deep red hue only rarely encountered in birds and normally absent in oriole feathers, was in both.

Any avian species that have carotenoids in feathers and ingest honeysuckle berries when molting, Hudon suggests, could potentially have their plumage imbued with unusual reddish tones.



The beautiful, bi-monthly *BirdWatching* magazine (formerly *Birder's World*) appeals to every bird enthusiast — from backyard birdwatcher to serious birder. Subscribers receive helpful hints for attracting and feeding birds, handy identification tips, photography pointers, info about where to find birds, superb color photography, and much more!

FEATURE ARTICLE

A Day at Writing-on-Stone

BY EARL STAMM



EARL STAMM

We went to Writing-on-Stone for lunch outdoors, a fall picnic, with the eternal thieving wind getting its fingers into everything.

A lump of cheese held the bag of buns shut while the pickle container kept the paper towels from blowing away. The butter dish lid, making the wind its accomplice, made a couple of attempts at freedom, but we kept things under control long enough to satisfy our hunger without losing any hostages and put the remains back in the car.

We discussed what to do now. By then the noise and irritation of the drive and the distraction of eating had fallen away and we really heard for the first time the wind in the trees. It is odd how when you concentrate on one thing you do not hear or feel others. Suddenly the wind was there with us, as it usually is, as if it had been waiting for our heads to clear so it could speak to us. It sounded deep and cool there in the shade of the bare trees.

Between the picnic table and the car we walked through drifts of yellow cottonwood leaves that piled halfway to our knees – dry, weightless, neatly arranged in long drifts as if some thoughtful person had tired of cleaning the park and had left intending to return. I could not resist kicking my way through the windrows. I was free from sitting in the car and knowing that the wind would rearrange them all to satisfy itself anyway, I raised up great goutts of gold-brown leaves. They flew away taking the rushing sound of their passage with them.

Dead leaves make a very similar sound when they are moving on the ground as live leaves do on the trees. The rattle of new leaves in the spring is the sound of small hands clapping; the rustle after they fall is the shuffle of small feet running. The drifts of leaves stretched across the well-worn

picnic area...yellow leaves on yellow sand; I wondered how much less the trees weighed without their leaves.

We left the picnic area to walk the trail that follows the river toward the only easily accessible public rock art site, the battle scene. The trail rises from the river beach in a few steps and seems always to be disappearing into the rocks, except that it reappears as it is travelled. It appears ahead and disappears behind as we walk, so that we soon felt absorbed into the formation, so that the round rocks and the prairie, the wind and time itself rolled right over us. Time and the sandstone are about equally visible in the hoodoos; they lie among each other; without time, no hoodoos; without hoodoos, less sense of the passage of time.

To my eye, several different times show in the rocks. There must



SOME TREMENDOUS AND COLOURFUL SCENES CANOEING DOWN THE MILK RIVER. CARITA BERGMAN

have been a brutal time that went quickly, that cut the vertical sides of the river down. A slower, more thoughtful time that came after to sculpt the shapes and curves that make the hoodoos, and another that continues even now, in which the details of the valley are added to and altered until it becomes art visible to a man.

When Michelangelo sculpted, he used great heavy chisels to rough out his work piece, and progressively smaller, finer blades to detail, finish, and polish his stone. A rapidly flowing post-glacial river; and the smaller subsequent ancillary flows of water down to it after it subsided, were the chisels that made the large, quick, rough cuts into the rocks, making them into workable blocks. Wind, rain, and frost are

the scribing irons and pitchers that have made the added details. Maybe the stars had something to do with it too; there is something a little other worldly about shapes in the valley walls. Sometimes there are faces in the rocks. I have a passing thought that wonders whether the furniture of the valley has been created by time and the natural tools at its disposal, or if some Hand waved over it and left it as it is now.

There have been smaller hands at work among the rocks. In some steep places, trailmakers have cut steps into the sandstone to make following the trail possible, none of them fresh cut. Made I do not know how many years or seasons ago, the scuffing by many boots has worn away their edges. The rubbing of boots has sped up the

course of local erosion, which is usually done by the infinitesimal scrapings of the freeze-thaw cycle.

Stepping up the single file steps made me walk like a supermodel: one foot directly in front of the other, so that I swayed and for balance touched the rocks on the sides of the passage with my hands. As I touched the old stone on one side and the newly exposed stone on the other, I felt as if I was between the poles of something, like being between the poles of a battery, with its potential to pass electrons through whatever touches both together. I expected perhaps to feel a current of sorts passing through me, perhaps something like the passage of time.

Time peered out again, from an old bushy-tailed wood rat nest,

a pack rat nest, exposed right by the trail on a sheer cliff overlooking the river. Nobody knows how old this one may be, but in New Mexico there are nests that archaeologists have dated back for centuries. There is only some of this one left on the rock, enough to make a perch for some pigeons, a bit ironic; the only nesting creature dirtier than a pack rat is a pigeon. The majority of the nest has fallen away since whatever held up the bottom has fallen away. Typically, they are built in a cleft in the rock behind a leaning tree or bush. Pack rats like to hide; the nest only becomes visible when it gets too big and spreads out of its space. This one is wide open, which makes it old because there is no sign of the tree or rock that must have been there when the nest was used. It lies mostly exposed, used for a time and now abandoned, returning bit by bit to the land from which it was raised.

The trail wanders between hoodoos, climbing and falling, in and out of view of the river, in and out of the voice of the wind, hiding from the valley rim, and giving periodic glimpses of the west butte of the Sweetgrass Hills across the valley.



It is a trail considerate of my urge to see as much as possible of the rock formations, their details and perspectives. From the valley rim, the hoodoos, the river, and the grassy slopes that lead from the horizon down into the valley make a lovely picture. At the rim, the overwhelming impression is of distance that stretches away. There are details. With concentration I can narrow my view to distinguish individual hoodoos, cap rocks, and arches, but the river is just a glint in a sliver below the tawny, autumn grass on the river bank. I see too much and I see too little.

If I had not been here times before I might think that I was seeing all there was to see. But I am not. From the rim I see a vista, all picturesque, an exercise in remote sensing, everything revealed before me but without particular detail or distinction. I love the view from the top but it is not what I seek; today we came to this place to see things closely and as directly as possible.

Walking into the valley walks me into the vista. It is a sort of out of body experience to remember myself where I was on the rim, what the view looked like from there, and then place myself in the picture where I am walking.

