
OBITUARY

Raymond Belanger

R.J. "Dick" Gutfriend, President, Weyburn Nature Society

Weyburn and area birders were saddened to hear of the sudden death of one of the most avid birders and conservationists in our area, if in the whole of Saskatchewan.

Ray was born in Estevan on 15 April 1940, took his early schooling in Lampman, then attended Champion College in Regina for Grades 11 and 12. Upon graduation, he moved to Weyburn to work at the Saskatchewan Hospital, graduating as a Psychiatric Nurse in 1961. In 1962 he transferred to the Ward Activities Department, in 1970 Ray was appointed Supervisor of the Recreation Department, in 1973 he was promoted to the position of Coordinator of Therapies, a position he held until retirement in July of 1993, after working in the same facility for 35 years.

Ray was very dedicated to his work — his goal was to make life better and happier for the patients of Saskatchewan Hospital. The many hours Ray spent to get to know the wants and needs of the patients were much appreciated by both the patients and staff as the lives of those he touched and influenced were improved, enlightened and full of enjoyment. Ray always had time to stop and talk — giving a patient his last cigarette or money for a cup of coffee or a coke.

Ray loved all sports and enjoyed playing or watching curling, football, hockey, boxing, hunting, fishing and of course baseball, the love of this life. Ray was a Major League Base-

ball scout, first for the Cincinnati Reds and then Canadian Scouting Director for the Atlanta Braves. In 1988 Ray was elected to the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame.

Ray was an avid birder, he was always on the lookout for that rare and elusive bird. Many a time he would phone and say something like this — "a flock of whooping cranes have been spotted west of McTaggart, let's go and see if we can find them" and away we went.

In 1984 Ray spearheaded a group of interested birders to form the Weyburn Natural History Society and in January 1985, the Society received its Charter. Ray was the first President in 1985 and again in 1986, 1994 and 1995. Ray was also a director for the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. In 1987, Ray and a group of avid Weyburn birders spotted a Band-tailed Pigeon on the Hospital grounds, a report of which appeared in the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's magazine *Blue Jay*.

Ray was always concerned about the environment and what we, as humans, are doing to destroy the habitat of the flora and fauna of our beloved area, province and country. Ray's expertise at writing was used on many occasions to express his and our concerns about what a group or company is doing to destroy our beautiful area.

Ray was continually on the lookout for new projects for himself and

the Weyburn Nature Society. Some of his achievements were: being the first participant in the Weyburn area "Project Feeder Watch," contacting Veterinarians in Weyburn to look after injured birds, helping with the amphibian survey, helping with a provincial owl count, getting the Society involved in the adopt-a-highway program. He was instrumental in building the Souris Valley Nature Trail, starting the Weyburn Public Schools in an annual birdathon for Grade 3's and working to set up a scholarship for Grade 12 graduates. He wrote the "Nature Watch" article for the *Weyburn Review* for many years.

Ray was always busy but never too busy to talk about birding or to tell a good joke. Ray, on many occasions, spoke to school children or adult groups about birding and the environment. In the early 1990s, Ray undertook to do a three-year study of "Shorebirds at the city of Weyburn Sewage Lagoon Cells." A copy of that report was published in an edition of the *Blue Jay* magazine. Ray

had just completed a book for the City of Weyburn Parks Board entitled "Flora and Fauna of Tatagwa Parkway," which is at the printers at the present time.

Ray was a dedicated individual and always had time to visit and help the people he came in contact with. His love of life and people was shown by the many friends that came to pay last respects on 13 November 1997. Ray will be deeply missed by the many patients he cared so much for, the staff he worked with and helped in their times of need, the many young ball players he coached and guided through their growing years, and the many friends he had on coffee row, at the Elks and the many buddies he had in all walks of life. Ray leaves to mourn, his wife Louise, daughter Cindy (Tim) Herberhiltz, sons Neil and Mark, grandchildren Danielle and Mitchell, along with many relatives and friends.

Ray will be deeply missed by all who knew him.



Baby Opossums weigh .07 ounce each while Bear cubs are 10 ounces each at birth.

Maximum recorded ages of some birds are; swallow - 9 years, Starling - 19 years, Arctic Tern - 27 years, Golden Eagle - 80 years.

Maximum recorded ages of some mammals are; shrew - 2 years, mouse - 3 years.

The dragonfly can eat its own weight in 30 minutes.

A male Chestnut-collared Longspur defends a territory of 1-2 acres.

Snow Buntings burrow in the snow to keep warm.

Hippoboscid flies, which parasitize birds, gave birth to a single larva that is fed from "milk glands."