

Directions to Various Birding Places in Red Deer

By Judy Boyd

Speaker at Bird Study Group meeting March 7, 2007.

Kerry Wood Nature Centre

Just after Gasoline Alley on hwy 2, go north on Gaetz Ave. Follow this for quite a ways. The road will separate and become a one way heading north (49 Ave.). Go to 55 Street (which is just before the bridge over the river - if you go over the river, you've gone too far). Turn east (right). Follow that road till you get to 45 Ave. (there is a corner store on the north east side of the road) and turn north (left). This road will take you to Kerry Wood Nature Centre. It is on the right hand side of the road. If you go under a bridge, you've gone too far.

McKenzie Trails (good for loons, ducks, herons, osprey, kingfisher, warblers, sparrows, beaver, muskrat)

Follow the directions to get to Kerry Wood Nature Centre. Instead of turning into the Nature Centre, keep going north on 45 Ave and under the bridge. The road will curve to the east. Directly after the curve, there is a turn into the Trails (turning left). There is a small roundabout and continue on till you get to the parking lot. This park has a gate at the roundabout. The gate is locked from October(ish) to May. If the gate is locked you can still park in the roundabout and walk in.

Three Mile Bend (off-leash dog park but good for osprey)

Just after Gasoline Alley on hwy 2, go north on Gaetz Ave. Follow this for quite a ways. The road will separate and become a one way heading north (49 Ave.). Go past 55 Street (where you would have turned for the Nature Centre) and go across the bridge. Directly after the bridge, turn east (right) onto Riverside Drive. Follow Riverside Drive, going under the bridge and continue on till you see the Three Mile Bend sign on the right hand side of the road.

River Bend Golf Course (good for loons, geese, shorebirds, cliff swallows, pelicans, woodpeckers, songbirds)

There are two ways of getting to this location.

1. Follow the directions to Three Mile Bend and keep going north on Riverside Drive. You will get to a place in the road where the

main road veers off to the left and there is a poor road leading (sort of) straight ahead. Follow that road for a very short distance and you will get to a roundabout where you can park. Directly west of the roundabout is a pair of osprey nests. Follow the paved trail north from the roundabout and you will get to a walking bridge across the river. If you continue straight ahead you will get to the golf course and Discovery Canyon (a kid's water park). As soon as you get across the river, turn left and follow the graveled path. This is the perimeter trail. It is about 4 km. but doesn't loop back. We often park one vehicle at one end and another at the other end so that we don't have to walk back.

2. Coming in from hwy 2, just after Gasoline Alley on hwy 2, go north on Gaetz Ave. At the first set of lights, turn east (right) onto the Delburne hwy (19 Street). Follow this to 30 Ave. Turn north (left) and continue north for quite a ways. Go past the intersection with hwy 11. At the next set of lights (just before the road curves to the west and you can see the curve from the lights) turn east (30 Ave). The road curves north right away. Follow this road till you get to the sign for River Bend Golf Course on the left hand side of the road. You will then proceed down the hill. When the hill flattens out there is a turn in on the right which will take you to the boat launch. This is the other end of the perimeter trail. Or you can continue down to the main parking lot for the golf course. To get to the perimeter trail from here, go through Discovery Canyon till you get to the foot bridge across the river and before going across the river turn right onto the graveled path.

Directions to Various Birding Places around Red Deer

Sora Central (soras, sparrows, snipe, yellow-headed blackbirds)

Take hwy 11A (west) from hwy 2. Go to RR 281 and turn south. Sora Central is right there. There are sloughs on either side of the road. Either drive slowly or park and walk down the road.

Loaded Lagoon (shorebirds, black terns, ducks, swans in migration)

Going north on hwy 2, turn east onto hwy 590 (at Innisfail). Go approximately 6 miles to RR 272 and turn south (right). Follow this road till you get to a tee intersection (Twp. 350). Turn west (right) Loaded Lagoon is the sloughs on either side of the road.

Davey Lake (grebes, scoters, great blue herons, cormorants, warblers)

Follow the directions to Loaded Lagoon, and continue past to the next range road (274) and turn south (left). Go to the next road (twp 344A) and turn east (left). This road is really easy to miss but it is sign posted. Follow this road to a bridge. This is a good place for eastern phoebes and songbirds. The owl's nest had been here but the tree blew down last year. Past the bridge the road curves south. There is a little turn off that goes down to the lake (to the right). You need scopes for this lake as the birds are usually a fair distance away. If you continue past the turn off the main road curves to the east and becomes Twp 344. You can go straight ahead, though, over the cattle guards and get to the farther end of the lake. If you follow twp 344 east you will get to another good slough area - the sloughs are on either side of the road.