Within the vista are the details that give the lie to any photo or painting that claims a degree of "reality". As detailed as a photo or painting ever can be, it is still only a pale imitation of the real landscape. From the rim, perspective is its own detail. Walking off the rim, into the perspective, suddenly the

details are everywhere; they are multifarious and nearly overwhelming. Every step I take reveals a different selection of shape, color and texture. I have the feeling that it would take me a long time to see everything visible to me from the position of any particular step.

There is sky, cloudless; every inch of it is the same shade of blue. I suppose there is only one sky, but still, how long would it take to see it all? To tell the truth, I am not sure I see it at all; sky by its nature is something we look through, mostly, except where it touches the valley rim. Above, all is smooth blue sky, below there are rocks and plants in profusion, but as I look at each shape as its own, I move my eye to the next and the next so that they become blended together, and my eye loses its ability to distinguish and differentiate. Soon I am seeing rocksskygrass, and colortextureshape, all one image, all one word repeating over and over so that the word becomes longer; endless...I am seeing the word made visible.

From a bench that someone has thoughtfully placed on a rise with a clear view south across the river I can see a long way. The river is revealed now as much more complicated that it was from the top of the valley. Instead of a flat surface of light, it glimmers with a light of its own, there is depth; there are ripples and movement. It curls in shallow bends, wandering within sharp banks. It seems terribly shallow, too shallow to bear the name of river; but it is

the close of the year, perhaps the water has mostly run past, it has done its work for the year.



EARL STAMM

There are two river bottoms in the valley: a ghost river that made the valley bottom, the ancient riverbed, a quarter mile wide; and where the water runs now, maybe 20 paces across incised as deep as my waist into the sediments left behind as the old river died. The old bed remains after massive floods cut the canyon a hundred feet into bedrock many generations ago. The water came from a glacier that melted away to the north and the sand that makes the floor was deposited as the glacial river flow diminished. The new bed has cut into the old, taking some of the sand downstream, eventually to the Gulf of Mexico, where the outwash sediments from the continent lie miles deep.

The young river is a wandering knife in the valley, cutting back and forth across the old sediments, removing the outsides of the curves and building up the insides. Taking sediment downstream requires water velocities sufficient to hold rocky material in the water in suspension. Heavy stones and large sand grains require higher

speed and agitation than lighter silts. Above the critical speed the water stays turbid, dirty looking, and the material goes downstream with the water. As the water slows down, on the inside of a curve, or as a flood diminishes, the material cannot stay in suspension. It falls out of the water to make a layer of mud or sand on the river bottom.

In the case of a curve, when the next flood comes, the new layer of material has made the river shallower so it tends to push the water more to the outside of the curve, cutting into the outside bank. The overall shape of a streambed indicates the overall slope of the bed and the speed of the water running in it. A straight-running stream has a steep slope and the water runs at a high velocity. Slower, flatter streams wander.

The course of the greater valley shows the character of the ghost stream. It is more or less straight as it runs in huge, miles-long curves, from mostly west to east, so at one time it was steeply sloped and had huge volumes of water running quickly.

The water as it runs today is barely cutting into the old bed and meanders back and forth across the entire width so that it touches the hard stone banks on one side and then the other. It has sufficient speed to mildly erode into the old sediments but the volume is so small that it has to wander to make its way. When the ghost river was dying away it must still have had a great load of silt because the sediments

being carried away these days are meters deep. I suspect that the real ancient river bed was bare rock and that it is now covered with what I can see, sand and grass and willow clumps; all of it temporary, in motion, finally on its way to the far away sea. The river that is here today is a slow snake, working downstream, working its serpentine way to move away all these sediments between the cliffs...eventually.

The vertical sandstone cliffs stand silent along the river, still from the time of the great floods, watching over the varying movements of the new stream. They are moving too, but much more slowly now that the sideways sweep of the ancient flood has passed. They stand in ranks, first and second: the first rising straight out of the water, rising abruptly from the stream to the second, where they break into the hoodoo formations reaching back to the base of the wide valley that rises up to the prairie rim.

The hoodoos are towers of stone cut out of solid sedimentary rock. There is a teaching by the believers of the Hand that says that rocks have always been rocks, that they were created the way they are now. These hoodoos display a different teaching; that a high place has been laid low and raised up again. They show that their genesis is from sediments that were carried here by wind or water from some higher place of erosion and in turn buried to become the rock they are today. Sedimentary means layered and in some, the layers are very

obvious, like stacked plates with the heaviest of all on the top, a resistant plate that protects the ones beneath from erosion.



EARL STAMM

Printed materials about the area refer to the hoodoos being formed by wind, but I do not see the effects of wind in the shape of the rocks very much. I would think that if the wind was their principal formative agent, they would be shaped very differently, either more eroded or smoother on the west side where the prevailing wind blows from. They are not. They tend to be slightly squat formations with a differently coloured rock on top making a cap. They look much more as if they have been washed from the top than cut away from the side. If you look at those fancy wooden signs at the park entrance you will see that the grain of the wood is revealed as rough. The signs are made by a sandblasting method that uses high pressure and volume air and fine sand directed through a narrow nozzle. Sandblasting tends to leave even marginally firmer material alone while removing softer material. And the air moving through the nozzle removes nothing without its weapon of sand. There is no evidence of the wind making that differentiation in the rock.

I think that the place wind has in the hoodoos is in removing the rock after a fine layer has been turned into sand by the freeze-thaw cycle. The sandstone looks solid but it is slightly porous. Moisture soaks into it from dew, rain, or melting snow and then freezes beneath the individual sand grains that make up the stone, prying them away one by one. The capstones are harder rock yet and protect the column of the hoodoo from water soaking in at the top so that the freeze-thaw effect has to operate mostly from the sides. There is no doubt the wind carries the sand away from where it falls when it is liberated, the trail is covered with it; and it will blow sand in your eyes if you let it, but there is little actual cutting away at the rock.

There is no ice today though, in the rock or the sand. There is wind enough that the trail is bare of any footprint except in the sheltered spaces. Then there are boot prints mingled with the spoor of the more delicate walking creatures, mice and deer, large and small, a rabbit I think. I expect that there was a moth or two that landed here and there but their feet are so small, I have trouble seeing exactly where they lit. The wind has swept the trail, where it could reach it, to a smooth tan surface, light and powdery, receptive to any disturbance. Besides the tracks of creatures there are places where stems of grass have bent over and swept their seed heads back and forth in arcs, trying to write. There are messages left from weed heads that have broken off and rolled along the soft

surface, making a hieroglyphic statement that unfortunately only wind can read. They are perhaps an incantation, possibly an exhortation, likely exaltation.



