

Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association Inc.  
(Yellowhead Nature Society)

# What's flying around...



## Member Memory—Carol Bolt

I grew up on a farm 9 miles south of Kamsack. I went to a one room school called Bonnie Bank. It was a mile and a half walk from home. Mom, Jean Rauchman, would walk me down a half mile to the corner where I would meet up with my friends Joyce and Audrey. Mom would turn back and go home.

Mom, Jeanetta (Nettie) Gibbons from Clonmel, Sk., had been a teacher at Bonnie Bank. That's how she met my dad. She could recite reams of poetry from memory. Students learned poetry "by heart" when she'd been a student attending school.

When I started school, Roy Rogers was one of the biggest movie stars in the world. The Roy Rogers Show was a popular radio broadcast. I was really lucky because I had a metal lunch kit that was like a miniature suitcase and featured a picture of Roy Rogers and his palomino horse, Trigger. I'm not sure if Dale Evans made the cut. Her being a female and all.

I used to trip over my own feet a lot so I would fall over and Roy Rogers would crash to the ground. He



Photo: Melodie Achtymichuk

was always okay, but the glass-lined thermos would break. I don't know how many times this happened but I always seemed to get a new thermos. My mother was a saint!

My fondest memory of those walks with Mom is of her pointing out of the different species of wildflowers and her identifying of all the birds. Mom would recite poetry as we walked. This is my favourite. I always think of it and those walks with Mom in the Fall:

### Indian Summer

*Along the line of smoky hills  
The crimson forest stands,  
And all the day the bluejay calls  
Throughout the autumn lands.*

*Now by the brook the maple leans  
With all his glory spread  
And all the sumachs on the hills  
Have turned their green to red.*

*Now by the great marshes wrapt in mist,  
Or past some river's mouth,  
Throughout the long, still autumn day  
Wild birds are flying south.*

*-Wilfred Campbell*

**Editors' note:** The celebration of Nature has often been expressed in poetry, song and dance. The memorizing of poems often deepened student appreciation of Nature.

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## Bring in the Birds—Debbie Hayward

*There are so many ways that gardeners can help out our feathered friends in all seasons!*

Have you ever thought of your yard or garden as a 'living bird feeder'? A bit of homework and some careful planning at this time of year can give gardeners a head start on what to plant next spring to attract birds to our yards!

We might think that birds come to our yards just to look for seeds, but there is more. Birds are looking for seeds, insects and nectar. The right assortment of plants can provide all three. Birds rely on our yards for food, water, shelter, nesting areas, and safety. Trees and shrubs provide safe havens to rest or nest.

But at this moment, let's think ahead and talk about planting in the spring. Do gardeners ever stop thinking about planting, even after we put away our garden gloves in the fall? Not really! So, let's make a list together of annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs for next year that will attract birds.

Some good seedy-sources in annual flowers are amaranth of all kinds, bachelor buttons, columbine, sunflowers, cosmos, millet, celosia, gomphrena, and zinnias. Flowers from A to Z!



*Photo: Takk - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11495244>*  
*Monarda didyma (Bee balm)*

For birds, like hummingbirds, that like nectar, choose flowers that have a tube shape such as petunias, coral bells, delphiniums, lantana, honeysuckle, and glads.

For perennials, let's mark down goldenrod, coneflower, bugleweed, yarrow, liatris (blazing star), Joe-Pye weed, and milkweed. Salvia and veronica are favorites, too,

with the added bonus of amazing texture and colour to the garden. Monarda (bee balm) and perennial asters are fine choices as well.

But let's keep going! If you are adding or amending your collection of trees and shrubs, consider red-osier dogwood, viburnum, elderberry, ninebark, cotoneaster, pin cherry or chokecherry, cranberry, and Virginia creeper. These plants are beautiful additions and provide berries that are welcome food sources for the birds.

Give birds a variety of nesting real-estate as well. Some birds do like the safety of conifers for nesting, while others prefer deciduous trees. Try to provide a mix for the birds and for landscaping beauty.

