

Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association Inc.

What's flying around....



Summer Program Facilitator Initiative

YFBTA President Martin Phillips

One of YFBTA's most important programs, the Summer Program Facilitator Initiative (SPFI), has concluded.

I spoke with Laura Blender, the YFBTA facilitator, about the year's program to assist me in providing our membership with a picture of this year's accomplishments.

One YFBTA goal of the S.P.F.I. is to connect youth with nature. Laura worked in schools (Calder, Saltcoats, Churchbridge and Dr. Brass). Laura connected with over 400 students during May and June. She conducted activities that highlighted nature including nature walks, bird identification, plant identification, as well as activities focused on the importance of recycling.

Students were responsive and interested. Many approached her after presentations wanting to share their personal experiences and interactions.

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A huge "Thank You" is extended to Saskatchewan Lotteries Community Grant Program and Painted Hand Community Development Corporation. Without these grants, and without fund-raising activities conducted by YFBTA members, the S.P.F.I. could not have operated.

During the months of July and August Laura continued to focus on an awareness of nature in her planned programs. She interacted with approximately 500 individuals. Day Care and health facilities in Saltcoats and Churchbridge, The Bentley, Aspen Bluffs and the Langenburg Nursing Home received presentations.

Laura planned and presented activities for The Boys and Girls Club, for Communities Connections, for the Saltcoats Parks Board, for the Family Resource Center, for Parks and Recreation Yorkton, for Shelwin House, for Ducks Unlimited, for the Yorkton Tribal Council and for Tourism Yorkton.

I asked Laura about her impressions of the summer. Her comments included, "Wow, was I busy!" and "Absolutely loved it!"

She highlighted the importance of planning. Smiling, she added that she should have found a better way of transporting frogs and salamanders from place to place. Sometimes they found a way to escape and on occasion she looked into the rear view mirror only to discover a frog looking back. A little unnerving! "Rather than carrying actual antlers around (really heavy) maybe pictures could do?" she suggested.

Laura found the job to be personally rewarding. She is currently pursuing a degree in education.

Perhaps Laura and YFBTA will continue to work together in 2017? Perhaps that will happen.

Albinism: Western Kingbird



Photo: Don Smith

Dragonflies at Madge Lake

Submitted by Dana Guertin

Last summer a new opportunity became available to me. Every Wednesday after work I would be at Jackfish Lake with rubber boots on my feet and a dip net in my hand. Jackfish Lake is just minutes from Madge Lake, which is Duck Mountain's main summer attraction. The amount of human activity at Jackfish Lake is usually quite low which keeps the lake quiet and serene. It is the perfect place for those wanting to connect with nature. The small dock on Jackfish Lake is barely visible from the road and I knew it was the spot I was looking for.

Previous years I would come here to try my luck at fishing, but this summer I would be here for a different reason. I was here to take an in depth look at the life cycle and growth patterns of dragonflies in Saskatchewan.

Duck Mountain Provincial Park was my summer paradise for four years. During this time I was able to participate in many of the activities the park has to offer.

I enjoyed guided nature hikes, craft projects, canoeing on the lake, watching fireworks on the beach, dancing and singing with musical performers,

pond dipping for insects on the shoreline, and so much more! And the best part of all...This was my summer job! I was a Duck Mountain Park Interpreter, responsible for developing public outreach programs that promote awareness and appreciation for all things relating to nature and recreation within the park.



**Aeshna Canadensis
Male and female**



Photo: David Halstead

Get the Grizzly Facts

Are you aware that Canada has a sanctuary for grizzly bears? It is located in Khutzeymateen Provincial Park.

You can view striking grizzly photos by visiting Mag.cangeo.ca/ca/apr16/grizzly

Wolf management: a balancing act Submitted by Mike Gollop (Fish and Wildlife)

Wolves were once seen as the voice of the wilderness, living their lives in the most remote corners of the continent. This trend has changed in the last 20 years, with expanding settlement driving wolves from much of the boreal forest, northern Rocky Mountains and the arctic tundra.

However, re-introduction of wolves, along with their stringent protection, has allowed populations in the southern Rockies and in northern Michigan and Wisconsin to thrive and to expand their range, dispelling the myth that wolves need remote areas insulated from human disturbance. Instead, they have demonstrated the same adaptability and resiliency as their smaller cousin, the coyote. Wolves have now re-colonized in seven western states from their initial introductions in Yellowstone and Arizona, and recent outliers of the eastern population have even been noted creating dens in proximity to an interstate highway in Illinois. Wolves have always existed along Saskatchewan's forest-agriculture interface, but there has been a steady increase in wolf sightings south of the traditional range. Some of these sightings are wandering individuals, common throughout the last century. However, many of the new occurrences are resident packs breeding and attempting to re-establish in traditional areas long ago abandoned.