EARL STAMM

They are writings from another existence without a Rosetta to lead us to their meaning. I look at my own footprints to see what sort of message is left in my personal trail. My feet make waffle prints, the abstract of some factory floor printed on the ground; the message is one of protection and separation, it says my feet were safe as I went this way. On the way back, over the same bit of trail, I find that I have been swept away so that I have to leave a new set of marks. This whole park is about peoples that vanished; the trail leads eventually to a display of native rock art that is fading from being washed by sun and rain. I have an intimation again of myself standing on the rim watching the view and imagine that I am swept away too, very quickly after I pass.

The dry river bottom has been a commemorative Park for many years, protected from people and cattle so the grass is long and grows into scattered clumps of willows on the wetter areas. I watch the flat across the water



OCCASIONALLY A REAL SURPRISE ALONG THE MILK RIVER: AN ELK HERD! CARITA BERGMAN

for signs and there are none. No thing moves, I have pure distance before me again. I wait, listening to the wind as it passes, noticing that it waxes and wanes in strength. It presses upon me and stirs the grass stems within my personal space; it leaves me and moves the bushes over by a stone wall; it leaves us both in quiet for while and then comes back. It is either questing or lost. It is the time of day when the creatures that stir are resting, and the only presence is the wind moving from and to.

If nothing else is moving, my eyes are. Across the river, I see a coulee, the open space in the opposite bank where a smaller stream joins the larger. My eyes start at its bottom and follow the contour of the banks up and up. There is little here that is truly flat;

I find that I am always looking up. I must look down to walk but my impression is that I am continually looking up. I came here to see and I am; the country makes me do it. I see across the river and far away rise up the grey bulk of the big hills, the Sweetgrass Hills.



EARL STAMM

While my host rock lies horizontal, supine with the horizon, layers upon layers of hardened sand laid flat, the Hills do not lie upon them. They hump

up. They are granite from the center of the earth and they pushed up through the flat land in a slow eruption to make a dome several thousand feet above the plain. Geologists call such activity in the ground an intrusion when they form and exfoliation domes when they erode away. The Hills formed perhaps 50 million years ago and they have taken since then to wash away to their present molar-like shape. It was rock much harder than sandstone that lay in cubic miles, and is still washing away grain by grain, carried by water that runs into Police Coulee, into the Milk River and into the Missouri, to the Mississippi and into the Gulf of Mexico, the sandstones of the future.



EARL STAMM

We came for a picnic and discovered a world. From drifts of softly fallen leaves that we could kick into the wind we progressed through cuts of hardened sandstone and took ourselves into the details of the perspective from the rim of the prairie. There was one blue flower still growing out of a crack in solid rock, the last flower of the year. Take that, you timeless landscape, it seemed to be saying; this time is mine.

We came here to see, and in one afternoon I have seen leaves and sand and the wind. Well, I did not see the wind, but I saw where it passed, and I felt it. I saw the remains of mountains; mountains as mountains, and mountains as they reform after they have been eroded into tiny bits and grains.

I have sat on a mountain all afternoon; at least I was sitting a mound of rock several thousand feet above sea level. It looks like a plain for now, where I sat, but if it eroded away in sections, it would be a mountain or a range of mountains perhaps reminiscent of the badland hoodoos.

Later in the afternoon, I was watching across the river flat and a small part of it began to move. Harry Potter was right; there are creatures that can apperate, breath themselves into existence. What had been a clump of grass between two willows was suddenly not grass any more. It was a Mule Deer doe. Just like that – grass had become an animal, seemingly without the usual transition between the inanimate and life. And then there were two more besides, another aspiration that became a doe deer and her two nearly grown fawns.

Time, time, time. It accumulates on the prairie in the spaces between the land and sky and it rolls in waves unfettered until it comes to the edge of the river. It stops softly, for there are no

hard edges to time, and considers. Then it rolls in uninterrupted moments down to the river, enfolding the hoodoos in their freeze frame disappearing act, shaking the cliffs ever so slightly as it goes by, to encourage their passage to the river, and down to the river where it speaks encouragingly through ripples and swells, and leaves just not quite visible steps in the sand. Time speaks its words and the river runs.



EARL STAMM

Ponderables

Nature first, then theory. Or, better, Nature and theory closely intertwined while you throw all your intellectual capital at the subject. Love the organisms for themselves first, then strain for general explanations, and, with good fortune, discoveries will follow. If they don't, the love and the pleasure will have been enough."

E. O. WILSON

Everyone should have some good ol' fashioned wilderness to play in

BY SARAH ELMELIGI AND WENDY FRANCIS

AT THE RIDGE TOP! KARSTEN HEUER

Life in Southern Alberta is changing; from the weather to the population, our region is redefining itself with each passing year. The recent unprecedented floods made huge changes to our once familiar landscapes and recreational playgrounds.

Kananaskis Country took a big hit from the flooding, and that's impacted our ability to get out and enjoy favourite trails. Eventually, Kananaskis will be rebuilt, even if it's a little different from what we knew. But not everybody has access to that amazing playground. What about people who don't live in and around Calgary? Doesn't everyone deserve some good ol' fashioned wilderness to play in?

The public lands from the Southern end of Kananaskis Country to Waterton are a complex network

of industrial roads, motorized recreation trails, oil and gas wells, and clearcuts. Recreationists in that landscape compete with an array of motorized vehicles and land-uses. This leads to user conflicts, a lack of access to some areas, and over-crowding in others. It's not a quality recreational experience for people who look to wilderness for self-propelled activities like hiking, biking, paddling or bird-watching. More protected parks are required to provide our growing population with places to experience and appreciate the natural world.

The Alberta Government is currently undertaking a planning process that could result in more parks in the southeast slopes, if it's done right. Dubbed the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, for the watershed that encompasses most of southern Alberta from the mountains to the prairies, the plan will determine the mix of land uses across a huge swath of the province for decades to come. A draft of the plan will be released later this summer and it's important that it protects our ability

to explore and enjoy Alberta's fantastic natural landscape. Once approved, the plan will become law and will shape what our region looks like for the next 50 years.

