

The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
2017 winter solstice



web image

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Can you find a good kestrel picture [our local species, the American Kestrel] for this spot? If so, please email it to the newsletter at rmnatskestrel@gmail.com.

Devil's Hole

October 5

Hike successful, but a bit of a mystery remains

Not deterred by the name, seven Rocky Mountain Naturalist Club members set out for Devil's Hole and lived to tell the tale. Leader Gerry Warner had it more-or-less right this time, leading his intrepid crew to the trailhead off Holmes Road a few km northeast of Ft. Steele in the dry-as-dust Rocky Mountain Trench.



looking over the bluff

in or out, but the water in the infamous "hole" was so clear that despite its green tint the bottom of the pond could be clearly observed from our lofty height.



what they saw down below

However, when we reached the top of the big rock bluff overlooking the “hole” we could clearly hear a gurgling sound below us that must have been the source of the water in the Devil’s Hole. According to an email I received from geologist Lyle Grisedale, the Devil’s Hole lies inside “an old fault composed of Moyie intrusive sills of gabbro or diorite igneous rock.” If you want to know what that means, you’ll have to ask Lyle.

After a lunch enjoying the view of the vivid autumn colors up and down the canyon, Greg Ross scrambled down a steep slope facing the Rockies directly below Lakit Lookout (far below) and got close to the Devil’s Hole and could hear the water gurgling into it but no sight of the water itself. The only conclusion? The water is running underground and only surfaces at the Devil’s Hole before going its merry way underground again.



Everyone seemed to enjoy the field trip, and a few of us vowed the next time we go to the Devil’s Hole we’ll do it right by hiking all the way down to the “hole” itself and see if we can find Old Sparky himself and that burning fire he’s always stoking with his pitchfork.

Any takers?

story and photos by Gerry Warner

Hobgoblin Lake and Hobgoblin Hill

October 10

The hike to Hobgoblin Lake is along a well used bicycle trail. It goes from Kettle Lake in the Cranbrook Community Forest up through a moist forest ecosystem and over a rocky pass to Migor Junction. Then the Hobgoblin Trail goes about four km across private land,



Margaret Lindsay

On the way we stopped for a picture by a big old downed tree, probably a ponderosa pine, judging by the spiral grain and heavy branches.

Eventually we arrived at the lake. The lake has



Fisher Peak

Paula Rogers

through dry forest and grassland ecosystems. Seven of us showed up to hike out that way.



