

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

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VOLUME 29 ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2018

ACTWS President's Report Robin Gutsell

So here it is February 2018 already and, in my last month as President, I am mulling over the past year, its successes and challenges. I continue to be so impressed by the dedication of the volunteer Executive of the Chapter. It is no small task to keep this organization not only running but moving forward and growing. The passion for wildlife that we all share is truly exemplified by the members of the Chapter's Executive and Committee Chairs, and I want to say what an absolute pleasure it has been to be part of this family. Not that I am going anywhere in a hurry! I also want to point out how the passion of wildlifers here in Alberta has been a shining example to the rest of the country for a long time. This has really been brought home to me over the past year as I participated in monthly executive meetings of the Canadian Section of the Wildlife Society; I felt proud to be associated with one of the original Canadian chapters – an old timer, so to speak.

I hope everyone has registered for the upcoming conference in Lethbridge; if not, there is still time! You can register online before February 19 or at the door. The plenary and symposium sessions promise much learning and discussion and the lineup of regular session presentations and posters also looks fantastic. Please don't miss the AGM on Friday evening, which is always much more than just business details and approvals – which are also necessary. Bring your auction items and enjoy the networking and learning that are the essence of ACTWS conferences.

Also, check out our website for the latest work by the Conservation Affairs Committee. Matthew Pyper has been leading this small and very dedicated group over the last year, and they have just drafted three letters to the provincial Minister of Environment and Parks regarding provincial woodland caribou range planning, human activities in SW Alberta, and provincial native trout recovery. Many thanks to this enthusiastic committee for their hard work and thoughtful letter-writing.

See you all in Lethbridge!



#ACTWS18 - CONFERENCE AND AGM
The Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society

When: March 9-11, 2018

Where: Lethbridge Alberta, Canada

Venue: Lethbridge Lodge and Lethbridge College

#ACTWS18 THEME

--A Future with Renewable Energy: Implications for Wildlife Conservation--

What is the current situation in the province and beyond?

What are the positive and negative implications for wildlife?

How are industry and regulators working together to conserve wildlife?

Will increasing demand for renewable energy change the current situation?

SPECIAL SYMPOSIUM

--Globalization and Invasive Species--

How has globalization affected the spread of invasive species?

Are alien species all bad: positive and negative implications for wildlife conservation?

How can invasions affect species at risk?

How has habitat quality/quantity been affected by invasive species?

What other frontiers exist in the discipline of invasive species biology?

By
Lorne Fitch

Bull Trout Ghosts

In a deep pool, beneath an immense logjam I saw my first bull trout. I didn't know then it was a bull trout; I was to learn that much later. Precariously perched on that logjam, peering into the deep water, that baseball bat-shaped fish, with white trailing edges on its fins made an inescapable impression on me.

It was on a family picnic on the Tay River, a small tributary of the Clearwater River, west of Caroline that this happened. I had snuck off from potato salad and chicken sandwiches coupled with boring adult conversation, to clamber out on that logjam. The context is still clear- the logs had collected on an outside bank, pick-up stick fashion, I suppose from a previous flood, maybe several. Some of the logs were white with age, the bark sloughing off them; other trees were fresh and you could get a good grip on them. The current spun around the corner and disappeared into a mesmerizing abyss beneath my feet.

Had my mother caught me there, words would have been spoken, followed with an obligatory swat or two. I suppose I would have been about ten and the scale of water depth, danger and adventure were far out of proportion to adult sensibilities.

But I swear, that bull trout was as long as I was tall, or nearly so, it seemed to me. On that I am clear after nearly 60 years. I dropped my only lure, a Len Thompson red and white down to dangle it in front of its nose. My parents would have frowned at the idea of lure redundancy. It was expected that a lure was to be protected, stewarded and, if lost, retrieved. It was a gamble to present it to this fish since it took some maneuvering to get it down through the labyrinth of logs.



Mercifully it did not bite, out of hunger, boredom or anger, for the ensuing ride would have been unforgettable. The trout looked like it was suspended in air, the water was that clear and it lay there showing no interest in my lure or the predator perched above it. I was clearly no threat to this pinnacle of aquatic predators.

Even by 1960 this bull trout would have been a loner, a survivor of net, spear, set line and the occasional rifle bullet. Some people wouldn't recognize them as a sport fish, but as a "trash" fish unworthy of consideration by a refined angler. Others derided the predatory habits of bull trout, while forgetting their own in the process of rationalization. Many just saw the trout as cheap protein, expendable by the washtub full.

