

# Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

## March 2022



Pat Hutchins photo (reprinted from website)

### The Long-billed Curlew

The Long-billed Curlew is the largest shorebird in North America. It breeds in Alberta, Saskatchewan and in the grassland areas of BC's interior. They arrive in BC in March and will begin nesting in April and May. They are commonly sighted in the Tappen Valley and farmlands near Chase.

In 2005 the Long-billed Curlew was designated a species at risk. The survey being carried out (Di wrote about this in the last newsletter) requires current province-wide information.

This is from the Pritchard to Neskonlith Meadows Outing - May 9, 2019

Check out our club website, [www.shuswapnaturalists.org](http://www.shuswapnaturalists.org). Dorothy Parks set it up in 2006 and is still maintaining it. We thank Dorothy for this and her many contributions to the club over the years.

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### Larch Hills Interpretive Trail - Pat Danforth

The Larch Hills Interpretive Sign Renewal Project team is preparing for a busy and active year. Through the winter, we have been working on securing funding for sign printing, a much later stage in this project. While we wait on grant responses from the BC Naturalists Foundation and others, we have been planning a process to enlist the skills of our talented and diverse club members. Volunteers may be needed to record observations & take photographs of the noteworthy & unique "nature" in this ecosystem, create informative and engaging sign text from the observations, edit text, edit photos, collate and select sign information, complete final editing and finally arrange layout. It's inspiring to know that we have all of these skills and more within our club. Won't it be wonderful to explore and work together with a goal to enhance the multi-season and multi-age hiking experience on this trail. We'll keep you posted!

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### Membership dues for 2022

If you are wanting to renew your membership and have not paid your dues for this year, you can pay them at the March meeting or send a cheque to our treasurer, Ted Hillary. Our mailing address is: Shuswap Naturalist Club, 1740 !6<sup>th</sup> St. NE, Salmon Arm, BC, V1E 3Z7.

If you haven't paid your club membership, your membership with BC Nature will expire at the end of March, but as Ted says, you can be reinstated again at any time. Our fees continue to be: Single - \$25, Family - \$30. This payment includes membership in BC Nature and the BC Nature magazine plus our club's liability insurance. We keep about \$5 from a single and \$10 from a family membership. In addition to our BCN fees, this year we also need funds to pay for room rental.

## Birder Uses Recycled Material to Deter Squirrel

Gillian Richardson



My seed feeder has tempted the red squirrel that hangs around my back yard. It was an easy target: climb up on the deck rail, into the bush....bingo, food! But my feeder is for the birds. Squirrels are on their own. They don't hibernate, just nap the colder days away. When the temperature rises and the sun is out, they emerge to forage. Our 'resident' squirrel is energetic, plump, healthy looking. It doesn't need my seed.

So, I needed a plan. Option #1: Buy a squirrel-proof feeder. The inventors have recognized that the squirrel is a highly intelligent, determined, rodent, able to problem-solve. But that costs money, and I really like my hopper-style feeder without a tray (where the seed gets mucky and encourages diseases to spread) and a slim perch rail from which birds can pick out seeds. Option #2: hang the feeder, higher, under the house eaves. That's when Squirrel figured out it could leap from the deck rail (did I say, problem-solver?)

I needed something simple to block Squirrel's flight path. So...it's a free, homemade-with-recycled-material "distracter" to hang between Squirrel's take-off spot and the feeder. Squirrel has taken the leap, grabbed the gadget, ridden the bungee cord up and down (funny!)... but it can't move on to the feeder. Can't go over it, can't go under it, and the "distracter" is too wide to angle around it. Nor can it get a firm enough push off to jump the rest of the way to the feeder.

Success, so far! Now the chickadees and song sparrow are happy...Squirrel not so much.

**Recycled Material: an elastic cord (bungee style), an inch-wide lanyard ribbon, a Styrofoam tray with slits cut to thread the lanyard through, a metal key ring for weight to calm it down in wind.**



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## BC-Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey - Gillian Richardson

It's BC-Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey time again....March, in the Okanagan. If you are interested in participating, visit this site to learn more: <https://birdscanada.org/naturecounts/bcytowls/main.jsp>

Routes consist of at least 14.4 km, with 10-30 stops situated about 1.6 km apart to listen for owls. The routes are surveyed between a half hour after sunset and midnight, with each stop lasting for 2 minutes. Details recorded and submitted to the Co-ordinator include species heard, distance and direction from the stop, any traffic or other noise and weather conditions.

