The Kestrel

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Rocky Mountain Naturalists

2026 Autumnal Equinox



40th Anniversary group photo by Greg Ross

August 30th, 2026

The Rocky Mountain Naturalists 40th Anniversary Celebration was held at the Wasa Lions Community Hall on August 30th, 2026. About 47 members and guests attended our celebration event. Linda Digby opened the event with recognition of the significance of the gathering and the legacy of the founders. Original members Helga Knote, Ruth Goodwin, Greg Ross, Penny Ohanjanian and Annie Coulter were present. Martin Ross was unable to attend, but he, Penny and Mildred White were the original founding members who, in 1986, met in the basement of the former Inn of the Rockies in Kimberley, and the Nature Club was officially formed.

Mildred White was an avid naturalist who spent a lot of time in the Wasa area, so it was a fitting location for the anniversary event. A memorial walk at Wasa is a usual annual event for our club and will be offered again next spring.

www.rockymountainnaturalists.org

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Executive · Committees · Meetings

40th Anniversary - cont'd from pg 1

Helga Knote, as keeper of the club archives, then provided an engaging chronological overview of the growth of the club, describing the variety of nature-related activities and well-attended presentations at the college. The club has been actively involved in multiple conservation projects over the years. Notably, Elizabeth Lake wetlands have been a club focal point since the beginning.



Helga Knote took us through the history of the club.

Photo: Marianne Nahm



Opening remarks by Linda Digby were entertaining and informative. Photo: Sandy Oates

Theckla Sawicki created a trivia bingo activity which revealed previously unknown facts about individual members. The results created a whole lot of "who knew" information, generating both surprise and laughter. Great camaraderie.

Delicious BBQ, potluck salads and dessert rounded out the evening. Thanks to Cal, Theckla and Marianne for cooking and organizing the kitchen production.

On Monday morning, a group of 12 headed down Wolf Creek Road for an enjoyable morning of birding.

Submitted by Betty Baker

Participants enjoying conversation and delicious BBQ and potluck





Art or Effortless AI?

July 2, 2026

On July 2nd, a group of artisan oriented naturalists ventured out at Southstar Trails led by Jim Hurvid to observe and photograph wild flower patterns and arrangements. The newly upgraded photo editing package on Samsung models S21 and higher was recently incorporated with Galaxy AI features which allowed creative and conversions to artistic impression.

These new capabilities were used by the group to convert the floral patterns to watercolor images which would be appropriate for self made greeting cards, decals, wall pieces, or other uses. Some of the results are illustrated by these following images.



Group of 'artsy' naturalists, L to R: George, Jim, Susan Aileen Peggy and Lorraine...and an interested observer, (created with AI, simply by typing the input line 'add a sasquatch'.)







Jim feels that the way that AI handles converting photos into watercolour-like impressions could be useful as a tool to create a study piece for a finished work.

Bi-Monthly Meeting at Reade Lake, Wycliffe



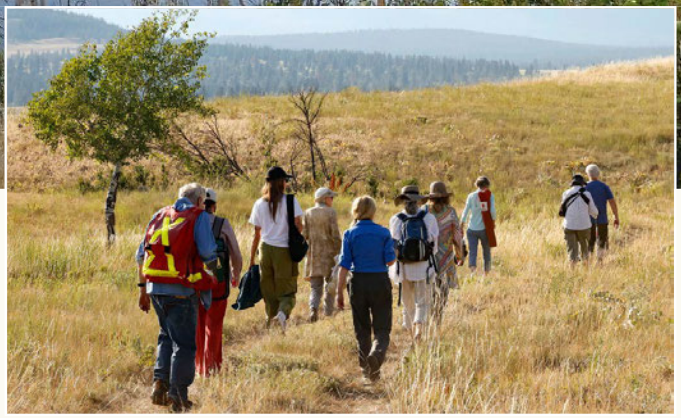
July 15, 2026 *Submitted by Helga Knote*

Rocky Mountain Naturalists once again held our July bi-monthly meeting in Wycliffe, at Reade Lake. Thanks to the Wallach and Sorenson families for allowing us to access their beautiful property.

