

The Bergen News

Bringing Bergen Together

December 2020

Birds, Beasts and Botany in Bergen

by Bob Griebel, photo by Sandy Easterbrook

Northern Hawk Owl (*surnia ulula*)

We encountered this rare and rather exotic visitor while driving down our range road several weeks ago. Perched nonchalantly atop a power pole, he waited patiently while Sandy raced home, grabbed her camera and returned to snap his picture. The Northern Hawk Owl is a non-migratory bird of the boreal region and seldom ventures into the southern half of the province. When it does, especially if it travels south of the Canadian-American border, it causes something of an occasion that can attract crowds of birders with scopes and cameras in hand.

The Hawk Owl comes by its name honestly. Although a bonafide member of the owl family, it is one of the few owls that hunts in daylight. This is probably an adaptation to the long hours of summer sunlight in the North. The owl's hunting habits are also akin to those of many hawks. It sits high on a prominent tree in order to spot those small mammals upon which it preys. The bird's flight pattern is said to resemble that of a Cooper's Hawk. The Hawk Owl's long tail and the white and brown striped plumage of the breast and belly are reminiscent of a hawk.

The bird's facial disk is whitish with a distinctive black border on either side of the face. The back and top of the head are dark brown with off-white mottling. The eyes and curved bill are yellow.

This species inhabits the northern circumpolar boreal zone across North America from Alaska to Newfoundland and across northern Europe and Siberia. It prefers to inhabit forest edges rather than deep spruce and fir woods, and can often be found at burn sites before they become overgrown. It is also found near swamps, bogs and other areas with sparse tree growth. Through the summer the bird survives mainly on mice, voles, rabbits, red squirrels and the occasional short-tailed weasel. In winter its diet consists mainly of small birds and ground dwellers such as grouse and ptarmigan. However, its exceptional hearing also alerts it to rodents below the surface of the snow pack, through which the hawk will plunge to capture the rodents. Although the owl swallows small prey whole, it has a ritualized approach to eating larger game. After eviscerating the prey, it will eat the head first, then the organs, and will cache the remaining corpse for later consumption.



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A Gift for Songbirds

by Sandy Easterbrook

For years I have provided wild birds with suet chunks and black sunflower seeds. About three years ago, however, I purchased a booklet called *Winter Bird Feeding: An Alberta Guide* during a sale at the Sundre Library. It's by Myrna Pearman and published by her workplace, Ellis Bird Farm Ltd. As it was last printed in 1991, you may have to search the second hand stores to find it. Myrna is an excellent photographer as well as a birding guru so, if you have a chance to watch one of her presentations, it is well worth it.

The book contains several recipes for suet cakes. As they are composed of a variety of ingredients, they attract a fairly large range of species. Over the past few years, my diners have included boreal chickadees (the prime feeder), their black-capped cousins, hairy and downy woodpeckers, grey jays, starlings and a lone tree sparrow. Include the sunflower and suet feeders and my visitors extend to blue jays, pileated woodpeckers, three types of grosbeaks, juncos, pine siskins, both kinds of



nuthatches, redpolls, a single varied thrush and, in spring and fall, several types of sparrows.

The suet treat mixture, which is initially runny, can be smeared onto tree trunks and is appreciated by nuthatches and creepers. Or it can be smeared onto cones, or poured into containers. I use small cat food or tuna tins. I pierce the bottom of the tin and the suet with a nail, then pass a twist tie through the mix and attach the twist tie to a cord hanging from a spruce bough outside my office window.

When I hung my first tin can, it was ignored for a week, probably because it was perceived as threatening. Now the birds finish off a can every two days. It is quite amusing to watch the larger birds trying to access it. Magpies find it impossible. A pileated woodpecker tried for several days before he got the hang of it (pardon the pun!). Grey jays, on the other hand, are like gymnasts, flapping their wings for stability and stretching out their tails for leverage.

If you can, place feeding stations on or near trees, ideally on their south side. This will offer some shelter, and protection from predators such as hawks and cats.

Below is my recipe for suet treats, adapted from Pearman's. If you don't have some of the ingredients, just substitute items like cubed apple, sunflower seeds, nuts, triticale flakes, cream of wheat or barley. Keep the proportions approximately the same. If you aren't using all

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Northern Hawk Owl continued from page 1

Hawk Owls mate for life. Mating rituals begin in early March and the pair will seek out old cavities made by Pileated Woodpeckers in which to nest. Alternatively, a hollow in a broken-topped snag may provide the nesting site. The female deposits between three and eleven plain white eggs, higher egg numbers correlating with the relative abundance of rodents and other game in the area. While the female tends the eggs and the young, the male hunts for food and protects the nest from predators.

Due to the remoteness of the Hawk Owls' range and their relatively low density throughout the Boreal, this bird is one of the least studied and poorly understood avian species in North America. There are few accurate estimates of their overall population, and their conservation status is unknown. Fisher and Acorn's "Birds of Alberta" indicates that High Level and Sundre are two of the best locations in the province to catch sight of the Hawk Owl, so keep an eye open for this daytime hunter if you are out and about this winter.

EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY

by Jessie



Dear Santa Dog,

I hear it's time to send you my Christmas Wish List so here goes:

I want to live in a place with lots of room to roam and live out my doggie instincts chasing varmints. (Oh, I guess I already have that.)

I want to know that good food is always waiting for me and I don't have to scrounge or beg. (Oh, I guess I have that one, too.)

I want to be loved and be able to come in by the fire and lie on my person's foot. (Yeah, I got that, too.)

I want a pet cat to be my friend. (Well, if Tab got much friendlier, I'd have to beat him off with my big tail.)

I want a nice juicy fresh bone from time to time. (Oh, my person says the yard is already so full of bones she can hardly walk through it.)

Sorry, Santa, I guess I don't need anything.

Oh, wait. There is one thing. If you run across any of those big black birds with suits like undertakers—I think they're called ravings from all the squawking they make—hitch them to your sleigh and run them across the sky till their tail feathers fall off. Maybe then they won't come back and hang around my yard again.

Merry Christmas, dogs and persons, and let's all be grateful for our wonderful life here in Bergen.



FACIAL HAIR

by Marilyn Halvorson

What, you say? Facial hair? What an inappropriate topic for the festive season! Au contraire. Who is the poster boy for facial hair? Santa Claus. Of course. The old fellow himself, or even a reasonable facsimile is what a proper beard is all about. And white is the perfect colour for this facial adornment.

I do not much care for black beards. To me, there is a tinge of the sinister about them. After all, wasn't Blackbeard a notorious pirate? And, in more recent times, black beards have often been a signature feature of terrorists.

My most recent observation of the effect a beard can have on one's appearance relates to our own prime minister. I do not intend to cast aspersions on his political expertise. My current quarrel is facial, more than political. Last winter he was quite a good-looking, up-and-coming young man. Then, in a few days, he had been utterly transformed into something resembling a down-and-out, aging goatherd. Why? Because for reasons unclear to me, he had decided to grow a beard. And not a successful beard, at that. It is sparse, two-tone, and utterly unflattering. And, no, it does not make him look wise and scholarly. End of that subject.

But there are other whiskery problems besetting us. What about the so-called soul patch, that little wisp of whiskers left behind on an otherwise clean-shaven face? Come on guys, admit it. You were half asleep when shaving, missed a spot, and never got around to going back to correct your sin of omission.

Now, let us turn our attention to moustaches. I confess that I have never been a fan of moustaches. As a young person, my aversion to them was extreme. If, when reading a book, I discovered that the hero had a moustache, I generally had to abandon the book. Obviously he was not heroic material. The wisdom(?) acquired with age has tempered my opinion somewhat. Now, I admit that I have known some men whose moustaches were quite attractive. Nice work, guys.

However, this is not a blanket absolution for moustaches. There are rules: A moustache may not be so thin that it looks like it was drawn on with eyebrow pencil. Nor must it be so thick as to serve as a storage silo for enough crumbs to keep the wearer fed for a week in the wilderness. And last but not least, we have the "old-time sheriff moustache", long and straggly with needle-sharp waxed points. No, no, a thousand times no! Should any woman be foolish enough to lean over to kiss you, you may very well put her eye out. 'Nuff said.

I could go on to the subject of the five-day-stubble that all the cool guys sported last year. I have an opinion on that, too, but Santa says, "Quit while you're still ahead," and I never argue with Santa.

Merry Christmas and let's hope for good things in 2021.

Theo was a wonderful alto, a warm and unflappable mother, and a great baker and cook. Her version of shortbread is creamy with a slightly caramel flavour and is very easy to make.

Theo's Shortbread

1 cup of butter

3/4 cup of brown sugar

2 1/4 cup flour

Cream butter well. Add brown sugar and cream well. Add flour and blend. Roll dough out to about 1/2 inch. Cut into your favourite shapes. Place on a greased cookie sheet or one lined with parchment paper. Bake at 325°F for 10 to 15 minutes.

Musings: Christmas Past

by Phyllis Cormack

Have you ever been listening to the radio and heard a song that reminds you of a time long ago—perhaps in a place far away? You can remember what you were doing, who you were with, perhaps even the time of year? In my case the radio station I'm listening to has to be playing the “golden oldies”!

Some pieces remind me of when I worked in the medical clinic in Sundre. I think to myself—I was filing when that song was playing. Or other songs may bring flashbacks of being outside enjoying the wonderful summer weather with friends or family.

How about smells? They provide a variety of memories. Mom was never one to wear a lot of perfume. However, I can remember a certain scent on her leather gloves. Not strong. Likely from the talcum powder she used. Just enough there to bring her face to mind.