The Steeples

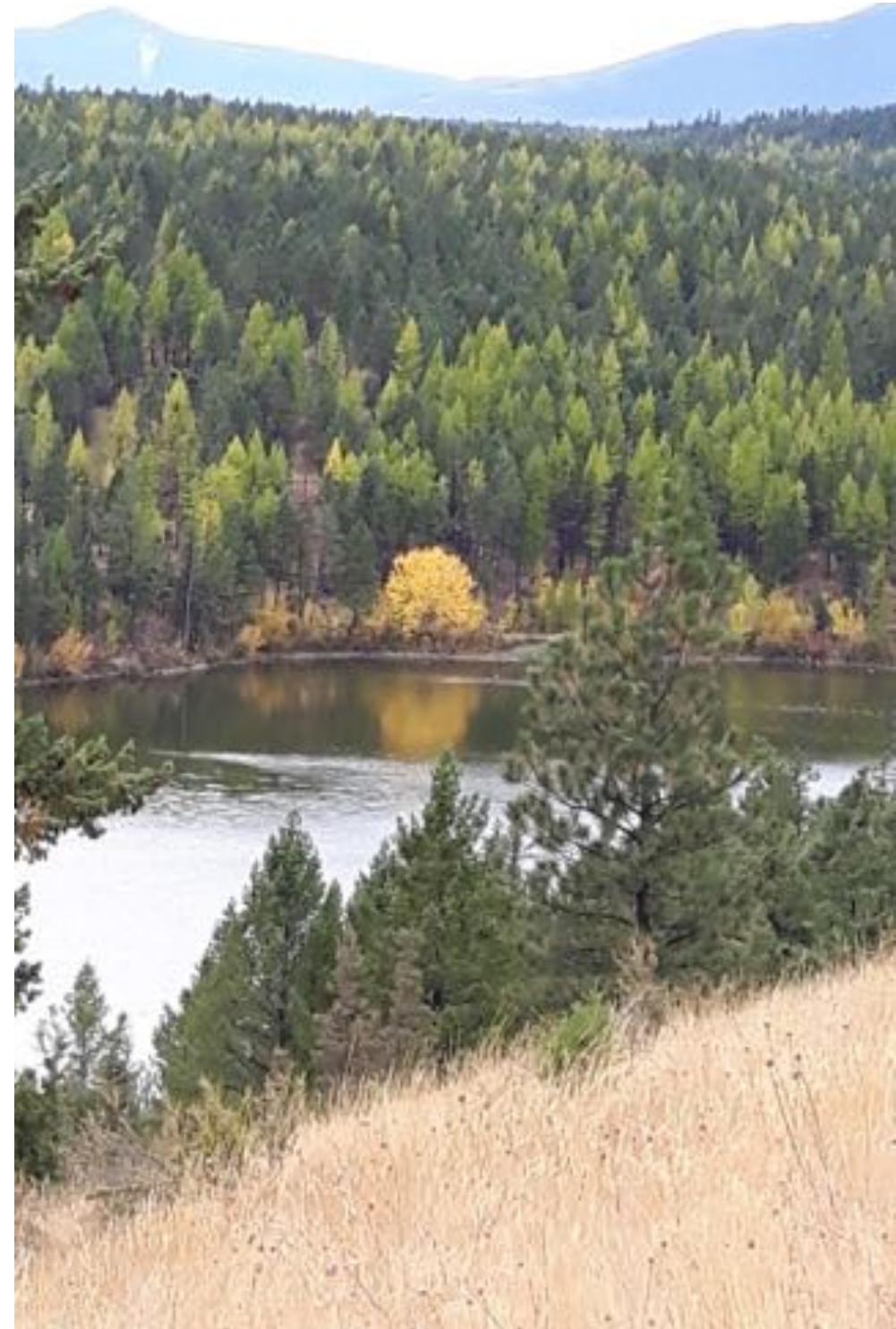
Paula Rogers



hiking down
Hobgoblin Hill
Paula Rogers

Hill across the highway. After that high point, we came back down to the lake, retracing our steps back into the community forest and to our starting point at Kettle Lake.