Wolves in Saskatchewan's boreal forest are generally accepted as a natural component of the ecosystem. Occasionally, concerns are voiced over their impact on game species and on species of concern such as boreal caribou; however, their impact is generally considered natural mortality and of less concern than more broad and recent threats, such as loss of productive value of habitat for wildlife.

The situation is different south of the forest. Here, where experience is measured in a human lifetime, the wolf is seen as a new species and to many as an invader with a proven track record of preying on livestock and pets. Their presence is a point of concern for livestock producers as well as for sport hunters and outfitters who resent the competition for game species. There is also, for some, the looming spectre of the wolf as a danger to humans, a situation which is extremely rare but happens just enough to keep the fear alive.

All of this is to say that management of wolves in Saskatchewan is a delicate balancing act.



Photo: Hamilton Greenwood

It is an act between respecting the legitimate concerns of our residents and maintaining the inherent protection that is granted to our native wildlife under Saskatchewan law.

The wolf has dual status in Saskatchewan, which means it is considered as both a furbearer and a big game species. This means wolves can potentially be harvested by means of either trapping or hunting. In the Northern Fur Conservation Area (NFCA), which essentially makes up two-thirds of Saskatchewan from the provincial forest boundary northward, the only legal means of harvesting wolves is by trapping and this is restricted to October 15 to March 15 when pelts are in prime. Hunting wolves is not allowed in the NFCA, although the holder of a trapping license is allowed to harvest wolves by means of shooting.

South of the NFCA, the situation is similar, except that in the past two years the Ministry of Environment has also instituted targeted hunting seasons in two areas where livestock predation by wolves has been persistently documented, and where the efforts of trappers have failed to entirely alleviate the problem. It should be noted that wolves are not readily hunted, and hunting success generally averages less than five per cent.

There are also policies and regulations in place in the south that are meant to provide additional protection for landowners who may be experiencing livestock losses to wolves. Rural municipalities may pass a motion to become part of a wolf management area. Rural municipalities within the area have the option to identify individuals as wolf control persons and these people will be permitted by the Ministry of Environment to harvest wolves at any time on land where they have permission to do so.

In addition, a landowner, his immediate family member, hired help or a licensed trapper named by the landowner may kill any predator on his own private or leased land at any time where he feels that animal is endangering his property or livestock.

Saskatchewan, and most other North American jurisdictions, does not monitor wolf populations using survey methods that yield concise population. Instead population information is gathered through trapper surveys, hunter harvest surveys, pelt harvest statistics and population models that factor habitat quality and prey density to estimate wolf abundance. These methods indicate Saskatchewan has a healthy and dynamic wolf population that is likely expanding as new range is pioneered. Harvest currently poses no danger of suppressing populations to a degree which would threaten their sustainable survival. These population estimates will ensure viable populations are maintained in areas where native prey and acceptable levels of human-wolf interactions occur.

Jack Meets Vireo
YFBTA member Jack Dawes

If you look at a coverage map for the Red-eyed Vireo you will see that they are virtually ubiquitous in Canada – nesting in virtually every province and Territory, except Newfoundland/Labrador. And although they are incessant songsters, they remain tricky to observe – especially to one colour-blind such as I am.

But not so with a friend of ours – Diana Gilleshammer of Minnedosa, Manitoba. On our summer visit to the Gilleshammer home this year we were able to observe the vireo and its nest from relatively close range-their backyard deck – on a hillcrest of the “Little Saskatchewan River” which flows through their town.

It was Diana who took the accompanying photograph and who has this reply to a couple of Saskatchewan birding types who thought one of the three eggs must be a cow-bird egg – because it appears so different from the other two. She writes: “All 3 baby birds were vireos.....white breasts, mask markings around the eyes, etc. I thought, too, that another bird was getting its egg hatched but no!

There must be an explanation for the variation in egg colour and I have been looking. I think that the white lilac tree is such a perfect camouflage for this particular nest. The height was also perfect for me on the deck!" See Editor's Note on page 8.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology (provided of course by Dr. Google!) describes the Red-eyed Vireo colour pattern thusly:

These neat, olive-green and white songbirds have a crisp head pattern of gray, black, and white. Their brief but incessant songs—sometimes more than 20,000 per day by a single male—contribute to the characteristic sound of an Eastern forest in summer. When fall arrives, they head for the Amazon basin, fueled by a summer of plucking caterpillars from leaves in the treetops.

Footnotes: the Red-eyed Vireo is described as “not threatened” under the “IUCN” protocols –IUCN being the World Conservation Congress – this year in Hawaii Sept 1-10 – from Wikipedia:

Held once every four years, the IUCN World Conservation Congress brings together several thousand leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business, and academia, with the goal of conserving the environment and harnessing the solutions nature offers to global *challenges*.