There are many ornamental grasses that offer seeds and perching places. Karl Foerster is an elegant and beautiful addition to the garden. Not only does it stand up well against winter snows, but the seed heads are a welcome treat for the birds in winter.

This brings us to the next topic with our living bird feeders. Picture that it is next spring, we have planted our bird-friendly plants, summer passed, and now fall has arrived. What should we do?

### *Leave things alone.*

What does that mean? Some gardeners are so hard-working that they trim down every stem in the fall from their assorted perennials, getting ready for the following spring. But we should try and keep in mind that these stems and their multitudinous seed heads are a valuable resource to the birds when winter snows cover our yards. Not only the birds benefit: having a bit of wild and 'uncleaned' areas in our yards provided important winter places for many beneficial insects, which in turn will attract birds the following spring. It's all a marvelous circle!

We've got quite a list! But by taking a little tour of our gardens and yards, we might see areas that require upgrading or refinement, and these areas give us the perfect opportunity to add in some bird-friendly additions. Choosing just a few of these next spring will give our birds a fruitful, safe and beautiful area to call home...as well as creating beautiful landscapes for ourselves! We all win!



## Arbor Day/Week Activities

Walter Farquharson—YFBTA member

The Province of Saskatchewan is committed to declaring an annual Spring Arbor Week/Arbor Day. The initiative taken to promote Arbor Day/Week was, to a great extent, begun and pursued by YFBTA. We were joined in that by Nature Sask, SOS Trees in Saskatoon, and the Provincial Forestry Association. Our attempts to have a government promotion of the day/week was less successful, although some MLAs have been involved in their own constituencies, encouraging action and attending special planting events. The Hon. Warren Kaeding, Melville-Saltcoats MLA, was, from the beginning, an avid supporter and advocate. In appreciation of Warren's work, YFBTA, working with Churchbridge in Bloom, arranged for the planting of a Siberian Larch at the Stopping Place on Highway #16 within the Town of Churchbridge.

The Arbor Week/Day Committee within YFBTA/YNS has urged individuals and groups to be involved in a variety of local activities and have, each year planned one or more special YFBTA/YNS celebration. They have also planted spruce and larch trees in the Saltcoats and District Regional Park opposite the beach.

For 2026 the YFBTA/YNS Arbor Day Committee has decided on "Plant A Tree for Peace" as our theme. Trees and peace have often been held in tandem within world religions. There are references in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and many shrines and sacred places around the world are connected with specific trees and

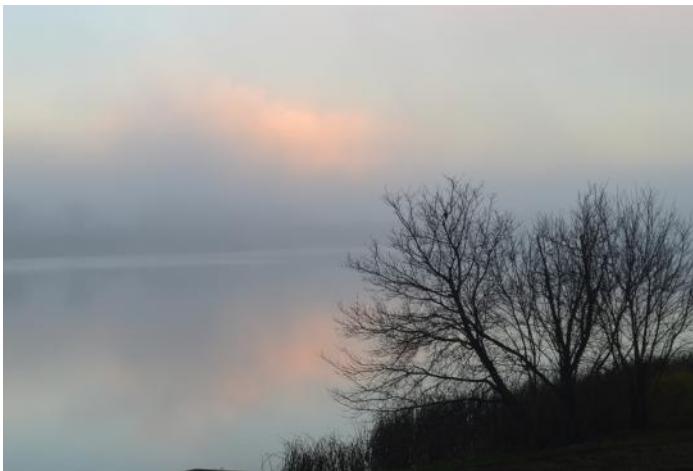


*Photo: BING Creative Commons*

groves of trees. Gratitude for trees, and the gifts they offer us and many other creatures, is part of the wisdom of Indigenous elders, and in spoken prayers of thanksgiving.

Our world today is witness to many wars. We think of Gaza, of Ukraine, Sudan, Nigeria – to name only a few of the places where many have been killed, many others displaced, and too many are victims of starvation and disease. War wastes precious resources in addition to the loss of human life. War inevitably results in the destruction of forests, croplands, degradation of soils and healthy water sources.

