

Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

May 2023



Thank you all who contributed to this newsletter. Your input keeps it alive, so keep sending in material. The next issue will be July 1st.

The Barn Owl nest is up!

Not an easy job. Hear about it at Tuesday's meeting.

Wood Duck



Jerry Zihrul photo

Ken Raynor photo

Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary

We are very pleased that Greg Griffiths was chosen to receive our Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary this year. We can be very proud of the recipients who have received it over the years. Greg writes....

Dear Shuswap Naturalist Club,

I would like to extend my gratitude to all Shuswap Naturalist Club members for a very generous contribution to the Department of Natural Resources Sciences at TRU. To be chosen as the 2023 recipient of the award is an honor. I grew up spending time in the outdoors surrounding my hometown of Kamloops BC, instilling a passion for nature that has followed me from an early age. The funds will assist my pursuit in a career managing the provincial forests. Working in wildfire management has given me appreciation for the importance of protection of many values including biodiversity, plant communities and wildlife habitat. As I evolve from seasonal employee and student to eventual full-time forest professional protection of such values will be entwined in decision making throughout my career.

The award means more to me than I can express in a single letter, however, I hope that I have effectively expressed my appreciation.

Sincerely,

Greg Griffiths

Student Bachelor of Natural Sciences, TRU

SNC Bursary History - Gillian Richardson reports

Each year since 2006, the Shuswap Naturalist Club has given a bursary to a student of environmental studies at a local college, in keeping with our philosophy of environmental stewardship and conservation. How did this idea come about? Looking back to 2005, our Club hosted the BC Nature AGM in Salmon Arm. It was a success in terms of revenue, resulting in a fund of \$2680.59. Janet Pattinson wondered how we could put this surplus money to use. Perhaps a scholarship of some sort? There would be sufficient money for several years of \$500 awards.

A committee—Janet Pattinson, Dorothy Parks and Joanne Leatherdale—initiated discussions that led to the choice of the term ‘bursary’, since the award would go to someone with academic suitability as well as financial need. The decision was made to give \$750 to a second-year student at OUC, Salmon Arm campus, in the field of ecology and/or conservation, starting in the fall of 2006. After Cathy Gillick made a donation in memory of her late husband, Jack, consequently, the first bursary was given in Jack’s name to Katilynn DeWolff. In 2007, the bursary to Kelsey Simons was in memory of Sue Hart.

A small note in the December 2005 minutes - *“Clare Meunier has suggested the idea of an endowment”*—may be the spark that brought about a change. In 2008, Janet Pattinson made a generous donation of \$10,000 to open an endowment fund with Shuswap Community Foundation, to be called the Janet Pattinson—Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary. Although we wanted to grant this award to a student at the local college, they had no appropriate environmental program. In the meantime, it was decided to approach Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, with the bursary to be awarded to a 3rd year student in Natural Resource Sciences. And what of our initial fund? In 2008, since no suitable candidate was found at OUC in Salmon Arm, it was decided to fold our fund into the Janet Pattinson—Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary: a deposit of \$2160.55 was made to boost the endowment fund which *“might expect an approximate annual return rate of 5%”*. With an occasional top-up from the Club at first, and with preference given to a high school graduate from the Shuswap area, now our support for a student could go forward in perpetuity.



These are the recipients of this award. More details, and usually a letter of appreciation from these students, can be found in past issues of the SNC eNewsletter:

- 2009 Jacob Loos, in memory of Mary-Lou Tapson-Jones
- 2010 Paul Antonelli
- 2011 Lorena Tillotson in memory of Margarett Johnson
- 2012 Kate Bezooyen, in memory of Doris Kime
- 2013 Sasha Russell, in memory of John Coffey

Thanks to donations along the way, a report in September, 2013 noted *“our fund with the Community Foundation now exceeds \$20,000, and so we will be receiving the full amount of dividend for our Thompson Rivers University Bursary/Award (at \$1000).”*

- 2014 Paul Baker, in memory of Winn Cochrane
- 2015 Jennifer Petersen, in memory of Peigi Macmillan
- 2016 Jennifer Peterson in memory of Harry Higgins
- 2017 Aaron Mann, in memory of Leslie Stoddart
- 2018 Vanessa Robinson, in memory of Eric Grayston
- 2019 Michelle Matson, in memory of Margaret Wrench
- 2020 Nicola Costerton, in acknowledgement of our club’s 50th anniversary
- 2021 Alexa Wiebe
- 2022/2023 Greg Griffiths (TRU has changed presentations from fall to spring.)