Food cooking is another memory trigger. A good pot of soup bubbling away on the stove or cinnamon buns in the oven. Fresh bread. The list can go on and almost makes me want to start baking!

After all, Christmas is coming and many families have traditional delicacies that they make every year. Lefse is one thing that goes over well with our whole family. My recipe comes out of the Bergen Missionary Church cookbook. My Auntie Esther contributed it. So I do it my way and it's a hit.

Rosettes are another item I like to have at Christmas. They are a very healthy treat—snowflake or star-shaped irons dipped in batter and deep fried, then sprinkled with icing sugar. Rather messy and, of course, the hot oil is—well—hot!

Tilslorede Bondepige or Peasant Girl with a Veil is very much like trifle. A layer of broken soda crackers, then cooked blueberries with the sweetened juice, then a layer of lightly sweetened whipped cream. Repeat. The crackers soak up the juice. Very yummy and nary a calorie in it! It's the perfect dessert for after your light meal of turkey with all the trimmings. Those Norwegians really know how to eat and keep slim.

There are so many cookies and squares that make their appearance at this time of year.

The biggest problem this year is that if you make too many goodies, guess who will be eating them? It looks like Christmas this year is going to be a lot different. With regard to family gatherings, the memory of wonderful times we had together other years will have to fill the gap of absence this year. Dig out the photos or scroll down on your phone camera—wherever you have your pictures stored these days. Check out what the grandkids looked like a year ago and let the memories take over. Make a phone call or text, Zoom. There are so many ways of communicating. The old saying “it's better to give than receive” will remind us to think of those shut ins in facilities or at home who can't go anywhere. Give them a call to brighten their holiday season.

May your Christmases past help to encourage you and may your connections with family and friends this festive season give you a Merry Christmas. Very best wishes to you now and in 2021!

May God bless us every one!

The Bergen News is very grateful for the rural community grant received from Mountain View County to assist in our operating costs. Thank you for your continued support.

Submissions of articles or comments can be sent via email to ljsyer@telus.net, or by snail-mail to Marilyn Walker, The Bergen News, Box 21, Site 9, RR 2, Sundre, T0M 1X0. If you would like a subscription, it is \$15 which can be sent to our snail-mail address. For more information call Marilyn at 403-638-2156. Remember, subscriptions are coming due for this year. Your subscription expiry date will be highlighted on the label. Thank you for your continued support.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS 2020

by Noreen Olson

*Nice old couple, both silver haired,
Lots of books and favorite chairs.
Electronic devices to entertain,
A garden to tend, when it doesn't rain,
Freezer full of lovely food,
Friends to call, when you're in the mood,
Kids are well and grandkids grand,
We have our house and a bit of land,
We'll cope with Covid.*

*We've seen a lot in sixty years,
Lots of laughter, sometimes tears,
Drought and Hail and partial Flood,
Mud, Manure and even Blood.
We built things up, and tore things down,
Some things vanished, some got found,
We lost some loved ones, found new friends,
And have some ties that never end.
We'll cope with Covid.*

*We've watched the Sunsets and the Dawn,
Blue skies and Rainbows, welcome Sun
We've planted trees and tended flowers,
We've dedicated countless hours.
To painting decks and seeding grain,
To feeding cows, in snow or rain.
To baling hay and ploughing snow,
And never ending lawns to mow.
We'll cope with Covid.*

*Banana Split Days on the lawn,
A thousand birthdays come and gone,
Christmas Day with loved ones dear,
Some of them no longer here,
Fireworks, First of July,
Great memories that make you cry,
A family that makes us proud,
Again we'll say it long and loud.
We'll cope with Covid.*

And so another year ends and another begins. Again most of our prayers are prayers of thanks.
Merry Christmas from Greenhaven Farm and may 2021 bring us less trouble than 2020 did.
Love one another and God Bless us every one.

This recipe comes from Laurie's friend, Micki Stirling. The rice flour gives this shortbread a lovely silky feel. Both the ginger and the chocolate marble versions are delicious.

Ginger Shortbread

4 cups unbleached white flour

1 pound butter—warm

1 cup white or golden yellow sugar

1/2 cup rice flour

1/2 tsp. salt

1/4 cup soft crystalized ginger, slivered

Mix with hands

✱Make dough into 4 rounds on 2 cookie sheets by patting from balls. Pierce with a fork. Cut in wedges. Bake at 250°F until only golden, about 40 minutes.

For marbled shortbread take out 1/16 of the dough and work in 2 to 3 ounces of melted, unsweetened chocolate plus some sugar. Add dabs of the chocolate dough to the rounds when patting for the marbled effect.

✱You may use small flan pans to help form the rounds. Press the dough firmly into the pans, then turn it out onto the baking sheet and cut it into 12 wedges each. 4 rounds per recipe.

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the treat right away, store it in the freezer. Left out, my first batch went mouldy.

I hope everyone has a special Christmas despite the covid restrictions. If you get too bored, you can always watch your avian friends.

