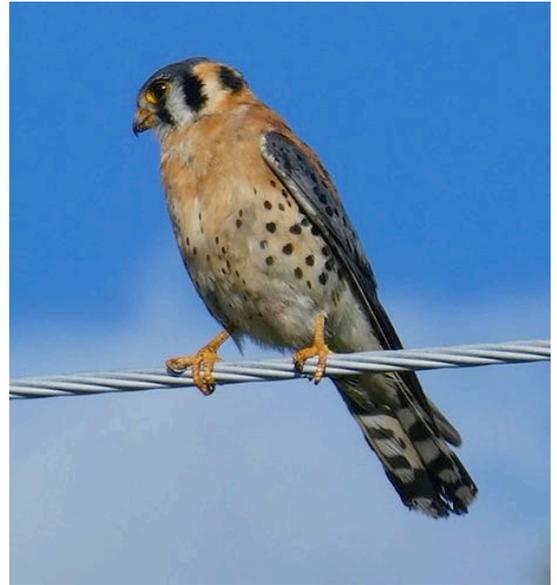


The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
2020 fall equinox



Stewart Wilson

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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.

Bat Count at Baynes Lake Community Center

June 12th

The Baynes Lake community group led by Norma Sommerville has volunteered to take over the lead on this project started by the Rocky Mountain Naturalists in 2019. On Friday 12 June the Rocky Mountain Naturalists met with the Baynes Lake Group at 9:00 pm at the community hall in Baynes Lake.

In the past the Baynes Lake community group had erected 4 bat houses in front of the community hall to house bats that they were attempting to evict from the attic space of the community hall. The bats have thrived in the provided housing but, as discovered on the evening of June 12th, their population is also very healthy in the attic.

With 6 RMN volunteers and 15 Baynes Lake volunteers being introduced to bat counting, the area had a lot of eyes looking for activity. Unfortunately we missed, until later in the evening, a part of the bat population leaving the community hall from the ridge venting on the east side. The Baynes Lake group plans to take another count and have volunteer(s) focus on this area.

We counted a total of 472 bats. Broken down, the numbers were as follows:

rocket box (1)	45	north end box
rocket box (2)	1	
nest box (3)	122	
rocket box (4)	84	south end box
Community Hall	220	(potentially missed part of the population)
Total for June 12th	472	

The Rocky Mountain Naturalists have loaned 6 click counters to the Baynes Lake group so they may continue with the study.

While in Baynes Lake it was suggested by Norma that there may be a large population of bats in an old barn on the Kikomun park site. I spoke with park employees while staying there and found out that a group is already monitoring and counting the bats there.

Thank you, everyone, for the effort put into this project. It has been a great experience for all of us.

Scott Bodaly

Looking for Ladyslippers

June 17

Here is a list of some plants observed on the hike in the Kimberley Nature Park.

- northern gentian
- slender hawksbeard
- slender hawkweed
- pink wintergreen
- round-leaved alumroot
- red clover
- white clover
- common red paintbrush
- round-leaved violet
- early blue violet
- star-flowered false Solomon's-seal
- false Solomon's-seal
- baneberry



mountain ladyslipper



bunchberry

- western meadowrue (male)
- Holboell's rockcress
- thimbleberry
- mountain forget-me-not
- marsh buttercup
- red elderberry
- wild sarsaparilla
- clasping twisted stalk
- fiddleheads
- wild strawberry
- bunchberry
- silky phacelia
- heart-leaved arnica
- Oregon grape
- yarrow
- prickly wild rose

field pussytoes
rosy pussytoes
racemose pussytoes
kinnikinnick
narrow-leaved desert-parsley
bronze bells
spotted coral root
three-spot mariposa lily
Utah honeysuckle (red twinberry)
nodding onion
twinflor
pipsissewa (prince's pine)
mountain ladyslipper
western rattlesnake plantain
snowbrush ceanothus

list and photographs by Paula Rogers



Munroe Lake Paddle

July 3

The surface of Munroe Lake was like a sheet of glass as three paddlers made their way to the outlet end on a quiet, sunny Friday morning. Yellow water lilies (*Nuphar polysepalum*) were starting to cover large areas of water surface with their glossy, leathery leaves. A few were beginning to bloom, with many buds still underwater, reaching for the surface.

I had two purposes for choosing Munroe Lake. The previous week, Daryl and I had paddled Munroe, spotting a small clump of what we thought was yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudachoris*), a very invasive, non-native species. On this trip I brought my cell phone, which has the 'Report Invasives' app downloadable from a BC government webpage. Link to this page through bcinvasives.ca (resources>links>report). This easy to use app helped me to quickly take a



paddling through water lilies
Marilyn Doggart



yellow water lily

George Rogers

photo of the now blooming iris. The app automatically records GPS location for sending off to the BC Invasive Species Council, which will use the submitted information to take care of the invasive plant.

