

Buffalo Lake Nature Club

October 17, 2019 regular meeting

Guest speaker Tim Schowalter : Exploring Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Chris opened the meeting welcoming everyone, especially the 10 visitors. 24 persons present.

Minutes were amended: the IBA bird workshop on Oct 25- 26 will be at the Quality Inn Red Deer rather than as stated in minutes at Kerry Wood Nature Centre.

No treasurers report

Simone sent her regrets at attending.

Roll Call

Anne here

Charley will be giving a brief talk on the Erskine /Ewing Lake IBA at the upcoming workshop. He has been visiting the Erskine Lake to observe as much as he can this fall. In September before the freeze there were large flocks of a variety of species of Geese and Swans. Many ducks are difficult to identify this time of year but some were Gadwalls, Shovelers, Coots. Most of those flocks have gone from the area although there still smaller flocks, mostly ducks. Today he saw 200 Coots they are usually along the shore.

Wayne Sept. 30 he observed a flock of Swans on the ponds west of Bashaw. He estimated there were 100. After close counting there were only 92.

Sue G enjoys watching the flocks of water fowl flying overhead.

David G Was in the Castor area and noticed many white birds on the ponds, but did not stop for a closer inspection.

Dave Tibble From Forestburg. Seeing many flocks of Swans, Snow Geese and a few Canada Geese out his way. David is hoping to be a steward of the Wavy Lake IBA. If you are ever out by Daysland/Strome and want to look around call Dave.

Laraine Hess reported seeing Snow Geese at Munson

Tim Schowalter They live at Michichi, northeast of Drumheller. The neighbouring farmer ploughed up his hayfield. Tim now has about 28 Pronghorns that enjoy his pasture.

Mary Davis and Ed Schowalter (Tim Schowalter's sister and brother) live in Stettler. Seeing many of the town birds.

Mr. McGreggor (The Birds neighbour) from Erskine

Tim Green 50 to 100 Canada Geese still on Alix Lake. Commented on his Swiss Chard; he is still harvesting even after it was under the snow last week.

Kim Poapst Teaches at the school in Stettler and was giving instruction to the grade 4s to go out for a run, unfortunately there was a moose and calf in the schoolyard.

Bob Poapst Late August he was up early in the morning and observed a Hummingbird in their flower bed for the first time.

Wilma Many Blue Jays begging for peanuts in her neighbourhood.

Marie Moose with a calf in the apple trees and still have Pine Siskin at the feeder and also a Junco seen today.

Savana (Mark Higgins coworker) so happy to find this group of people so interested in birds. Saw a Bald Eagle by Veteran.

Nathan (Savana's friend)

Bob S Also seeing many Blue Jays in his yard. Has not noticed them in past years.

Karin Saw a lot of Hawks mostly Red Tails .

Neal saw some Blue Winged Teals

Bob R On the way up to Rochon Sands today saw 25 Swans, about 200 misc. white Geese and saw a junco today. He still has the Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak at the feeder.

Elmer Reported many chickadees in the yard this summer but no Gold Finches. Went with his daughter for a drive down by Linda Hall and they saw a Blue Bird sitting on one of Elmer's nest boxes. He was thrilled that she got a picture of it. Elmer also shared his story of starting the blue bird trail and that he has made over 4000 nest boxes since 1982. He also shared some data and articles for us to share in the club archives.

Chris P has allowed the sunflowers to self seed along his driveway and now they enjoy watching many species feeding off them; his grandson reported seeing a Pileated Woodpecker, Chris had his doubts but his grandson has a picture to prove it.

Guest speaker Tim Schowalter : Exploring Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Upcoming Events

Nature Alberta IBA workshop Oct. 25 and 26 at Quality Inn Red Deer. To register you must go to Eventbrite.ca the cost is \$20 plus service fee and tax. Charley will be giving about a 20 minute power point on the Ewing /Erskine IBA in the morning of Saturday Oct. 26

If you are interested PLEASE register right away to insure your spot.

If anyone interested in helping with bird nest box clean out on the Linear Trails Chris and Bob S will be doing the Red Willow trail. Contact Chris, Marie or Claudia to help with the Rowley, Rumsey trail.

Wayne won the door prize. Thank you to Simone for donating the art work.

Next meeting will be Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. 4817- 51 St. Stettler

Guest speaker to be announced

Guest speaker Tim Schowalter : Exploring Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Tim has been visiting the park since 1963 and has been involved in palaeontological, archaeological, and biological work there with the University of Alberta, Alberta Fish and Wildlife, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Archaeological Survey of Alberta, Royal Tyrrell Museum, and the Alberta Lepidopterists Guild Butterfly Survey.

Tim gave us a very informative slide show on the park and an overview of all the scientific study areas he has had experience with during all his visits to the park for the last 56 years. Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park is an internationally important area for many scientific and indigenous reasons. The indigenous people used the area for over 2000 years for a Buffalo Jump and the processing of the meat. The cliffs are known to be the highest vertical jump anywhere and have been studied by archaeologists and historians. This area has significant meaning to the first nations culture and therefore should be voluntarily restricted by respectful visitors. It has also become so overgrown with vegetation that it is very difficult to get to and very difficult to see any bones or artifacts.

A large variety of Scientists from all over the world are envious of anyone who has the opportunity to do research in this park.

There are 2 internationally important fossil areas, which have been studied, by Palaeontologists, geologists and students since Brown found the first Albertosaurus leg in 1910. In the 1980s Currie found the group of 6 Albertosaurus suggesting that these dinosaurs were social animals living in groups. This fossil display can be seen at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller. Tim Schowalter, also found a fossil of the ½ grown dinosaur. Duck billed Dinosaurs and prehistoric fish fossils are 2 other important finds in the park.

The geological history of the area is amazing and very evident when you visit the park and see the diversity of landscapes and geological formations that are now visible thanks to glaciation and erosion. It is a great place to see the many distinct layers of rock formations deposited 65 to 80 million years ago and their historical sequence. (Whitemud Formation, Ardley and Nevis coals, and Scollard Formation to name a few)

The steep cliffs and valley ridges are evidence slump or landslides have occurred for thousands of years and are still active today. We need to protect this park because of the type of geological formations and soil composition that continue to make this sensitive area easily damaged by erosion and over use.

The park is also an important biodiversity area with respect to wildlife, birds and plants. The Franklin's Ground Squirrel is found here at its southern limit. Cottontails have not been observed for several years but the Snowshoe Hare is a resident. Red Squirrels were not seen here in the 1960s but are now as far south as Drumheller. There are 3 varieties of Garter snake, Red-Sided, Plains and Wandering, but you will be all happy to hear, no Rattlesnakes are found in the park.

Birders love the park. Some species to see are, Prairie Falcon, Vultures, Rock-Wrens, several types of swallows and Mt. Blue Birds, which will nest in rock cavities in the valley, Cliff and Tree Swallows and Violet Green Swallows. Night Hawks, Osprey and Bald Eagle are also known to nest in the area. Many other species of songbirds too many to name are found in the park.

Guest speaker Tim Schowalter : Exploring Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

Botanical study is also important, students from all over the world come here to study the extreme variety of plants, from spruce and pine forests of the east edge to Fragile Cactus of the badlands, to the Rough Fescue on the Dry Island, to Bergamot and Lilac Flowered Beardtongue found in grassland area, and the Wood Lily and other plants found in the wetlands and river shoreline.

The Alberta Lepidopterists have been holding a Butterfly count in the park for 20 years. The Old World Swallowtail butterfly mates on the top of the Dry Island, and the Wood Lily is pollinated by butterflies and moths that visit the park.

The park is a great place for photographers and hikers for all the reasons listed above, however the scenery of the park is so beautiful at all times of day and season. Tim's pictures captured the beauty of the park proving the fact it is known as a hidden jewel. But we all know photos can never capture the true beauty of actually seeing the park for your self. You will just need to visit this 'hidden gem' for yourself.

- ***Please use respect for all that has been in the area and all those who will someday visit the park. Local concerned citizens lobbied the Provincial Government to protect this important historical, biodiverse area and the Park was established in the 1970s. Tim asked us all to continue to be active in protecting the park and it's sensitive areas that are easily damaged by overuse. Please speak up if there is public support for opening the park up for camping and development.***
- ***Please be aware of the dangers and the damage that is caused by walking on trails or driving down into the park when it is wet.***
- ***Please regard the indigenous significant areas of the park and only visit with the outmost respect.***
- ***Please use the old but true motto: take only photographs and leave only footprints.***
- ***Please leave any cultural, historic and fossils you find where they are so others may enjoy them. Report any findings to Park staff and they will decide if to remove the items to Museums.***
- ***Please visit the park and bring your visiting family and friends to the park.***

(If you missed Tim's presentation too bad for you, here is a very brief summary, which is only as good as the notes this writer was able to make.)

The Buffalo Lake Nature Club (and the world) is so lucky to have Tim share his wealth of knowledge and experience of the Natural World and especially Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park. He is a fantastic resource to us all.