

Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

May 2022

The Osprey are back

The Osprey returned to their three nests on Sunnybrae Road the week of April 7th.

It has been 60 years since Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book "Silent Spring" revealed the impact insecticides had on the environment, and yet we are still fighting to protect nature from their harmful use. Carson's work was first published in the New Yorker as a series and then later as a book. Her work was not appreciated by much of the public. It sparked some furious response from the agrochemical business, warning that eliminating insecticide use in farmland would be pushing the world to the brink of famine. Some critics dismissed her controversial theories as the "ravings of a hysterical woman."



In spite of the opposition, DDT was banned in the US and Canada in 1972. It had been found to cause egg-shell thinning on hatching eggs, causing havoc with many birds of prey. The Osprey was not an exception and their population plummeted.

By 1992, 20 years after the banning of DDT the Osprey and other birds of prey were showing evidence of revival. However, the practice of using other pesticides remains, and we need to be aware of its ruinous effect on the environment.

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Coming Attraction -

We should all be aware of the dire need to save the pollinators. They play a crucial role in the functioning of ecosystems.



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Meeting about Little Mountain Park – The Environmental Advisory Committee for the City of Salmon Arm has arranged a meeting at Little Mountain Park on Friday, May 20th, at 2:30 pm with Terry Smith of Silvatech Consulting to answer questions about the “work in progress” we have been discussing. The EAC has invited interested persons in all of the represented groups to attend. More details to come for any that are interested.

Turtles at the Prestige

- Di Wittner

While out on my usual rounds, I noticed the basking logs at the Prestige pond were all sinking. Those logs were placed just three years ago but it was clearly time to replace them. A huge thank you to Barbara and Ken Raynor who are fast becoming my right AND left arms! Waterlogged wood is very heavy! As predicted, the turtles made use of the new 'baskers' very quickly.

Nearby, I counted 132 turtles on the bank below the boat-loading ramp. Barbara and Ken suggested building a raft for them, based on a design they had seen previously. I'm happy to construct and place one but getting permission from DFO is a real headache and costs money for permits. Anyone have any helpful suggestions for a work-around, short of seeing me in jail?



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Heron Colony

- John Woods shares

I had a grand time this morning (April 15th) photographing herons gathering nesting material at the Shoemaker Hill colony.

It is very interesting to stand and watch the birds as they gather snap off twigs and branches for their nests.

I've found the best place to watch this is at the junction of 10th Ave. SE and 4th St. SE. The birds fly over the traffic without paying any attention to cars or people. You also can walk or drive down 4th St. where there is essentially no traffic and you are right above the colony.



Wildcams on Bird Boxes

- Di Wittner reports

You won't get calendar-quality photos from most wildcams but what you will get is priceless information about activities you would never see, no matter how patient you are with a serious camera. This is why motion-sensor cameras are such a valuable research tool for scientists. It's also why they are so much fun!

You may recall Werner built four specialty nest boxes to add to our swallow/chickadee collection along the foreshore. Two are appropriate for flickers or pygmy owls, the other two are designed for saw whet owls and/or kestrels. Based on club chatter over the past seven years, I took a stab at locating them: PJ Park (#72), Kime Trail (#79), grove of trees near Christmas Island intersection (#84), and closer to Raven end of the trail (#30). Since the targeted species are all quite shy, particularly when nesting, I tried to find spots that blended privacy with practicality. I haven't fallen off the ladder yet but I've come close!



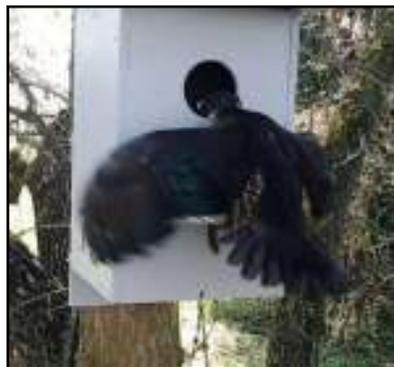
Northern Flicker assess honeymoon suite

A box full of motion sensor cameras was donated to SABNES last year so I borrowed a couple to monitor two nest boxes at a time. The Kime Trail box (#79) attracted a very ambitious chickadee but the majority of visits were those of a flicker. There were dozens and dozens of pictures of a very interested male going in and out of the hole. It's too early to tell if flickers will raise a brood at this location but it's helpful to know they are attracted to it. That camera has now been taken down and set up at box #30. I won't visit #79 again until nesting season is over. Placing the cameras is only disruptive for a few minutes but it can be enough to scare wary nesters off at a very critical time.

The PJ Park camera (#72) told a similar story with one awesome bonus and one not-so-awesome. Again, a male flicker went in and out of the box on multiple occasions. Imagine my surprise when a wood duck was also photographed! The wood duck was clearly trying to get in a hole that is a bit too small for it. This means, of course, that the location – on the south side of the park – has potential for ducks and it'll drive me bonkers until I get one up. Unfortunately, a black cat was also caught on camera. (I've come to the conclusion that flickers don't seem to read the species descriptors on the boxes, having taken apartments meant for small raptors.)

Flickers were observed by my able helpers, Barbara and Ken Raynor, in the nest box near Raven (#30) shortly after it went up. As I approached the site slowly today (April 28th), a female flew out but watched me from a distance. I worked as quickly as I could to set up the camera and will not return for at least three weeks.

Box #84 got its own camera today as well. I'll have an update on the *Camera Games* for the June newsletter. Stay tuned!



