



Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Survey Spring 2017



CONSERVATION IN ACTION

NEWS AND UPDATES

Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Survey strikes again!

Over 26,500 birds counted this spring

Frozen marshes, few birds and cold temperatures... that's how many people would have felt about the way spring rolled out in the Columbia Valley this year. However, despite there being some truth to this description, the recently completed third round of spring migratory bird counts conducted through Wildsight Golden's Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Survey (CWWS) came off with great success... and with lots of birds! Regardless of the late start to spring this year, the **CWWS still managed to count 26,627 birds!** This is about 800 more birds than were counted during the same time last year.

The data gathered by the CWWS is collected by dozens of trained and dedicated citizen-scientists. With **special thanks to 83 volunteers**, the CWWS was able to count and identify thousands of birds from 100 different survey sites located in the Columbia Wetlands this spring.

"I continue to be astounded by the amazing volunteers that make the Waterbird Survey such a great success," states CWWS Program Biologist Rachel Darvill. "Without such significant volunteer efforts, this program could simply not collect the incredible amount of baseline bird data that it does,"

said Darvill. "The CWWS is greatly adding to our scientific knowledge on numerous species abundance and distribution patterns in the Columbia Wetlands."

Other than the total count, some of the highlights from this spring's waterbird surveys include the high individual bird species counts. For instance, on April 16th, the highest count of individual species was 2,426 American Coots. On April 3rd, the second highest count was Mallards, at 1,820 followed by 1,376 American Wigeons seen on April 16. Also with notable numbers this spring were 402 Trumpeter/Tundra Swans seen on April 3rd (72 of which were confirmed as Trumpeter Swans), and 456 Common Mergansers identified and recorded on April 3rd.

In total, the 2017 spring CWWS was able to record 113 different bird species with 291 checklists submitted.

"Our aim is that all this data is contributing to our long-term goal of having the Columbia Wetlands become recognized and designated as an 'Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA),' states Darvill. "Once

an area becomes an IBA it is on the global spotlight; it becomes part of an international network, including access to IBA caretakers, scientists, newsletters and reports, and support for communications materials. The designation also helps to broaden public knowledge on the value of wetlands and the importance of conserving birds."



DANGERS OF RED DYE IN HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS

Solution: Homemade nectar!

Hummingbirds are some of our most beloved birds and many people enjoy feeding them with specially designed feeders. What you may not realize is that the red dye found in commercial nectar may be toxic to hummingbirds and is not necessary to attract them. Hummingbirds will eat from anything with nectar in it, but they must be able to find it. Most hummingbird feeders have red on them because the birds seem to be more attracted to red than to other colors, but you do not need red dye in the liquid. If you don't have a red feeder, you could put a red ribbon on it to make it more attractive to the hummers.

The most important thing about selecting a feeder, is to choose one that is easy to clean and refill, as it is very important to keep

feeders clean. Sugar water is a very rich growth medium. Yeasts like to eat it, causing fermentation which can harm hummingbirds. Mold and bacteria grow in it, which can harm the birds. That is why it is important to keep the feeder clean and the nectar fresh. You must change the nectar frequently to avoid these contaminants. In cooler temperatures we recommend changing it every seven days. In warmer temperatures the recommended guidelines are as follows:

Daily high temps	Change nectar after
61-70 F	4-5 days
71-80 F	3 days
81-85 F	2 days
86+ F	daily

Making homemade nectar is easy and inexpensive.

Recipe as follows: One part white cane sugar (not brown) to four parts boiling water. You can store the cooled liquid in the fridge for up to two weeks.



BIRDS AND WINDOW COLLISIONS

Prevention techniques

Many people are aware that birds can collide with windows, but did you know that it is estimated that 16 to 42 million birds die each year in Canada alone? This astounding figure does not include how many birds are also injured. How many of you have had birds collide with your windows at home? What can be done to prevent this, if anything? Here are some suggestions taken from the

Cornell Lab's All About Birds website:

- Relocate feeders and other attractants. Feeders within three feet of window glass or more than thirty feet away are the safest.
- Cover the glass on the outside with window screening or netting at least 3 inches from the glass, taut enough to bounce birds off before they can hit the glass. CWWS Assistant Verena Shaw has a friend who has done this and you can barely see that there is netting. She has mentioned that this has really cut down on bird deaths/injuries.
- Cover the glass with one way transparent film that lets people on the

inside look out but makes the window look opaque on the outside.