Members and readers, please consider being actively involved in planning and participating in Arbor Day/Week activities. Within families, with a next-door neighbour, with the members of any group you belong to, or any collection of persons, join in planting a tree or trees. Whenever possible involve people of all ages, and of varied abilities. Celebrate trees. Celebrate peace. As soon as you can get at it is the time to begin! For more information or suggestions contact Walter Farquharson, chair of YFBTA/YNS Arbor Day Committee. email: farq.blueheron@sasktel.net



*Photo: Valerie Brooks YFBTA member*



**Member Sighting  
Ruffed Grouse**

*Photos: Melodie Achtymichuk*

## "Trees Against the Wind" - Author's Reflections

William Schroeder



At my book events, people often asked what inspired me to write "Trees Against the Wind." Crafting a book about the history of tree planting on the prairies was a journey rooted in personal passion. These stories reflected both my experiences growing up on the farm and my career as a scientist, highlighting how people and place are connected. Engaging with individuals, I witnessed firsthand the pride and nostalgia tied to shelterbelts. This process enriched my understanding and reinforced the significance of preserving both the memories and the living legacy of trees.

My emotional connection with shelterbelts and tree planting goes beyond practicality—it reflects shared community, resilience, and changing a once inhospitable landscape. The desire to capture this history led me to dig deep into archives, oral histories, and government records. Documenting this story came with its own set of challenges. Accessing information was daunting as many early records were scattered or incomplete, requiring a persistent effort to locate and verify information. In addition, I needed to balance science and storytelling by weaving together technical details with personal anecdotes and broader historical context. As a scientist, being trained to write factually scripting an engaging story was not easy. The work was not just about compiling facts—it became more about telling the story of how trees became a vital part of prairie life, and why those stories matter. Fortunately, a patient and understanding editor helped me.

Since releasing "Trees Against the Wind", I have had the opportunity to meet and converse with

100s of prairie people. Every community I visited had its unique perspective on how trees fit into prairie agriculture, but most expressed a sense of loss when government support for shelterbelt planting ended. A highlight was always the discussion period after the presentation. Questions were always thoughtful. One young attendee asked: What is your favourite tree? After brief reflection, I explained that choosing a favourite tree feels much like picking a favourite child—I appreciate and love all of them equally and enjoy spending time with whichever tree happens to be nearby. This may not be the expected answer but represents how I value all trees and their purpose in natural spaces. While I may have been addressing those already passionate about prairie tree planting, I finished each session feeling optimistic that there was a shared recognition of the importance of trees and conserving natural areas.

It is my hope that the stories about Norman Ross, the Germantown women, tree inspectors and tree planting homesteaders inspires readers to reflect on the power of people coming together with determination and ingenuity to improve their environment. Their determination reshaped the prairie and inspired ongoing stewardship. These stories highlight that the true legacy of shelterbelts lies not just in the trees, but also in the spirit of cooperation and shared purpose they represent.

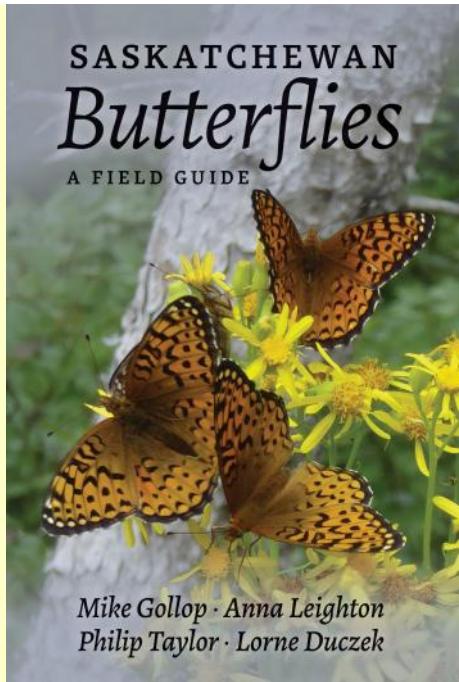
As I journey across the prairies today, I feel a sense of loss for the trees—both those that were naturally here and those my parents' generation planted. Many shelterbelts and wooded areas have disappeared, taken not by age but by bulldozers. Still, I am hopeful that pieces like "Trees Against the Wind" will inspire people to appreciate the role trees play in shaping our landscape and impacting the lives of those who live on the prairies. By reflecting on the resilience, ingenuity, and collaborative efforts that have defined prairie tree planting, I hope my work encourages ongoing stewardship and a renewed respect for the legacy of trees in our region.



