

Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

March 2023

"The more you try and make things better for nature, the more nature will give you... and that only makes it brighter." Simon Barnes

Thank-you to all that contributed to this newsletter, and a big thank-you to the many members who contribute to the club in so many ways. We thank those who are continuing to serve as executive and directors of the club, especially Janet and Di for taking on the president and vice-president positions. We welcome Anne Caughlan and Ken and Barbara Raynor as new directors, and thank them for stepping forward.

Also, we want to acknowledge Dorothy Parks and Sharon Lawless, as they step down as directors, for their years of service. They have shared their wisdom and have always been willing to help.

* * * * *

Outings Committee Report

Cathy Meakes, Marcia Woods and John Woods recently met to map out a set of 7-8 spring outings starting with a Foreshore Trail walk for birds on April 13th.

We discussed ranking the physical difficulty of each outing (Easy, Moderate, Challenging) similar to the criteria developed by the North Okanagan Naturalists and the potential to invite guest co-leaders who may not be club members but who have detailed knowledge of particular areas.

The easiest outings will be an hour or so long (likely along the Foreshore & Wharf) and the longest a late-spring trip to visit birding hotspots in and around Revelstoke.

If you have ideas for trips and leaders or join the outings committee, please contact Marcia at mews2@telus.net or give her a call at (250) 837-4707. Members will receive an email outlining the complete spring programme once we have all the details worked out.

* * * * *



Mitch Milgram, sharing his knowledge of mushrooms with club members.

This photo by Hanne MacKay shows Pat Danforth and Dawn McDonald as they lead the group, walking the Larch Hills trails while learning about and enjoying nature.

We thank the three of them along with Marie Fortin for their hard work in providing us with outings over the last years. We have benefited from your dedication and inspiration.

* * * * *

"Dues are overdue" - Membership report by Ted Hillary

We thank all of you who have paid your membership dues for 2023 either at the meeting or by mail, but Ted says that the deadline for both BC Nature and our club is coming up. So, this is a reminder that if you haven't paid your club membership fee for this year, and wish to continue with your membership, please remember to get the money to Ted before the end of March.

Recognizing the Unique Nature of Salmon Arm Bay

Blast from the Past, by Gillian Richardson

After hearing recent details about rebuilding a viewing platform and the need to replant native trees along the foreshore, it was interesting to think how far our bay has come from the original idea of creating a nature refuge here. In our archives, I came across a couple of newspaper clippings dating back 36 years to the time when development of Salmon Arm Bay was being considered. In a local newspaper article from July 1987, an interview with our club members Frank Kime and Mary-Lou Tapson-Jones revealed growing enthusiasm for the idea to turn part of the city's foreshore into a unique birding destination. The bay was a magnet for birds, they knew, especially during spring and fall migration. Why not build viewing boardwalks, bird blinds, a nature trail? They were encouraged in this direction by a visiting biologist from the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, the only other western grebe nesting area in BC.

In addition to the future creation of trails, ponds and islands east of the wharf, there was potential for the waste area near the sewage treatment plant and adjacent to the mouth of the Salmon River—which attracted 65 pairs of western grebes to nest that year—to become a green space (now Peter Jannink Park), *“an ideal park for education,”* Frank Kime said. As well as pleasing naturalists, of course, these foreshore attractions would bring visitors to enjoy and benefit the local community.

