



VFFN Newsletter – Fall 2025

created by Johanna Nott & Jason Lahaie

Spring / Summer Hike Highlights



New Gorge Trail at China Ridge - April
Photo courtesy of Mary Masiel



Birdhouses made by the Princeton Secondary School. Very well done!

Northern Birdcount

Many birders get up at the crack of dawn to begin tallying for the Xmas Bird Count, but not Clare Kines. The sun skims just below the horizon in Arctic Bay, Nunavut, creating a prolonged twilight in the middle of the day so he can go out later in the morning. Kines Count circle is the northernmost one in Canada. For many years Common Raven is the only species he tallies. He checks out the local dump, tethered dog team areas and along the frozen river (where Eider Ducks nest in the Spring) in hopes of picking up Rock Ptarmigan and Redpolls, but his spirits are not diminished looking for birds in High Winter. "There is a certain cachet to taking part in the most northerly bird count" he says. "And more than that, I think the data matters."

His Xmas Bird Count held on Jan. 4th (-26C) was 253 Common Ravens and 3 Redpolls.

Edited from Living Bird Magazine

Side note: Ornithologists now consider that Hoary, Common and Lesser Redpolls (in Europe) are one species.

Mark Your Calendar

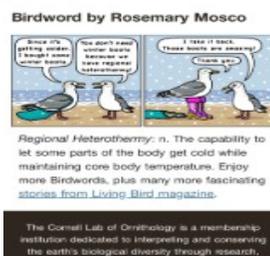
Xmas Potluck – Saturday, December 6 @ 5:00pm
invitations should be in your inbox with more details.

Xmas Birdcount – Saturday, December 20 @ 08:30am
Contact Cathy at

vffnbc@gmail.com for more details.

Presentation – A New Dragonfly
Sub Order with Bruce Archibald on
January 13

Membership fees are due. You can bring your fees to Donna at the Xmas party or at the January general meeting!



Night Sky 🌙 ☀️

- Dec 4 - Long Night Moon
- Jan 3 - Wolf Hunger Moon
- Feb 2 - Snowcrust Moon
- Mar 3 - Worm Moon

Comet C/2024 E1 (Wierchchos) is currently visible (mag 10.7 - scope or good binoculars), it is very low on the horizon and dropping fast but will become visible once again in late February 2026, returning much brighter at mag 7.

VFFN Bursary Update

submitted by Johanna Nott

Our bursary recipient, Reid MacMurchy, is now in 3rd year of biological sciences with a 4.0 grade point average. He wants to complete 2 courses this summer that weren't available before and continues to enjoy wilderness hikes, even finding time to volunteer at a local Alberta food bank. He received our bursary at the start of his 2nd year in 2024. There were no applicants in 2025. We wish him every success.

John Henry: Hiking with the Homeschoolers

The home school group really enjoyed the China Ridge nature walk with John Henry on October 6. John talked about the fragility of our earth, geology, nature around us and the need to protect it... an educational and interesting nature hike.

Whitebark Pine and the Bird

Whitebark Pine is an endangered, long-lived native species occurring in high elevations in BC, facing an uncertain future due to fire, climate change and pine blister rust. This tree is identified by its needle grouping of five. There are Whitebark Pine growing on the slopes of the Heather Trail in Manning Park.



Interestingly, this species has formed mutualistic relationship with Clark's Nutcracker as the primary disperser of its seeds. These seeds are highly sought after by many animals for their caloric content. The cone is very solid and not activated by fire release but by Nutcrackers mainly which have specialized beaks to open the cone. They then cache seeds to be eaten later, some of which are forgotten and then germinate into new trees.

Due to Whitebark's keystone role in high alpine ecosystems, habitat survival is urgent. Recovery includes collection of cones for starting rust-resistant seed orchards, habitat improvement and range mapping.

Edited from WPEF Canada article

For more information or to support the project, check out whitebarkpine.ca