For more information or if you wish to join the survey project, contact Nocturnal Survey Owl Coordinator, Remi Torrenta, [torrenta@birdscanada.org](mailto:torrenta@birdscanada.org)

## Blast from the Past

- this piece from the now defunct Lakeshore News



Beavers play a vital role in the ecology of the Salmon Arm Bay marsh. The main value of beavers, as well as muskrats, is to provide pools of water in and pathways through the reed canarygrass. These activities allow waterfowl, including our flagship species, the Western Grebe, to nest successfully in the shelter of the marsh. If the beaver population disappears then an upset in the ecology of the marsh would soon follow.

Beavers gnaw away at trees as part of their activities. The trees that eventually fall become an important part of the ecosystem. The urban naturalist may view a fallen tree as unsightly, and they would be correct if the tree were lying in their front yard or in a public park. The marsh, however, is a nature reserve and nature should be left to evolve in its own way without tinkering. A dead tree, especially the Black Cottonwood, becomes a significant asset as a wildlife tree. As the tree decays it will begin to retain moisture much like a sponge. During the warm summer months this process will provide habitat for frogs, reptiles and insects. The result is a healthier marshland.

The public should be aware that what is often deemed as attractive landscaping does not always translate into what takes place and should take place in a nature reserve. The Salmon Arm Bay is considered by many experts to be the most productive wetland in the southern interior. A part of this achievement can be attributed to the existence of the beaver. Remember this the next time you visit the marsh. Enjoy your front yard and the public parks for their beauty, and appreciate and delight in the wonders and the close association of life as they are exhibited in the marsh.



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## Once They Were Hats

written by Frances Backhouse

published by ECW Press

If you have a desire to learn more about the history of the beaver and its contribution to Canada's history, I highly recommend this book. The author writes that the beaver is a dam builder, landscape shaper, habitat creator and history maker. It's true that the beaver is not faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive or able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but the Mighty Beaver is a superhero in its own inimitable way.

## Horned Lark

Glynne Green took this photo on Christmas Island on February 18. It is a rare sighting for our area. The first reported Horned Lark sighting in BC was in 1926 on the Sumas Prairie (the year after the lake was drained). The amount of suitable habitat for larks is very small, and much like that of the curlew, has declined over the past few decades.

In the 2000's, we watched a large group foraging on the Salmon Arm mud flats. When they were disturbed, they ran and then flew madly off in all directions.

*In summer they will show their black horns.*



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## Life on the Narrows

- JoAnne Leslie share this

Here is an interesting video on aquatic life in Cowichan Bay on Vancouver Island.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Xiyirp4hh0>

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## February Wanderings

- Fern Fennel

Recently I had a few members of the Shuswap Naturalist Facebook group join me for a bird and nature walk in the Salmon Arm Bay area. Even though it was a foggy day to start, we did see many song birds in front of Lakeside Manor eating at the bird feeders. Usual suspects such as American Goldfinch, Black-capped Chickadees, Song Sparrows, Juncos and a few House Finch. We also saw a male Ring-necked Pheasant sitting in a tree in front of the hotel.... very unusual. Most days, birds of prey can be viewed such as Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Kestrels, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and even a Peregrine Falcon. Of course, the resident four to five Great Blue Heron always seem to be loafing or feeding in front of the Prestige Inn. Of special interest was a pair of Bald Eagles that occupy the nest just east of the Manor which were mating.

Later when the fog cleared, I returned to the area and viewed one of the Bald Eagles eating what appeared to be a medium size bird of some sort.





A week later on another sunny morning, I also saw one of the eagles return to the nest with talons full of large bunch of dried marsh grass which she/he took to the nest which I assume was being used to line it in prep for egg laying.



Horned Grebe in winter plumage.

Recently I have been viewing some very nice duck species in North Canoe at the village wharf: Scaup, Buffleheads, Goldeneye, Horned Grebes, Trumpeter Swans, Canada Geese and many Mallards that are relishing the open water for feeding and sunny shores for loafing.

From the wharf at the main village of Canoe, showing Bastion Mtn, Sunnybrae and Tappen.



Greater Scaup in winter plumage.