In that time the Tay River still ran clean, clear and cold, through groves of mostly intact aspen, balsam poplar, willow and spruce. The transformation of the lower watershed with an agricultural blitzkrieg had only just begun. A juggernaut of logging, petroleum exploration and development with extensive roading was to follow. But no one saw it happening- the singular vision was to tame this wild land, civi-

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lize it and make it productive and profitable. If someone did see a connection between land use change and the decline of native trout, it was dismissed as the price of progress. The preponderance of extirpation weaponry comes, not from natural causes, but from humans.

I was too young to see this, to understand consequences and to have voiced a concern. There are now no bull trout left in the Tay River to inspire memories. The blueprint for local extirpation was followed and completed. I can't go back to that logjam, or any other, to find a memory of my youth or an indicator of a different world, filled with possibilities and bull trout. The bull trout of the Tay River are now ghosts.

But the memory of that bull trout of my youth is vivid and still resonates. In my mind hangs a picture of that trout that has not been diluted by the passage of time or the trivialities of living. The impact of seeing it had a profound and long-lived impact on me. I can only hope someone will wave a recovery wand over the Tay River and someday, another kid will peer through a new logjam and be inspired by another bull trout.

February, 2018

Lorne Fitch is a Professional Biologist, a retired Fish and Wildlife Biologist and an Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary.

TWS Leadership Institute Now Accepting Applications

The Wildlife Society's flagship leadership training program, the Leadership Institute, is now accepting applications for its Class of 2018! Select early-career professionals will receive leadership training, mentoring, and a travel grant to attend TWS' Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, in October 2018.

Participation in the Institute is geared toward early-career professionals, typically individuals 2 to 3 years out of school (either undergraduate or graduate school), currently working full-time in a wildlife professional position, and with demonstrated evidence of their leadership potential. Also eligible are more recent graduates who have shown strong evidence of their leadership potential and those who are working while concurrently pursuing a graduate degree. All applicants must be members in good standing of TWS and a chapter or section of TWS. The selection committee will be seeking to create a diverse group with participants of varying gender, ethnic, and regional diversity, with selection based upon:

- An excellent academic record
 - Demonstrated leadership capability or potential
 - Demonstrated level of excellence in current position
- Commitment to and involvement in TWS

Preference will be given to individuals who are certified as Associate Wildlife Biologists® or Certified Wildlife Biologists®, or who have submitted such an application to TWS.

Learn more and apply [here](#). The application deadline is 18 March 2018.

Citizen Science for Grizzly Bear Conservation: The GrizzTracker Program

GrizzTracker



Courtney Hughes, Nataalka Melnycky, Lindsey Dewart, Luke Vander Vennen, Lyle Fullerton
Alberta Environment and Parks, Peace Region Resource Management staff

Grizzly bear population size and distribution is currently not well known in Northwest Alberta, known as Bear Management Area 1 (BMA1) covering approximately 4 million hectares of land. As part of grizzly bear recovery, population assessments must be conducted to help inform landscape management actions (Alberta Environment and Parks, 2016). Alongside more traditional data collection techniques, such as collection of DNA or collaring programs, citizen science is an increasingly popular way to collect information on wildlife populations. In the simplest terms, citizen science is the engagement of volunteers in the collection of information intended to be used in scientific processes. This is not a new approach but certainly one gaining popularity, with examples from monitoring Monarch butterflies, breeding birds, wetlands, and even moose in Alberta. Common elements in citizen science programs include collaboration with volunteers, scientists and organizations to collect reliable and useful data, and provide learning opportunities related to species and scientific methods and processes.

Across Alberta's BMA1 local government staff have received numerous reports of grizzly bear sightings from community members, Indigenous Peoples, petroleum industry and forestry personnel, and other government employees. While these observations are helpful to signal the presence of bears across this northern landscape, these reports have been opportunistic in nature and therefore are not necessarily helpful in science-based management and decision making. A multi-stakeholder, collaborative working group was established in 2014 and developed an innovative citizen science program called GrizzTracker to address the need for useful data collection in northwest Alberta.

