

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ALONG WEST POTENTIAL ROUTES

### The Myth:

*There is no natural environment along the 2 west potential routes that would be impacted by overhead high voltage power lines.*

### The Facts:

● Many environmentally sensitive areas are found along the 2 west potential routes for the Heartland Transmission Line. Particularly noteworthy sites include Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park, Wagner Natural Area, Riverlot 56 Natural Area and Manawan Lake. Other important waterbodies, wetlands, old growth forests and natural grasslands include the North Saskatchewan River, Sturgeon River, a Nature Conservancy of Canada quarter section, and 12 other quarter sections. Many species of birds and mammals in these areas would be negatively impacted by an overhead high voltage power line.

● Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park (which includes Big Lake) is the largest provincial park located along the boundaries of St. Albert and Edmonton. As a result, it is a very popular and well-used area by naturalists and birdwatchers. The Alberta Government first designated the Big Lake Natural Area in 1999, and then upgraded its protected status and size in 2005, renaming it Lois Hole

Centennial Provincial Park in honour of the late Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Big Lake is globally recognized as an “Important Bird Area” and is considered one of Alberta’s more important bird habitats located close to a large urban area.

● More than 235 bird species have been recorded at Big Lake, and include such noteworthy species as: common loon, double-crested cormorant, trumpeter swan, tundra swan, sprague’s pipit, peregrine falcon (species at risk), short-eared owl (species of special concern), bald eagle, American white pelican, great blue heron, osprey and American avocet. Big Lake also provides nesting habitat for large colonies of Franklin’s gull, and great egrets (rare in Alberta) have been recorded nesting here. Thousands of waterfowl use Big Lake annually for nesting, moulting, migration stop-over and staging.

● Wagner Natural Area, designated in 1975, contains 16 species of orchids native to Alberta as well as many other interesting plant species. Calcareous peatland habitat and marl ponds in the area are unique in Alberta. A well-developed trail system attracts hundreds of botanists and natural historians every year.

● Riverlot 56 Natural Area and its well-developed trail system are popular among St. Albert residents for hiking and cross-country skiing. The natural area, bordered on the north by the Sturgeon River, provides natural aspen parkland habitat for a diversity of bird and mammal species

*See other RETA Fact Sheets for impacts on birds and other parts of the environment.*



Peregrine Falcon

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