

Master of Ceremonies

Morris Flewwelling has served in a multitude of leadership positions in Central Alberta. He began his working career as a teacher with the Red Deer Public School District, has been instrumental in the establishment of such important heritage initiatives as the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation and has been involved in local and federal politics, including serving as Red Deer's mayor from 2004 until 2013. Morris played an instrumental role in founding EBF and was EBF's first Chairman of the Board.

Friday Session Leaders: The EBF Team!

Ron Biel – Ron is the site foreman, handyman and craftsman of Ellis Bird Farm. He grew up just a few miles from EBF, and as a child spent time with Charlie and Winnie Ellis. He now keeps the site running with his expertise in exhibit design and construction, creative beaver flood control, carpentry and amazing repair talents.

Morris Flewwelling – See Saturday program

Dr. Kevin Fraser – see Saturday program

Phil French – see Field Trip program

Darcy Gabert – Darcy is the Secretary and MEGlobal representative on the EBF board. He grew up on a farm close to EBF and spent time during his childhood with Charlie, “The Bird Man.” He was asked by Bryan Shantz, EBF's first biologist, to help monitor part of Charlie's nestbox trail, as task he accomplished with his trusty dirt bike. He has worked at MEGlobal for the past 33 years and has been an active EBF board member for the past 10 years.

Scott Hoyland – Scott is the EBF technical and IT wizard. He pioneered the use of RFID technology, invented cavity cameras, and installs/maintains our webcams and AV equipment. He also delivers popular survival programs at EBF over the summer.

Cheyenne Knight – Cheyenne has returned to Ellis Bird Farm for a third summer, where she shares her love of nature with young and old alike. She is a student in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Claudia Lipski - Claudia joined the Ellis Bird Farm team to assist with school program delivery. Her duties have expanded to include staff training and monitoring of the EBF bluebird trail. She combines her training as an early childhood educator with her love of nature to offer popular and nature interpretation to youngsters. EBF staff have dubbed her “Fairy God Mother.”

Myrna Pearman – Ellis Bird Farm has been Myrna's life-long career. She became the Site Services Manager and Biologist at EBF in 1987, and since that time has overseen the development of the farm into a well-respected conservation, education and research site. A keen naturalist, writer and photographer, she has authored or co-authored several books. She also contributes to various magazines and newspapers, and has had her photographs widely published. She is a founding member of NABS.

Cynthia Pohl – Cynthia is the owner and operator of *Living Lands Landscape and Design* and has been the Head Gardener/Designer for the Ellis Bird Farm since 2002. Cynthia is a Professional Journeyman Landscape Gardener and a Certified Green Roof Professional. In addition to turning EBF into a world-class, organic public garden, Cynthia is responsible for the development of our unique and interesting signage. Each summer she presents workshops on pollinator gardens, xeriscaping and NatureScaping.

Alisha Ritchie – See Saturday program

Friday Evening and Saturday Presenters:

Michael Dawe: Frank Farley

Michael Dawe will be speaking about Frank Farley, the famous Canadian naturalist, who lived in Red Deer and Camrose and after whom the author Farley Mowat, Frank Farley's nephew, was named.

Michael is Red Deer's long-standing archivist and historian. He has written several books on Central Alberta history, including *Red Deer: An Illustrated History*, and is a columnist for several Central Alberta newspapers. Michael has served in various positions as archivist and historian, particularly with the Red Deer and District Archives.

Dr. Kevin Fraser: Tracking Mountain Bluebirds and Purple Martins

Dr. Kevin Fraser will be speaking about his ground-breaking research on the migration of both Purple Martins and Mountain Bluebirds using geolocator and GPS technology. These new technologies allow the collection of detailed information on migration routes, overwintering sites and the environmental conditions that birds face between breeding seasons. These new data can be used to determine how these range-wide factors may affect their behaviour, survival and breeding activity when they get back to Canada. He will be presenting new migratory connectivity and migration behaviour data and will discuss these findings in the context of conservation.

Kevin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, MB, Canada. His research focuses on the migration ecology, behaviour and conservation of long-distance migratory songbirds. He uses bio-logging technology to track the migratory journeys of individual birds to document migratory routes, stopover locations and overwintering sites.

Alexandra Grossi – Tree Swallow Nest Mites

Birds' nests, at first glance, might look like nothing more than a cozy spot for eggs to be laid. But closer inspection reveals that they provide excellent habitat for arthropods. The nest itself provides shelter from the environment and there is a constant supply of nutrients once the chicks have hatched. Nest mites, among the most diverse and abundant nest inhabitants, are known to be parasitic, but there are also peaceful detritivores and mites that prey upon other the parasites and detritivores, forming a complex community all housed within a single nest. Ms. Grossi will discuss the diversity of mites inhabiting Tree Swallow nestboxes, their prevalence and variation based on geographical location.

Alexandra is a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. She is currently studying symbionts of birds, including the investigation of arthropod assemblages in Tree Swallow nests, the population genetics of chewing lice infesting Rock Pigeons, and the distribution of quill mites in Ovenbirds. She received a MSc from the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Geoff Holroyd – The Tree Swallows of Beaverhill Lake

Dr. Geoff Holroyd will be speaking about Tree Swallow research being conducted at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, located east of Edmonton, Alberta. Observatory researchers have been studying and monitoring nesting Tree Swallows for 32 years, looking at—among other things—the impact of climate change and lake drying. They have also been using geolocators to track Tree Swallow movement, including post-breeding dispersal, migration and overwintering patterns.

