

Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

June 2022

“For me the door to the woods is the door to the temple.” - Mary Oliver

Our Naturalists’ planned project of the Larch Hills Interpretive Trail Sign Renewal is very exciting and certainly one that can make us all proud. We support it and want to help in any way that we can.

Pat Danforth has stated the project goal so well: to “renew and re-establish Interpretive Signage along a well-used four-season nature trail in the Larch Hills. We plan to provide informative and site-specific descriptions of “nature” important to the full appreciation of this natural area that will enhance and inform the experience of trail users.”

Pat’s photo of the group on the 24th.

Anne Caughlan writes, “We had a great time seeking sign posts today! We took three hours walking the six kilometers with dozens of stops to ID plants, etc.”



Bear or cougar scratch from claw sharpening.



Skunk Cabbage



Clubmosses side by side -
Ground Cedar and Ground Pine

Shuswap Climate Action

- Julia Beatty

I'd like to introduce you to Shuswap Climate Action, a local non-profit, grassroots group that supports community knowledge and solutions related to the climate crisis. For those who aren't aware of this initiative, our group has been active for the last couple of years.

During that time, we have engaged the cities of Salmon Arm and Armstrong, asking them to develop climate action plans. We have given presentations to other local groups such as the Rotary Clubs and the Salmon Arm Economic Development Society, urging them to do more to address the climate crisis. Our aim is also to inform the community about climate change and the various things they can do to address it. This includes individual actions, civic actions like letter writing, or even just talking to family and friends about the topic. We have presented several virtual events, one with a climate expert, and two online webinars to educate residents about switching to heat pumps (in collaboration with CleanBC).

Our heat pump initiative includes registering an additional group purchase rebate (GPR) which could qualify those buying a heat pump to an additional CleanBC rebate. The GPR code and additional information may be found on our website. We also work together with and support our "sister organizations", Armstrong/Spallumcheen Climate Action and the Chase Environmental Action Group.

We have had two Earth Day tree seedling giveaways as a climate awareness and action event, the most recent this past April.

Shuswap Climate Action has an informative website (www.shuswapclimate.org). We also post regular articles on [Facebook](#) and we have a newsletter that goes out approximately monthly. We encourage people to look us up online, support us by subscribing to our newsletter (see our [web page](#) to subscribe), through donations or annual memberships, and we welcome volunteers who wish to get more involved. If you have any questions, please email us at shuswap.climate@telus.net.

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A chance to win some bragging rights

Sharon Lawless writes -

"I found this insect as I was weeding my flowerbed...any idea what it is?"

Let's help Sharon with the identification. I think it's a beetle, but not a dung beetle. Can you identify it?



Salmon Arm Bay Western Grebe Count - by Di Wittner

Date of count: May 24, 2020

Viewing Location	Adults
Raven	6
Christmas Island	3
Beaver pond boardwalk	5
Wharf	144
Peter Jannink Park	131
Tappen Bay	26
Sunnybrae Park	0
Total	315

Photos taken at the wharf,
by Pat Hutchins



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Christmas Island Gull Nest Count - by Mandy Moore

I performed the annual gull nest count at Christmas Island on Sunday May 22nd. My helper from last year (Paivi Sarre) joined me once again and we were able to provide a more accurate count due to better preparation! We followed the same methodology as previous years, placing candies in the nests.

This year we did not have to use a paddleboard to access the island, we simply walked over to the area where the gulls nest. Once again, some of the gulls decided to eat the candies or throw them out of the nests, making accuracy more difficult. There was a small isolated island where they were nesting that we could not access, so I took out my binoculars and counted the number of gulls I could see incubating.

The number of nests counted was a whopping 1061, with 1- 5 eggs per nest giving us an average of 2/3 eggs. Water levels seem to be low currently, it is possible that some could be flooded out in the future. There appeared to be a slightly higher number of deceased birds and predated nests, which could be due to low water.

The Great Egret

A Great Egret paid a rare visit to the Salmon Arm foreshore in early May. This species was last recorded in our area in May 2008. The area where they are most seen in B.C. is along the Columbia River.

The Great Egret was chosen as the symbol of the oldest environmental organization in America, the National Audubon Society, which was originally funded to protect birds hunted for their feathers. The Great Egret's population had been decimated in the 19th century due to plume hunters. Today the population for North America is estimated to be 180,000 breeding birds.



Dorothy Parks photo in front of Heronview, May 7

Pat Hutchins caught these photos of the Egret near the wharf on May 14



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New island emerges off New Jersey coast, and endangered birds are flocking to it.

- JoAnne Leslie shares this interesting video

"The use of this island was truly unprecedented in this part of New Jersey."

<https://apple.news/Aa-O3EnTTTNypdfexmGZnTg>

Blackburn Park Tree Planting Project

- Joyce Henderson

What looks great in the fall sometimes surprises you in the spring. This is the story of the Douglas Maples planted in Blackburn Park beside Piccadilly Terrace. All four trees have died off, but all have green shoots coming up from the roots. This means we will have four bushy maples rather than tall straight trees. The five Mountain Ash look healthy but sway in the wind. Keith Cox has agreed to give them some support with stakes as too much swaying often damages the roots.

The weeds are growing faster than the shrubs, so we will need a work bee to clean around the trees and shrubs and put more mulch so the grass/weeds can be weed whacked without danger of damage to the plantings. Let us know if you would like to help with this.

Ocean spray -
one of the healthy-looking shrubs we planted



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Lessons on McGuire Lake

- Shelley Corbin shares her observations

Last week, (*written May 15*), while walking on 8th Avenue past McGuire Lake, I observed 13 or 14 (they move and change position so quickly) little ducklings out for a swimming and 'following' lesson with 'Mom'. I will check them again, as sadly, or "naturally", the number usually diminishes after visits by hungry overhead fliers, like eagles and hawks, I imagine.