Yellow flag iris plants, native to Europe, North Africa and West Asia, were introduced to North America in the 1800s. Unfortunately, here in southern BC they can reproduce very quickly from



photographing the yellow flag iris

Marilyn Doggart

horizontal root systems, root fragments and seeds in our wetland habitats – lake shorelines, ditches and streams. They grow in dense mats and out-compete native species, clog waterways and even reduce water storage capabilities. Yellow flag iris can be challenging to remove because hand pulling or digging can fragment the rhizomes which are then

difficult to gather. Sometimes rubber mats are used to smother this plant. It can cause contact dermatitis, so care must be taken when handling.

It is really important to not purchase or plant yellow flag iris (different from perennial garden iris) on our properties. If you see yellow flag iris while paddling, report the site to the BC Invasive Species Council.



George Rogers



empty nest

George

My second goal was to observe the Common Loon, or Great Northern Diver, (*Gavia immer*) as part of the Canadian Lake Loon Survey with Birds Canada. As we paddled to the south end, I was pleased to see two chicks perhaps about three to four weeks old. At one point, one of the parents was calling for the chicks, who were underwater for quite some time. Suddenly, very close to our watercraft, the pair of young popped up, much to our delight. The adult guided the chicks to a

safer distance.

If there is enough food at Munroe Lake and both chicks are very similar in size and strength, both may survive to migrate. However, the stronger, dominant chick may kill the weaker one to better its chance of survival. This is called siblicidal behaviour and does occur in several bird species. It is a tough, challenging struggle for many birds during breeding season.



adult loon

Marilyn Doggart



parent with chicks

Marilyn

It was a lovely paddle with observant, keen naturalist friends. Thank you for joining me.

Marianne Nahm



Lyle Grisedale

Our club traditionally holds its July meeting outdoors, typically at Reade Lake (but not always - once it was held in the Cranbrook Community Forest by First Alkali Lake). Along with the rocks and water, there are interesting plants and animals to look at. Sometimes there are interesting cloud formations, moon, planets and stars (if the meeting is long enough).

Susan Walp



Lyle Grisedale



three sandhill cranes and some long-billed dowitchers at the edge of the lake
Those attending were lucky enough to view this group
as we walked back to our cars around 9:30 pm.

Stewart Wilson

Early Morning Birding

Since we entered stage two of pandemic recovery the Early Morning Birders have been meeting. We all travel in our own vehicles and then converge on an area to observe and count birds, practicing social distancing. Then we move to another area and start over again. Some of our trips



the Early Morning Birding group practicing social distancing

involve hiking. For example, on Wednesday 12 August we went to one area and then hiked a route, birding along the way, trying to keep the required distance from each other. This system works well and allows us to socialize as we bird.

Lyle Grisedale

Perseid Meteor Shower



Saturn and Jupiter over the glow of Cranbrook, on the horizon, with a meteor above, streaking through the sky by the Milky Way



For the meteor shower photos I went out to the old Kimberley Airport. This is a good dark sky area. The glow at the bottom of the photos is from the lights of Cranbrook. I went out there for sunset on Wednesday 12 August and then hung around waiting for it to get dark. About 11pm it was dark enough to see all the stars but not dark enough to see the meteors. I started photographing at midnight. Unfortunately there was not a lot happening that night, I stayed until 1:30 am and then headed for home. The Milky Way was just visible but would have risen higher in the sky had I

stayed up later. But it was visible enough for the photos that I took. The moon would rise about 2:30, and once that happens it is difficult to see the Milky Way. When there is no moon is the best time to go out and see the Milky Way. It is at its brightest when there is no moon.