We Value our Volunteers - Janet Aitken reporting

A sincere thank you to all the hard-working volunteers! It was a busy week...but we accomplished a great deal.

Cathy Meakes, thank you leading the outing on the foreshore on the Thursday morning. It was great to see a good turnout. I hear I missed the Wood Duck on his box by 20 minutes. No doubt a highlight.

Planting Hawthorns on Christmas Island Thursday afternoon:

A huge thank you to Keith Cox for donating his Hawthorns that he has nursed from seedlings, and organizing the planting details. We had a good turnout here, as well.

Thanks so much for your help: Keith Cox, Carla and Wally Kirkpatrick, Anne Caughlan and, Gerry Schellenberg, Werner Groeschel, and Doug. Together, we planted over 70 Hawthorns. If you look closely among the stakes, you will see the eight-inch stem. Carla and I had visualized thorny little bushes about a foot high, but the thorns will be forthcoming in a few years.



The Hummock on Friday morning:

Di Wittner organized a work bee at the Raven end of the trail to clean up the old cage wire around the trees on the hummock and remove the remaining old, plastic vole guards. This was a hardworking crew! There were two full loads of wire and three bags of foam and plastic. I wish I had a photo!!

A huge thank you to Di Wittner, Harold and Debbie Noakes, Don Derby, Judy Murray, and her sister, Pauline Waelti, Marianne and Mike McKee for all their hard work.



Earth Day Burrowing Owl Release - with Hanne MacKay

There are some days that are purely magical and this past Earth Day was truly one of them! My grandson Ben is very good friends with the son of a local Biologist and we were invited to join a group which was releasing Burrowing Owls on Earth Day. They have requested that the location of the release remain untold, other than it was in a regional Grassland. It was an amazing team of Indigenous leaders, local community and scientists. We hiked up to the burrows with the birds quietly transported in covered cages. A massive flock of Sandhill Cranes was kettling overhead.

We were very fortunate to have BC Nature's retiring President Alan E. Burger join us for the dedication and drumming tribute at the release of these year-old owls.

Here is grandson Ben walking with Alan carrying the covered cages.

These eight young birds had been bred and selected in pairs to begin nesting this year. Some Burrowing Owls from previous releases were also spotted in the area which made us all very heartened.



Alan Burger releasing an owl into its burrow.

The owls are provided with 16 dead mice in their burrows to make sure they had a strong start. They are kept in the burrow together as a mating couple for a few days to acclimatize and then the team returns to uncover the burrow after which the owls begin their life in the precious Grasslands.

Even I was given permission to release an owl!

This program has been carefully maintained and monitored for many years and we should all be grateful for the hard work of these dedicated people.



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"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."

Henry David Thoreau



Mushroom Identification for Beginners with Mitch Milgram

I've been collecting and identifying mushrooms for close to 45 years, and each fall for the past 20 years I've taught a few introductory mushroom identification courses for our local community college here in south central BC. It's a short course, so the best that can be achieved is to give participants an introductory orientation to what can be an overwhelmingly detailed field. I see it as a doorway into an engaging and fascinating hobby.

Pleurotus populinum - Oyster Mushroom

Many people arrive with one or two field guides and a lot of questions. They've leafed through their guide hoping to identify their find, only to discover that the illustrations for many different species seem to match it. Which one is it? Additionally, when out in the field they're soon overwhelmed by the never-ending variety of mushrooms. Their eyes glaze over after they've been introduced to fifty or more species in quick succession. So how to bring some order and method to making sense of all this information? Here's the approach I take.