The Government website with information on the planning process is: <https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/SouthSaskatchewanRegion/Pages/default.aspx>.

Creating more parks and protected areas along the eastern slopes, especially in the Castle River watershed north of Waterton and the Livingstone Range between Highway 3 and K-Country, will provide all residents of Southern Alberta with their own recreational playground. It will also protect our headwaters and make sure that vulnerable wildlife like grizzlies have enough room to roam.

It's critical, however, that our politicians hear from Albertans that we want more parks along the eastern slopes. Call your MLA and tell him or her what you want to see in the draft plan, and don't settle for less. Your quality of life as an Albertan depends on this plan. What will you do to help shape your own future?

HIKING IN WIND VALLEY. KARSTEN HEUER



Sarah Elmeligi is an independent professional biologist. Wendy Francis is Program Director at the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.





FIRST SIGHTING EVER OF A MONARCH BUTTERFLY ON OUR ACREAGE NEAR WESTLOCK, AB. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

Nature Diary: Monarch Butterfly Sighting at Westlock

BY DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

Look what the wind blew in...or so I assumed that the strong easterly winds on June 5 and 6 (2012) had been responsible for carrying more kinds of butterflies into our yard in one afternoon, and in higher numbers, than I would normally see in an entire butterfly season.

There were several migratory Red Admiral and Painted Lady, and to my surprise, two male Monarchs, which are a rare sighting in the Westlock AB area. Being an avid butterfly watcher, and never

having seen a Monarch before, I was elated to say the least.

We also saw an unusually high number of Blues and Sulphurs which never landed long enough,

or allowed a close enough approach, to tell with certainty what kind they were. A few others that we were able to identify were the Artic, Dreamy Dusky Wing and Hobomok Skippers. The

Like many naturalists, Debbie and Alan Godkin, from Westlock AB, have numerous stories of their experiences with nature – stories they love to share with other naturalists in this “NATURE DIARY” series!



2ND SIGHTING OF A MONARCH ON OUR ACREAGE NEAR WESTLOCK, AB. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

latter two we hadn't seen here before. The influx of butterflies, combined with the ones already in our yard, such as the Western White, Cabbage Butterfly, Clouded Sulphur, Silvery Blue, Western Tailed-Blue and Tiger Swallowtail, made for an amazing sight.

Another first sighting was of an Anise Swallowtail on May 25 and a second one on June 9 (see the "First Hand" article, pg 39). On July 1, I spotted a third Monarch, which was in better condition than the first two. Its

colours weren't as faded and there were no tears in its wings.

Although the Monarch sightings remained the highlight of the season, it was nice to see our own home-grown Mourning Cloak in higher numbers than usual in our yard. In the first week of August I counted five recently emerged Mourning Cloaks, patrolling up and down our driveway and feeding on mineral salts. And fortunately for me, three remained active right up until September 27.

On August 8, I found a Mourning Cloak caterpillar on the side of our house and several others on outbuildings. When I looked two days later, they had entered the pupa stage. I'd read that they could hatch as early as ten days from the time they entered the pupa stage, or up to fifteen days if the weather was cooler. From the ninth day onward, I checked on them several times a day hoping to see one emerge from the chrysalis, but for some reason the transformation was



SAW TWO MALE MONARCHS ON JUNE 7 AND ONE MORE JULY 1, 2012; VERY EXCITING EVENT FOR AN AVID BUTTERFLY WATCHER!

DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

unsuccessful. A second brood was not to be.

Fast forward to May 3, 2013. Spring is in the air, and there are Milbert's and Comptons Tortoise Shell, Satyr Anglewing and Azure Blue butterflies flying everywhere, marking an auspicious start of another butterfly season.

THE LATEST ON MONARCHS

BY MONICA TANAKA, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, NATURE CANADA

The latest research on Monarch Butterflies shows a sharp decline in its numbers since monitoring began nearly 20 years ago. Part of the problem lies in the parallel decline of milkweed, a plant that Monarchs rely on for food and protection. Milkweed, often eradicated through the use of pesticides, is vital to the Monarch's ability to survive and reproduce.

What can you do to help? It's easier than you think! A wonderful way to help Monarch butterflies (and others) is to create a butterfly haven in your own backyard. Learn about the plants and flowers that Monarchs need in order to thrive. In spring, plant milkweed in your garden, along your driveway or at the cottage and give the Monarch a much-needed helping hand.

Need help getting started? Check out Nature Canada's excellent guide to planting milkweed and get ready to welcome home the Monarch! Go to the "Take Action: How to plant a Monarch-friendly Garden" section of the Nature Canada website: www.naturecanada.ca/take_action_monarch_friendly_garden.asp

"Weeds are just a plant out of place" – Ed Lawrence on the CBC's "Ontario Today".

This article is from the Nature Canada blog, April 5, 2013: www.naturecanadablog.blogspot.ca/2013_04_01_archive.html



A LOVELY, COLOURFUL MONARCH CATERPILLAR MUNCHING ON MILKWEED.

NATURE CANADA



PRONGHORN ANTELOPE, SOUTH OF LIBERAL ROAD,
WEST OF STETTLER, 25 MAY 2013.. CHARLES BIRD

Charley's Nature Note: Pronghorn

BY DR. CHARLES BIRD

This "Nature Note" is about Pronghorn Antelope (Antilocapra americana).

Last Saturday, we were having supper at our home in Erskine when we had an excited phone call from Linda Howitt-Taylor [Vice-President of Nature Alberta]. She had been on her way to Alix from Stettler when, 3-4 miles west of town, she spotted a

Pronghorn Antelope nibbling on grass in a field on the south side of Highway 12. She suggested that my wife Ann and I take a drive over there to see if we could spot it.

We left shortly afterwards, but by then the animal was nowhere in

"Pronghorn" – "Antelope" – "Pronghorn Antelope" – "American Pronghorn Antelope": all the same ungulate. While "Antelope" is the most common term used in Alberta to identify it, it is not an antelope nor is it closely related to the true antelopes of Africa and Asia. "Pronghorn" could be said to be the proper name. The present species – *Antilocapra americana* – is the only surviving member of a family that was confined to North America.