I also saw three Canadian goslings on the other side of the little lake where the two adult Canada Geese had been nesting close to the edge/bank just east the big willows trees.

I walked around McGuire at 6 p.m. the following Sunday and saw six goslings. They were not quite as yellow, rather a duskier yellow than last week. I watched as the two parent geese scared off the Blue Heron lurking below the bank, then proceeded to walk the little ones to a spot under the willows at the edge of the lake. While one kept strict guard, eyeing carefully even the small birds that flew overhead, swallows maybe, the other adult preened and picked at their feathers and the little ones with her/him all began to do the same themselves! "Lessons"!



Mountain Bluebird Trail Report - Fern Fennel

The new nest boxes at Peterson Orchards have one pair of Mountain Bluebirds successfully raising a family. Both male and female have been busy catching insects of some sort to feed the youngsters.



On careful observation I viewed the female (and male) exiting with a large glob of a white substance on her beak, which I assume is poop from the nest box. She then “stuck” it to a telephone line above the nest box. Talk about good housekeeping!

The lower new nest boxes at 45 Ave NE do not appear to have any nesting bluebirds. However, the older nest box in the farm yard did have a male bluebird visiting. This trail also is an excellent location to see the tiny, yet gorgeous Calliope Hummingbird which seems to favour the small conifers along the trail.



Be sure to be on the look out for the gorgeous Lazuli Bunting in the Peterson Orchards area near the bluebird trail. The melodic song of the male will help to lead you to hopefully a successful sighting. (Use the Merlin app to help ID).

BC Nature AGM, Kelowna
May 26-29, 2022
- Di Witner

Everyone was happy to meet in person after a two-year hiatus. Covid effects still lingered, however, as the group was smaller than usual, though some members managed to join via Zoom.

The proverbial questions of leadership and recruitment threaded their way throughout the conference. We are not the only club without a current president; even the interim president of BC Nature, Alan Burger, hopes to relinquish that role as soon as possible. As you probably know, Harry Crosby who met with us in October, resigned in February and the organization is actively seeking a new leader. During the regional rep meeting, several solutions were bandied about which I will share with you at our meeting in June.

Despite these ongoing concerns, there was a general feel of optimism and things to look forward to. Our hosts, the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club (CONC) provided a convenient venue at UBCO, great food, and several marvelous outings. There were fewer presentations than in previous years and sadly, our keynote speaker had to cancel due to a medical emergency. I will summarize a few of the topics that had particular relevance to the us.

- Tara Bergeson, Kelowna's Urban Forester, presented the city's tree management plan which included goals on tree protection, subsidized tree sales to encourage neighbourhood plantings, a Yellow-fish project to reduce toxin dumping in storm drains, free recycling of 'hazardous vegetation' homeowners wished to remove from their property, a Bee House, and the management of forest fuels. I will expand on this verbally at one of our meetings.
- Mara Meadows was mentioned in a presentation on the Okanagan's Ecological Reserves.
- Les Gyug shared several decades of data on avocet populations in two urban ponds in Kelowna. One of those ponds (Robert Lake) was adjacent to the campus. A short walk and a pair of binoculars were all you needed to see avocets on their nests. Les' history of the two ponds, along with protection work and the creation of floating islands could be something we can initiate in Salmon Arm Bay, not necessarily for avocets.
- Richard Gregson spoke to us from Montreal on *Green Wildlifing*, which is basically the pursuit of our beloved wildlife watching activities without increasing our carbon footprint. That is, cycling and walking to our favourite spots as well as exploring our own yards in greater depth. His statistics on how much fuel is used by birders trying to plump up their life lists was quite shocking. To learn more about Green Wildlifing, look up Green Birding, BIGBY, and/or Biking Birder.
- Stephen Partington - president of the BC Naturalists' Foundation which gives away thousands of dollars to clubs each year - highlighted two projects he considered of special merit. The first was the official designation of Howe Sound as a UNESCO Biosphere Region. This is a major coup for the groups who have been working hard to achieve the designation. Stephen's second highlight was none other than our own Larch Hills Interpretive Trail. Slides of Frodo's Bog and cross-country skiers immersed in dense forest were shared with the room, to significant applause.

At the general meeting, a new resolution was passed which will affect all clubs directly. It was moved that we all do our best to acknowledge the unceded territory of local first nations prior to every meeting and in all publications. We can learn how this is properly done by searching Native-Land.ca.

Peter Ballin, chair of BC Nature’s Conservation Committee, reminded us their committee will help with letter writing when any club seeks to address government officials or sponsors. This may be helpful in dealing with Little Mountain and other local parks we currently seek to protect. Peter and his team can edit or write a letter for us in short order, one that will deliver clout while maintaining appropriate diplomacy.

BC Nature’s 2023 AGM will be held in Langley, May 4-7th.

Niskonlith Picnic -

Don’t forget our invitation to join the Kamloops club for their June picnic and meeting at Niskonlith Lake Provincial Park, on Sunday June 19th. Peter Ballin, who has a cabin at the lake, has been doing research on painted turtles for years. He has offered to host us and will present a program on his research. Arrival time is 11:30 am. We will start with a bring-your-own-lunch picnic, which will be followed by Peter’s slide show and a walk to seek the turtles.

If anyone wants a ride, I am happy to carpool. Please contact me by email (dwildlife8@gmail.com) or by phone (250-835-8608). If you are driving on your own and need directions, please let me know.

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Coral Root -
our first orchid sighting of the year
in Sunnybrae Park