Some people learn best by starting with specific information, expanding outwards, and then building upon it. Conversely, some people learn best by having the broad outline before them, as a framework upon which they can attach new information as they learn it. I try to strike a compromise and combine both approaches. I present an overview, a "big picture" of identification considerations and then provide examples, using those mushrooms that are distinctive and easy to recognize.

Mushroom identification is a multifaceted puzzle and the process of elimination of possibilities is very helpful. So, to start eliminating, here are some of the big picture considerations:

Is your mushroom fleshy or woody?

There's a large group of mushrooms that are hard and woody, commonly called "conks," the **Polypores**. Though there are exceptions, most Polypores are hard and woody, often perennial with annual growth rings, and thus easy to distinguish from the myriad of fleshy mushrooms.

Ganoderma applanatum -the Artist's Conk, a common polypore

Does your mushroom have gills, spines, or pores?

Walking along the woodland trail you can be fooled by the appearance from above of many mushrooms. But a quick glance at the underside of the cap reveals the presence of either gills, spines, or pores (the Boletes). With this quick observation you can quickly start to home in on the appropriate grouping of mushrooms. There are other large and distinctive groups of mushrooms that are good for the beginner to learn. Some of the most distinctive are the morels and false morels, the puffballs, the cup mushrooms, jelly mushrooms, and the corals and club mushrooms.





What time of the year is it?

Like fruits and vegetables, many fungi fruit at a specific season. For example, morels appear in the spring. If it's the end of September and you're puzzled by that convoluted pinecone-like mushroom that you've found, you're likely looking at something other than a morel. Other mushrooms, such as the Winter Oyster (*Sarcomyxa serotina*) or the Winter Chanterelle (*Craterellus tubaeformis*), as their names suggest, appear late in the season. We don't expect to see them in May. Sometimes, when trying to figure out what you have found, you can narrow your search by simply noting the mushroom's fruiting season.

Hericium coralloides - a distinctive beginner's mushroom

Mitch Milgram photo

Where are you located geographically?

Use a field guide that's as specific to your area as possible. Some field guides cover too broad a range, some as much as all of North America. If you have one of these it will be loaded with species that do not grow in your area, thus adding to the confusion. Worse yet for the beginner are those field guides written for European fungi, translated into English, and again loaded with fungi that do not grow here. (These guides are still useful for more experienced people, who have a grasp of the different genera. There are a few recommended guides listed at the end of this article.)

Where are you collecting and what is the substrate or type of ground from which you've picked your collection?

Mushrooms can be very specific as to where they will grow. Some grow on the ground, some on wood. Some like to grow in grass, some on dung, while some grow specifically on fir cones. One species, *Agaricus bitorquis* prefers disturbed, hard packed soil. It can often be seen emerging along the edge of sidewalks or even through asphalt. Walking along the street and seeing it from a distance, you can make a quick identification simply from this growth habit. Some have a symbiotic (mycorrhizal) relationship with specific trees. For example, many in the genus *Suillus* grow exclusively with pines, others only with Lodgepole pine. Some *Suillus* grow only with Larch, such as *Suillus ampliporus*. By closely observing where your mushroom is growing you can quickly eliminate a lot of confusing possibilities and narrow your search.

What are the weather conditions?