- Put decals or other objects closely spaced together on the outside window surface.

There are more suggestions on the Cornell website at:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>

There are also great suggestions on the University of Alberta's "Birds and Windows Project" website:

<http://birdswindows.biology.ualberta.ca/you-can-help/>

CAVITY NESTING DUCK SPECIES

Did you know?

Did you know that Wood Ducks, Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, Hooded and Common Mergansers, and Buffleheads are

all cavity nesting species? They are secondary cavity-nesters, meaning that they use abandoned holes created by other species, e.g. woodpeckers, or natural holes.

Very shortly after eggs have hatched from tree cavity nests, the little nestlings jump from the tree, often many metres, before landing on the ground or in the water to join their mother. This jump can be a real challenge for the freshly hatched chick!

So, the next time you see a wood duck, merganser, goldeneye or bufflehead with their young, think of the big adventure the fledglings have already been through in their short lives!

Here's an interesting short video that shows nestlings jump from a tree: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDJw43BJtCE>



DID YOU KNOW that the CWWS conducted its second one-day aerial swan survey this spring? 621 Trumpeter/Tundra Swans were counted at 58 locations in the Columbia Wetlands. The Columbia National Wildlife Area (Wilmer Unit) had the highest count this year with 138 individuals. Last year we counted 756 individuals in total during the aerial survey.

But, we believe we may have missed the peak of the swan migration in both years (challenging date to time with one possible survey date!), so it is suspected that even more swans utilize the Columbia Wetlands during the peak of their migration, which may have been about a week after our survey this year. Wow, lots of swans out there! Exciting.

The CWWS brought kids into nature again this spring, helping to open their minds and hearts to the world of birds and to the significance of the Columbia Wetlands in terms of being important migratory and breeding bird habitat. This spring, CWWS Program Biologist Rachel Darvill brought 62 young children outside for bird watching field trips in the Invermere area. CWWS Program Assistant Verena Shaw also took ten people outside in the Golden area for an educational bird walk as part of the Wing's Over the Rockies Bird Festival.



FREE Birding Event at Reflection Lake, Golden – Friday, June 23th, 8am

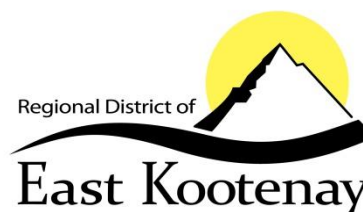
Are you interested in learning more about the birds that call Golden their home these days? Come join naturalist and Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Assistant Verena Shaw to see what we can find at Golden's Reflection Lake on June 23rd at 8 am for an hour or two. We will check out the viewing platform as well as the view from above the lake. There should be lots to see and hear at this time of year. Please bring binoculars, water, a hat, and some walking shoes. Binoculars and field guides will be provided for those who need them and scopes will be set up for good viewing.

For more information or to sign up please contact Verena at verena@wildsight.ca or call 250-344-5530.