Photo: BING Creative Commons

**Saskatchewan Butterflies - A Field Guide**

By Mike Gollop, Anna Leighton, Philip Taylor and Lorne Duczek—Foreword by Peter Taylor



*Saskatchewan Butterflies* illustrates the colour, variety and allure of all 158 butterfly species found in the province to date. This thoughtfully crafted guide blends plentiful high-quality photos and specially designed identification plates with concise text and distribution maps to help you find and identify butterflies.

Purchase your copy [online at the Nature Saskatchewan store](#) or by contacting the office at 306-780-9273/1-800-667-4668.

### Saltcoats School 2025 Arbor Day

Walter Farquharson

YFBTA /YNS invited Saltcoats School students to participate in Arbor Day and Arbor Week activities. Bredenbury students attend the Saltcoats School. On behalf of the Arbor Day Committee, Walter Farquharson met with students and their teachers to announce a writing and art competition, and to talk about trees and the importance of trees. Some conversation included the visit of Bill Schroeder to the school in 2024 and the spruce seed planting many engaged in with him.

They remembered the title of Bill's book, Trees Against the Wind. They asked a few questions

We had hoped to display all writing and art but few opportunities arose when we could do that.

Winners of the competition received their prizes at a school assembly when different awards were being handed out and acknowledged.

Mention was made of the many opportunities Saltcoats students have had to plant trees and learn of the many ways trees are important to all of us. Principal, Ron Gillis and teachers, Crystal Farquharson, Candice Baron, and Dion Walker were thanked for their support of this project.

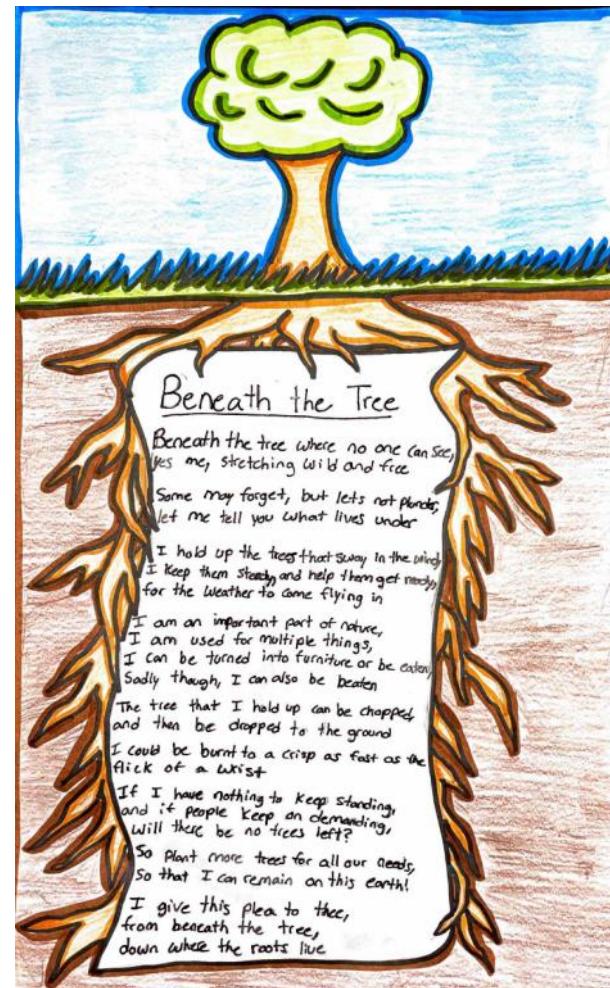
#### Student Awards by Grade:

Grade 5/6 Art: 1<sup>st</sup> Emma Kaiser, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mady Delanoy, 3<sup>rd</sup> Mariana Ortiz, 3<sup>rd</sup> Kayleigh Staley.

