

## Exploring Nature Together While Apart

By Simone Lee

Calgary River Valleys is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a strong and effective voice for river valley protection and water quality in Calgary. We consider ourselves to be “the voice of our rivers.” While our group activities are temporarily suspended, Calgary River Valleys is continuing to plan for our upcoming riverbank restorations. In the meantime, Calgary River Valleys encourages you to get outside, at a safe social distance abiding by any updated provincial and federal guidelines, and enjoy our beautiful urban waterways.

From West Nose Creek in the north to Pine Creek in the south, Twelve Mile Coulee to the west and Forest Lawn Creek to the east, Calgary has an abundance of fresh water. Our rivers and streams are also a haven for wildlife who depend on these special areas for their habitats and food. Some of the animal species to be found within the City are beavers, muskrats, cougars, deer, raccoons, eagles, porcupine, bobcats and black bears. Northern flying squirrels and pine marten have also recently been observed.

In May, migrating birds that return to the North include warblers, kinglets, song sparrows, Franklin’s gulls, and swallows. You may also observe spring indicator plant species like aspen poplar, pussy willows, and saskatoon bushes have bloomed in our river and creek valleys, and green has returned to our part of the world.

While you are out, don’t forget to bring a camera along to capture what you see around you. While the City Nature Challenge is now over, Calgarians can contribute to the iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>) community at any time to document our City’s beauty and biodiversity. Every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed. iNaturalist shares your findings with scientific data repositories like the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](https://www.gbif.org/) (<https://www.gbif.org/>) to help scientists find and use your data. All you have to do is observe, take a picture, and upload it, noting the location of where you saw that species.

For the more artistically inclined, each year, beginning on May 1, the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society, offers their *Capture Nature* photo contest <https://friendsoffishcreek.org/programs/capturenature/> as a fun and creative opportunity for park users to engage with their natural surroundings. The contest is also part of the Friends’ “Social Enterprise” programming, with all proceeds contributing to their ongoing stewardship and education programming in Fish Creek Provincial Park. All submissions must be images taken in Fish Creek Provincial Park.

There are 3 new contest themes this year that they hope will spark some creativity, encourage you to visit the park often and get you to think outside of the box! These 3 themes are: “A Bug’s Eye View”, “Power & Grace”, and “Weather or Not”.

Are you up for the challenge? There is a \$25 registration fee for adults, but the program is free for youth 17 years of age or under! Register through Eventbrite starting on May 1.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/capture-nature-friends-of-fish-creek-photography-contest->

[tickets-95520098185](tel:95520098185) Please be sure to read the contest **Rules and Regulations** prior to registering.

We would love to see and share your photographs (with full credit) on our Facebook (@CalgaryRiverValleys) and Twitter (@clgrivervalleys) too. You can also email us at [calgaryrivervalleys@outlook.com](mailto:calgaryrivervalleys@outlook.com). Do your best to stay safe everyone!