The objectives of the GrizzTracker program include engaging local land users in systematic data collection on bears in order to use this information in decision making and support broader recovery implementation across BMA1. GrizzTracker also aims to raise awareness of grizzly bear ecology, scientific methods and processes, and provide information and outreach on staying safe in bear country. Further, the program aims to strengthen relationships between organizations and individuals, and help foster a stewardship ethic for bears and broader landscape management.

A key part of GrizzTracker has been the development of a smartphone application, designed for iPhone and Android using open-source software that has been designed to systematically collect citizen-reported observations of grizzly bears across BMA1. This app uses a phone's internal GPS system to collect observer effort (the time spent "searching" for grizzlies), a key piece of information that

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greatly improves the utility of this data. The GrizzTracker program also includes an educational website and online mapping tool, where a blog shares updates for the broader public, pictures of bears and other wildlife species in BMA1, and in future will include mapped products from our citizen-collected data.

Throughout 2017 we tested the app with over 190 independent users from across various stakeholder groups, with over 300 trips averaging roughly 1540 hours of observation. While still in the early stages of implementation, we have demonstrated proof of concept and utility of this app, even in remote northern reaches of BMA1.

Certainly, collaborative initiatives like GrizzTracker are helping provide valuable information for grizzly bear management, and perhaps more importantly, signal the stewardship contributions of partnerships in Northwest Alberta. Stay tuned for more information on the progress of this app, check out our upcoming book chapter in *Community Service-Learning (CSL) and Community Engagement (CE) in Canada: Exemplars in Research, Curriculum Delivery, and Partnership Models*, and for more information contact Courtney Hughes (courtneyhughes@gov.ab.ca) or check out www.grizztracker.ca.

The banner features the GrizzTracker logo at the top left, which consists of a stylized bear head in a circle. To the right of the logo are navigation links: "Teacher corner", "Contact", and "Get the mobile app" (with a smartphone icon). Below these are five circular buttons: "About the project", "How to ID a grizzly bear", "Submit an observation", "Blog", and "View the gallery". The main image is a photograph of a grizzly bear eating in a field. Text on the right side of the image reads: "Alberta Environment and Parks and industrial stakeholders have teamed up to monitor Grizzly bears in the Lower Peace." At the bottom, there are logos for DMI (Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., Peace River Pulp Division), Alberta Environment and Parks, Miistakis Institute, Canfor, Boucher Bros. Lumber Ltd., and the Alberta Conservation Association. At the very bottom, it says "Canadian Natural Resources Limited" and "Manning Forest Products, a division of West Fraser Mills Ltd".

ACTWS Conservation Committee Update

Ken Crutchfield, Kirby Smith, Kristie Derkson, Larry Roy, Lorne Fitch, Mark Boyce,
Delinda Ryerson, Matthew Pyper

By
Matthew
Pyper

A Flurry of Activity on Conservation Topics in Alberta

The ACTWS Conservation Committee has been hard at work drafting letters to the Government of Alberta on the topics of woodland caribou conservation, native trout recovery planning, and OHV use in the eastern slopes of Alberta. We are also focusing on additional letters to the Government of Alberta in relation to bat conservation, and mandatory fish identification testing for Alberta anglers.

With respect to caribou conservation planning, we recently submitted a letter to the Government of Alberta which critiqued the recent range plan that was released publicly in December. The ACTWS applauded the detail provided regarding the population and habitat status for each herd; however, requested that more specificities and commitments be provided for achieving the minimum 65 per cent undisturbed habitat within the plan. One of our Committee members also represented the ACTWS at the provinces multi-stakeholder sessions held in Edmonton on February 6th and 7th.