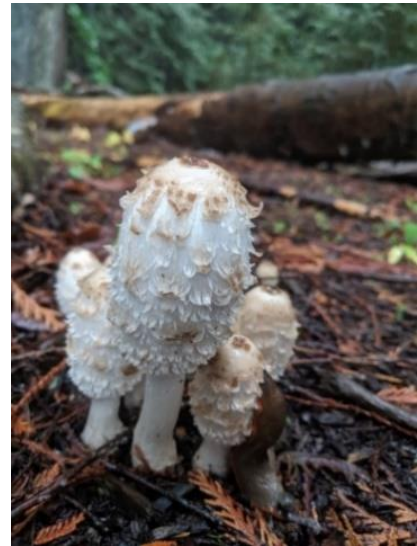
Considering them can eliminate more possibilities. If it has been hot and dry, mushrooms on the ground may be few and far between. However, "the wood rotters" may be fruiting. These mushrooms are saprotrophic, growing on and breaking down the tissue in fallen trees, and taking advantage of the moisture contained in the wood fibers. A nice example of this is *Aureoboletus mirabilis*, the Admirable Bolete, one of the very few boletes that grows on wood (usually, specifically, Western Hemlock). By knowing its growth habit on wood, combined with its distinctive brown velvety top, you can make a quick and accurate identification.

What is the growth habit of your mushroom?

Most mushrooms are predictable and distinctive in how they grow. Is it growing singly, in groups, or in dense clusters? Observing this growth habit can be very useful at times. For example, you would be hard pressed in the field to tell the difference between *Gomphidius glutinosus* (“hideous” *Gomphidius*) and *Gomphidius oregonensis*, except that *oregonensis* is the one that grows in clusters. A popular edible is the “Fried Chicken” mushroom, *Lyophyllum decastes*, often growing in large dense clumps in disturbed soil. Knowing this you shouldn’t get confused with the toxic *Entolomas* that look similar but don’t grow in the large “cespitose” groups, but singly or two or three together. A quick glance at these easy to distinguish features will again quickly eliminate confusing possibilities and narrow down your search.

These are some of the broad strokes of initial identification. The next step in identification is to start looking at specific details of the mushroom. Here you’ll be examining a variety of mushroom characteristics such as colour, texture, size, shape, spore print colour, gill attachment, veils, and many other traits. These can all assist with identification. However, this detailed stage can be a long and slow process of meticulous and lengthy investigative work; after 45 years there are still many species I am learning to identify.

It’s encouraging and fun for beginners to learn some of the easily identified species in your area, especially if you’re looking for edibles. The morels are relatively easy, as are the chanterelles with their funnel shape, white or yellow colour, and blunted vein-like gills. Lobster mushrooms are hard to confuse with anything else. Also distinctive are the **Shaggy Manes** and Puffballs. The Boletes can be a good area for beginners to focus on, because they are fewer in number than the gilled mushrooms. So, too, are the mushrooms with spines. There aren’t that many of them, and two related species, the “Hedgehogs” (*Hydnum repandum* and *Hydnum umbilicatum*) are excellent edibles and conveniently distinctive. Another good beginner’s genus to investigate is *Lactarius*, with its distinctive coloured milk (latex) and associated colour changes.



Coprinus comatus - Shaggy Mane
- one of the first mushrooms people recognize

Mushroom identification is an unlimited pursuit; there are thousands of species out there. With often years between fruitings, their identification can be a challenge. However, if you like puzzling things out, you’ll never be bored. And for those who just want to know “can I eat it?” there are lots of quick and easily identified mushrooms to be found.



Hydnum washingtonium (aka *H.repandum*)
- a distinctive toothed mushroom

Photos by Michael Beug & Mitch Milgram



One of the joys of spring,
the return of the Osprey.

Ken Raynor's photo -

Taken at the wharf, showing this Osprey trying to keep hold of its fish.

The first Sunnybrae Osprey arrived April 19th.

Jerry Zihrul on the April 27th foreshore outing -

"Here are a couple of photos from today. The outing was great and we enjoyed ourselves a lot."

Common Merganser



Female Gadwall



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The Swan - by Mary Oliver

*Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air -
An armful of white blossoms,
A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned
into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,
Biting the air with its black beak?
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling
A shrill dark music - like the rain pelting the trees - like a waterfall
Knifing down the black ledges?
And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds -
A white cross Streaming across the sky, its feet
Like black leaves, its wings Like the stretching light of the river?
And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to everything?
And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?
And have you changed your life?*

Thanks Dawn McDonald, for sharing this poem with us.