Lyle Grisedale



Nesting Robins



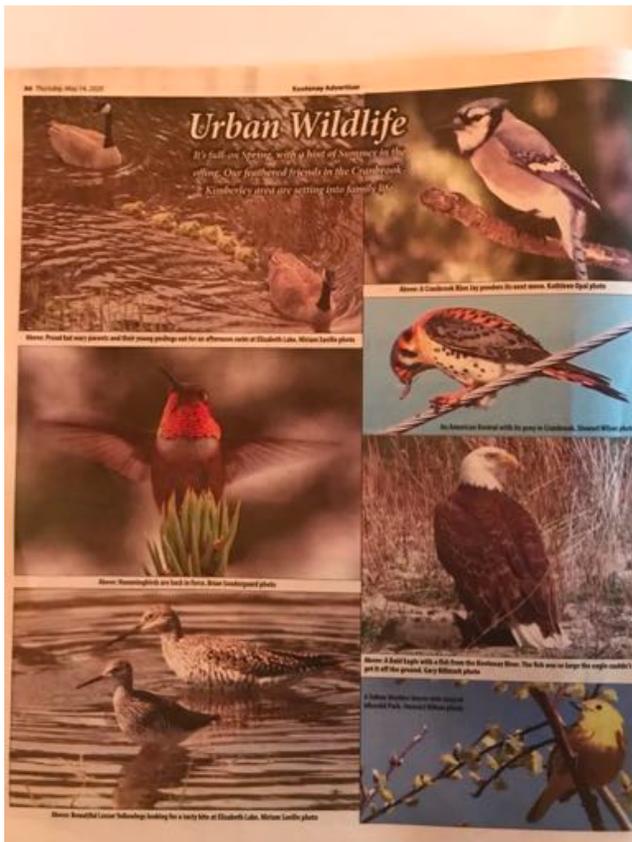
I have robins nesting on the awning above my back door. It's great fun to watch the chicks grow and to see their excitement when the mother comes in with a meal. Nothing more tasty than a mouthful of worms, yummy. These guys will fledge soon; they are flapping their wings and exploring the awning outside the nest.





Lyle Grisedale

Urban wildlife photos: Capturing the avian soul of a community



one of many urban wildlife pages

Never doubt that one bird photographer can make a difference! Here's the story of how one small newspaper in the Southern Interior of British Columbia came to run a full page of colour bird photographs on a regular basis. And the avid readers and generous photographers are all part of the story.

Before he retired four years ago, Stewart Wilson was an elementary school teacher who frequently brought his students to Elizabeth Lake in Confederation Park, a local natural area.

He would often take photos of birds and other species—such as turtles, dragonflies and snakes—to use in the classroom. And when he saw a great shot of a group of students enjoying the park, he'd snap that too. But most of his photos were of birds.

Wilson is an active member of the Rocky Mountain Naturalists Club and a natural teacher at heart. He regularly sent his photos to *The Cranbrook Townsman*, our local newspaper, as well as to *The Weather Network*.

Wilson is not one of those bird photographers with a lens as big as his arm. He used a Panasonic Lumix DMC ZS60, which fit comfortably in his pocket and weighed a mere 310 grams. Nonetheless, he took great photos that were often published.

After he retired, Wilson had more time to aim and shoot so he sent in more photos. That's when the magic happened.