Grade 5/6 Writing: 1<sup>st</sup> Reid Evans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nash Bradford, 3<sup>rd</sup> Zachary Novak

Grade 7/8 Art: 1<sup>st</sup> Aniston Novak, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kylee Tangedal, 3<sup>rd</sup> Jozsef Pellecer

Grade 7/8 Writing: 1<sup>st</sup> Taylynn Novak, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sophia Morrison



Taylynn Novak—Grade 7/8 1st Place Writing

## Student Submissions—Arbor Day

### Brick's Trees

Brick is a little boy who had no trees in his backyard. He sees a lot of trees every time he goes for a run. He didn't know why people plant them so he did research on what trees do for the environment. The things he found surprised him. When he found out what trees do for the environment. When he went for runs, he would try to pick up seeds so he could plant some trees back at his house in the backyard. At one point he had so many trees that he could barely see the fence at the back of his house. When he did more research he also found out that there is a special day for acknowledging trees. This special day is in May. When he found this out he decided to do something for this day. He got 50 people to help. They started to plant thousands of trees in their town. When the town mayor found out he was surprised that a little kid could do all of this. When he grew up he ended up being a tree planter in places that had absolutely no trees. When the world found out about his story, he was selected to go on the news to promote and talked about how everyone should plant trees.

Reid Evans—1st Place, Grade 5/6

### Member Sighting Submission—Davis Daniels

Interesting colouration on this goose, anyone with information on species identification please contact the editor.



## Christmas Bird Count 2025

Arden Bradford

Founded by the YFBTA the Christmas Bird Count has become an annual event in the Saltcoats - Bredenbury area. Every year on Dec. 18 volunteer birders take note of the number and species of birds they see at their bird feeders and in their yards. Other volunteers drive specific routes on the East and West sides of the Yellowhead Highway and record their observations. The reports are tabulated and forwarded to the Provincial Co-ordinator and can be seen in the Nature Sask. publication "The Blue Jay"

In 2023 the Bird Count recorded 26 species and a estimated 1100. individuals. In 2024 there were 23 species recorded and 750 individuals. The numbers vary year to year and that variance points to the importance of the Christmas Bird Count.

We are restricted as to area surveyed and proximity to another bird counter as we try not to count the same birds twice. We are currently short on bird counters and would welcome any inquiries about joining the Christmas Bird Count. There are no obligations other than counting birds and recording and forwarding the information to the committee comprised of YFBTA members Arden and Donna Bradford and Ron and Gerri Knudson.

The Christmas Bird Count is fun and interesting and has value.



Photo: Moira Theede



## Whooping Cranes

Moira Theede

On Thanksgiving weekend in 2018 my husband Al and I became Whooping Crane enthusiasts. It was our first trip out to the Blaine Lake area in search of Whooping Cranes of the Aransas/Wood Buffalo flock. We grew up in rural Saskatchewan so taking back roads wasn't a problem. And what a surprise when we could see a group of 125 birds gathered on the low bank of a slough. It was a surreal sight as our hopes were to maybe see a dozen birds.

The cranes were about 400 meters away so out came the binoculars and camera. We travelled back and forth every few days for over three weeks to watch the cranes voraciously eating in the stubble. Our youngest grandson not quite 3 years old came with us and enjoyed the wide open spaces and the back roads, and happy to have his own pair of binoculars.

These days we usually head out the last week of September on a quick trip to check out where the cereal crops are planted. We make at least two trips per week in October.