Find out more at:

<http://www.iucnworldconservationcongress.org/about/about-congress>



Photo: Diana Gilleshammer

Bemused but for the Birds Blog YFBTA member Thom Carnahan

Back again, unfortunately! Arthritis paining over the winter, no skiing, so concentrated on work and birds. We did not have a great 2015/2016 winter bird watching season in Canora, but we are happy with what we received.

Many Redpolls, actually several hundred, arrived and stayed with us most of the season. They consumed one and one half, five gallon pails of black sunflower seeds and none of them put on any weight! They are voracious and aggressive eaters, even ravenous before and during storms; no, not ravenous, since they are not Ravens, more accurately being redpollvenous (I greatly dislike this spell checker, since it does not support creative writing); look it up in the dictionary. We have had one Goldfinch included and welcomed into the flock; it could be considered a new species called Goldpoll; we named her Goldie, we don't know what she calls us. The flock is called Mixedpolls.

In addition, we have seen an albino Redpoll a few times in with them, an Albpoll which we call Whitey; we don't know what he calls us. Also, at various times during the winter we have had a few of those red and yellow Big Beakers.

March twenty-ninth we saw our first Robin and called her Robin.

Unfortunately for Robin and the Big Beakers, the Waxed Wings arrived early and consumed all of our crabby apples, mountain ash berries and choked cherries.

Last year, our Crab Tree had many apples remaining in the Spring, including many which had fallen to the ground and fermented in the welcoming sun. We watched in horror as Robins began fighting with each other and even falling out of the tree. As a result, we have formed the very first local committee of People Against Birds Flying and Drinking; that's right, PABFAD.

With obvious Robin hunger this year, we have left generous amounts of apple slices in the sun, close to the crab tree.

It is hoped this will alleviate their hunger. If anyone is interested in further education or erudite discussion, you are welcome to follow Thom's regular blogspot: ca.thomsbirdbull.com

A Sighting of Interest YFBTA member Laretta Ritchie-McInnis



Photo: Terry Hyggen

This bird was sighted in Yorkton, perched on the railing of the deck, in a back yard. The Nighthawk is often heard before it is seen, with its choppy wing beats, gliding and swooping over flying insects.

Up close, the Nighthawk is perfectly camouflaged for daytime perching on the ground or lengthwise on a tree branch. Visually, its wings are long with bold white bars across its primaries; its tail is slightly forked. Flying Nighthawks utter a sharp, nasal call. During courtship, the males dive from a great height making a deep, booming noise with their wings. In August and September, large flocks, migrating, are sometimes seen at dusk.

Sustainable and Affordable: Living Bridge
Talk about connecting youth with nature!

Type "youtube living bridge". I suggest the one by Akmai Nordin.

Editor

What's Flying Around? YFBTA member Burke Sebastian

What's flying around? The squirrels! I mean, if it flies it can be in this newsletter, right?

Anyway, a while back my Mom and I were cross-country skiing and during our rest in the shelter we heard a thud. We both looked at each other and I asked what it was. She said it may have been a Flying squirrel. We switched on a flashlight and pointed it to the window. Sure enough, we could see a Flying Squirrel! It was late at night so that was an easy indicator that the squirrels are nocturnal. They also don't like light, making it difficult to photograph them. We got a good look at it anyway, and couple of good pictures.

Curiosity caused me to search for interesting facts about Flying Squirrels. I knew this first one beforehand, but it's interesting nonetheless. A Flying Squirrel does not fly; it simply stretches its skin and glides from tree to tree. Its tail is flat and wide, essentially becoming a rudder in flight to keep it right side up and on its path. In flight, it can turn 180 degrees and go the other way. The longest recorded flight of a squirrel was 300 feet, but they usually travel only 30-40 feet from tree to tree. The squirrels also have thick paws used to cushion a landing. After they land they climb to the top of the tree. Surprisingly, they are omnivores. They like to eat many things, like slugs, snails, seeds, nuts and such. How about these dietary items? Mice and small birds are also prey. I don't know about you, but I find it extremely surprising that a little fuzz-ball can take down a bird or a mouse. They do have predators like raccoons, coyotes, owls, foxes, snakes and birds. They do not hibernate- they only slow down in winter, eating food they collected over summer (they can collect over 15000 nuts over summer). They are very social animals; a Flying Squirrel will share a den with many other Flying Squirrels and can also share a den with bats or Screech Owls. The average lifespan of one of these furry creatures is 4-5 years in the wild. They will grow to about a foot long including the tail.

I hope you enjoyed my article and learned something new, just like I did writing it!



