

# The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the  
Rocky Mountain Naturalists  
2015 fall equinox



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

## Inside this Issue

### Field Trips

Potato Butte	2
Pighin Road	3
Silver Springs Rim	3
Monroe Lake Paddle	4
Noxious Weeds Walk	5
Fernie Fossils and Butterflies	6
Shorebird Search	7
Lone Pine Butte	9
Return to Pighin Road	10

Internet Links 10

Club Information 11

Executive

Committees

Field Trips

Upcoming Events

Meetings

# Potato Butte

June 24

A group of naturalists took off on a Wednesday morning to hike among the wind-tilted trees and interesting rock formations of the first Wycliffe butte. They enjoyed the long views and looked for wildflowers.



photos by George



## Pighin Road Cycle Ride

July 3

Jackie, Doug and I headed out first thing this morning to look for the Brewer's Sparrow and Pygmy Nuthatch that Dianne had seen earlier in the week. No luck! We did go up to Pine Butte Ranch for the bobolinks that were so abundant a few weeks ago. The fields had been mowed, so no luck there either! When we were coming back down to the main road again, sitting on a fence post was a single BOBO. It was also sitting there on our return trip. The birds were plentiful along our route: bluebirds, swallows, both the Eastern and Western Kingbirds, various other sparrows, Least Flycatcher, and Western Wood Pewees, to name a few. As we got to the wetlands at the end, the Sora and Red-winged Blackbirds were singing. The highlight of the morning for me was a very good view of a Western Tanager and a Williamson Sapsucker, which I had not seen for a few years.

Ruth Goodwin

## Silver Springs Rim

July 17

On Friday, July 17, 2015, nine RM Nats braved what looked like a stormy day to head to the rim overlook at Silver Spring Lakes (Elko area). However, it turned out to be a perfect day with a clouded sky and cooler temperatures for that long gradual climb to the rim. Slowly making our way up the well-trodden path, we spied a profusion of Oregon grape, curly cup gumweed, ocean spray, penstemon and spreading dogbane as well as many other lovely plants. The birders of the group were kept busy trying to identify various young chicks flitting through the forest.

The climb to the rim was well worth our effort as we suddenly came to the overlook and spied the green hued lakes nestled in the narrow valley far below us. Sheer rock cliffs in all their jagged beauty formed myriad shapes, creating faces, spires and even castles for the inventive mind. A narrow path led us along the edge of the rim to a wonderful lunch spot overlooking the five lakes and trees laden with witch's hair lichen.

A highlight of our return journey was spotting a young bighorn ram grazing on the hillside who then crashed down onto the roadway behind us and stood inspecting us. He finally decided that we didn't look good enough to eat and made his way back up the hillside.

submitted by Paula Rogers

See RMNats blog [[www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/rmn-blog](http://www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/rmn-blog)] for more.

# Monroe Lake Paddle

July 24

Rocky Mountain Naturalists enjoyed an evening paddle at Monroe Lake at the end of July, using



a nice assortment of water craft: a canoe, kayaks and a paddle board. Nice to see Gray Jays, Swainson's Thrush and Osprey as well as a moose. Informative discussion regarding the Monroe Lake Fire and the changes and growth of the new forest.

Greg Ross

photos by George



# Noxious Weeds Walk

July 26



yellow bur weed

On July 26, 2015, I led an invasive weed excursion around Cranbrook. We met at Elizabeth Lake to view the weeds on the former water slide lot, then carpoled to other sites within the city. Paula and George from RMNats participated, and Barry Coulter from the *Daily Townsman* joined us. We looked at the mass of knapweed, burdock, Dalmatian toad-flax and common tansy on the vacant water slide lot, then carpoled through the industrial areas north of the CPR tracks, looking at lots and roadsides where city contractors had sprayed the weeds.



blue bur

Another major area of concern was the site of the former Echo Field Raceway, which was infested with knapweed, blueweed, Dalmatian Toadflax, oxeye daisy etc. From there, we road-tripped to the laneway between Tundra Steel and the wood preservers. Tundra Steel had managed its weeds for years, and the wood preservers' lot was a sea of knapweed.

The final stop was the empty lot across 6th Street,

north from the Save-on Foods mall, where city trucks dumped snow in winter. Mats of yellow bur weed, blue bur and hedge bind weed had taken hold.

Barry Coulter published an article about this weed walk in the *Daily Townsman*. Shortly after, the water slide lot was sprayed, and the city dumping lot was mowed. A couple of weeks later, I led city councillor Norma Blissett around the same route. Following our picnic at Greg and Sue Ross' beach I introduced Cathy Conroy, of the East Kootenay Invasive Plant Council, to Barry Coulter, and he published her story on nurseries selling invasive plants and the Plant Wise Program to promote the sale of native plants instead.



hedge bind weed

Frank Hastings

# Fernie Fossils and Butterflies

August 12

Bob Livsey (Nature Bob) led an enthusiastic group of Rocky Mountain Naturalists up the Fernie ski hill to look for butterflies, plants and fossils. It was a cool morning but turned warm and then hot pretty quickly. Everyone managed to get to the top of the Great Bear Express, where we had our lunch. The hike up had one great view after another, and so did the hike down! We learned a little about the geology of the mountains in this area, looked at fossils and did some plant identification along the way. A great way to spend a day! We even got to go up and down on the chair lift, which was a first-time experience for some. Many thanks to everyone involved in planning this and to Bob for an entertaining and informative hike.



