

The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
2023 summer solstice



Lyle Grisedale

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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.

Annual Memorial Hike at Wasa

May 7

A group of 11 keen Naturalists met at the Wasa Provincial Park entrance to meander the Loop Trail at the far end of the Park. The group was led by the very knowledgeable and informative Marianne Nahm and Gretchen Whetham. The well worn path cut through ponderosa pine



Bob Whetham

"What's this?"



Bob

the process of plant identification

and Douglas-fir forest and coulees, eventually making its way up to a level bench of land. A spectacular view of Wasa Lake, the Kootenay River and the Purcell Mountains was observed from this lovely vantage point.

Our progress was slow as we identified and shot photos of numerous plants and shrubs along our route. The colours of

the abundantly growing longleaf phlox were particularly enchanting while arrowleaf balsamroot cheered us on with its bright yellow sunny face. All in all 31 different species of plants and shrubs were identified along our route.

In previous years this walk was a memorial to Mildred White, a founding member of the Rocky Mountain Naturalists, mentor to youth and avid recorder of local flora and fauna whose data now resides at the Royal B.C.



Bob Whetham

sharing memories of past members



Bob

arrow leaved balsamroot brightening the forest

Museum. Four more former naturalists are now included in this tribute: Tony Wideski, Anne Redfern, Peter Davidson and Art Gruenig. Marianne and Gretchen spoke briefly about each of these former naturalists, their involvement with the RM Nats as well as on their love of nature and their contributions toward preserving it.

Sixteen species of birds were recorded along



Bob Whetham

the high point of the trail overlooking Wasa



Bob

fairy bells



Bob

gathered at the Wasa Park Loop Trail sign

our walk, including a Cassin's Vireo, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, an Osprey and an eagle, to name a few.

Paula Rogers

2023 Mildred White Scholarship



photo courtesy of COTR

Marianne presenting the Mildred White Scholarship to Benjamin Rogers

Benjamin Rogers was again the recipient of the \$1000.00 Mildred White Scholarship provided by the Rocky Mountain Naturalists Club. Ben is working towards a degree in geology. As part of his student life at COTR (College of the Rockies), Ben has been initiating an outdoor club with a focus on getting International students involved in the outdoor environment of the East Kootenay.

Marianne Nahm

Elizabeth Lake Turtle Day

April 26

Our annual Elizabeth Lake Turtle Day was a great success. The Rocky Mountain Naturalists partnered with the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program to provide a great environmental education experience for six classes from three local elementary schools. Students participated in three stations to learn about the life cycle of the western painted turtle. Later in the day, the event was open to the public, who embraced the event enthusiastically with about 800 people



Claude Rioux

demonstrating at the sandbox



Greg Ross

after Turtle Day

attending. (There had not been a public event for three years.) Thank you to Angus from FWCP, two Ministry biologists and the 23 volunteers from the Naturalists.

Marianne Nahm

Club Camp 2023

May 30 - June 2

Columbia Headwaters

May 30

Our Club Camp began Tuesday afternoon at the headwaters of the mighty Columbia River located on the outskirts of Canal Flats Village.

Colin Cartwright, a lifelong resident, was one of the community leaders who designed and built the Headwaters Interpretive Trail. He led our group, explaining the history of the area. We observed many plants, with displays of yellow orchids (*Cypridedium parviflorum*) being a highlight. There were interesting birds and even one largescale sucker, a native fish species, which we identified thanks to an adventurous gent who waded into the stream to retrieve the dead fish for closer inspection. After our walk, the group headed to Spruce Grove Campground to set up camp.



Marianne Nahm

Janice Strong

Early Birding

May 31

'Now that's cute', I mentioned to myself when mother Common Goldeneye, followed by four fluffy ducklings, slid by. The family was riding the swift current of the upper Columbia River where it curved around our campsite. It was 20 minutes before Early Birding at Club Camp 2023 was due to start, and I wanted to be prepared in advance of the arrival of my fellow birders at 7 am.

So many birds were singing and active, I would certainly need help getting them all onto a list. Fifteen of us wandered along the perimeter of the Spruce Grove Campground, which, with its own little oxbow lake, is set in a grassy area surrounded by mixed woods and a tangle of brush. From hummingbirds to catbirds, and wood ducks to kingfishers, there was never a dull moment. Warblers, flycatchers, sparrows, kinglets and eagles attracted our attention. When all the campground birds, about 50 species, were added up at the end of the three day camp, some of us were thinking the same thing: Maybe we should camp here more often!