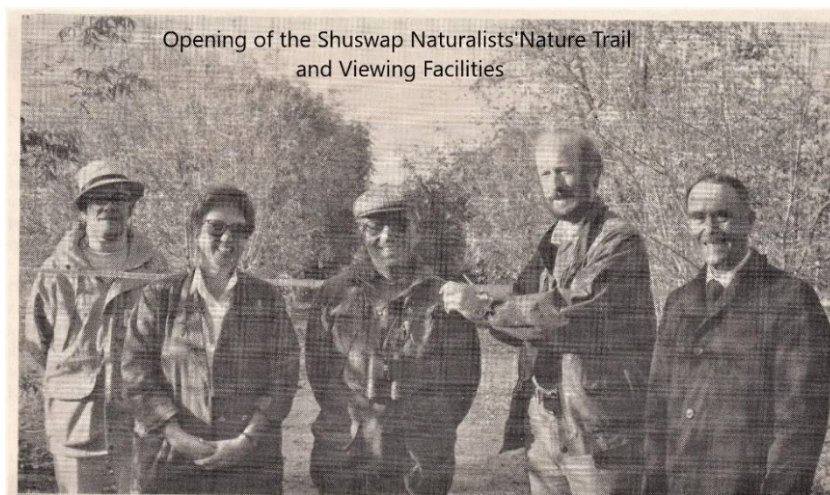
Fast forward (not too far, though) to October 1990, when SNC hosted the Fall General Meeting of FBCN (now BC Nature). The idea of saving the foreshore had already progressed to the point that SNC President Frank Kime wrote, *“delegates were shown the first steps in the task of building a Nature Reserve, our efforts to preserve the bay and environs in its natural state, and to protect the Western Grebe Colony, whilst affording viewing facilities for naturalists.”* Entitled, *“Opening of the Shuswap Naturalists' Nature*



Birdwatchers Frank Kime and Mary Lou Tapson-Jones stand on the edge of Lakeshore Road, at the foot of 17 Ave. N.E., and point to the various birds on property Vic Bates is trying to have developed as a viewing area for birdwatchers.

Trail and Viewing Facilities”, the article focused on the area next to the wharf and boat ramp where a nature trail with viewing blind and platform allowed closer observation of shorebird feeding areas, and the grebes. From that ribbon cutting event to today, the trail has been maintained (though the viewing blind is gone), and in 2008 was dedicated to Frank and Doris Kime for their efforts in preserving the bay and its wildlife.

It is our good fortune that this concept from 1987 became reality. Our bay is unique for the whole foreshore nature refuge that we value so much now.



Opening of the Shuswap Naturalists' Nature Trail and Viewing Facilities

President Syd Cannings cut the ribbon along with (l-r) Harold Smiley, Karen Angove, Frank Kime, Syd Cannings and Mayor Dick Smith.

Shuswap Naturalist Club Award

Each year a Thompson Rivers University student in environmental studies is chosen to receive our club award. The university has just informed us that the recipient chosen to receive the award this year is Gregory Griffiths, a Bachelor of Natural Resource Science student. We will be hearing from him shortly. Donations to this fund through the Shuswap Community Fund are gratefully accepted.

* * * * *

NatureKids

- An update on the Young Naturalists from Molly Cooperman

We did the Christmas Bird Count in December with John Woods which was great. I am actively looking for a co-leader at the moment and will keep you posted. The cost for NatureKids membership has changed. It is now Pay what you can: <https://naturekidsbc.ca/join-us/memberships-slidingscale/>

I am looking forward to connecting with members during the coming meetings, and will be presenting information about HCTF (Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation) Education at the April 4th meeting.

* * * * *

BC-Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey

Gillian Richardson reports a slight change for the survey this year. After owling for 22 years, she and Trevor decided to retire from that role (except for listening in our own back yard!). But to save the long-monitored Notch Hill Road route from being without a surveyor, John and Marcia Woods have offered to take it on. They will head out one evening in March to begin their record-keeping. Hopefully they will collect some Northern Saw-whet Owls, a Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl or other species during their two-minute listening times at each of the 10 stops. Stay tuned for John & Marcia's report in the next eNewsletter. To learn more, check out <https://birdscanada.org/naturecounts/bcytowls/main.jsp>



Northern Saw-whet Owl -
seen along the Naturalist Trail this past month.

Moose - The moose is the least social of the antlered species. It is the largest of the deer tribe and leads a solitary life. This moose was recently spotted and photographed in the meadow in the foothills of Mt. Ida by Glynn Green. Shortly after this sighting, Greg Wiebe reported also seeing a moose along the Shuswap River, near his home near Grindrod.



Great Backyard Bird Count

- Bob and Sandra Ewart, from their home in Anglemont.

As the third weekend of February approached, we were looking forward to the GBBC (Great Backyard Bird Count) which we would participate in again for the 7th time since moving to Anglemont.