Dr. Charles "Charley" Bird is a university professor, publisher of 300+ scholarly articles, long-time advocate for Alberta conservation issues, active with Federation of Alberta Naturalists (Nature Alberta) and in particular with his local group, Buffalo Lake Naturalists Society (a Nature Alberta Corporate Club). In 1978, he received Nature Alberta's Loran Goulden Award. Charley's interests and expertise are broad indeed, but especially butterflies and moths; he was the lead author for Alberta Butterflies, published in 1995.

sight, so we drove around for a while and finally spotted it in the middle of a stubble field. I got a couple of photographs but the animal was a long way off. We then drove over to Glenn Nelson's home a few miles to the northeast to see if they had seen the animal. They hadn't, but they mentioned seeing a few several years before in their area. I had seen a small bunch 15 or so years ago on the western outskirts of Stettler. On the way home, we decided to try to find the animal again and this time we were successful and I was able to get the attached photograph.

Pronghorns are often seen farther south in the province, especially in the Brooks and Medicine Hat areas, but they seldom venture this far to the northwest. They are creatures of open prairies and fields, as opposed to deer which find shelter in woods. Their eyes are on the sides of their heads and this feature enables them to more easily spot predators. Many move south into southernmost Alberta and Montana as winter approaches, then return in the spring. Unlike deer, Elk and

Moose, they do not have the ability to jump over barbed wire fences and, instead, crawl underneath (but see the "Follow-up: #3" blurb).

Pronghorns have the scientific name *Antilocapra americana*. They belong to the Family *Antilocapridae* and are actually not antelope at all. I could write much more about them but, rather than doing so, I strongly suggest that you go to the Wikipedia source below. The book that is mentioned has recently been published and it is excellent. It would make a nice Father's Day present. I got mine through Ancestry.ca.

Keep on the watch. You never know what you might see. Two excellent sources:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pronghorn>

Naughton, Donna. 2012. *The Natural History of Canadian Mammals*. Canadian Museum of Nature and University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London. 784 pp. [ISBN 978-1-4426-4483-0].

"PRONGHORN FOLLOW-UP"

I often receive feedback when I send out my "nature notes". The following are some of the comments I received to "Pronghorn".

- (1) I received word that a fawn had been sighted with the doe.
- (2) Another correspondent wondered about the elevated rump hair on the doe in the image. Dr. Len Hills pointed out that this was a normal stress reaction. He also pointed out an important reference that some may wish to read: "J.A. Byers. 1997. *American Pronghorn: Social Adaptations and the Ghosts of Predators Past*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago."
- (3) Dennis Baresco commented that on rare occasions he has seen individual pronghorns jump over a barbed wire fence.

Ponderables

A little repentance just before a species goes over the brink is enough to make us feel virtuous. When the species is gone we have a good cry and repeat the performance.

ALDO LEOPOLD

Charley's Nature Note: Goldenrod Galls

BY DR. CHARLES BIRD

Yesterday evening (13 June 2013), our Buffalo Lake Naturalist Club had an outing at the Narrows on the SW side of Buffalo Lake AB, the twin purposes being to do some canoeing and to see the lady-slippers.

Both aims were achieved, there was no rain and the mosquito population was low. The purpose of this "nature note" is to discuss goldenrod galls.

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, a gall is "an abnormal outgrowth of plant tissue usually due to insect or mite parasites or fungi". At this time of year, the goldenrod plants are just starting to show up and they won't be fully leafed out and flowering until the latter part of August. However, we can see the dead stalks from last year's growth. These can frequently be observed to have a round swelling, or gall, in the upper part of the stem, as you can see in the attached photograph. We split this one lengthwise and, in the right hand half, a fat larva. If we had waited until August, we would have seen a round hole on the side of the gall where the immature chewed its way out. It later would have become an adult of a number of kinds of insects. In the present case, we don't know for sure what kind. We do know, however, that in Alberta, several species of micromoths form galls on goldenrod. One of these moths is shown.



CHARLES BIRD

The insects will locate young goldenrod plants and lay an egg in a stem. The plants will then have a cancer-type growth develop around the developing larva, thus forming the "gall". The plant tissue provides food for the larva and the hard shell around the gall provides protection. See the photo for an image of a newly formed gall.



NOTE THE GALL ON THE STEM IN THE LOWER THIRD OF THE PHOTO. CHARLES BIRD



Lots to see out there, keep looking. For further details of the various kinds of Goldenrod "galls", and the insects that form them, look at <http://bugguide.net/node/view/324012>.

"GOLDENROD GALLS FOLLOW-UP"

Elisabeth Beaubien sent the following comment after receiving the Goldenrod Galls "Nature Note":

"Back in the Gatineau Park, we naturalists used to entertain the school kids by cutting the gall open and popping the larva in our mouths, to the chorus of 'yeeoo!' and 'yuck!' from the students. We'd explain that they were just little morsels of fat, and that if you are starving in the woods, insects can be the best food (protein and fat source)."

I then wrote back to her and asked what they tasted like. The following was her reply.

"The tiny gall grubs were too small to have much flavour! Pretty bland if I recall. I recommend you try one (if only for audience reaction)!"

Investing in Bird Conservation Makes Economic Sense

FROM: BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEWS FROM THE BIRDLIFE PARTNERSHIP (JUNE 20, 2013)

Declines in birds across the globe are providing evidence of a rapid deterioration in the global environment that is affecting all life on earth – including people.

However, birds also tell us that saving the planet comes at a relatively small price – an investment that's vital to secure our own future.

These are some of the messages in a new report *State of the world's birds: indicators for our changing world* by the world's largest Partnership of conservation organisations, BirdLife International, who gathered in Ottawa to launch the report and unveil their vision for a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony.

The status of the world's birds continues to get worse with many species slipping towards extinction and others in steep decline. Birds are facing threats on many fronts but habitat destruction and degradation, owing to changes in agriculture, as well as direct impacts from invasive species are the major causes. However, birds also provide a lens

through which we can view all nature.

"Birds provide an accurate and easy to read environmental barometer that allows us to see clearly the pressures our current way of life are putting on the world's biodiversity", said Dr Leon Bennun, BirdLife's Director of Science, Information and Policy.

The BirdLife Partnership has identified the most important places for nature: Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). Over 12,000 have now been documented, with major recent advances in identifying IBAs in the marine environment.