Helga Knot

Look at the RMNNats blog [[www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/rmn-blog](http://www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/rmn-blog)] for more spectacular photos.



photos by Helga

## Shorebird Field Trip

August 15

Only three naturalists showed up but we went birding anyway-and I'm glad we did. We saw the following:

Reade Lake, 9:00-11:00

- 2 Western meadowlarks
- 4 Western bluebirds
- 1 American goldfinch
- 3 barn swallows
- 2 tree swallows
- 4 vesper sparrows
- 2 kestrels by house and 10 by the lake
- 10 eastern kingbird
- 1 yellowthroat
- 4 cedar waxwings
- 4 northern flickers
- 1 hairy woodpecker
- 1 red-tailed hawk
- 30 red-winged blackbirds
- 12 killdeer
- 3 black-bellied plovers
- 6 western sandpipers
- 5 least sandpipers
- 2 long-billed dowitchers
- 3 lesser yellowlegs
- 2 greater yellowlegs
- 1 spotted sandpiper
- 4 pied billed grebes
- 2 eared grebes
- 6 ruddy ducks
- 12 blue winged teal
- 45 Canada geese
- 20 mallards
- 4 unidentified gulls (looked like California gulls but other side of lake)
- 4 bufflehead
- 5 ravens

Next stop Clearview Heights, 11:30-1:00

3 western bluebirds  
6 mountain bluebirds  
15 common crossbills  
1 white breasted nuthatch  
12 Lewis's woodpeckers  
2 kestrels  
1 red-tailed hawk  
6 American goldfinch  
3 vesper sparrows

Airport Pond 1:00-1:30

3 Lesser Yellowlegs  
4 Killdeer  
6 Western bluebirds  
6 Mallards  
2 Northern flickers  
4 Mourning doves  
12 Rock doves

City Lagoons 2:00-3:30

North end:

3 kestrels  
4 Redheads  
12 Ring-necked ducks  
25 Ruddy ducks  
2 Eared grebes  
1 Red necked grebe

Middle Part:

12 Least sandpipers  
1 Solitary sandpiper

South end:

6 Least sandpipers  
3 Spotted sandpipers  
1 Stilt sandpipers  
1 Black legged stilt

Peter Davidson

## Lone Pine Butte

August 20



Six of us headed over to Lone Pine Butte this morning. It was very smoky so the anticipated views were lurking out of sight. It was still a pleasant hike and the first time I found the trail up to the second butte. I think this trail has been forming over the past few years and now is a much better route to the trail that takes you to the top. The only flowers blooming were showy aster, white sweet-clover and

golden-aster. No butterflies. We did hear Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden Crowned Kinglet, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Red Crossbill, to name a few of the birds. Many of those LBBs (little brown birds) were flitting in the grasses and trees. We could see the aspen trees starting to turn golden. [Seems very early for this!]

story and photo by Ruth Goodwin

## Pighin Road

September 7

Eight members and two guests headed out this morning to bike Pighin Road. We also did two short walks on pass-throughs as well as looked at possible other rides on old roads in the area. The weather was 5 degrees at 9:30 when we started and sunny at 15 degrees when we returned to our bikes about 1:15. There were a few flowers still in bloom including white sweet-clover, golden-aster, fireweed, dandelion, and early blue violet. A few of the birds seen or heard were Spruce Grouse, Mountain Bluebirds, Vesper Sparrows, Northern Flickers, Vultures, Canada Geese, Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Northern Goshawk. We also saw a few deer and a turtle in the creek up from the old Pighin cabin. A very pleasant outing!



Ruth Goodwin

## 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](http://www.wildsafebc.com)

## Club Information

### Executive

President	George Rogers
Vice President	Virginia Rasch
Secretary	Marianne Nahm
Treasurer	Linda Hastings
BC Nature Director	Greg Ross
Field Trips	Paula Rogers

### Other Committee and Club Representatives

Little Big Day	Greg Ross
Christmas Bird Counts	Greg Ross
Elizabeth Lake	Tara Szkorupa
Newsletter	Susan Walp
Presentations	Tara Szkorupa

### Field Trips

#### Leader responsibilities:

- Get radios and first aid kits.
- Find a replacement leader if necessary.
- Keep the group together.
- Make sure everybody leaves the parking area safely.
- Get someone to write an account of the field trip for the newsletter. Send it in, along with pictures, as soon as possible.

Carpoolers: Please offer to chip in for gas.

No dogs on field trips, please, unless otherwise specified



If you'd like to see your dog here, please send its picture to the newsletter.

### Upcoming Events

September	24	Thursday	9:00	Bear Lake hike	Frank
	[alt. 30	Wednesday]			
September	26	Saturday	1:00-3:00	Elizabeth Lake work party	

RMNats meetings - every two months, in odd-numbered months

November 18 Wednesday 7:00 pm meeting and presentation