The weather turned out to be unpleasant with snow and rain each day so we decided to not travel on the roads. All of our birding took place looking out the windows plus one walk around the neighborhood.

Although the number of individuals was down from previous years the number of species was similar, but that is the way it has been all winter.

Over the four days we had visiting our yard daily: a Northern Flicker (1), Stellar's Jay (4), Black-capped Chickadee (2), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1), Varied Thrush (5), Dark-eyed Junco (24), an American Crow and 3 Common Ravens flying over a couple of the days.

On a walk Friday we added: Pileated Woodpecker (3), Red Crossbill (2) and Pine Siskins.

Friday the 17th: Chestnut-backed Chickadee (1), Black-capped Chickadee (1), Steller's Jay (4), Dark-eyed Junco (22), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1), Varied Thrush (4).

Walking: Red-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, Pine Siskins, Red Crossbill, Pileated Woodpeckers (3), Common Raven (3).

Saturday: 0°C with snow. The same yard birds.

Sunday: +2°C rain, snow and fog: Common Raven (1), Black-capped Chickadee (1), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1), Dark-eyed Juncos (8), Varied Thrush (3).

Monday: some snow, melting as it hits the ground: Steller's Jay (1), Varied Thrush (3), Black-capped Chickadee (2), Red-breasted Nuthatch (2), Junco (3), Pine Siskins (20-30), Crow (2).

As luck would have it Tuesday morning, we heard a Northern Pygmy Owl and a Song Sparrow returned to clean up some of the seeds, oh well, good birding and good birds.

* * * * *

California Quail can make Back Yard Bird Count counting difficult, with their scampering and darting about.
We had at least 30 out in Sunnybrae that day.

* * * * *

The Day the World Stops Shopping

- A book suggestion from Janet Pattinson

In his book, The Day the World Stops Shopping, J. B. MacKinnon addresses a question: What would it be like if we just stopped shopping? He consults a wide variety of researchers, historians, economists and business people about their experience and perspectives. He talks about the ways people have adapted to wars, disasters, recessions or pandemics across the centuries and in many parts of the world. He considers whether the end to shopping could bring a stop to the increasing amount of carbon being put into the atmosphere.

Published in 2021. It includes experience of the latest pandemic.



Travels with Fern

Notes and photos from Fern Fennell

Here are a few pics from my winter for the last two months in San Carlos, Mexico on the coast of Gulf of California. The area is made up mainly of volcanic rock formations with some distinct eroded volcanos. The inland is dry with scrub desert bushes, and a variety of cactus.

Cardon Cacti, now in a protected area outside the town. They can live up to 300 years and reach over 60 feet.

The beaches are a mix of long areas of sand, mixed with rugged rock cliffs. There are daily sightings of bottlenose dolphins, many ocean birds such as brown pelicans, cormorants, and a variety of gulls. A huge government protected estuary is nearby with many shore birds, song birds and a large flock of white pelicans. I was able to get out on my kayak to view the interesting Blue-footed Booby birds (from the Spanish word “bobo” which means stupid as these birds had little fear of people) and saw a large flock plunge diving for small fish from a height of up to 100 feet. I joined a small group of winter visitors who go out as a large group once a week to bird watch as a large group and daily with a handful of “serious birders). Since fresh water is scarce here the birding group has found some private settling ponds, and a couple natural spring water holes to view song birds. I have submitting eBird lists almost daily and have seen up to over 50 different species some days.

The one big negative here is that the locals dump large amounts of garbage on many of the back roads, turnouts and beside many beaches. I did join a “Clean up San Carlos” group that goes out weekly to clean up public areas near the main road. It is very disheartening to see a total lack of recycling here and lack of tax dollars (and political will) to provide affordable curb side pick-up. Also, a mass public education program to change a mindset that views garbage and public dumping as being of little concern. However, most of this area of Mexico has a varied and rugged beauty and the bird life has been extraordinary.



Blue-footed Booby on huge mounds of guano. Many of these islands were “mined” for guano to make into fertilizer in the 1800’s, much to the detriment of island nesting birds.