Sixteen members met at the end of Foster Road South on a sultry evening before walking down the grassy trail to Reade Lake. Storm clouds were already gathering by the time we found a shady spot overlooking the lake and surrounding fields. Binoculars were at the ready as the meeting progressed, and every now and then there was a short break to watch as birds flew overhead or across the water.



Inspecting plants on the Reade Lake trail



RMNs on the trail to Reade Lake



Thunder could be heard in the distance as the meeting came to a close and lightning flashed in the northern sky as we made our way back to the vehicles, but we were spared the storm that was forming overhead and even had time to identify plants, birds and insects along the way.

As always, this was a very enjoyable way to spend a summer's eve and we even got the business done!

Photos by Helga Knote

Nature Trust of BC Cranbrook visits Elizabeth Lake

Submitted by Marianne Nahm

July 16, 2026



Photo by Marianne Nahm

Nature Trust of BC Cranbrook staff spent a morning in mid-July at Elizabeth Lake checking out the birds from the viewing platform and learning about our Ecosystem Enhancement Project.
Thank you to Dianne Cooper and Marianne for helping out.



Butterfly Outing



Submitted by Marilyn Doggart

Skipper on oregano blossom - Photo by Marilyn Doggart



Butterfly Outing – Wednesday July 29, 2026

A very enjoyable and informative outing lead by Dean Nicholson, hosted by Helga Knote and attended by 18 naturalists, including two guests.

After introductions we learned a few things about the order *Lepidoptera*, which includes butterflies and moths. Dean explained some main differences to help identify what we were seeing. Butterflies are daytime flyers (diurnal) and most moths are nighttime flyers (nocturnal). The antennae of butterflies are slender and clubbed at the end whereas moths have slim or feathered antennae that lack any clubbing at the ends. Butterflies tend to have more slender bodies and moths can have more stocky, broad bodies. Then we wandered around the gardens and meadows of Helga's property with nets and cameras in hand.

A few butterflies, dragonflies and bees were caught in Dean's net and transferred to a jar so all could have a better look, after which they were released. The flowering oregano was a big attractant to both the butterflies and bees. We saw lots of Skipper butterflies, which are the oldest family of butterflies.



Butterfly outing - cont'd from page 7

Group checking out butterfly jar. Photo by Helga Knote

They are small, fast butterflies and the name *Skipper* describes their flight habit of flitting from plant to plant. A Common Wood Nymph and Woodland Skipper were two that were caught so the group could have a closer look.

We learned that despite everyone knowing about Monarch butterflies and their migration, they are very rare in our region and are found mostly east of the Rocky Mountains. Other butterflies and moths do not migrate. We also talked about habitat and how crucial it is to their survival. Many species prefer a specific habitat, elevation or specific native plants.



Meadowhawk dragonfly. Photo by Marilyn Doggart

Even though we did not see a great number of butterflies on this outing, we learned that the East Kootenay region is home to the most diverse butterfly and moth population in Canada. It was an enjoyable couple of hours.

Tachinid fly



Elizabeth Lake Weed-Pull **Sept 3, 2026** *Submitted by Marianne Nahm*



All smiles at the end of the day! *Photos by Marianne Nahm*

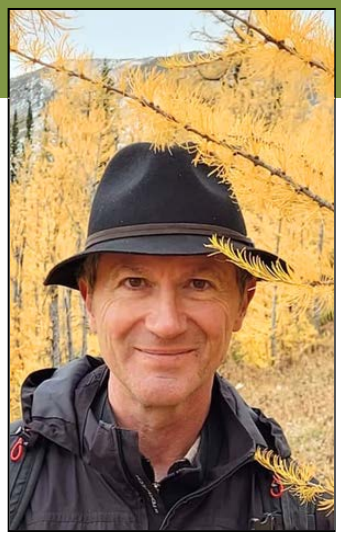
At the beginning of September, an energetic group of four young women from the Youth Climate Corps East Kootenay joined five volunteer members to dig out the invasive Tansy patches on the Conservation property. Other invasives pulled and bagged were Spotted Knapweed, Pepperweed and Curlycup Gumweed.