Bigelow Reservoir (grebes, bittern, loon, pelican, cormorant, mergansers, ducks, northern harrier)

In the same general area as Davey Lake and Loaded Lagoon. You can get to it from Davey Lake by following twp 344 east to hwy 805. Turn south on hwy 805 and go to hwy 587 where you turn east. Bigelow Reservoir is between RR 254 and 252. If you go past RR 254, go east to RR 253 and turn north. There is a little turn off where you can park and watch the birds. Go back to hwy 587 and continue east to RR 253. It says it is a fair weather road and it can get yucky in wet weather so either go in dry weather or take a four wheel drive. Follow this road to a tee intersection. There is a slough on the left hand side of the road before you get to the tee which sometimes has some interesting stuff. At the tee (Twp 340), turn right (west). Follow this road over a small bridge and up a hill. Just past the top of the hill there is a road leading into the reservoir. It is not sign posted and is easy to miss. When you follow the road in, you will get to an outhouse with the Bigelow Reservoir sign beside it. You can park here and do some walking around the reservoir.

Slack's Slough (shorebirds, ducks, eared grebes, avocets)

Take the first Gasoline Alley turn-off (McKenzie Road), turn to the east. As soon as you get up off the interchange and turn east, pull over off the road and park. This is the best place to see the avocets and shorebirds. A little farther east is the pull into the parking lot, where you can go to the observation tower. We have found the observation tower disappointing. It needs to be a. taller or b. closer to the slough. But you can walk nearer to the water if you want. Straight across the road from the parking lot is

another smaller waterbody (very small). Black-necked stilts have been seen here, as well as cinnamon teals. It's worth a look.

Ghostpine Springs Sanctuary (cliff swallows, grebes, ducks, great blue heron, snipes, hooded mergansers)

Also in the same general vicinity as Bigelow Reservoir. Go east on hwy 590 at Innisfail. Continue to RR 244. Turn north onto RR 244. The water is on the left hand side of the road. Just before you get to the bridge, there is a little turn in where you can park off the road. The sign for the sanctuary is here. This land is privately owned so you can't go onto the property without permission.

Dickson Dam (waterfowl, bald eagles)

Go west on hwy 54 (at Innisfail - going east at this intersection would put you on hwy 590). At RR 23 turn south for approximately 2 miles. You turn in at the sign on the left hand side of the road and go down the hill to see the dam and the water below the dam. If you continue past this area, the road will curve around and go across the dam. The lake above the dam is Glenniffer Lake. Go past the interp centre (which I've never found to be open so I've never been inside), and there will be a road to the left which will go down the hill and bring you to the other side of the dam.

Medicine River Wildlife Centre (sandhill cranes, ducks, northern harrier, snipe)

Go west on hwy 54 (at Innisfail) Follow hwy 54 to RR 42. You will have gone past Spruceview and will be at the turn off to Raven. Go south on RR 42. On the right hand side of this road is another slough (called Crane Lake by the locals) and is worth a look see. The sandhills may be there. At Twp 360 (sign posted to the Rehab Centre) turn east (left). Approximately a mile down this road is the Wildlife Centre on the north side of the road. From the west side of the parking lot, follow the path to the observation tower which overlooks Sandhill Slough. If you are there at the right time of the year, you may find the sandhill nest. If you go slightly past the Wildlife Centre to the east there is a low part to the road and it is marshy on both sides. The sandhills bring their babies to this area to feed so there is a good chance to see them there.

Raven Trout Farm (in winter: belted kingfisher, bald eagle, American dipper)

You can come north on hwy 22 to get here. Just before you get to hwy 54, you will turn west onto Twp 360. It is sign posted to the Raven Trout Farm.

This is a gorgeous place to come in the winter as the springs stay open all winter and there are some interesting ice formations (a bit like Big Hill Springs).

Sylvan Lake Natural Area (bald eagles nesting)

From hwy 2, take hwy 11A west to hwy 20. Turn north onto hwy 20. Continue to Rainy Creek Road (Twp 40-0) and turn west. Follow Twp 40-0 to RR 24 and go south. This is a dead end road. At the dead end is the Natural Area. You will be able to see the bald eagle nest from the road. (Look east). There is a trail into the Natural Area. It is usually wet and boggy.

Ellis Bird Farm

To get to Ellis, go north of Red Deer on hwy 2 to the Blackfalds turn off (hwy 597). Go west on this hwy to Prentiss Road (RR 260 - it is sign posted to the Bird Farm) and turn north (left). Go about 3.5 miles down this road, crossing railroad tracks. The Prentiss Plant is on the right hand side of the road and Ellis Bird Farm is on the left.