IBAs represent the largest systematically identified global network of important sites for biodiversity but only 28% are completely covered by existing protected areas. Effectively protecting and managing all IBAs would cost \$57.8 billion per year. Combined with the cost of actions to improve the status of threatened species in all wildlife groups, conserving nature has been estimated to cost US\$80 billion per year.

"The total sums may sound large, but they are small in terms of government budgets, and they should be seen as investments, not bills – saving nature makes economic sense because of the payback in terms of services and benefits that people receive in return, from mitigating climate change to pollinating crops", said Dr Stuart Butchart, BirdLife's Head of Science.

"More fundamentally, biodiversity underpins our planetary life-support systems – in order to survive and prosper, we have to look after it."

The positive message from the report is that conservation works. Where threats are tackled through focused interventions, conservation can succeed. Some species have been brought back from the brink of extinction in spectacular fashion and degraded habitats can be restored.

"Effective nature conservation is affordable and it works. It's time to make it happen. The result will be a world that is in every way wealthier and healthier – and that remains diverse and beautiful too," concluded Dr Bennun.

The report, *State of the World's Birds*, is available in pdf form on the BirdLife International website (www.birdlife.org).



MARGARET ATWOOD AT THE BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL GATHERING, HOLDING A HARD COPY OF *STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIRDS*.

First Hand: And 3 More Great Wildlife Encounters

Anise Swallowtail Butterfly

Debbie and Alan Godkin were unsure of the identity of a particular caterpillar they had and photographed on July 7, 2013 in their yard near Westlock AB, so put a call out to Nature Alberta. Several folks responded, with Linda Brouwer giving the more exact identification: an Anise Swallowtail Fifth Instar Caterpillar (*Papilio zelicaon*).

Alan took the Anise Butterfly photo in May 2012. It was the first sighting of one in their yard. "Very exciting!" wrote Debbie.

Then, on July 10 of this year, Alan took a photo of another Anise caterpillar. Said Debbie: "It's the largest of the three we found, about 2" long. I think it

must be close to shedding its skin one last time before entering the pupa stage."

Debbie and Alan send, "thanks to NA for identifying the caterpillar."

ALL THE SWALLOWTAILS, INCLUDING THE ANISE, ARE EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



THE ANISE CATERPILLAR IS A BEAUTIFUL CREATURE (SEE ALSO THE PHOTO INSIDE THE BACK COVER). DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN





RICHARD KLAUKE

Black-billed Cuckoo

Richard Klauke photographed this Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) in his yard near Stry AB, which is approximately 12km south of Vilna. The bird was around for several days during the first week of August 2012.

Black-billed Cuckoos are infrequently reported in Alberta, though that may be because they are very secretive and thus rarely seen. Plus, by August they are already departing for South America. It is unfortunate that they are not as common as Robins, because Black-billed Cuckoos are one of the few species that eat hairy caterpillars, including tent caterpillars.

If you have a first-hand experience with nature, send it in and share it with other naturalists. After all – there are 8 million stories in the Nature City. Yours...could be one of them.

Trouble at the Pond

BY LEN PETTITT

An interesting story behind these two photos. The mother Common Merganser and family had entered a pond on which a pair of Red-necked Grebes had nested and were raising two

young. One of the adult Grebes, angered by the intrusion, went after the Mergansers who did a hasty march up the slope and over an isthmus into a pond on the opposite side – where they

were set upon by a different adult Grebe who must have felt it had owner's rights to it, as it and a mate had a nest there. I was in the right place at the right time to witness this event!

LEN PETTITT



LEN PETTITT



BOOK REVIEW

Look Up! Bird-Watching in Your Own Backyard

Charlotte Wasylik has written an excellent review of this excellent children's book. Her full review is on her blog: <http://prairiebirder.wordpress.com/2013/07/11/book-review-look-up-bird-watching-in-your-own-backyard/>. Below is an excerpt from her blog review.

"A few months ago, when I found out about the new nonfiction children's picture book, *Look Up!: Bird-Watching in Your Own Backyard* by Annette LeBlanc Cate

(Candlewick, March 2013), I thought it would be perfect for kids and especially for the Young Naturalists' Corner at the Snow Goose Chase at the end of April. I can't tell you what it would have meant to have this book when I was eight or nine years old — I'm pretty sure I would have become a serious birder even sooner. The book includes a lot of information I didn't come across until much later."



By Annette LeBlanc Cate. Candlewick, \$15.99 (64p) ISBN 978-0-7636-4561-8

Ponderables

To find the universal elements enough;
to find the air and the water exhilarating;
to be refreshed by a morning walk or an
evening saunter; to be thrilled by the stars
at night; to be elated over a bird's nest or
a wildflower in spring - these are some of
the rewards of the simple life.

JOHN BURROUGHS



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Up Close Naturally: The Raven

BY MARGOT HERVIEUX

One of our most conspicuous winter residents is the Raven (Corvus corax, official English name is “Common Raven”).

These large, black birds tend to gather in our towns and cities during the winter to take advantage of the smorgasbord of treats we leave behind in parking lots and back alleys. Humans aren't very fond of scavengers, perhaps because they were our competitors in the distant past, and as a result Ravens often get a bad rap. In many cultures, however, Ravens are seen as important links to the spirit world and are often very much revered.

Ravens and their Corvid cousins – crows, magpies and jays – are all intelligent birds and that often gets them into trouble with people. It is sometimes annoying to watch the family pet being outsmarted at the backyard food dish by a “bird”. All members of the crow family are well adapted opportunists, however, and we can hardly blame them for taking advantage of any meal that comes their way. And Ravens are flexible;

while primarily scavengers, they will also hunt mice, insects, and small birds as well as dining on berries.

A number of fascinating studies have been done on Raven intelligence. On one occasion, well-known Raven researcher Bernd Heinrich presented captive birds with bits of meat tied to a perch on a long string. Crows spent many minutes trying to figure out how reach the meat but never managed. Ravens, however, immediately began pulling up the string bit by bit, using their feet to hold it as they worked. To top it all off, when the bird was startled it dropped the meat rather than trying to fly off with it – now that is thinking ahead.

Anyone that spends time outdoors also knows that Ravens are “tuned in” to what's around them. Fire a gun and a scouting bird will fly by almost immediately. You will also notice Ravens cruising down the highway alert for road-kills and they always seem

to know when it is garbage day. Magpies and jays, though not quite as smart as Ravens, use their excellent memories to find food that they have stashed weeks and months before.

Like many intelligent creatures, Ravens also have a complex social structure. Birds in a particular area can recognize each other and communicate with an amazing variety of “gronks” and “squawks”. When food is found, word quickly spreads. Sharing does result in smaller individual meals, but it also means that each bird will have more chances to feed than if it always searches on its own.

Another sign that Ravens are smart birds is their ability to play. I have seen film footage on TV of Ravens sliding in the snow. It is also

The Raven is the official bird of the Yukon and of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.



Margot also writes a column for the Peace Country Sun, archived copies of which are available at www.peacecountrysun.com.

**A CLOSE LOOK AT A RAVEN REVEALS AN
ELEGANT AND PROUD BIRD.** DAVID ILIFF.

LICENSE: CC-BY-SA 3.0

amazing to watch them fly like acrobats above ridge tops or tall buildings on a windy day.

Ravens become quite secretive during the nesting season. They are long-lived birds (up to 20 years in the wild and 70 or more in captivity) and stay with the same partner year after year. By the end of April they have selected a nest site in a large conifer, on a sheltered cliff or on a man-made structure like a bridge. Four to seven chicks are in the nest for up to six weeks before heading off with their parents.

The next time you see a Raven, take a moment to watch what the



bird is up to. You are bound to be impressed by its ingenuity. To find out more about these fascinating creatures, be sure to read *Mind of the Raven* by Bernd Heinrich. You will never look at Ravens the same way again.

French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss proposed a structuralist theory that suggests the Raven (like the Coyote) obtained mythic status because it was a mediator animal between life and death. As a carrion bird, ravens became associated with the dead and with lost souls.

[FROM WIKIPEDIA]

Badger SYMPOSIUM 2013

The 1st International Badger Symposium will be held in Edmonton, October 1 – 3, 2013, at the Lister Centre, University of Alberta campus.

The objective of the symposium is to bring together researchers, conservationists and managers working on six badger species, including Alberta's American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*). The preliminary program is very impressive.

The symposium will be hosted by Alpha Wildlife Research & Management. For information and registration: www.alphawildlife.ca/2013badgersymposium/.



THE PAINTED LADY, THE WORLD'S MOST COMMON BUTTERFLY, IS ONLY COMMON IN ALBERTA ON A MAJOR MIGRATION YEAR WHEN IT COMES NORTH IN HUGE NUMBERS FROM THE SOUTHERN STATES AND MEXICO; THIS ONLY HAPPENS EVERY DECADE OR SO – AT LEAST, AS FAR AS WE KNOW. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



Painted Lady Migration Mystery

FROM BBC NATURE NEWS, OCT 12, 2012 (WWW.BBC.CO.UK/NATURE/)

A study in the United Kingdom has indicated that Painted Lady Butterflies (Vanessa sp) do not die in the country at the end of summer, as some believed, but make a high altitude escape south – one leg of a 14,400km (9,000mi) migration.

The discoveries are “astonishing”, says Richard Fox, a co-author of the paper. It is the first study to explain where the butterflies go as cold weather approaches.

“The question was: why don’t we see them?” said Fox. “The radar element of this study has given us an answer to that,” Mr. Fox told BBC Nature. “They are going southwards but they’re doing it out of human eyesight, up in the sky.”

The butterflies travelled at altitudes of over 1,000m but would descend to benefit from favourable winds, the study found. It showed that the butterflies flew at an average height of over 500m on their way south,

reaching speeds of up to 48km/hr (30 mph) in favourable winds. The radar images showed eleven million Painted Ladies entered the UK at high altitude in spring 2009; twenty six million were counted departing in the autumn.

It could take up to six successive generations for the species to complete a 14,400km round trip from tropical Africa to the Arctic Circle. For each new generation, the butterflies must find plants for their caterpillars to eat, and that is thought to be behind their need to keep moving.

The journey is much longer than that undertaken by the

famous Monarch Butterfly, which migrates between Mexico and Canada. “The migration of the Monarch in North America is kind of world famous as this wonder of nature and yet this annual migratory movement that Painted Ladies are undertaking is even greater,” said Mr. Fox.

This tiny creature weighing less than a gram, with a brain the size of a pin head, and no opportunity to learn from older, experienced individuals, undertakes an epic intercontinental migration.

“Could the same happen here [in Alberta]?” That’s the question Dr. David Evans Walter asks. Dr. Walters is with the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta.

Starry Nights

Summer/Fall (August to October)

BY JOHN MCFAUL

FEATURED CONSTELLATIONS: CARINA, VELA, AND PUPPIS

One of the great sea faring adventures of ancient Greek mythology is the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. Jason was the son of Aeson who was briefly the king of Boeotia, a central region of Greece. Shortly after Aeson inherited the throne, his younger brother Pelias forced him out and became king.

After many years, Aeson's son Jason decided to avenge the injustice that his father had suffered. He went to Pelias and asked him to relinquish the throne to Aeson. Pelias decided to ask Jason to prove himself by returning the Golden Fleece from the far off land of Colchis. The Golden Fleece was once the coat of Aries the Ram which had saved the children Phryxus and Helle from certain death at the hand of their stepmother Ino.

Jason accepted this challenge and set sail on the great ship Argos Navis. His crewmates included many heroes such as Hercules and the twins Castor and Pollux. The crew was known as the Argonauts. After many amazing encounters with various mythical beings and dangers, they managed to return the fleece back to Boeotia. Upon returning to Boeotia, Jason's treacherous wife Medea tricked the daughters of Pelias to murder their father believing that Medea would rejuvenate him to a more youthful vigor. After this great voyage the goddess Athena placed the ship into the realm of the stars.

Argos Navis was one of the original 48 constellations charted by Claudius Ptolemy. However due to its large size it was divided up in 1752 to form the constellations Carina (the keel), Vela (the sail) and Puppis (the stern). Of these constellations only the northern part of Puppis may be seen from Alberta. It appears just below Canis major (the great dog) very low in the winter sky in January.

The second brightest star in our night sky after Sirius is the star Canopus.



It is the principal star in the constellation Carina. Canopus was used by mariners for navigation purposes and in modern times it has been used for celestial navigation by spacecraft, including the astronauts of the Apollo program. A number of extra solar planets have been discovered revolving around stars in the constellation Puppis. In Vela is the remnant of a supernova explosion that is thought to have been visible from earth 10,000 years ago.

CELESTIAL HAPPENINGS

Sun: Rise – Aug. 1 (05:50 MDT), Sept. 1 (06:44 MDT), Oct. 1 (07:36 MDT)
Set – Aug. 1 (21:29 MDT), Sept. 1 (20:23 MDT), Oct. 1 (19:10 MDT)
Times are for Edmonton; Autumnal Equinox Sept. 22nd

Moon: Full – Aug. 20th, Sept. 19th, Oct. 18th
New – Aug. 6th, Sept. 5th, Oct. 4th

Planets: **Mercury** makes its best morning appearance during the first week of August low above the ENE horizon. At this time it is the bottom of a planetary alignment with Mars in the middle and Jupiter at the top.

Venus continues to appear low in the SW sky just after sunset. It is near the crescent moon on September 8th and October 7th. On September 17th it lies just below Saturn.

Mars rises in the early hours in the east from August to October. The moon will be close to Mars on September 30th. On October 15th and 16th it is very close to the bright star Regulus in the constellation Leo.

Jupiter is seen high above the eastern horizon before sunrise in the Gemini constellation. The moon is nearby on Aug 31st, September 28th and October 25th.

Saturn may be seen very low in the west after sunset in early August. On September 17th it is just above Venus. By the end of September it is lost in the glare from the sun.

Meteor Shower: The Perseid Meteor Shower peaks in the late evening and early morning of August 12th into the 13th. 50 meteors/hour. Orionid Meteor Shower peaks on October 21st. 25 meteors/hour

The rate of meteors observed is for dark skies well away from city lights and with no Moon.

CLUBS PAGE



Nature Alberta has forty member clubs from across the province: ten Corporate Clubs, which make up the Board of Directors; and thirty Affiliate Clubs. All the clubs do a great job in living up to their naturalist and conservation mandate; below are just three of the Affiliates. The descriptions are directly from their websites, and visiting them is a wonderful way to get to know what naturalists across Alberta are up to.

Ellis Bird Farm

Located in the heart of central Alberta, Ellis Bird Farm is both a working farm as well as a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Mountain Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and other native cavity-nesting birds.

Drop-in visitors and tour groups are welcome during the summer months, when we are open to the public. We invite you to stroll the trails, enjoy the beautiful gardens, see the world's largest outdoor collection of bluebird nest boxes,

take a tour out to our bluebird trail, visit the Visitor Centre and linger in the Tea House.

Butterfly gardens, orchards, native wildflower gardens, hummingbird gardens and water gardens are linked by a network of trails, including an extensive wheelchair path. We invite you to visit us! Enjoy a country drive in Central



Alberta and find your way to Ellis Bird Farm. There is no charge to visit, but donations are welcomed.

Check our website (www.ellisbirdfarm.ca) for upcoming events and programs, a virtual tour and the latest news.

Crowsnest Conservation Society

Crowsnest Conservation Society is a diverse group of individuals with a passion for nature and the beautiful landscapes in the Crowsnest Pass and surrounding area. We share a strong conservation ethic and a desire to integrate this into the mainstream of our community. We are active in undertaking and supporting programs that preserve, protect

and enhance nature and the landscapes we cherish, while ensuring a vibrant growing community. We are a registered charitable organization.

Our Mission is: Valuing and connecting people and nature for a healthy future in the Crowsnest Pass and beyond.



RAYMOND TOAL/WWW.CROWSNESTCONSERVATION.CA

Check our website (www.crowsnestconservation.ca) to learn more about our vision, accomplishments and activities.

Calgary Bird Banding Society

The Calgary Bird Banding Society (CBBS) was incorporated on 22 March 1995 with the following objectives:

- Quantify long-term population trends of Neotropical migratory birds using constant effort mist-netting;
- Promote involvement and expertise in bird banding; and
- Promote conservation of Neotropical migratory birds by fostering public awareness and understanding of Neotropical migratory birds.

The primary project of the CBBS is monitoring of migratory birds at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary (IBS), a federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary. IBS has long been known as an



important migration site for Neotropical migrants. Located within 80km of the Rocky Mountains, the site is an integral component of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network.

As of 1998 the Calgary Bird Banding Society's Inglewood Bird Sanctuary site is a fully designated member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) a cooperative initiative of the member stations, Canadian Wildlife Service and Bird Studies Canada. This formal association



BANDING A WESTERN TANAGER AT CYPRESS HILLS PROVINCIAL PARK BANDING STATION

of migrant monitoring sites across Canada significantly enhances the value of the work conducted at each site.

For a whole raft of information on the doings of CBBS, plus photos, visit our website at: www.calgarybirdbandingsociety.org.

Advertising in *Nature Alberta*

Nature Alberta is now accepting a limited number of advertisements for future issues. Ad rates vary from \$35 (business card size) to \$249 (full page), X2 for colour.

Full details, including rates and sizes, are available at:

online: www.naturealberta.ca

email: na@naturealberta.ca

phone: (780) 427 – 8124

Telling Sparrows Apart

On her June 2, 2013 "Prairie Birder" blog, Charlotte Wasylik mentions a site to assist any birder in identifying sparrows.

As she wrote: "Some more advanced birders overlook sparrows because they are just 'Little Brown Jobs'. For novice birders, sparrow species can be very tough to identify. And to others, sparrows don't have the flashy plumage of

warblers or complex songs of orioles. But sparrows are very beautiful birds if you really look at them and take the time to tell them apart.

"For those who would like some more help with sparrow identification, there's

a very good article by Marcel Gahbauer on telling sparrow species apart, at the Migration Research Foundation/McGill Bird Observatory website (www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/id/sparrows.html).

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ANISE SWALLOWTAIL CATERPILLAR (SEE STORY, PGS 32 & 39). DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN

RED ADMIRAL. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



PAINTED LADY. DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



THE MOURNING CLOAK CATERPILLAR SPINS A SILK PAD, ANCHORS ITS HIND END TO IT AND HANGS HEAD DOWN FOR A DAY BEFORE SHEDDING ITS SKIN ONE LAST TIME TO ENTER THE PUPA STAGE.
DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



MOURNING CLOAKS PREFER SAP, DECAYING FRUIT, EXTRACTING NUTRIENTS FROM MUD PUDDLES AND ON OCCASION NECTAR FROM FLOWERS.DEBBIE AND ALAN GODKIN



Nature *gallery*



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