Susan Walp



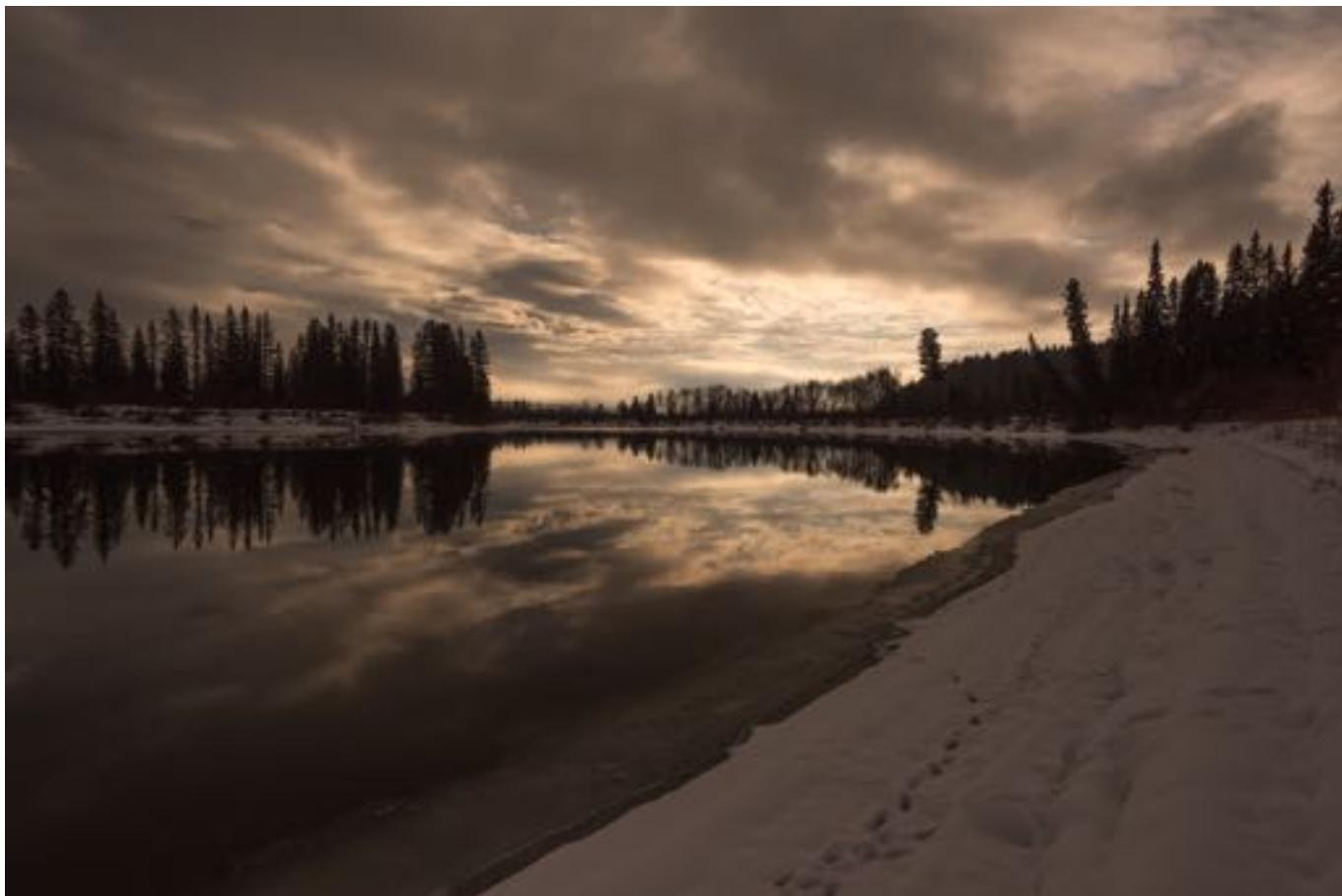
Hobgoblin Lake

Margaret Lindsay

Cherry Creek

November 12

Today,
November 12,
I led a hike to
the Cherry
Creek Nature
Conservancy.
Eleven
members of
the RMNats
joined me.
We went
down to the
south end
wetlands then
along the old
McGinty trail
to the place
where the ore
from the



North Star mine in Kimberley was loaded on to stern wheelers and taken to the US for smelting. From there we headed north towards the old homestead that was down there. Along the way we observed eight Bald Eagles and about a dozen ravens that had congregated there. The possibility of some dead animal was the suspected attraction. After lunch on the Cherry Creek Bridge we continued north toward the artificial pond where we see Wood Ducks in the summer. We then walked to the north end of the conservancy,



six Bald Eagles and nest



lunch on the Cherry Creek Bridge

observing the work being done down there to improve the wetlands. At the river a flock of Snow Buntings flew by, much to our delight. After exploring more of the wetland improvements we returned to our vehicles. Total hike was nine kilometres. The weather was overcast but very warm, which made for pleasant walking through about eight cm of wet snow. This was the first time down there for most of the people in attendance.

Lyle Grisedale story and photos



Bluebird Nest Boxes



The 2017 bluebird nest box project is largely complete.

For many years, long-time member Art Gruenig built hundreds of carefully crafted boxes and guided the establishment of many of today's bluebird trails. In addition to periodic sales of boxes, Art encouraged the tenants of the condo block he was managing



to set aside their returnable containers. Using revenues from returning these containers, he purchased materials and built boxes with no expense to the club. When Art retired we struggled to continue to repair and construct enough boxes for our needs.



Our project requires club funds and volunteer labour. At present, we have built and stained over 130 boxes at a cost of about \$9 each. Over half the boxes are of high quality in terms of function and appearance, and are suitable for sale locally and to other naturalist clubs. The remainder will be used to maintain existing bluebird trails. A user fact sheet will accompany each box sold, and revenue will be returned to the club treasury.

One needed addition to our boxes is some sort of identification and reference to our website. This could be in the form of a metal plate, brand or stencil. We need someone to develop and execute a plan.

With regular minor maintenance, we anticipate a life of up to 20 years for these bluebird boxes. It is anticipated that construction of about 100 boxes will be needed about every two years. At present, several Rocky Mountain Naturalist members continue to use the remaining materials to construct and refurbish an additional 20 boxes.

