

Buffalo Lake Nature Club

May 16, 2019

Monthly meeting

Guest Speaker: Dr. Michelle Gordy - Swimmers Itch and Parasites of Central Alberta Lakes

Many of the members were observing wildlife at the Shuckburgh Wetlands from prior to the meeting 6 - 6:45 pm

Mark Higgins called the meeting to order shortly after 7 pm with 14 members present Introduced our Guest Speaker Dr. Michelle Gordy from North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and Alberta Public Health

 Minutes for the April meeting were mailed out on email

Claudia reported for Nature Alberta. On July 8-9 there is a casino fundraiser and Nature Alberta is in need of volunteers especially for the 7pm to 3:30 am shifts. If you are interested please contact Claudia or Nature Alberta.

Members please send an email to Nature Alberta requesting the quarterly e- magazine. Also anyone can check out the website and online newsletter.

 Many interesting nature related sites and Apps are also on line such as ebird and now the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI), has NatureLynx a free citizen science application. NatureLynx is a way for nature enthusiasts to share, connect, and learn, but also a way to contribute to the ever-growing understanding of Alberta’s natural heritage, and its relationship with human activities.

May 27 JJ Collette Spring Walk. The Best Guided Walk in Central Alberta. A side note you can walk at the JJ Collette Natural Area at any time on your own as long as you follow the posted rules of use.

June 13, 6 pm the Lady Slipper walk and Paddle at The Narrows. Mark Higgins will have canoes for use provided by the Erskine Recreation Group.

June 20 6 pm The BLNC Annual potluck picnic at Rochon Sands Provincial Park Group area. Watch for details and signs. You are reminded that you can arrive early to enjoy the many walking trails at the park. Please bring your lawn chairs, dishes and cutlery.

Everyone welcome please bring your family members and friends!

July 7 20th Annual Dry Island Butterfly Count (and Dr. Charley Bird’s Birthday)

 Meet at 10 pm at the Dry Island Provincial Park upper viewpoint parking lot for introductions and to sign the waiver.

Then go down to the park and split into groups lead by the Alberta Lepidoptera Guild Stop for lunch and a group photo. Bring buttery fly net if you have them your lunch, water and Please dress for hiking in the bad lands.

Next formal meeting is September 19, 2019

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Roll Call

 Bob S has been watching a Bittern come up onto the lawn

Kariin seeing many deer, moose, hawks Also saw earred grebs and meadowlarks

Jim Has been enjoying watching the on line video camera of the Ellis Bird Farm Owl nest. Red winged Black birds the males arrived first It looked like the males established territory and now the females have arrived. Jim was setting out nesting boxes and the Tree Swallows were checking them out while they were still on the ground.

Charley Charley and Anne hosted Kelsy Norton from Nature Alberta today. They went to Erskine Lake and down to Ewing Lake to do observations of the IBA. She was also at the Shuckburgh Wet lands before the meeting but sent her regrets as she could not stay for the meeting tonight. Kelsey will compile all the sightings and post them to e-Bird. Charley had a chipping Sparrow in his yard in Erskine.

Claudia She has been monitoring the Blue Bird trail for the Ellis Bird Farm. Reminded us that opening day the EBF is Monday May 20. Myrna will be launching her new book on the history of Charlie and Winnie Ellis and the Ellis Bird Farm.

 Claudia had a Nashville Warbler at her feeder

Wayne Bashaw the gosslings were first seen May 11 now there are 4 pairs with 16 goslings.Interesting observation that 4 new pairs have started nesting in the raised boxes around the slough.

 Marie was in Ontario saw some lovely Cardinals

Melanie Her mother lives about 20 miles south of Botha about 20 miles east of the Red Deer River and they have seen Beavers in the area. Not very many trees around so how far will they travel?

Thomasina and Chester went last week with the Battle River Watershed Alliance and observed the Sharp Tailed Grouse courtship at the likclose to Wainright

Anne present

Sue Was in Ontario recently and saw the American Gold Finch

Dave Goslings and muskrat at West Central Park

 Chris P Rochon Sands Robins nesting in the yard and saw a Bald Eagle

Michelle Noticed Wax wings and Red Breasted Nut Hatch

Mark H Noticed a Western Tanager in Erskine

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 Marie’s notes of the presentation

Guest Speaker Dr Michelle Gordy A graduate of the University of Alberta School of Public Health. Her Ph.D research focused on the biodiversity of flateworm parasites in central Alberta lakes, with an emphasis on the transmission of the species that cause the allergic skin condition known as swimmer’s itch. She is passionate about scientific outreach, parasites and biodiversity. She now works at the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, an non profit organization that advises on best management practices within the North Saskatchewan River watershed.

Michelle talked about some hidden biodiversity of Buffalo Lake… the parasites and their hosts. Not all paracites are bad they are the ecosytems engineers; they all have an important part to play in the ecosystem.

She talked about the flateworm or Trematodes and the important role the parasites play in the ecosystem of Buffalo Lake. During her study 2013 -2015 she collected over 300 snail samples from Buffalo Lake. Trematodes species require a different host usally in the liver of an vertebrate , deer moose, birds, muskrats and also fish Worldwide there are over 18000 species of Trematodes. In Buffalo Lake she found 34 species 26 of those were identified as new species. The egg are passed from the fecus of the vertabrates then the parasite requires a snail to “incubate the larva”. The larva are then released into the water, some species will go to different levels of the lake. Those from a muskrat host are usually found at night at the water surface, If someone is wading in the water the reaction would be a ring rash around the legs ; this usually peaks in July. The other type found in the lower levels of the water will affect the whole body as a general rash., the host species are birds and the paricites peak after 10am.

 There were 5 types of snails found in Buffalo Lake and 4 of them are species which host the paracites. Only 11% of Michelle’s samples were infected with parasites and only 2 ot those species cause swimmers itch.

 Michelle helped develop and create a web site for tracking and reporting swimmers itch Please check it out. swimmeritch.ca