By day's end, we hauled 17 large garbage bags to the Transfer Station. A big thank you to the Climate Action group and our 5 energetic members!



Digging and bagging Tansy in the riparian zone.

Submission GUIDELINES



THANKS to Rocky Mountain Naturalists members for submitting your stories and photos, events and interesting facts for this Autumnal Equinox issue of *The Kestrel*. Apologies if I didn't respond to every email.

It was very nice to meet a lot of you at the 40th Anniversary of RMNaturalists in Wasa in September and to learn so much about the history of the club. Thanks to those of you who sent me photos of that special occasion, and for taking the time to submit your pictures and articles using the guidelines below. It really saves me a lot of time.

As Susan Walp is no longer with us (RIP Susan) to assist with correcting punctuation and grammar, I rely on those who submit articles to research your latin and scientific species names and their correct and appropriate punctuation.

See you later! - Gary

Gary Schneider

Guidlines:

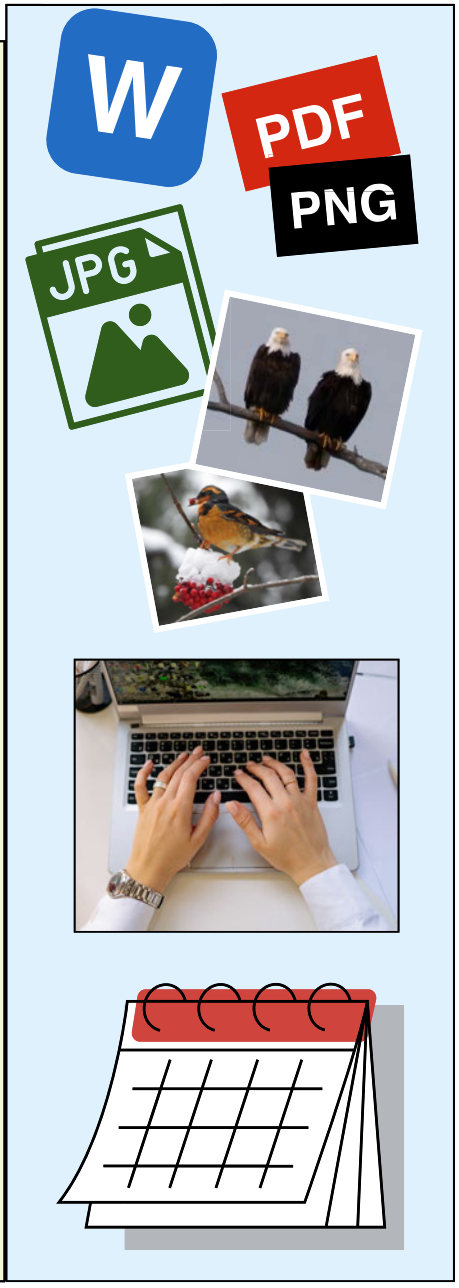
What format should I use to submit my article?
Since I will be reformatting all submissions, the easiest method is to paste your text directly into an email. I can also accept articles in Word, .txt, or .rtf formats.

What format should I use to submit my photos?
I prefer photos in .jpg format, and they should ideally be between 2-4 MB. I will resize them to reduce the overall file size for the publication. To make it easier for me, please rename your photos. Instead of a generic label like 'XYZ123_jpg', use something descriptive like 'Tabletop Mtn. Hike - Bob Smith'. This will assist me in locating the correct images, labeling them properly, and crediting the photographer accurately.