SUET TREAT

1 lb melted suet

½ to ¾ cup peanut butter

2 cups rolled oats (quick cooking or not)

½ cup coconut

3 cups corn meal

½ cup bran

Handful of raisins

1 cup water

Melt the lard and stir in the remainder of the ingredients.

Makes 16 small cat food tins.

Bergen Church News

by Phyllis Cormack

The Bergen Church is located on the Bergen Road one mile west of the Highway 760 intersection. For Sunday morning services, please go to our website <http://bergenmissionarychurch.ca/> then click on the Facebook page where alternative services will be listed.

Bergen Church is open for services every Sunday starting at 10:30 a.m. The pew chairs have been rearranged to allow for social distancing. Families are allowed to sit together. Hand sanitizer is at the door. At this time masks are mandatory for the whole service. Disposable ones are available at the door.

Children's features that provide wonderful, informative stories for both children and adults are usually part of the service. Unfortunately, children's church has been cancelled due to Covid.

Friday night youth group is happening by Zoom under the direction of Adam Elliot, our youth pastor. His phone number is 403-438-7729 if you have inquiries.

Work on the skating rink has been started but, due to the warm weather and Covid, use of it has been delayed. It needs several more floodings and colder weather. We look forward to the restrictions being lessened so the community can enjoy using it again. Last year it proved to be a wonderful place for kids and adults of our community and beyond to gather for fresh air and exercise.

The Sundre Ministerial is a team of churches in the Sundre area who want to help during this difficult time. If you find yourself in need of help, whether physical or emotional, please feel free to contact this number and they will be able to direct you to an appropriate resource: 403-636-0554.

You can also go to the Sundre Ministerial web page — sundreministerial.blogspot.com — if you'd like to contact a church directly. Click on 'Church Listings and Links'.

If you want to donate food to the McDougal Chapel food bank, it can be taken to the Chapel. There is a door bell you can ring to alert them that you are there. You can also donate by e-transfer. Contact McDougal Chapel or check their web site for information.

Our prayer chain is still operating so, if you have prayer needs, please call or email Leila Schwartzenberger at 403-638-4175 or leila@processworks.ca

Pastor Rob Holland's number is 403-672-0020.

Olwyn is in the church office Tuesdays and Fridays, 10:00 – 2:00 p.m. The church's number is 403-638-4010 and the fax number is 403-638-4004. The email address is bergenchurch@xplornet.ca.

The website is <http://bergenmissionarychurch.ca/>

Bergen Ladies Aid Report

by Phyllis Cormack

Regrettably, we were not able to have our November meeting. It has been a year of disappointments as everyone knows.

Our usual auction that has been held in November for decades was cancelled. Fortunately, we have funds permitting us to give out a few donations come January—if we are able to gather for our meeting then. We are hoping to get back to our regular meetings and events next year.

December brings our Christmas party—usually. But not this year. We had to be content singing our Christmas carols to ourselves, opening the gift we were going to take to the party for someone else and eating our own Christmas baking in the comfort of our own home, which likely wasn't decorated as nicely as the home we were going to go to! Unless, of course, one had their party on the early December date we had originally scheduled it for.

One thing we have done for years at our party is make up bags of baking to hand out to shut ins around the community. This still happened under strict controls so we didn't get too close and chatty.

Unless schedules change, we will get together at Gwen Gochee's home in January. Betty Josephson is to co-host and is also to read scripture.

On behalf of our group I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas! We will need to focus on what we have and can do that is good, and not so much on what we can't do and who we can't see or have in our homes. This has been more than a difficult year for many. May God give us a healthy new year in 2021!

Christmas Cards of Hope

by Shari Peyerl

These are strange times—but they could be worse. This year, we face the challenge of adapting our holiday traditions to the realities of a pandemic and the necessity of remaining apart from our loved ones. As hard as this will be for us, our ancestors faced more difficult situations. Their strength can comfort us and give us courage.