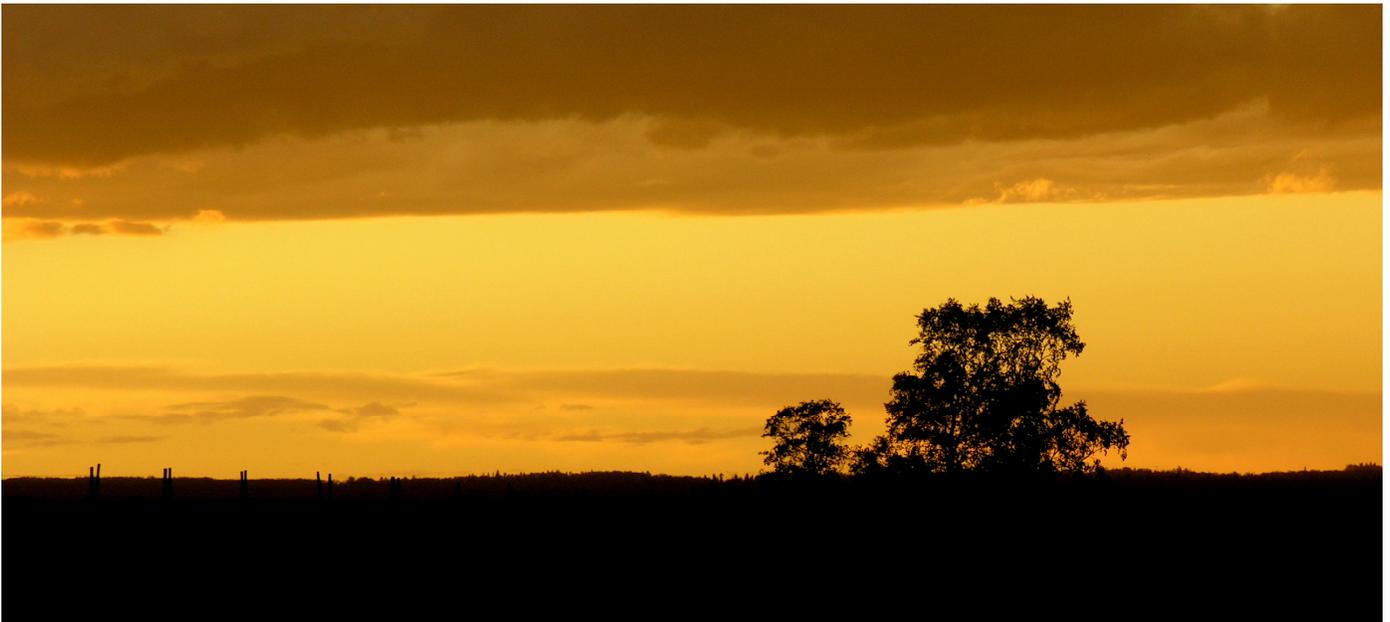


Trout recovery planning in Alberta is a topic the Conservation Committee watched throughout 2017, and our recent letter provided support for the provinces science-based approach to native trout recovery planning. More specifically, our letter supported recent efforts to close specific watersheds to all angling in order to scientifically assess key drivers that may be hindering native trout recovery. However, we also called on the government to provide more resources for public outreach and consultation to explain the rationale behind the closures and gain the support of the recreational angling community.

The province recently released an important report focused on OHV use and impacts in the Castle Wilderness area of the province. The report *Ecological Response to Human Activities in Southwestern Alberta: Scientific Assessment and Synthesis* outlines the known impacts of linear footprint (road and trail density) and provides a clear indication of impacts on fish and wildlife species, especially those designated as species at risk. The Conservation Committee felt it was necessary to applaud the Government of Alberta for their science-based work on this report and encouraged them to use it as a foundation for on-going planning efforts throughout the eastern slopes of Alberta.

Finally, we will be providing a presentation at the ACTWS Annual Conference in Lethbridge about the results of our membership survey on the topic of Ecosystem-based Management. Our goal for this presentation is to share what we heard through the survey, to provide opportunity for further feedback from the membership, and to use the results of the discussion to finalize our position statement on Ecosystem-based Management in Alberta. Please be sure to come to our presentation and provide your feedback.

If you have any questions or priorities for the committee to consider, please reach out to our Chair: Matthew Pyper (matthew@fuseconsulting.ca).



REMEMBER - Do not underestimate the value of your input into wildlife conservation matters. Take a stand and engage in public forums. Introduce yourself to your local elected officials and offer your insight. Professionalism is not confined to working hours. ~ Ken Crutchfield

By
Shevenell
Webb

Q and A with Jim Potter

In March, Jim Potter is retiring and I thought it was the perfect opportunity to recognize Jim and the contributions he has made to conservation in Alberta over the past 30 years. Jim Potter is humble, easy to get along with, and very resourceful—a true mountain man at home in the outdoors. I have many fond memories working in the field with him from flying aerial moose surveys, early morning sharp-tailed grouse surveys, snowshoeing the Fire trail west of Nordegg, and snowmobiling in the backcountry looking for wolverine tracks. One weekend, Jim, myself and Nate pulling our 2 year old daughter in the Chariot, skied/snowshoed into the Bighorn Backcountry for a weekend trip. As is typical for any backcountry adventure, we had some mishaps, but Jim was a real trooper and we made such wonderful memories I will cherish forever. It was a real privilege to work closely with Jim and I wish him all the best in his retirement!

