

The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
2023 spring equinox



Neal Weisenberg

Inside this Issue

Field Trips	
Wilks Woods Snowshoe	2
St. Eugene Birdwatching	6
Winter Social	7
Internet Links	11
Information about Field Trips	11
Upcoming Events and Activities	11
Club Information	12
Executive	
Committees	
Meetings	

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.

Wilks Woods Wander

What Better Way to Welcome the New Year?

January 1

The mild New Year's Day weather made for a pleasant snowshoe trek through the conifer forests of the Wilks Woods up to Whisky Jack Hill. On a flatter part of the steep slopes of Huff 'n' Puff (aka Thigh-master), with its views over the Buttes, Bootleg Mountain and the St. Mary Valley, we cooked wieners over the firewood that Daryl C. had hauled up earlier.



Dina Hanson

wiener roast in Wilks Woods



Dean Chatterson

Dean up on top in the deep snow

While roasting the wieners on sticks, and enjoying Marianne's hot apple juice and mulled wine, local avid hiker, Dean Chatterson, passed by and stopped for a visit. This gave us an opportunity to learn more of Dean's history in this area.

Dean was raised in Kimberley and, from an early age, enjoyed exploring the out-of-doors. On summer jobs, he worked in the Matthew Creek area for Cominco's mineral exploration program, cutting horse trails up to sites where they set up exploration camps. On another summer



Dina Hanson



Dean Chatterson

assignment, he did more trail-cutting, plus diamond drilling, up Dewar Creek, where he added his skills as a camp cook and dish-washer.

Later, as a teacher, Dean integrated outdoor education into his regular curriculum. On a memorable 10-day camping and eco-studies trip, he took his class to Expo '86 in Vancouver, making stops in Creston to do field studies of wetlands; Kootenay Pass for mountain studies; desert studies in Osoyoos; and in Manning Park, they studied the temperate rainforest.



Dean

In 2003, Dean and his wife moved to Six-Mile Lane and he started exploring his new backyard. He spent years hiking dozens of different trails, following game paths, clearing deadfall. When he discovered Whisky Jack Hill, a passion was born. Dean has made over 1600 trips to this destination. He has improved the trail and constructed a bench, securely affixed to the nearby rocks, with a built-in cover so there's always a dry seat. In 2008, Dean began gathering and positioning rocks, two per trip, to create a 3-metre tall cairn, its arms outstretched to welcome the sun. He leaves a guest book for hikers to add their names and comments. After a hike up from the trailhead, these charming features create a welcoming spot to stop, and relax, on Whisky Jack Hill.

On our descent, George, with a photographer's eye, was admiring the way the sun's rays lit up the bark of a conifer,



Dean Chatterson



Dean



Marianne Nahm

up on top



Dean



Dean Chatterson



Dina Hanson

when he spotted a cow elk passing by, a short distance from us, sharing her home with us.

2023, The Year of the Rabbit. A most apt time, and place, to snowshoe. We didn't see any snowshoe hares, but did cross their tracks in the snow, with (seemingly contradictory) the larger, elongated pair of hind feet just AHEAD of the smaller, rounder fore feet.

And, as we enter this Year of the Rabbit (or Hare) on the Chinese calendar, we wish you, and all of Earth's inhabitants, the same Longevity, Peace and Prosperity.

Dina Hanson



Dean



Marianne Nahm

the St. Eugene birdwatchers

We met in the parking lot and explored the app Merlin, which can identify the birds that are not visible. It's true that it does make some mistakes though! After a few laughs about that, 11 birders, led by Marianne Nahm, headed toward the St. Mary River. The path went through a variety of conditions but afforded us plenty of spots to stop and listen and look for who was in the water, on rocks and in the trees. Thirteen species were recorded to ebird. The first were 2 pair of mallards. Next we spent a good amount of time following 2 dippers that were not shy at all. Perhaps they enjoyed being photographed. After

returning via the edge of the golf course, we continued toward the bridge. Lucky us to have seen American Goldfinch and Pine Siskins along the way. We were delighted to see, way off on the farm land, Wild Turkeys and a huge gathering of ravens. According to the A-Z Animals website (<https://a-z-animals.com/blog/what-is-a-group-of-ravens-called/>), a group of ravens is called an unkindness, but you can also refer to them as a rave, conspiracy, treachery, and flock. Most people use the generic term "flock of ravens." But for those looking to jazz up their vocabulary, you can throw out a casual "I saw an unkindness of ravens today" or "Look at the conspiracy of ravens!" It was a fine excursion with mild temperatures and even the big yellow ball shone for a welcome while.