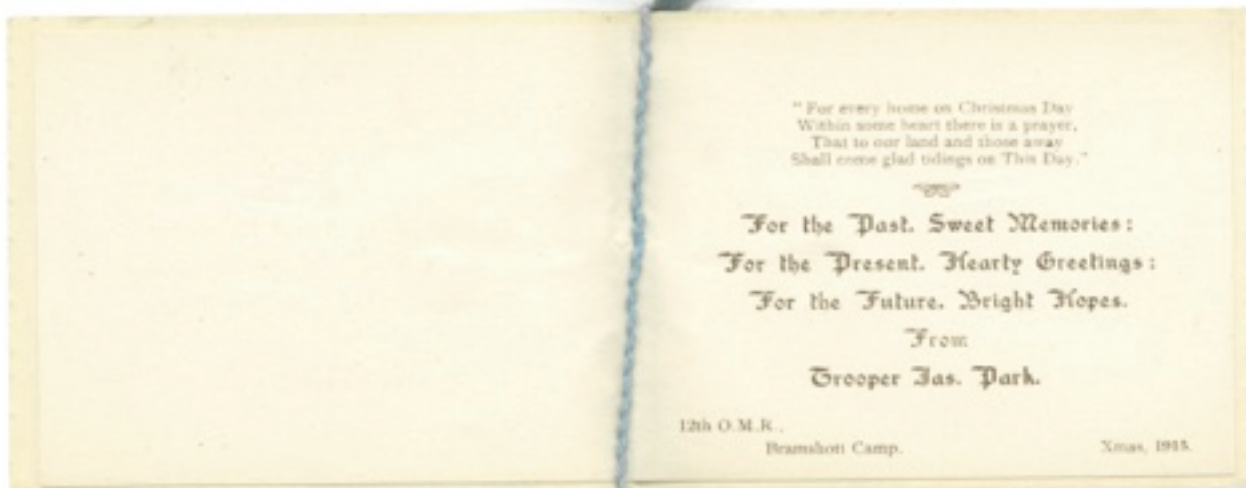
An example of the spirit that our ancestors possessed is evident in a group of artifacts that made a lasting impact on me. Several years ago, just before Christmas, I was charged with forwarding the personal possessions of a pioneering Albertan doctor and his family to the Royal Alberta Museum.

Hidden within an unadorned cardboard box were the century-old remnants of a loving family: Dr. Andrew Walter Park, his wife Amelia, and their daughter Lorna. While the assortment of photographs may have been expected, their unique details brought this long-gone family to life—a radiant bride holding a single rose, a little girl with a bow tied in her cheerful curls, a brave soldier wearing his uniform with dignity.

Many of the articles were precious because of their quality and rarity. The gorgeous and delicate pieces made me gasp: beaded deerskin gauntlets, a little girl's handmade lace dress, and a peacock feather fan. The weight and strength of the military artifacts was striking: a monogrammed riding crop, artillery shells engraved into trench art, and shining medals with their rainbow of ribbons.

But the two most moving objects were quite familiar—Christmas cards. They were emotive because they were greetings from a period of intense crisis and uncertainty. The first was dated “Xmas 1915” and was dispatched from Bramshott Camp, the WWI Canadian training base in England. It was sent by the doctor’s nephew and read:

There's no friends like the old friends
Wherever we may roam
There's no flag like the old flag
No country like our own.



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Italian Sweet Bread with Fennel, Fruit, and Nuts

Here is a slightly sweet country egg bread rich with the combination of almonds, walnuts, dried figs, and raisins. It yields 1 large loaf or 2 small ones.

Sponge

- 2 tsp active dry yeast
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose or bread flour
- 1 cup warm water (105° to 115°)

Dough

- Sponge above
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 3 1/2 to 3 3/4 cups unbleached all-purpose or bread flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp crushed fennel seed
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- Grated zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature, cut into 10 pieces

Fruit and Nut Mixture

- 1 cup slivered blanched almonds
- 1 cup walnut pieces
- 3/4 cup dried figs, such as Mission or Calimyrna, stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 3/4 cup dark raisins, such as muscat
- 1 tbsp all-purpose or bread flour
- 1 tbsp brown sugar

Method

1. To make the sponge: In a medium bowl or plastic container, whisk together yeast, sugar, flour, and water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature for 1 hour, or until bubbly.
2. To make the dough: In a large bowl, using a whisk, or in the work bowl of a heavy-duty electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the sponge, yeast, sugar, eggs and 1 cup of the flour until smooth. Add the salt, fennel, vanilla, zests, butter pieces, and 1 cup of the flour. Beat on low speed for 1 minute. Continue to add flour 1/2 cup at a time until a very soft dough is formed, switching to a wooden spoon when necessary if mixing by hand. The dough will be very sticky and have the consistency of a soft batter.
3. With a dough scraper, turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead 4 or 5 times to just form a cohesive, yet soft, uneven mass. Place in a greased deep container and cover with plastic wrap. Let rise in a warm place for about 2 hours, or until doubled in bulk. Meanwhile, make the fruit and nut mixture. Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the almonds and walnuts over the surface of a jelly-roll pan and bake until lightly toasted, about 8 minutes. Let cool in a large bowl, toss together all the ingredients to combine. Set aside.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and gently pat into a rectangle. Sprinkle with fruit and nuts. Fold the edges over and knead to evenly distribute. The dough will remain very soft and almost sticky. Form into a long, fat log with your palms and place in a 10-inch fluted or plain ring mold, filling it half full. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until even with the rim of the pan, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Twenty minutes before baking, preheat the oven to 350°.
5. Bake in the center of the preheated oven for 50 to 55 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the centre of the loaf comes out clean and the top is firm when pressed. Unmould onto a rack to cool before slicing.

Ride With Me

by Donelda Way

Deer: I saw a single deer with only the left antler.