Photo: YFBTA member Lana Sebastian

Burke's sources (provided at his request):

http://www.softschools.com/facts/animals/flying_squirrel_facts/80/

<http://interesting-animal-facts.com/Facts-South-American-Animals/Flying-Squirrel-Facts.shtml>

Window Strike: Black-billed Cuckoo



Photo: YFBTA member Mavis Hrynkiw

If you have internet access, you can, if you wish, receive email messages from YFBTA. You can also receive an electronic copy of the 2016 newsletters upon request.

Internet communication with members is not without glitches. Unless contacted we have no way of knowing if you are receiving electronic messages. If you value the emails and you suspect that you are not receiving them, please contact YFBTA. (see bottom of page 8).

Young Readers' Corner

I Like Birds

YFBTA member Jace McCallum

My name is Jace McCallum and I am nine years old. My family and I are members of the YFBTA. We have bird feeders and bird houses in our yard.

My sister Kalliegh and I saw the following birds in our yard:

American Robins, Tree Swallows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Blue Jays, Ruby-throated Humming birds, Mourning Doves, Barn Swallows, Martins, Pine Siskins, Redpolls, Black-capped Chickadees, Grackles, various sparrows, and lots of others! We also had a Ruffed Grouse visiting last winter.

Three years ago a Palm Warbler flew into our window and died in our flower bed. We were sad because that was the only Palm Warbler we have seen. We hope to see another Palm Warbler.. We also heard an American Bittern when we were at my aunt and uncle's farm.

Palm Warbler



Submitted by YFBTA member Grant McCallum
Photo: Julia Flanagan

Thank you YFBTA members for your support through membership and fund-raising. This has enabled YFBTA to offer its 2016 programs.

I attended the YFBTA Symposium with my grandpa. We listened to three speakers. One of them, Colin Laroque, also spoke at my school in Saltcoats. I correctly answered a question to a quiz that the speaker asked at the end of his talk on birding. I won a birding book called *Saskatchewan Birds!*

We keep track of the different types of birds that we see and so we like watching birds. We hope there will always be birds to watch!

Letters to the Editor



1. In early May the photo above was taken at Good Spirit Lake. The photographers couldn't identify this bird so they asked me if I could.

I had no idea so I forwarded the photo to Joyce Anaka. She thought it was a White-throated Sparrow and sent the photo to Stuart Houston for verification. Stuart replied that it was a leucistic (partial albino) White-throated Sparrow.

YFBTA member Ray Riesz

2. All this past winter we had two Goldfinches along with hundreds of Redpolls; they arrived together, stayed together and recently left together.

We would like to heartily congratulate the organizers of the latest bird symposium. The event was educational and interesting. It was great seeing and meeting all those birders. The presenters were all excellent and relevant. Your efforts have been well appreciated.

YFBTA members Thom Carnahan and Oney Pollock

Editor's note: Here is the answer to my enquiry regarding article on Page 4. If you wish to view photos (referred to below) I can provide a contact for you.

"Yes Rob, I've seen these photos and I've responded to Jack.

Although I am not an egg expert, I'm pretty sure the egg is a Brown-headed Cowbird. But even more convincing, is the young in the nest; the colour of the mouth of one of the birds is different than the other two; which makes me more convinced that one is a Brown-headed Cowbird. I've attached a photo from my "A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds", by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J.O. Harrison. I have no explanation as to how the folks saw only fledged Red-eyed Vireos."

YFBTA member Don Weidl

Calving was never like this in YFBTA region

If intrigued, Google "Calving glaciers". Select "Chasing Ice". The humans are "two tiny dots on the mountainside".

Help needed to sustain "What's Flying Around"

Your editor is beginning to find production of the YFBTA newsletter somewhat onerous. A co-editor and volunteer typists would lighten the load.

If you are asked to do some writing, please acquiesce. Will you help? Contact me.

I am waiting for the phone to ring. Rob Wilson

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A Bird Rarely Sighted in Our YFBTA Region

YFBTA member Don Weidl

Orchard Oriole

The Orchard Oriole was first recorded in Saskatchewan at Regina in 1972.

Unlike the brilliant orange and black colour of the more common Baltimore Oriole, the male Orchard Oriole's dark chestnut and black colors make it difficult to see in dense foliage. Adult females are olive-yellow above, with two white wing bars and dusky yellow below.

First year males remain olive-yellow in colour, like females, but acquire a black bib and sometimes traces of chestnut.

Orchard Orioles are occasionally found in small towns and farm yards in southeastern Saskatchewan. The song is described as bright and warbled; intermediate between buntings and orioles.

Orchard Orioles have occasionally nested in Broadview over the last 10 years and I was able to photograph one at a farmyard northwest of Broadview in June 2014.



Photo: YFBTA member Don Weidl

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