Wood Duck attempts unsuccessful entry



Mountain Bluebird Trail - by Fern Fennel

The Mountain Bluebird “trail” in North Broadview near the Peterson Orchards has been active over the past month. The lower trail near 45th and 25th NE was very active with a small flock of several bluebirds early in the month as they liked the small field of dormant weeds and grasses which must yield many insects as the spring warmed up. Recently I have occasionally sighted a pair in the area but not seen much nest building but there are several possible nesting sights that are behind the farm buildings.



The upper “trail” closer to Peterson Orchards has been busy with a pretty pair of the Mountain Bluebirds doing active nest building on box number 7, which is perfect for viewing close up using your car as a “blind”.



At end of April, I was again able to observe the pair being very active at that box. The female made a few trips into the nest box with short pieces of dry organic material which appeared to be grasses or seed pods. Two weeks earlier the material had all been long thin pieces of dried grass. Could this mean she has made the main part of the nest and now building the finer details? It will be interesting to check out the nest in the autumn when Di and I clean out the nest box.

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A letter of concern from Janet Pattinson -

Hi Naturalists,

I know you all are as concerned as I am about the Climate Crisis and the effects it is having on us right now. It may seem an overwhelming challenge and I know that on an individual level you are doing all you can for the health of the planet. At this point I feel we must step up the pressure on the decision makers to make the necessary, though difficult, changes to stop the warming of our world beyond what has already happened.

There are many active environmental groups that sponsor letters or petitions that people can sign to show their agreement with the issue. It is very easy to take a couple of minutes to read an on-line message and add your name to show you agree with the sentiment expressed. It is so easy that some people think the politicians don't pay much attention. But if 10, 000 people tell their elected person that they agree with the concern expressed, that represents a lot of concern. Just in case the elected people think those messages are too easy, I regularly make an appointment to talk with Mel Arnold, our MP, and Greg Kylo, our MLA to tell them exactly what I think! It is just as easy to do that nicely as signing the “form letters”. It does take more time. Recently I spoke with Mel in his office and with Greg by phone. When the contact is one on one, you know they are hearing you!

We also need to urge our local councils, whether in Salmon Arm or the regional districts, to produce a plan about what they will do to deal with both mitigation and adaptation. At this point The City of Salmon Arm doesn't have a plan or any dedicated staff to work on one.

I encourage everyone to take action now to get those decision makers to do what needs to be done. There is plenty of science to back you up in your arguments for action.

Mt. Ida -

John Vivian's photo of the West Peak as seen from the Fly Hills.



Hiking on Mt. Ida

- An invitation from Blaine Carson

I am planning a couple of hikes for early May. If people want to know about any other hikes, they should send me an email asking to join the friends of Mount Ida. Free membership with an email address. Walter Scheidegger has the Facebook Page going. We are not an official non-profit group yet, but we're working on it, and several of us sit in on the Trail Alliance Zoom Committee working on Kela7scen.

If the weather is suitable, I'm going to have three trips up to the John Thornton Mines and Gravesite on Sunday, May 1st: 10 AM, 12 noon, and 2 PM. People need to reserve for a spot. It is 45 minutes up and 30 minutes down, parking by the Geier Berry Farm on 40th Street. I'll show them the Gravesite and also some of the adits still there. It can also be done as a self-guided hike. Just park, and go up 300 metres approximately, turn right, and then turn left after crossing the Creek, and follow the lime green ribbons. People should bring Poles to help on the trip down. I will show them the route to make a loop but I won't do that, as I don't have the time.

Weather permitting, I will have some guided tours up the Silver Creek Ridge to the High Peak on Mother's Day or around that date. It will be a longer, more challenging hike, and will be up with the balsam flowers and then on snow near the top. Look me up on Strava for details from last year.

The early hikes avoid the mosquitoes of Kela7scen. I will have some other hikes, but people need to be on the friends of Kela7scen email list.

All the best for a good hiking summer. blainecarson@gmail.com, cell phone 250 833 2516

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Fancy Ducks - a note from Shelley Corbin

This little five-minute video is fabulous! The two guys are so enthusiastic about what they term "Fancy Ducks"! Four or five different ducks, the colourful Wood Duck at the end being (perhaps) my fav'.

[New B.C. short film shines spotlight on the 'fancy ducks' of the West Coast | CBC News](#)

Fern Fennel's sharing from her wanderings -

Pileated Woodpecker



In mid-April I doing a very slow drive of the country roads and was lucky enough to see two Pileated Woodpeckers right beside the road working on some smallish deciduous trees. I was able to stop right beside them and observe them both for about five minutes. I took all my photos from inside my car and was lucky enough to capture the female with a huge grub/larvae in her beak. This could possibly be from a long-horned beetle or a sawyer beetle. I'm not sure which, and hopefully not the Asian long-eared beetle which is invasive. Maybe someone in the club with a back ground in entomology might know.

Great Horned Owl

The Great Horned Owl pair in North Broadview seemed to have successfully fledged at least one owlet. Since this nest is on private property with many residences close by, I have not felt right about taking too many photos as I do not want to draw attention to the nest and owls.

The female seems to be happy with the nest in a small coniferous tree, maybe not the best. Apparently, owls do not build their down nest but take possession of the previous year's nest of some other raptor, such as a Red-tailed Hawk, or of a crow or magpie. The same nest is seldom used by owls for more than one year because of the trampling by the young, which usually reduces any nest to a disintegrating mass of sticks.



A Northern Flicker appears to have taken up nesting in a woodpecker hole in a partly dead birch tree at the edge of a nearby orchard. I had even observed the bluebird pair checking it out in March but they didn't really seem that interested and I think it is more suited to the Flicker.

Photos by Glynne Green -



Wood Ducks seen near Sandy Point.
There were 20 in the flock.



Greater Yellowlegs along the foreshore



Horned Grebe at Engineers Point