Emma Bourassa

Winter Social Wiener Roast Event

February 26

Hike to top of Jim Smith Hill

On Sunday, February 26, as one of the activities planned for our Winter Social Wiener Roast, Helga Knote led a group of 19 Naturalists from the Jim Smith parking area up to the old quarry site at the top of Jim Smith (Badger) Hill, also known to some as Bluebird Hill or



Charlene Jennejohn

a view from the top



Stewart Wilson

a woodpecker tree

Blueberry Hill. Apparently there are no blueberry bushes growing there, but it can be a good site to view early season bluebirds, so definitely worth coming back to for a spring hike. We hiked the approximate 4.5 km loop at a leisurely pace, stopping to view snowshoe hare and other large and small animal tracks as well as trees where woodpeckers had been busily working. However, there were no reported sightings of woodpeckers that day. The foot trail in the snow has been quite packed from walkers or snowshoers so it was in excellent condition. The gradual ascent through mixed forest made our climb relatively easy. It's always a pleasure to walk among the aspens on any hike! Such a beautiful tree! At the top we observed the benches made of large flat rocks and enjoyed the beautiful 360 degree views overlooking the Steeples, Baker Mountain, Cranbrook Mountain and the hills to the south and west. The weather was partly sunny, not too cold but with a moderate breeze at the summit! On our return to the trailhead we were welcomed by two blazing firepits and enjoyed the remainder of the afternoon visiting and roasting! Thanks to Helga for leading our party!

Charlene Jennejohn

Hike up Gnarly Point

During the Naturalist Winter Social Event eight enthusiastic snowshoers led by Gretchen traveled up the steep direct route to Gnarly Point. Unfortunately the weather did not offer up the great



view that can be seen from there. From Gnarly Point the group descended the back side through a small valley and ascended the next hill, known as Three Views. After a short stop we



proceeded from this viewpoint into the valley and followed our route back to the starting place. Along the way we ascended another small summit before returning to our vehicles. The total distance travelled was a little over 4 kilometers. There was a well established trail over our entire route as this seems to be a popular snowshoeing destination. A good time was had by all.

Lyle Grisedale

Lakeside Walk

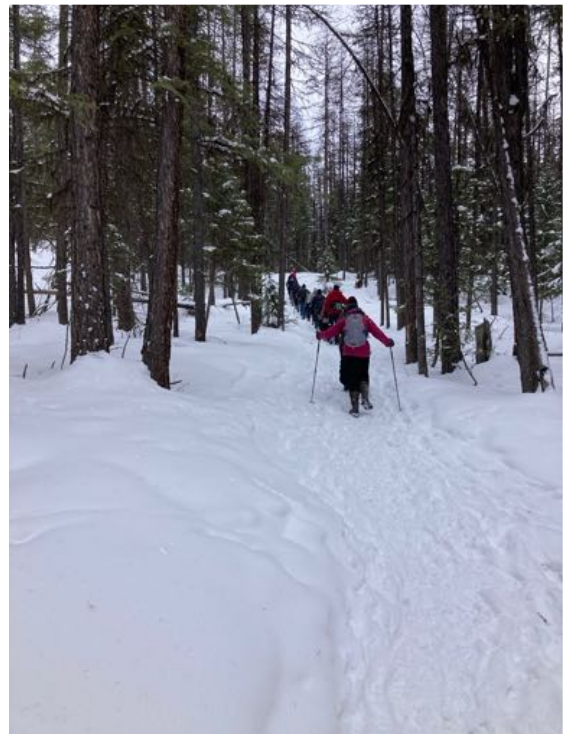
On February 26, Bill and I joined Marianne and five other people for a short walk before the winter social at Jimsmith Lake. We did the forest trail beside the lake and saw hare tracks, mouse tracks and woodpecker holes. We also saw snow fleas

these 3 photos by Lyle Grisedale



Stewart Wilson

(springtails). It was a windy day, and that is why we stayed in the forest. On the way back we walked on the ice on the lake. The trail was much nicer



Stewart

as it was flat and not so bumpy, and the



Marianne Nahm



Stewart



Marianne



wind was at our back so it was not so cold. We walked 2.02 kilometers back to the fire pit. We had each brought our own wieners for the hot dog roast and enjoyed a bit of social time before heading home for the day. 35 members attended the Social. Thank you to Marianne, Helga and Gretchen for organizing this enjoyable day outside.

Stewart Wilson

at the beginning

Deanne Perreault



Stewart

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/>

Terms for Raven Gatherings <https://a-z-animals.com/blog/what-is-a-group-of-ravens-called/>

About Field Trips

Leaders:

Radios and first aid kits are available from Paula.

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 facilitating carpooling. Group size will be limited to 10-12.

Our non-COVID practice is below.

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 Morning Birding Wednesday mornings See RMN Calendar on our website.

Wings Over the Rockies 2023 8 to 14 May

Club Camp 2023 Tuesday 30 May to Friday 2 June Fairmont

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



Stewart Wilson
at the Winter Social

Committees, Coordinators and Representatives

Bats	Scott Bodaly
Bluebirds	Marianne Nahm
Bylaws and Policies	Gretchen Whetham
Christmas Bird Count	Dianne Cooper
Club Camp	Jackie Leach/Ruth Goodwin
Communications	Susan Walp
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
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	Emma DeGroot
Webmasters	Dianne Cooper

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

Next meetings -

Wednesday	17	May	7:00 pm
Wednesday	19	July	7:00 pm
Wednesday	20	September	7:00 pm