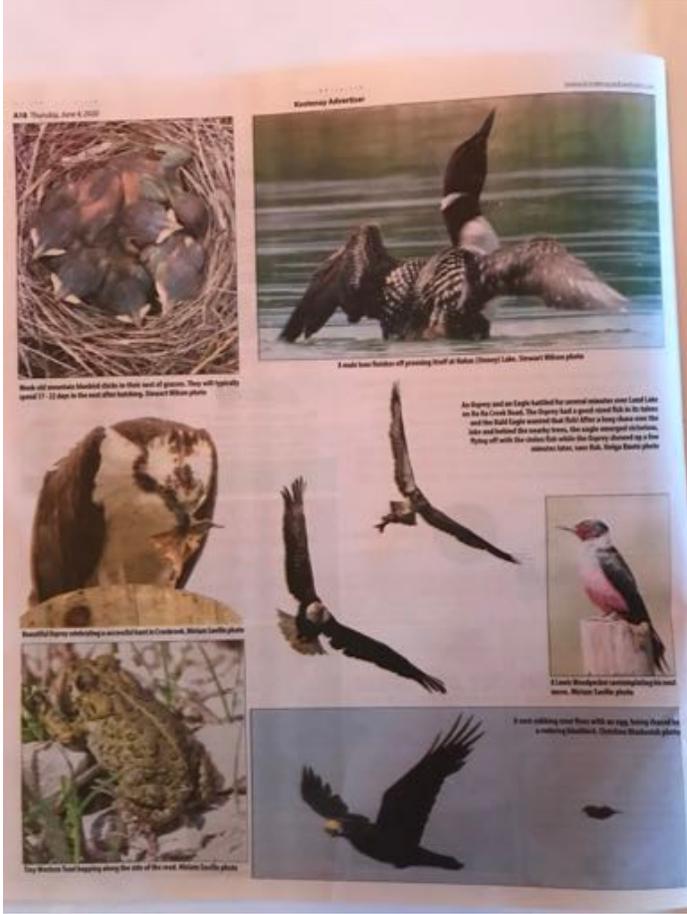
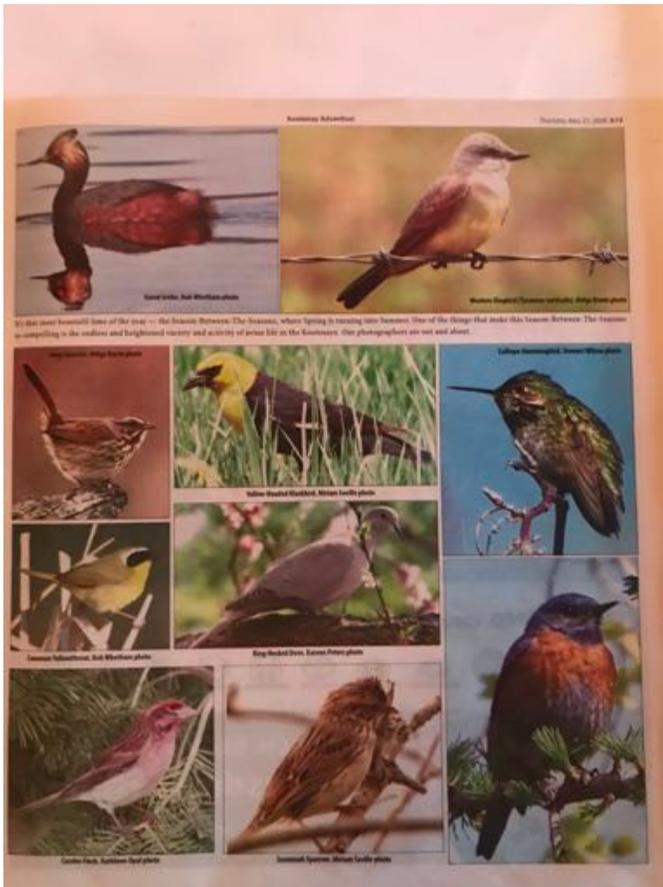
Barry Coulter, editor of *The Cranbrook Townsman*, said he then had enough photos to fill an entire colour page. So he moved the photos from the local paper to the regional paper, *Kootenay News Advertiser* (of which he is also the editor).

The Urban Wildlife feature was born—mostly full of bird photos and a few other species like reptiles and mammals.

"The reaction was profound," Coulter said. "Our readers love it. Everyone gets great joy from this feature."

"Photographers came out of the woodwork," said Wilson.

"It became a nicely regarded feature in *Kootenay News Advertiser* with its regional audience," Coulter said.



examples of urban wildlife pages

The popularity and the benefits of the Urban Wildlife feature

As Coulter explained, our avian neighbours in the Cranbrook region are diverse, beautiful, colourful and cherished.

Fans of the photos have even written to the newspaper's Hugs & Slugs column:



the mountain bluebird front page

“Hugs: To Stewart Wilson for the lovely photo of the Mountain Bluebird sitting on her egg, featured on the front page of our local newspaper *Kootenay News Advertiser*. Hugs also for all the photographers who continue to bring us beautiful pictures of wildlife, Bob Whetham, Helga Knotte, Miriam Saville, Kathleen Opal, Karen Peters. Thank you!”

Readers can learn to identify local species through the photos. Wilson heard that some people even cut out the photos and stick them on their walls or fridge.

And the photo captions often have other natural history facts about the species as well as the locale. Wilson said the location identifications show readers what our area has to offer and encourages people to get out and enjoy our natural areas.

Our local photographers have an outlet for their photos, including getting some recognition. And their knowledge, talent and acumen are greatly appreciated.

Coulter loves how organic the photo feature is, coming directly from his local readership.

“Rates of submission [of photos] have increased,” Coulter said. “There are a lot of birders here.”

“The feature shows the great interest the community has in its local community and its birds,” he said. “We love our birds in the East Kootenay.”

Virginia Rasch

Weed Pulls at Elizabeth Lake Turtle Beds

We have a wonderful group of nature loving, socially responsible Naturalists. Our first weed pull in late July had a waiting list of three members, and our last weed event in mid-August had the full complement of ten members.



spotted knapweed
bcinvasives.ca

Two of us were discussing the fact that a plant I may consider to be invasive is not deemed as such in everyone's world, so I looked it up. There are several definitions of the word "weed". The definition I like in regards to the Elizabeth Lake Turtle Beds comes from Wikipedia. "A weed is a plant that is considered undesirable in a particular

situation". Blueweed, knapweed and sandmat were three high priority invasive plants growing very near and in the turtle beds. They make it more difficult for turtles to lay eggs in the sandy areas provided and crowd out native plants.

Knapweed, which many of us are very familiar with as it steadily increases its presence along our roadsides, is a prolific seed producer. Seeds can remain in soil for up to 8 years, with some studies indicating viability of 15 years. For this reason, it was important to pull the knapweed before the flowers had gone to seed.

Another weed targeted at the turtle beds was blueweed. It is also known as viper's bugloss because the ripe nutlets or seeds



blueweed
bcinvasives.ca
blueweed

bcinvasives.ca

resemble a viper's head. This biennial member of the boraginaceae family was introduced to North America from Europe and Asia. Roadsides, ditches and rangelands are hosts for the hairy stemmed, bright blue blossomed plant. In one season one blueweed plant can produce 2800 seeds.

I used the iNaturalist.ca app to identify the low growing weed in the westernmost nesting beds. Aptly named sandmat, a member of the spurge family, it grows from a single root and has a spread of up to 16 cm. Gloves should be used when pulling this invasive because the white sap can be caustic, causing skin or eye irritation.



sandmat

plants.usda.gov



(Marianne's photos)

Thank you to the members who joined the Elizabeth Lake weed pulls this summer. Greg Ross, the Western Painted Turtle bed monitor, really appreciated our efforts.

Marianne Nahm



McGinty Lake

Karen Clark

The purpose of the walk was to view the birds in the area as well as notice any animal signs and take note of the wetlands. The mainly level trail led us around the lake and then over to a smaller pond before returning to the parking area. It was obvious that free range cows were roaming in the area; watch where you step. In the trees around the lake we heard juncos and chickadees. Three Gray Jays were spotted flitting from tree to tree. Off the path, a den was noted, which could have been for a fox or possibly a badger. Following the track as it circled back to the parking area we encountered what is called a squirrel midden (a term I had never heard before). It refers to a favourite site where squirrels gather to eat and where the detritus left from the pine cones and nuts drops to the ground, forming a large pile on the forest floor.

On Monday the 7th of September I joined some fellow members of the Rocky Mountain Naturalists Club for a walk around McGinty Lake, located about 12 km east of Kimberley. The day was cool, and it was raining when we started out, but the forecast was for the weather to brighten up during the morning. We met at the parking area at the trail head. By the time we had reached the lake after a 15 minute walk, the sun was shining. As we first approached the lake there were a number of varieties of ducks on the lake, including bufflehead, goldeneye, teal and, of course, mallard. Many of the ducks flew off a short distance, squawking in indignation at being disturbed by us. American Wigeons were also identified by the whistling sound their wings made as they took flight.



the small pond

Jane Christie



lake

Karen Clark

The walk took about two hours and was a great way to meet and enjoy the company of other people with an interest in all that nature provides.

Karen Clark



pond

Jane Christie



McGinty Lake

Jane

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

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

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

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

Bird Observations <https://ebird.org>

BC Invasive Species Council bcinvasives.ca

Trailforks trailforks.com

About Field Trips

Leader responsibilities:

- Find a replacement leader if necessary.

- Keep the group together. Radios and first aid kits are available from Paula.

- 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.

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. 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

Club Information

Executive

President	Helga Knoté
Vice President	Marianne Nahm
Past President	Virginia Rasch
Secretary	Jim Hurvid
Treasurer	Gretchen Whetham
BC Nature Director	Wendy Maisonneuve
Director at Large	Janice Strong



Munroe Lake Marilyn Doggart

Committees, Co-ordinators and Representatives

Bats	Scott Bodaly
Bluebirds	Marianne Nahm
Bylaws and Policies	Virginia Rasch
Christmas Bird Count	Dianne Cooper
Club Camp	Jackie Leach/Ruth Goodwin
Communications	Virginia Rasch
Early Morning Birding	Jim Hurvid
East Kootenays Invasive Species Council	Frank Hastings
Elizabeth Lake	Stewart Wilson
Field Trips	Paula Rogers
Internal Communications	Paula Rogers
Kootenay Conservation Program	Helga Knoté
Little Big Day	Greg Ross
Membership	Sue Ross
Newsletter	Susan Walp
Presentations	Marianne Nahm/Paula Rogers
Records	Wendy Maisonneuve
Rocky Mountain Trench Society	Jo Ellen Floer
Skookumchuck Prairie IBA	Dianne Cooper
Turtle Monitoring	Greg Ross
Web Masters	Dianne Cooper

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

Early Morning Birding Wednesdays (early) Contact Jim Hurvid.

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

Next meetings -	Wednesday	23	September	2020
	Wednesday	18	November	2020
	Wednesday	20	January	2021