I was entering the second part of the Fallen Timber Trail S-curve when I realized there were four does leading a buck, single file, across the road in front of me. Behind this group, in the ditch to start with, there were four more does leading a second buck that had just jumped the fence. They also crossed single file in front of me. I was surprised that none of them backtracked at all. For safety, the two vehicles behind me slowed to watch this live animal action.

Three healthy, plump grouse were present on the edge of the gravel roadway. Thankfully, we could pass by with no danger to them.

Blow Ups: There is a cheery snowman, a Santa Claus and a chimney positioned outside the entrance to the Ace store in Sundre.

Air powered, various-coloured, lanky, floppy-armed men draw attention to attract customers to the Funky Thriftstore and The Brick in Olds.

Eastern sunlight backlit a small, totally white horse, causing every hair to shimmer.

A coyote raced across a field toward us. Quickly it veered to the right, following quad tracks in the snow.

As we drove along a quiet country road, we saw a jogger wearing a bright-coloured jacket. Hand waves were given in acknowledgement of each other as we passed.

We turned from one county road to another and it was then we got the full view. There were so many grazing horses, the field was dotted with them.

En route to the scrap metal place: The train whistle and the clacking wheels were very loud. I could feel faint vibrations as I sat waiting in the vehicle. One of the large machines in the scrap yard had a huge pointed jaw attachment to it. This mechanism picked up an empty multi-gallon propane tank with ease, swung around and deposited it elsewhere. There were metal straps for holding the fuel tank securely under the sleeper portion of a semi-tractor unit. Also there was a wire boot-cleaning brush attached to the checkerboard strips beneath the cab door.

Someone has wrapped shiny green garlands around the corner posts at Pioneer Lodge Rd. Gold and red stand out among the greenery.

At Paint By Number a very large tree has been cut into sections right beside the road. You can tell the size of the many, many limbs that were removed by viewing their cut marks along the felled tree trunk.

In the distance, a light constantly flashed. As I got closer to town and slowed down, I imagined that the flashing light was coming from a utility company truck. As I crossed the bridge, traffic slowed even more. Ah yes, a school bus strobe light above the back door!

We had to wait for a tire repair. Walking along the new sidewalk beside Hwy 27 in Sundre, we were pleased that the snow had been brushed off it. Being in town on foot allowed us to readily hear the engine noises of multiple vehicles and big trucks, that were passing by. The table and bench areas are wonderful.

Another day: a lady with a youngster and a dog were enjoying the freedom of this walking pathway.

The man must have climbed over the metal gate. I first saw him as his feet hit the ground. The two accompanying dogs must have shimmied through or under the parallel barbwire fence. The three of them sauntered along the fence line toward an acreage dwelling.

It was an easy drive to our near neighbours. As we stood outside chatting, three or four of their feral cats searched about under our vehicle. Were they looking for warmth? One young kitten wasn't sure it liked the feel of cold while walking across an ice patch in the yard. It lifted one paw.

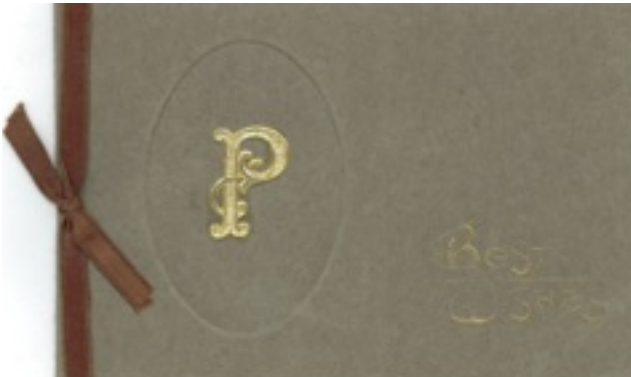
A lady and I waited a few minutes for the Sundre Thrift Store to open. We discussed the decorative painted rocks in the planter box near the doorway. The rocks had been placed to form floral decorations.

On the way to Olds we followed a mobile home for quite a distance. At the first traffic light at the edge of town, the pilot truck pulled in behind it. This combo proceeded the full length of town, blocking both lanes.

We had driven out to the field to check on a couple of things. Standing out in the open, we heard a Jake Brake for a long time. A cattle liner turned from the Twp Rd onto the Rge Rd. A short time later this same cattle line used its Jake Brake for a long time before the corner again. I commented, "Must be fun to be in the country. Would he get fined doing that in the city?"

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The second card was made of modest khaki card-stock, embossed with a golden *P*, and was tied with a brown velvet ribbon. It opened to reveal a simple message. But it was the signature that ignited my imagination: Mrs. A. W. Park.