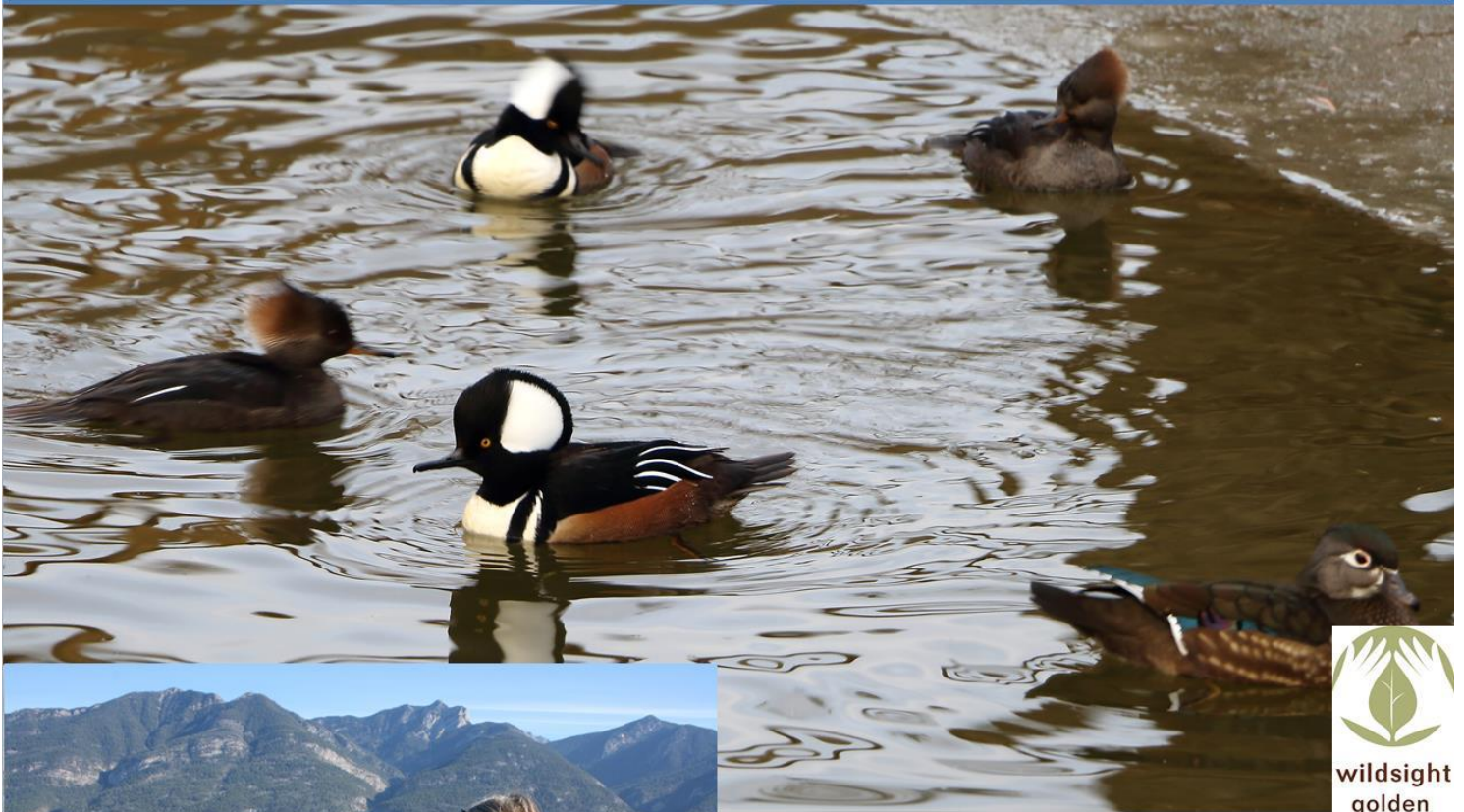
A BIG THANK YOU TO CWWS VOLUNTEERS AND TO OUR FUNDERS!

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This newsletter was compiled by Verena Shaw and Rachel Darvill. All photographs by Rachel Darvill.



COLUMBIA WETLANDS WATERBIRD SURVEY



Do you love wildlife and the Columbia Wetlands? If so, you may be interested in participating in a coordinated bird count! Data you collect will contribute to bird conservation initiatives in the Columbia Wetlands.

THE COLUMBIA WETLANDS WATERBIRD SURVEY IS FOR YOU!

2017 Fall survey dates are Friday September 29th, Thursday October 5th, & Sunday October 15th (10am-1pm each date). Bird ID training sessions will be held in September.

Interested? Contact racheldarvill@gmail.com or 250-344-5530

Thank you to CWWS funders:

