

The Kestrel

Official Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Naturalists

The Kestrel
Volume 6, Issue 1



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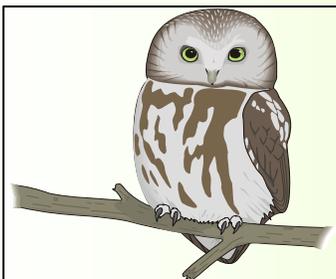
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Editor: My first spotted towhee was about 7 days late compared to previous years but was happily shuffling away in the flower gardens

Club News

- Remember to check your email for dates and locations of next meetings.

Editors Corner



Send your items to scoutfir@shaw.ca. Summer issue articles by June 21 please. Many thanks to the Duncans and Youngs for their articles.



Rocky Mountain Naturalists Executive

President: P. Davidson

Vice President:

Treasurer: D. Cooper

* Note we'll update this in next newsletter

Other Committees and club representatives

Little Big Day: G. Ross

Christmas Bird Counts: G. Ross

Elizabeth Lake: T. Szkorupa

Newsletter: T. Wideski

Winners of the first Annual Winter Seekers Bird Challenge

We had a number of members participate in this neat little event to find 30 key bird species between January 1 and March 30. Many members were in the mid 20s by the end of March. Kathy and Al Young were the only members that were able to find the entire 30 species. Congratulations Al and Kathy!! We'll do this again in 2010 and will be a different 30 species.



Feature Bird Species: Chestnut-backed Chickadee

This little guy periodically graces our feeders and is usually such a thrill to find that we all rush out to see one. This past winter Peter Davidson had two at his feeder.

This chickadee uses lots of fur in making its nest, with fur or hair accounting for up to half of all the material in the hole. The hair from rabbits, coyote, and deer is most common, but hair from skunks, cats, horses, or cows will be used as well. The adults make a layer of fur about 1 cm (0.4 in) thick that they use to cover the eggs when they leave the nest.

Interesting that some ornithologists are treating these chickadees as a different genus. Often, it is still placed in the genus *Parus* with most other chickadees, but DNA testing is indicating that the *Poecile* genus more adequately expresses these birds relationships.





Winter Outings Summary

Snowshoe Walk on the Butte in February

By Jim Duncan

It was advertised as a snowshoe walk up the Butte - Saturday, February 28, with leaders Tony Wideski and Peter Davidson, but when we arrived at the parking circle on McClure Road we met Ruth and Kent Goodwin. Peter and Tony asked the Goodwins to lead the walk because neither of them could make the date. In spring weather, snowshoeing can be challenging - particularly if the snow is soft and heavy. Each step sinks below the surface and it takes a lot of effort to drag the shoe out and step forward. Fortunately we encountered ideal conditions. The temperature dipped to below freezing the night before so we were able to walk in any direction with ease.

Walking on the Butte in non-snow conditions can be tricky because of the thick grasses and hidden rocky mountain ground squirrel tunnels. You can unexpectedly fall flat on your face when you hit a hole, or worse you can badly twist a joint or even give yourself whiplash. Snowshoeing on frozen snow is sublime; it was almost like skating. We had wonderful sunny weather and even though we climbed via a new, steep route to the summit, it

was a breeze. The four of us had a wonderful time!

Pighin Road Snowshoe, February 15 2009

By Jim Duncan

One of the best kept secrets in Wycliffe is the Pighin Road neighbourhood. You get to it from Fortie's Corner by turning right, (if you are coming from Cranbrook) then bending left off the old airport road. There are some beautiful farms back there and the Land Conservancy of BC has been working hard over the past decade to acquire as much land as they can afford. Thanks to Teck (formerly Cominco), they have been very successful and the blocks of land held by the TLC and the Ministry of Environment are now called the Wycliffe Corridor - it is ideal Elk habitat and in late winter you can see many Elk from Pighin Road.

We drove almost to the end of Pighin Road - a little farther on and the road is closed by Teck. Our objective was a trail that took off between a small barn and cabin. The cabin has been refurbished and is maintained by Brian McKenzie (Teck employee). Brian does it as a hobby and when Kathryn Martell (former manager of the Kootenay office of the Land Conservancy of BC) mentioned we were doing a snowshoe hike, he offered us use of the cabin. Not only did he offer it, but he went out before we arrived to light a cheery fire in the stove. The

particular piece of land we were using is in the process of becoming a TLC holding.

Laura and I originally billed our outing as a cross-country ski tour, but the icy conditions and lack of fresh snow forced us to change it to a snowshoe outing instead. At the beginning of the hike, we skirted a wetland that must be spectacular in late spring.

A dozen or so people showed up for the hike. When a number of people show up it is always reassuring to the leaders. We explored the wetlands and had fun deciphering various tracks in the snow. The weather treated us to a beautiful sunny day and all of us enjoyed a snack and hot chocolate in the warm cabin at the end of our journey.

Winter Outing Pictures (courtesy of Jim Duncan)





Winter Outings continued

Ruth Goodwin led a great outing on March 21. Not as many people as hoped but a very fun group none the less. From Mayook to Wardner to the Bull River fish hatchery to Wasa. Many things to see including over 100 Tree and Violet green swallows, Trumpeter Swans, both bluebirds etc. We stopped

at Mildred's meadow to see the first buttercups (can you believe how cold this spring has been. All in all, a very fun day.





Botany Profile:

Western Spring Beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata*)

You know that spring is just around the corner, when some of our members start to get excited about finding one of these during their outings.

This attractive wildflower is a sure sign that spring has arrived and that the local woodlands are full of wildflowers. When Spring Beauty and these other wildflowers are conspicuously absent from a woodlands, this indicates that it has been subjected to severe degradation from plows or bulldozers at some point in the past. Spring Beauty is a unique member of the Purslane family that is easy to distinguish from other wildflowers. Look for pink-stripes, whether pale or bright, on the petals of the flowers, and only 2 sepals underneath.

Traditionally used by the Ktunaxa as an important source of spring carbohydrate, this plant is sensitive to being over picked, so enjoy the display but don't dig.



Membership Information

Mail to:
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
P.O. Box 701
Cranbrook, B.C.
VIC 4J5

\$25 per Family

\$20 per Individual

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Postal Code _____



SPRING OUTINGS LIST

<p>April 7 to September 30 Early Morning birding Elizabeth Lake 7 to 8 a.m.</p>	<p>May 30th Family Day Elisabeth Lake 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. Mariane 489-1601</p>
<p>April 25th Pitch Inn Joseph Creek behind Tamarack Mall 10:00 a.m. Greg -- 489-2566</p>	<p>June 14th Looking for Warblers Meet @ Elisabeth Lake 7:00 a.m. Peter 426-2458</p>
<p>AGM April 30th - May 3rd Greg -- 489-2566</p>	<p>June 19th --21st Club Camp Spruce Groves Resort Fairmont Ruth -- 427 5404</p>
<p>Little Big Day May 9th Birding 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Dinner - Apollo or ? 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>June 28th Lumberton Rd. Meet @ Elisabeth Lake 9:00 a.m. Greg 489--2566</p>
<p>May 10th Mother's Day Hill hike Meet @ Wycliffe Regional Park entrance Laura and Jim 427-2600 1:00 p.m.</p>	<p>July 15th Nats meeting 7:00 p.m. meet @ Wallach's Place 3205 Wycliffe Rd. 6:30 p.m. Greg - 489--2566</p>
<p>Birding @ Kinsmen Park 8:00 a.m. May 14th - May 28th -June 11th -June 25th Laura and Jim 427-2600</p>	
<p>May 20th Nats meeting Gregs new place @ Jim Smith Lake 7:00 p.m. 489-2566</p>	
<p>Owls and Poorwills May 23rd Meet @ Staples 8:30 p.m Peter 426-2458</p>	
<p>May 28th Doran Marsh Evening Ramble 7:00 p.m meet @ Doran sign Elaine</p>	



Tips for Outing Etiquette

The leader of an outing is responsible for:

- Finding a replacement contact/leader if you cannot be available for your planned outing. A replacement *leader* may choose to do the same outing, or they may suggest another,
- Ensuring you have the safety kit including hand held radios
- Make it a policy with the entire group to keep the person behind you in sight. If your follower on the trail is lagging, slow your pace to keep them in sight. If everyone in the group continually checks to make sure they can see the person behind them, it is impossible for anyone to get into serious trouble. If you split into groups, do not allow any one person to take off by him/herself.
- Making sure that no one is left behind with car trouble at the parking area, especially in winter,
- Arranging to have the outing trip report forwarded to the Editor. It is not necessary to write it - you may delegate this, of course, but please advise the Editor from whom to expect it. In a perfect world, we would have a different participant write each report, so we could have many different viewpoints.
- If you bring a dog, ensure it is kept under control