During the project, photographs were taken; these will be used in a dedicated section of our website.



Thank you to Ron and Leslie, who provided shop space and significant contribution of labour. Bird box builders included Dave, Doug L., Doug S., Sandy O., Ron J., Daryl, Jo Ellen, Gretchen, Tom J., Dan, Debbie and Marianne. Thank you to Rocke, Dave, Bard McGinn, Daryl and a mystery person for plywood donations and Bob for hauling boxes. Hope I didn't miss anyone. Completed boxes are now stored on our property.



Daryl Calder
photos by Marianne Nahm



Steeples Lookout

November 30

On a mostly cloudy day, ten RMNats followed a meandering pathway through a forest of pine, Douglas-fir and the occasional rocky mountain juniper. Along the way, the path passed through a small grove of pine trees bearing the signs of Christmas tree culture from many years before. Climbing steadily upwards we finally reached the small summit where a beautiful vista greeted us, along with a sturdily built wooden bench for those who needed a rest.

Although the clouds

obscured the top of the Steeples, a lovely view of the hills and knolls around us and the valley spread out far below was enjoyed by all. A small herd of elk could be seen in the distance grazing

on the meadow grasses while a lone western red squirrel chattered its displeasure at us invading its forest. A few ravens were spotted gliding on the breeze while the occasional chickadee and red breasted nuthatch let their presence be known.



article and
pictures by
Paula Rogers

Internet Links

The website for Rocky Mountain Naturalists can be found at:

<http://www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/>

It has a calendar of events, a blog with photographs, archived newsletters, and more.

Make sure you are up to date on the latest techniques for keeping yourselves safe in the wild. Visit this site now and then to see how the science has given us new information.

www.wildsafebc.com

B.C. Big Tree Registry <http://bcbigtree.ca>

Curlew locations <http://birdscanada.org/research/speciesatrisk/index.jsp?targetpg=lbcu>

Mystery Photo from fall issue



Nobody sent an identification to rnnatskestrel@gmail.com. There must be somebody who knows what it is. Maybe there will be some information in the spring issue of *The Kestrel*.

Mystery Photo: Where is this?



(hint: It's in Cranbrook.)

Susan Walp

Can anybody identify this location? Please submit your answer to rmnatskestrel@gmail.com by March 1. The answer will be reported in the next issue of *The Kestrel*.

Please submit your mystery photo and write-up to
rmnatskestrel@gmail.com by March 1 for the spring issue of the
newsletter.

Club Information

Executive

President	Virginia Rasch
Past President	George Rogers
Vice President	Helga Knote
Secretary	Marianne Nahm
Treasurer	Linda Hastings
BC Nature Director	Greg Ross



Committees and Club Representatives

Little Big Day	Greg Ross
Christmas Bird Counts	Dianne Cooper
Elizabeth Lake	Stewart Wilson
Field Trips	Paula Rogers
Membership	Sue Ross
Presentations	Paula and Marianne
Club Camp	Jackie Leach and Ruth Goodwin

Bylaws and Policies	Virginia Rasch
Invasive Species	Frank Hastings
Trench Society	Jo Ellen Floer
Bluebirds	Marianne
Turtle Monitoring	Greg Ross
Newsletter	Susan Walp

Field Trips

Leader responsibilities:

- Take radios and first aid kits.
- Find a replacement leader if necessary.
- Keep the group together.
- All leaders must have trip waiver forms [available from Paula] in case any non-members come along on the trip. Non-members must sign, and forms must be returned to Paula. Non-member insurance costs \$2.00.

Make sure everybody leaves the parking area safely.

Get someone to write an account of the field trip for the newsletter. Send it in to rmanatskestrel@gmail.com, along with pictures, as soon as possible.

Carpoolers: Please offer to chip in for gas. On a round trip with a driving time of under an hour the compensation should be \$5.00 and on a round trip with a driving time of an hour or more the compensation should be \$10.00.

No dogs on field trips, please

Upcoming Events

These are events planned at the present time. Watch your inbox for more details, possible changes and additional events.

Wednesday 27 December Cranbrook Christmas Bird Count

Saturday 30 December Kimberley Christmas Bird Count

RMNats meetings - every two months, on the third Wednesday of odd-numbered months

Next meetings - Wednesday 17 January

Wednesday 21 March