These cranes are the largest birds in North America and stand 5 feet tall, their wing span about 7.5 feet. Watching whooping cranes land on the ground is always fascinating and in a way rather comical. They have a static posture with wings straight out, legs slightly forward yet poker straight, with the three toes on each foot spread as far apart as possible and once they touch the ground they take a couple of running hop steps folding their wings down at the same time. This all takes less than 3 seconds. My first reaction was "Ok get ready, landing gear is down."

On the other hand the gesture that indicates a family group (large or small) may take flight is when the cranes bring their heads and necks forward and lowered, then suddenly taking big running steps as wings spread they lift off into the air. In shallow water the running take-off looks more dramatic as it appears they have to take longer strides. Definitely shows how

amazingly strong their legs are.

Our youngest granddaughter joined in on some trips to see the cranes in 2023. If we didn't see cranes we would park the van, roll down the windows and listen. The odd time we would hear the bugle calls in the distance and wait patiently to see if they were coming our way. Travelling down narrower back roads we'd see a family of three eating in a cereal stubble field - the female and male taking turns "with heads up surveying" the area for possible predators. I was always fascinated with the coloured banding and telemetry and over the years when reviewing our photos once home on a big screen, realized we had sometimes photographed some of the same birds from previous years!

This October 27th was a beautiful day here in the city so shortly before noon we headed up north for one last trip and were greeted with high winds. We saw a few family groups of three here and there but felt we must have missed the window. As we headed East to the highway we had a "surprise" seeing best with binoculars 80 cranes sheltering in a low spot (15 of them juveniles). We had completely missed seeing them when heading West earlier in the day on the same road. This made for a good day.



Photo: Moira Theede

**Rob Wilson—Long-time Editor**

Walter Farquharson

Whatever is the future of “What’s Flying Around” the official newsletter of Yellowhead Nature Society (YFBTA), we will count on the knowledge and expertise of long-time Editor Rob Wilson. Many words can be used to describe Rob as Editor – dedicated, persistent, informed, dedicated. He diligently sought a great variety of contributors and used well his many connections in the world of ecological concern and natural science.

At our request, Rob searched his files to find some history of the publication.

“The first document I have in my newsletter file is titled “Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association Newsletter (Feb. 2004). Later in February the one-page newsletter was titled “What’s Flying Around”. I think that the first editor might have been Kim Wondrasek\*. Andrew John Sawkey became editor possibly in 2006 and editing the newsletter passed from Kim to John. I began helping John with newsletters in 2007. My involvement with the newsletters increased. In 2007 John included editorial-like articles as the final “Last Word” of an issue. I considered John to be the editor although I wrote editorials in those years. At some point John informed me that he would only continue if I gave him a personal assurance that I would work with him as a co-editor. I cannot remember which year. In December of 2011 Marcel Pelletier, John’s adopted son who had been helping John with “The Last Word” column, referred to me as editor, so this was when (and how) I became editor. It’s a longish and somewhat complicated and convoluted story.”

For 18 years Rob has been our dedicated Editor. Joan Wilson was a wise and efficient adviser and proof-reader. This publication has been a uniting force within our organization, a source of information and enjoyment, a voice advocating for ecological awareness and action. Thank you, Rob.

\* Kim Wondrasek played a key and very supportive role in the formation and shaping of YFBTA – as a group committed to enjoying and advocating for the world of nature. We had hoped to be part of a provincial network involving ecotourism and promoting a network of great birding sites. Kim was Director of the local branch of the Regional Economic Development Authority (REDA). She helped plan and execute our first hosting of a very successful Nature Sk. Meet.



Photo: Bob Wynes YFBTA Member

**Member Sighting Submission—Bob Wynes**

Exciting to see Trumpeter Swans nesting in Duck Mountain Provincial Park again. I am aware of nesting locations for 2 pairs but suspect there are many more in the park on more remote ponds. One pair had two cygnets, the other pair had 7 cygnets. I haven't seen that many in a long time.

Another interesting siting - there is a small flock of Hooded mergansers gathered on Madge Lake in front of my cabin.

**What's Flying Around: Newsletter Volunteers**

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