American Oystercatcher found on rocky shorelines as well as estuary flats in Mexico/Central America. Coastal B.C. has the similar Black Oystercatcher.





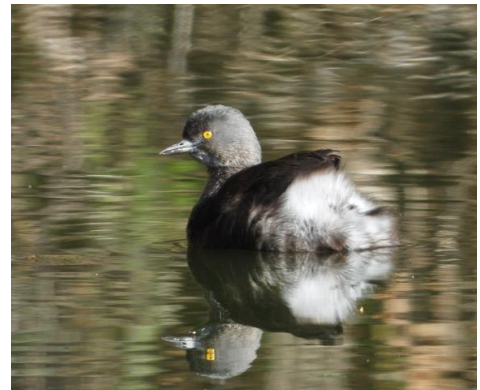
The iconic Mt. Tetakawi with small town of San Carlos in the back ground. The protected estuary in foreground at partial low tide and home to many bird and aquatic species.

The Roseate Spoonbill, found in southern Florida and Mexico to South America. The pink colour comes from eating crustaceans that have fed on algae.



Broad-billed Hummingbird, a medium sized hummer, found in very southern Arizona, Californian and Texas as well as much of Mexico.

A first for me: Least Grebe, the smallest of the grebes found in North America. They don't migrate, but nest in the settling ponds near town.



Black-necked Stilts are mud probers, found as far north as the Canadian Western Prairies. They migrate through Southern BC.

Feeding the Birds in our Front and Back Yard in the Winter

Werner Groeschel & Glenda Hanna

The three essential things that birds need in the winter are food, water and shelter from the elements.

Food: The bird food we provide is Black Sunflower Oil Seed, a song bird seed mix, peanuts, unsalted, crunchy peanut butter and suet.

Water: We have an electrically heated bird bath that keeps the water from freezing. I empty out the bath in the evening and refill it with fresh water in the morning. The birds like to drink from it and sometimes bathe in it even when the air temperature is below zero Celsius.



Shelter: The back porch and back yard area at our house is surrounded by a board fence on one side, trees and bushes on the opposite side of the patio and the back side of the house so the area is well protected from 3 sides. Three tray feeders are hanging under the roof of the patio, and the suet log is hanging from the branch of a large Spruce tree.



In addition, there are two large trays under the Spruce tree. We used to keep these trays on the ground for the ground feeders, but our dog has taken a liking to some of the bird food, so I put the trays on top of two overturned rain barrels, where she cannot get to it.

We put some of the seeds on the patio table which is covered with a plastic sheet as the birds poop sometimes where they feed.

We also have a feeder in the front yard. This area is more open and exposed to the elements so this feeder is less popular and is used mostly by Juncos and Song Sparrows.



The tray feeders are used by House finches, Juncos, Song Sparrows, Nuthatches, Chickadees and Eurasian Collared Doves. Two winters ago we had many Goldfinches and Pine Siskins visiting but we haven't seen any this winter.

The Suet log is a favourite with the wood peckers and nuthatches. The Juncos have learned as well to hang on to the log and enjoy some suet. Other birds are sometimes trying to get at the food but are unable to hang onto the log.



We make our own suet with beef fat from the butcher, chopped peanuts and seeds and also sometimes put unsalted, crunchy peanut butter into the hollows of the log. When a Pileated Woodpecker or a Flicker is feeding on the suet in

the log, other birds are waiting on the ground below the log for the crumbs of fat and seeds to fall down.



This year we had a number of Varied Thrushes and the odd Spotted Towhee visiting. They were feeding mostly on the ground. Song Sparrows are regular visitors at the feeders as well.

One day we had not-so-welcome visitors at the feeders, a flock of European Starlings. Luckily, they did not find any food they liked and flew off after a short visit.

Another, more rare visitor was a solitary, White Crowned Sparrow which we saw for a number of days.

We really enjoy watching our feathered friends at the feeders and hope that by providing them with food, water and shelter in the winter they will all make it through the tougher time of the year and be able to build their nests and rear their young in the coming spring and summer.