When emailing *The Kestrel* at rmnkestrel@gmail.com...
Just as with naming your photos, it would be greatly appreciated if you could specify your content in the 'subject' line. Instead of a vague title like '6 more pictures', please write something like 'Tabletop Mtn pics - Photographer's Name'. This helps me quickly access and accurately place and credit your submissions in the publication.

What is the deadline?
The official deadline is five days before the publication date, which coincides with the solstice or equinox. I encourage early submissions while the memories are fresh, and it helps me manage the layout of the upcoming issue effectively.

If you have any other questions or comments, please email me, Gary, at rmnkestrel@gmail.com



Internet Links

The website for Rocky Mountain Naturalists can be found at: rockymountainnaturalists.org
It has a calendar of events, a blog with photographs, archived newsletters and more.

Make sure you are up to date on the latest techniques for keeping yourselves safe in the wild. Visit one of these sites now and then to see how the science has given us new information. gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-conflict/staying-safe- around-wildlife or wildsafebc.com

Our own website has an abundance of links to interesting and informational websites covering our local area as well as the Rocky Mountains, the southern interior of BC and Canada. Check it out here:

https://www.rockymountainnaturalists.org/other-websites-of-interest.html

Events and Activities

Watch your inbox for notices of events and activities or check the calendar on the website

September 26, 2026 - 8am
Ram Creek Ecological Reserve Outing (Marianne)

For details see RMN Calendar on our website

About Field Trips

Leaders:
Radios and first aid kits are available from Paula or Marianne.

Find a replacement leader if necessary. Keep the group together.

Make sure everybody leaves the parking area safely.

Get someone (or several contributors) to write an account of the field trip for the newsletter. Send it in to rmnkestrel@gmail.com, along with (captioned) pictures, as soon as possible.

All leaders must have trip waiver forms (available from Paula) in case any non-members come along on the trip. Non-members must sign, and forms must be returned to Paula.

Group sizes are limited in order to provide a quality and safe experience for everyone. Carpooling can be organized from the meeting place for those feeling comfortable. If there is space, guests are welcome to join a field trip up to twice a year. A guest must complete a waiver form and pay $2.00 per field trip.

Carpoolers: Please offer to chip in for gas. On a round trip with a driving time of under an hour the compensation should be $5.00, and on a round trip with a driving time of an hour or more, the compensation should be $10.00.

No dogs on field trips, please



Executive



President	Betty Baker
Vice President	Linda Digby
Past President	Marianne Nahm
Secretary	Theckla Sawicki
Treasurer	Jan Gordon-Hooker
BC Nature Director	Stewart Wilson
Director at Large	Lourdes Niehaus

Group Representatives and Committee Contacts

Bats	Scott Bodaly
Bluebirds	Marianne Nahm
BCNature	Stewart Wilson
Bylaws and Policies	Gretchen Whetham
Cavity Nesting Group	Katrin Powell/Greg Ross
Christmas Bird Count	Dianne Cooper
Club Camp	Jackie Leach
Communications	Paula Rogers
Early Morning Birding	Daryl Calder
East Kootenay Invasive Species Council	Frank Hastings
Elizabeth Lake	Stewart Wilson
Field Trips	Paula Rogers
Internal Communications	Paula Rogers
Kootenay Conservation Program	....Vacant....
Little Big Day	Greg Ross
Membership	Hasi Oates
Newsletter	Gary Schneider
Personal Information/Privacy	Jim Hurvid
Presentations	Elizabeth Baker
Ram Creek Ecological Reserve	Marianne Nahm
Records	Helga Knote
Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee	Ian Adams
Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society	Jo Ellen Floer
Skookumchuck Prairie KBA	Dianne Cooper
Turtle Monitoring	Theckla Sawicki
Upper Columbia Basin Environmental Collaborative	Hilary Anderson
Webmasters	Dianne Cooper/Jackie Diveky

RMNats regular meetings - every two months,
on the third Wednesday of odd-numbered months at 7pm
Next regular meetings: Wednesday Nov 18, 2026 • Jan 20 • Mar 17