Daryl Calder

Lower Findlay Loop

May 31



Claude Rioux

Osprey with fish

why do creatures do what they do.

We hiked ten kilometres at a leisurely pace along the Lower Findlay Loop on old roads. Gretchen led the satisfying trip. As we walked with enthusiastic people from various backgrounds, we discussed all manner of interesting topics. Our hike wound through varied ecosystems. Jo Ellen described a grove of planted ponderosa pines, about sixty years old. In another area, leaves of an aspen forest shimmered in summertime

“Look. It’s got a fish,” she said, lowering her binoculars. We lifted our lenses to see the Osprey circling several times high above us. We were far from the water, so our group of keen Naturalists erupted with questions.

“How come it doesn’t just land, feed its young or even stop and just eat the fish?” That’s what I love about observing nature. There are always so many questions:

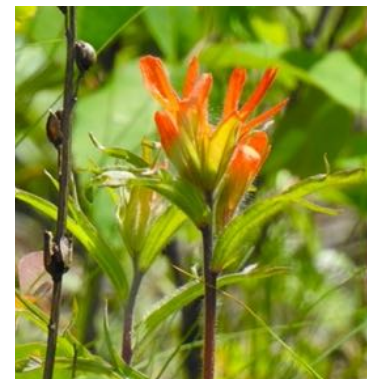


Janice Strong



Claude Rioux

female elk that we spotted trotting
along a fence line before it jumped over to meld into the forest



Claude
red paintbrush



Claude Rioux
male Mountain Bluebird,
keeping an eye on us



Claude
wild rose blooming and attracting pollinators



Claude
mushrooms bursting out of the hard
packed dirt road



Claude
male Red Crossbill, among a little flock
of females and juveniles



Janice Strong

breezes. At this time of year, the vibrant greens of new leaves glowed with backlit sunlight. The hike also featured Purcell Mountain views when we strolled from the forest into vast open vistas—in the warm sunshine.

Janice Strong

Wednesday Evening Talk

May 31



Colin Cartwright, our Wednesday evening guest speaker, grew up and continues to live in Canal Flats. He is a three time author, with books about back country packing on horses, the White Swan Road, and Kootenays bears (about his personal experiences with bears). Colin gave his talk with naturalists in mind, sharing stories about unusual plants and wildlife activity as well as high country packing trips. It was interesting that his prairie raised horse wasn't fazed around bears whereas his local horses wanted nothing to do with them!

Jo Ellen Floer

Walks in Columbia Lake Provincial Park

June 1

As we walked, the experienced birders shared their extensive knowledge. Bird sound filled the air. Hearing the array of species surrounding us made us more aware of the diversity and lively avian world around us. Lyle led eleven hikers, and Jo Ellen instructed the other ten. Both groups walked the same varied loop but from different directions.



Claude Rioux



Janice

The hike began traversing a grassland on a wide road. Then we ducked onto a single track and meandered downhill

toward Columbia Lake. The wind blew whitecaps on the lake, and waves sloshed against the stony shore. Lyle had heard from others that there was an archeological Ktunaxa cooking pit, or a fire pit for cooking food, near the lakeside. He showed us a three metre wide circle scooped into the ground. It all made for a fine hike.



Janice Strong



Claude Rioux

Janice Strong

Spirit Trail hike

June 1



wild blue flax



The views over Columbia Lake were lovely. Spring flowers and butterflies were everywhere, adding colour wherever we looked.

Claude Rioux



looking among the wolf willows

Fairmont Meadows

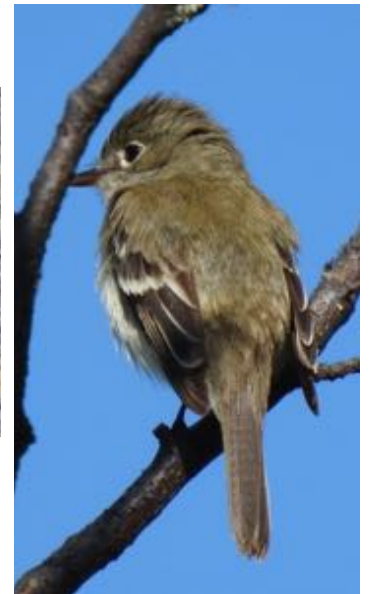
June 2



swallowtail butterfly on wild honeysuckle



Pileated Woodpecker



Least Flycatcher



Eastern Kingbird

We were surrounded by a chorus of bird song, most from birds we could not see as they sang from the comfort of the greenery. Wilson's Snipe and Sora were abundant, as were flycatchers, woodpeckers and butterflies.