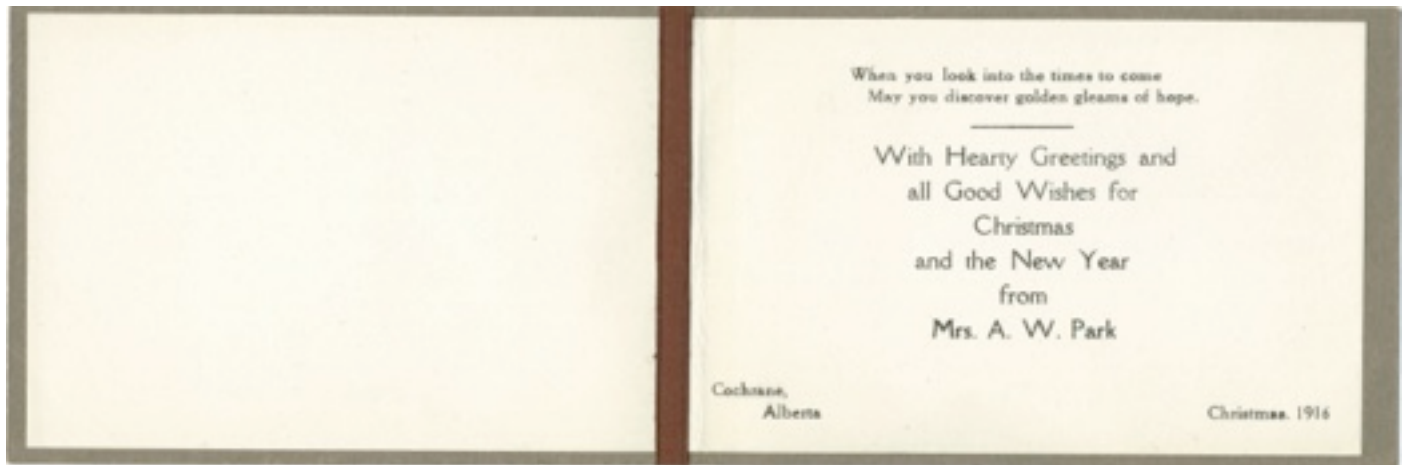
For Christmas 1916, Amelia was sending out cards in her own name, because her husband had volunteered for the Canadian Medical Corps. At that moment he was in Europe, separated from his family by a vast distance. He was suffering sickness and distress and the horrors of war. I could just see Amelia seated at a table, with little three-year-old Lorna playing beside her. Amelia was writing encouraging messages to family and friends, yearning for better times, and trying to be brave.

Those Christmas cards, in that parcel from the past, highlight the true meaning of the holiday season. This year, especially, remember that Christmas isn't about presents under a tree.

Know that your family and friends love you and wish you all the best, even if you are unable to greet them with hugs and kisses, or shower them with gifts. Even though we are facing new challenges, by treating each other with kindness, respect, and love, we will endure.

Like Amelia, I send you this holiday message:

When you look into the times to come
May you discover golden gleams of hope.



Subscription Renewals

To our loyal Bergen News subscribers: Please check your mail labels for your expiry date. You may mail your renewal to The Bergen News c/o Marilyn Walker Box 21, Site 9, RR 2, Sundre, T0M 1X0. Subscriptions are \$15 annually or \$10 for an email subscription. First time subscribers may use the same address to set up a subscription. For additional information call Marilyn at 403-638-2156 Thanks for your support.

Sundre Municipal Library ~ Holiday Hours

The library will be closed January 1st for New Year's Day through till January 4th.

We will reopen with our regular hours on Tuesday, January 5th, 2021.

Regular Monthly Offerings to Watch For in 2021...

*Programs may be cancelled or postponed (based on Government or AHS guidelines).

Rhyme & Rhythm!



Children ages 3-5 and their parents ~
Thursdays on **January 14, 21, 28**
and February 4th from 9:30—10:20
AM. Call the library to register.

The Chat Group

Sit somewhere warm to physically distance but still chat and connect with others. Held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 10:00 - 11:30am. **This month's sessions:** January 7th & 21st. **Call the library to register.**

Cooking The Books! *New Time

A book club for the those who love looking through cookbooks and trying new recipes. Different monthly themes. Share your experiences at our monthly meetings. Call to register. **January 25th @ 6:30 PM: Soups**

How Can I Keep Up To Date?

We have had many people asking if the Library will be closing with the latest round of Government guidelines for Covid-19. Please be assured we are here and ready to serve you! If future restrictions require us to close, we will do our best to provide you with materials through curbside service and online options.

Any future changes to library hours or services will be posted on our website, through social media, or by email for those who subscribe to our monthly newsletter. Call the library if you would like to be added to our email list.



If you have comments on anything that you read in the Bergen News, send your response to The Bergen News, ljsyer@telus.net or the Bergen News c/o Marilyn Walker, Box 21, Site 9, RR2, Sundre, T0M 1X0.