Geoff first became interested in birds when as a teenager he was an active volunteer and chairman of the Long Point Bird Observatory. He earned his MSc and PhD from the University of Toronto for his studies of the foraging strategies and diet of swallows. He retired in 2012 after 36 years with the Canadian Wildlife Service and is now chair of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory.

Dr. Glen Hvenegaard - Engaging the Next Generation of Bluebirders

The future of many wildlife species depends on the contributions of dedicated volunteer stewards, organized through groups like the North American Bluebird Society. Because of ongoing turnover, there is a need to regularly

attract and support new stewards. To this end, studies have explored the characteristics, motivations, barriers and benefits of participants for many other wildlife conservation projects, such as purple martin landlords and citizen science. Dr. Hvenegaard will summarize the experiences from these other wildlife stewardship projects and apply them to bluebird conservation.

Glen is an Environmental Science professor at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus in Camrose. His research focuses on the conservation aspects of ecotourism, bird biogeography, parks and environmental education. He is a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas (and its Tourism Specialist Group) and a fellow with LEAD International (Leadership for Environment and Development).

Dr. Margo Pybus - Nestbox Parasites: Thinking Inside the Box

Cavity-nesting birds share their nest site with a number of other species. This presentation will highlight nest parasites (other than mites) and provide information about who they are, how they got there, what you can do to reduce their occurrence, and whether they pose potential risk to birds or to you.

Margo is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta. She is also a Provincial Wildlife Disease Specialist with Alberta Fish and Wildlife, where she leads high profile provincial wildlife disease surveillance and management programs, and advises on related policy, management and research initiatives. She has an abiding interest in natural history and readily shares her enthusiasm for all wild species and spaces.

Alisha Ritchie - Using RFID and Geolocator Technology to Track Purple Martin Productivity

Alisha will be speaking about her ground-breaking use of RFID technology, which she uses in combination with geolocator and GPS technology to track migration and study parental nest provisioning rates in Purple Martins. She hopes that her research will be able to identify which environmental factors are involved in affecting the reproductive success of this declining aerial insectivore.

Alisha is a graduate student in the Avian Behavioural and Conservation Lab at the University of Manitoba under the supervision of Dr. Kevin Fraser. This is her third summer at Ellis Bird Farm. She was first hired as a summer student (without telling us that she was afraid of birds!) in 2013.

Gerald Romanchuk – A Celebration of Alberta Birds

Gerald Romanchuk will present his breath-taking images of Alberta birds. He will share photographs and stories about his encounters with cavity-nesting birds and other bird species that are fairly unique to Alberta (Gray Gray Owls, Hawk Owls, Boreal Chickadees, etc.).

Gerald is a long-time member of the Edmonton Nature Club. He has served on the club's board and has led numerous field trips over the last 15 years. He is an avid nature photographer who has much to share about the birds of Alberta.

Lorne Scott – A Short History of Bluebird Conservation on the Canadian Prairies

Lorne Scott made his first nesting box at the age of 15 and has had Mountain Bluebirds nesting for 50 years on and around his farm. A founding member of NABS and a bluebird trail operator who has maintained the longest continuous trail in Canada, Lorne will talk about the history of bluebird conservation in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Lorne Scott lives and farms at Indian Head, Saskatchewan. He served as Saskatchewan's Minister of Environment and is a member and active in many conservation organizations. He is the recipient of many awards and citations (e.g., Saskatchewan Order of Merit and Order of Canada) and is a founding board member of NABS.

Saturday Banquet Speaker:
Brian Keating (Topic to be Confirmed)

Brian Keating is a well-known naturalist, writer, CBC contributor and nature tour guide.

Brian's previous job at the Calgary Zoo was to raise money and then to spend it on environmental projects around the world. Presently, he's the Zoo's Honourary Conservation Advisor to their outreach efforts. He is also an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Calgary.

Brian has been leading groups on nature-based travel for three decades, exploring some of the best wildlife areas on the planet. He's a weekly guest on both Calgary and Edmonton's CBC Radio, and for many years, was a regular on the Discovery Channel, using his own wilderness adventure and wildlife filming. He's in high demand as an international speaker, presenting at some 50 events a year.

His wife, Dee, is a physician and keen naturalist who always joins him on his adventures.



Bus Field Trip Leaders:

Brian Biggs – Brian will be leading the East Central Alberta bus field trip, including stops at the famous Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park along the Red Deer River. He is excited to share many birding points of interest along the way as well as part of his bluebird trail.

Brian farms in an area of prime bluebird habitat near the Red Deer River southeast of Ellis Bird Farm. He has spent much of his life watching birds and has established a very successful 400-box bluebird trail. It is on his trail that Dr. Fraser and Alisha Ritchie are conducting their geolocator research.

Judy Boyd – Judy will be leading the post-conference bus tour to West Central Alberta.

Judy is a veteran bird watcher who serves the birding community in numerous ways, including being involved in the Red Deer River Naturalists (since 1998), working on local and provincial species counts, and working at the Medicine River Wildlife Centre (since 2008). She spearheaded the development of the Red Deer and Central Alberta Birding Guides and is a keen environmental educator.

Phil French - Phil will also be leading the East Central Alberta bus field trip.

Phil was born in England, but has called Alberta home for the past 50 years. He and his wife, Bev, live in the small town of Lousana, a home-base from which he wanders the wilds with his video camera. A keen hiker, videographer and film maker, he has produced three major films: *Inside the Box*, *Living with Beavers* and *Red Deer River Journey*. He is the Past President of the Red Deer River Naturalists. His blog can be found at <http://phil-french.blogspot.ca/>