Growing Up: I grew up in the Pine Lake Moraine (near Delburne). When I was about 10 years old I was hiking (as usual) over on some neighboring land beside Chapman Lake. Found a nice little spot overlooking a bay, a sheltered little hilltop and I thought – this would be a nice spot to build a house. Thirty years later I wound up buying this land and building a house right there! Our property was the 1st participant in the Buck for Wildlife program.



Brief Overview of Career: I started working in 1965, for farmers, ranchers, B & B Gang (railroad), Travelaire Trailers, Alpha Dairies, Eskimo Pipeline, Trapping, and Canada Packers. I began working for F & W in 1987, for the Crop Depredation Control program (CDC), Pair/ Brood Surveys, Ungulate Surveys, and Waterfowl Nest box Program. I was transferred to ACA when it was initiated in 1997.

Highlights of Career: The highlights were many – basically stopped working for a living in 1987 and began living life to the fullest (and getting paid for it!). I received the Bighorn Award in 2006 and the Lieutenant Governor's Greenwing Conservation Award in 2009.



Special People & Mentors: The support of my family, spouse Bonnie for editing all my works & brother Steve for always being there when there was work to be done. Special mention to James Allen (F & W), for without him there would not have been a career in the wildlife field. Ron Bjorge (Wildlife Management), Ian McFarlane (Ducks Unlimited Canada) are two of my favorites – and then there are too many to mention as my whole life has been filled with mentors and I thank each and every one for all the support and help I have received.



Biggest challenge or changes observed over your career: One big change with Government downsizing

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was the sale of licenses (hunting, fishing) when it was turned over to private vendors. Resource users no longer had that personal contact with the Department of Natural Resources. The enforcement branch, biologists and technicians are now seldom seen and even harder to touch base with. One of the biggest challenges/priorities is to try to manage the resource for the resources sake and making the public use secondary.

What are you most proud about or your most rewarding accomplishment(s): Fish & Wildlife took up my passion (duck boxes) in 1987. We put our expertise to work in the Buffalo Lake area (First Step Project – North American Waterfowl Management Plan) and with the help of Rob Corrigan (completing his Master's Degree on golden-eye) proved how artificial structures (nest boxes) can increase a local population, adding an additional 100,000 ducks to the fall flight over 20 years. (Conservation Magazine – Spring 2006, Volume 6).



The completion of the Pair/Brood Surveys in the Buffalo Lake Moraine and the resulting development of the "Nest Box Guide for Waterfowl", Alberta Edition. This guide was completed with the expertise and funding of Ducks Unlimited Canada in 2008. Alberta Conservation Assoc. followed up with a reprint in 2011. You might say it began in about 1958 with the building of my first bufflehead nest box. James Allen and brother Steve Potter helped develop the perfect nesting box for waterfowl. This inexpensive box was mass produced and lasts for 30-40 years.

Duck Nest Boxes You've Built: 3000+

Best Advice: Follow your passion/dreams, be honest with yourself and others, and make decisions that you will never be ashamed of.

Retirement Plans, Hobbies and Trips: Five days into "retirement", Bonnie & I are headed to Kauai for two weeks. Following that, I will be preparing the mules for a pack trip from Ft. Walsh to Waterton, then on North to the Kakwa. Should take about 4 months. After that Bonnie and I will become reacquainted and take a cruise to some place warm! As for hobbies – gardening, horseback riding & training, hiking (with gun in hand during season), mentoring beginning outdoor enthusiasts, reading, writing (not arithmetic) and the list goes on. Retirement will not be a problem.



The Wildlife Society – Western Section is excited to announce that *The Wildlife Confessional* anthology, a collection of short stories by dyed-in-the-wool wildlife biologists that endeavors to show the humor and poignancy in our day-to-day adventures that sometimes define and enlighten the profession or that, sometimes, we'd rather forget, is now live.

<https://www.inkshares.com/books/the-wildlife-confessional-an-anthology-of-stories>

The anthology is a collection of fifteen stories by thirteen biologists, including Western Section members Brian Cypher, Ivan Parr, Matthew Bettelheim, and the late Thomas A. Roberts. It also includes contributions by published authors Marcy Cottrell Houle (*Wings for my Flight, One City's Wilderness, The Prairie Keepers*) and J. Drew Lanham (*The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*), and a memoir of the late Dr. Charles Jonkel, co-founder of the Great Bear Foundation.

The authors whose stories have been collected here represent men and women from all walks of wildlife biology – State and Federal biologists, consultants, students, professors, interns – and take place across North and Central America, from the Gulf of Alaska to San Ignacio, Belize, from the tropics of the Hawaiian Islands to the deserts of Arizona, and in the desert springs, coastal bluffs, national parks, stock ponds, pick-up trucks, traplines, doctor's offices, roof tops, out-houses, and bombing ranges scattered everywhere in between.

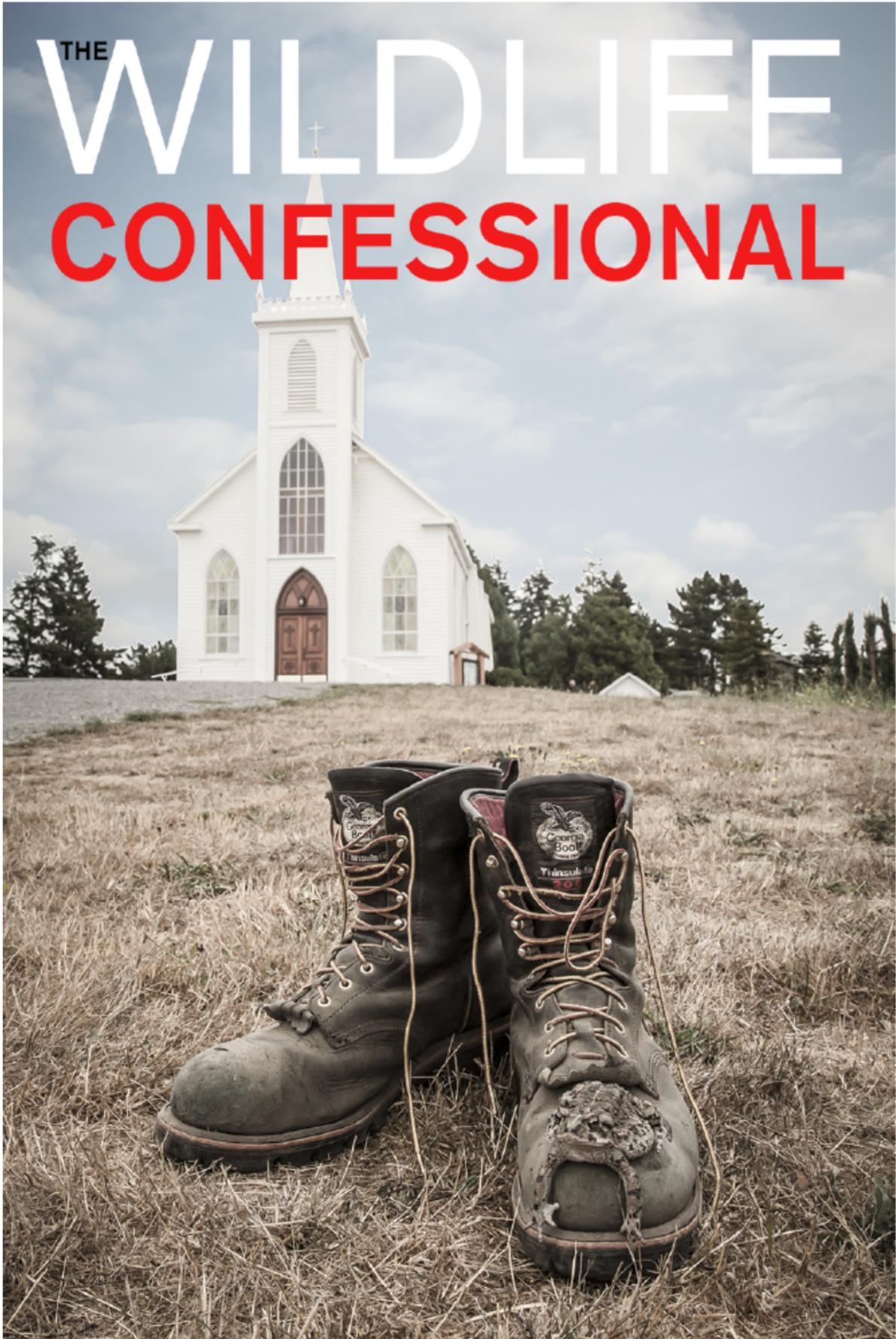
At a cover price of \$20 paperback / \$10 ebook, our intermediate goal is to sell 250 copies by February 28th, so we are counting on members to help spread the word.

This anthology is a labor of love. One of the primary reasons the authors and editors behind *The Wildlife Confessional* have undertaken this project is to educate and attract students to enter the field of wildlife biology and to apply money raised through book sales to support student involvement in The Wildlife Society by funding scholarships, grants, and training opportunities. Your support will help us realize those goals.

You can also follow the project on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Wildlife-Confessional-1070767069681846/>

THE
WILDLIFE
CONFESSIONAL



Mission statement: To initiate a citizen science monitoring program to track the timing of breeding behaviour across avian species.

Submitted by Connor Charchuk

Background

As the climate warms, the timing of seasons shifts. There is evidence that plants are blooming earlier in the spring and insect emergence happens earlier. Many species have evolved to time their migration and breeding activity in line with these events, but as the rate of global warming increases, there is a possibility that species will not be able to respond quickly enough. The timing of biological events, particularly pertaining to breeding, is referred to as *phenology*. Project EarlyBird is an initiative that aims to capitalize on the burgeoning field of citizen science to track phenology of birds in North America. The only other citizen science program designed to track nesting behaviour is NestWatch, a Cornell lab initiative, that tracks birds throughout the breeding cycle. As a result, this program places less emphasis on establishing the timing of breeding, and more emphasis on observing nesting success and nest fate.

My project seeks to determine the timing of breeding behaviour in birds to assess how different species may be responding to a changing climate. Many of us have observed a magpie carrying a stick and remarked, "first sign of spring!" Or heard their first White-throated Sparrow of the year and exclaimed, "they're back!" Well, these sorts of observations, and the time they occur, can be incredibly useful data. There is a hypothesis that short-distance migrants, like sparrows that overwinter through the central USA and along the coasts, are better at responding to climatic cues and may be more adaptive to global warming. In contrast, long distance migrants that spend their winters in South America might have no idea that our springs are occurring earlier.

Perhaps the most famous example of this mismatch is in Purple Martins. Purple Martins are aerial insectivores, and require a plethora of aerial insects in order to provision offspring during the breeding season. Insects are emerging earlier in Canada, but the Purple Martins are still showing up at the same time. By the time the birds get back, the insect abundance is already starting to decline, resulting in insufficient food to successfully reproduce. Essentially, I hope to build a database that will inform us which species are most sensitive to this type of mismatch, because it has been shown to have strong negative effects on populations.



Objective

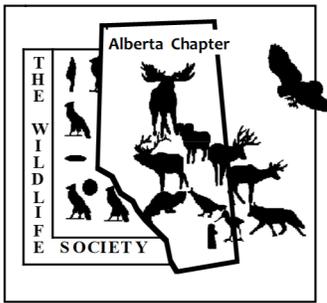
My intention is to pilot this program with the Edmonton Nature Club and hopefully launch it in a larger capacity next year. That being said, please feel free to circulate this to anyone you know who may be interested in participating. I hope to gather sufficient data this year that I can justify expanding the temporal and spatial scale. Of course, the sort of data that is most meaningful is trend data across many years, so I hope to establish this program and carry it out for the long-term foreseeable future.

How you can help

Submitting observations of breeding birds that you encounter [anywhere] in Alberta! I will provide the spreadsheet. Your participation is greatly appreciated, thank you!

Contact

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**Don't forget we are also
on Facebook**

Upcoming Events

Environment in the Courtroom: Enforcement Issues in the Protection of Canadian Wildlife

March 2 & 3, 2018 at the University of Calgary.

<http://www.cirl.ca/>

Change for Climate Community Series

Epcor Stage, March 5-7, 2018

Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton

www.edmonton.ca/EPCORStage

ACTWS Annual Meeting will be held in Lethbridge, on March 9-11, 2018

North American Congress for Conservation Biology July 21-26, 2018, Toronto, Ontario

~~Do you know of an event that should be advertised here?~~

If so, contact one of the editors.

Footnotes from the Editor



Interested in helping your chapter participate in important outreach events? Contact Delinda Ryerson
<execdirector@actws.ca>