THE GRINCH

by Pat Gibbs

Now, folks, I know this sounds a bit strange for a Christmas newsletter title, but I have been less than happy about the possibility of not being able to celebrate Christmas this year with family and friends. No, the Grinch of my title is not the green Dr. Seuss fellow we watch on T.V., but an invisible germ called COVID 19. To be honest with you, this name is becoming almost a swear word in our home. That's how I feel when I hear it! How does this word equate to the Grinch who stole Christmas?

Let me mention a few ways. Every event involving children, youth and adults has been cancelled due to COVID. Any social or community fundraiser event has been cancelled, due to COVID. Many outdoor activities and especially indoor ones, for the most part, are not happening due to COVID.

How about dealing with the loss of a loved one when the family is denied the right to be with their loved one in their final hours due to COVID? The list can go on but you are all aware of what's happening, I'm sure. Don't get me wrong, folks, I'm well aware of how serious this virus has been to many people. Some who contract it get over it in a few days while others don't even know they have it! Rather confusing don't you think? What really saddens me is the fact that suicides are escalating at a distressing rate and several of those have been children, some of whom are 13 or younger. Bullying has been an issue for many years, but, lately, our up-coming generation is becoming very concerned about their future hopes and dreams and rightly so. Then fear steps in, followed by feelings of helplessness. Not a good combination for anyone. I won't say anything about the adults without jobs or any prospects for one...due to COVID.

Now for some wonderful news! Christmas is coming! A most beautiful time of the year when we remember the story of Jesus coming to earth as a little baby. A time of singing wonderful songs we love to sing. The joyful and laughter-filled moments with family and friends, probably via Zoom this year, and sharing with those less fortunate. It is a giving time of year. May all of you stay healthy and safe and God bless you with joy, hope and peace, knowing that He is in control of everything and that includes the COVID 19 GRINCH!!

Til next time.....

Winter Solstice (also known as Yule)

by Laurie Syer

The shortest day of the year seems to ignite the imagination of humanity. There are many traditions around the world and from ancient times connected to the winter solstice.

Yuletide dates back to the fourth century and celebrates the triumph of light over darkness. The tradition of the yule log began in Norway. A giant log was burned on the hearth to celebrate the return of the sun each year. Evergreens were symbolic of life and renewal and were brought inside at this time to decorate windows, doors and mantels or to be made into wreaths, which were also given as gifts.

Holly, with its prickles, was thought to ward off spirits and the holly berry was a way to brighten up a home.

The mistletoe represents vitality and fertility. Norse mythology has a story about the gods using mistletoe to resurrect Odin's son, Baldur, from the dead. Baldur's mother was the goddess of love and, in gratitude, she made the mistletoe a symbol of love and vowed to kiss anyone who passed under it.

In China an ancient festival celebrated on December 21, 22, or 23 marks the end of the harvest season and welcomes the gradual return of a balance between darkness and light. It is celebrated with family gatherings and a big meal.

Winter solstice tradition at Stonehenge sees people gathering at dawn the day after the longest night of the year to watch the sun rising through the stones.

In Iran people celebrate the ancient Persian festival Shab-e Yalda, which celebrates the end of shorter days and the victory of light over darkness. Yalda means birth. It is marked by family gatherings, candles, poetry readings and a feast.

In North America, the Hopi people of northern Arizona celebrate the winter solstice with gift-giving to children, prayers to the spirits representing the natural world, singing and storytelling. In the solstice ceremony, led by the tribal chief, the sun is welcomed back with ritual dances.

So many people spanning time and space, all expressing their uneasiness with darkness and their joy at the return of life-giving light. Our vulnerability links us. We are one human family.



[Legacy's](#) 2021 calendar features 56 full-colour photos showcasing places, plants and wildlife in and around Mountain View County.

Legacy's goal is to conserve ecologically, agriculturally and historically important lands. Money raised through calendar sales supports local land conservation and stewardship.

Copies are available for \$20 each at the office in Olds (4801-49th Ave) or (403) 556-1029. You can also order through [Sally Banks](#) (403) 638-4736.

Passionate About Pollinators!

[Legacy Land Trust's year-end fundraising campaign](#) is all about wild pollinators—native bees, hover flies, butterflies, moths and birds. Why pollinators? Because healthy populations of pollinators ensure healthy ecosystems.

Our goal is \$10,000. Anonymous supporters have pledged \$4710 to match every dollar you donate—that means your donation is doubled!

Here are examples of what your donation can do:

\$25 Helps fund guided nature walks.

\$50 Helps fund speaking events about Wild Pollinators.

\$75 Helps create a user-friendly guide to the Wild Pollinators of Central Alberta.

\$150 Helps develop a tracking program to identify and improve habitat for wild pollinators.

Although our campaign officially ends December 31st, we're happy to accept donations after that. All donations will receive a charitable tax receipt.





From My Office Window

by Brian and Kim Allan

2020 has been an interesting year, to say the least. A picture mosaic of sunrises, wildlife, night sky, solar activity, flowers, people, kids, grandkids, water falls, garden items, mountain panoramas, etc. might best sum it up. Merry Christmas to all!