photos and writing by
Claude Rioux



Alpine butterfly



Cedar Waxwing



Columbia River

Hoodoo Hike

June 2



Western Tanager

audubon.org

One of the last outings was on Friday morning with nine Naturalists hiking 3.3 kilometer round trip to the Hoodoos and back. We counted 18 species of birds and saw a very photogenic hare. Of the birds sighted, three of the highlights were a Western Tanager, a Dusky Grouse and many White-throated Swifts flying



abcbirds.org

Dusky Grouse



avesphoto.com

White-throated Swifts

around the cliffs. The view from the top was spectacular,

looking down on Dutch Creek and Columbia Lake. There were many spring flowers in bloom along the path, and Jo Ellen spotted a patch of ricegrass on the dry slope. On our way back down the trail everyone participated in pulling out and bagging salsify, a noted invasive plant.

Judy Bodaly



arizona.edu

ricegrass



tallpinesranch.blogspot.com

salsify

Observations from a Nest Box Trail

According to early reports she has received from bird box monitors, Marianne Nahm reports that there appears to be lots of activity from both species of bluebirds (western and mountain) which arrived ahead of tree swallows.



female tree swallow sitting on a nest in bird box
off Pighin Road, Wycliffe



Moments after taking the picture of the female
on the nest, she flew off revealing six 2/3 day
old chicks.

Unlike tree swallow nests which tend to have a bed of grasses and feathers, bluebird nests have a bed of grasses.



a nest with five 1/2 week old bluebird chicks

Stewart Wilson, photos and writing



another nest with five 3 week old chicks which should be fledging soon

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

Bird Observations <https://ebird.org>

Cranbrook Community Forest <https://www.cranbrookcommunityforest.com/>

East Kootenay Invasive Species Council (EKISC) <https://www.ekisc.com/>

About Field Trips

Leaders:

Radios and first aid kits are available from Paula or Marianne.

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 rmnatskestrel@gmail.com, along with pictures, as soon as possible.

At present, the Club is not organizing carpooling. However, feel free to organize your own carpools from the meeting area if you feel comfortable with that.

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

Events and Activities

These are the events planned at the present time. Watch your inbox for notices of events and activities, or check the calendar on the website.

Early Birding

Wednesday mornings

See RMN Calendar on our website.

Club Information

Executive

President	Marianne Nahm
Vice President	Betty Baker
Past President	Helga Knot
Secretary	Theckla Sawicki
Treasurer	Judy Brunner
BC Nature Director	Stewart Wilson
Director at Large	Claude Rioux



birders at Club Camp
Janice Strong

Committee Coordinators and Representatives

Bats	Scott Bodaly
Bluebirds	Marianne Nahm
Bylaws and Policies	Gretchen Whetham
Christmas Bird Count	Dianne Cooper
Club Camp	Ruth Goodwin
Communications	Susan Walp
Duck Box Monitoring	Katrin Powell/Greg Ross
Early Morning Birding	Daryl Calder
East Kootenay Invasive Species Council	Frank Hastings
Elizabeth Lake	Stewart Wilson
Field Trips	Paula Rogers
Internal Communications	Paula Rogers
Kootenay Conservation Program	Helga Knot
Little Big Day	Greg Ross
Membership	Hasi Oates
Newsletter	Susan Walp
Personal Information/Privacy	Jim Hurvid
Presentations	Marianne Nahm/Paula Rogers
Ram Creek Ecological Reserve	Marianne Nahm
Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee	Ian Adams
Records	Helga Knot
Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society	Jo Ellen Floer
Skookumchuck Prairie IBA	Dianne Cooper
Sustainable Cranbrook	Stewart Wilson
Turtle Monitoring	Greg Ross
Upper Columbia Basin Environmental Collaborative	Hilary Anderson
Webmasters	Dianne Cooper

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

Next meetings -

Wednesday	19	July	7:00 pm
Wednesday	20	September	7:00 pm
Wednesday	15	November	7:00 pm