

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

NEWSLETTER
February 2018
Volume 18, number 1

To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing

Red-tailed Hawk



photo by Roger Beardmore

Regular Club Meetings

1st Tuesday of month

- September: 11 AM - Sunnybrae Park
- October to May: 7 PM
Library, Sullivan Campus of
Salmon Arm Secondary School
- June: 4 PM – meeting & potluck
Peter Jannink Nature Park

Club website:

www.shuswapnaturalists.org

Mailing address:

1740 16th St. NE
Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3Z7

Member of BC Nature - the Federation of BC Naturalists

Club Executive

President: Ed McDonald
Vice President: Gillian Richardson
Secretary: Michelle Weisenger
Treasurer: Ted Hillary
Directors: Janet Aitken
Isobel Anderson
Pat Hutchins
Kyle Fitzpatrick
Sharon Lawless
Dorothy Parks
Janet Pattinson

Committees

Programs: Janet Pattinson
Membership: Ted Hillary
Website & E-mail: Dorothy Parks
FBCN Director: Janet Pattinson
BC Nature e-news reporter:
Gillian Richardson
Newsletter: Ed and Marlene McDonald
Historian: Gillian Richardson
Good News Reports: Hanne MacKay
Coffee Conveners:
June and Clive Bryson
Pat Turner, Isobel Anderson
Award /Bursary:
Dorothy Parks, Janet Pattinson
SABNES Rep:
Grebe Count: Di Wittner
Enderby/Armstrong Bird Count:
Geoff Styles
Salmon Arm Christmas Bird Count:
Ted Hillary
Mara Meadows Warden:
Jeremy Ayotte
Weedpull Project: Ed McDonald
Songbird Committee: Janet Aitken,
Isobel Anderson, Gillian Richardson,
Clare Meunier, Loretta Prosser
Friends of Gardom Lake rep:
Sarah Weaver
District Environment Committee:
Janet Pattinson
Naturalist Trail: Greg Wiebe
McGuire Lake Turtle Count: Pat Turner
Outings Committee:
Pat Danforth, Kyle Fitzpatrick,
Marie Fortin, Hanne MacKay,
Dawn McDonald
Young Naturalists:
Geoff and Emily Styles

A note from Ed:

I hope we are all looking forward to another successful year for the naturalist club. Let us continue to let nature be our teacher.

*One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.*

William Wordsworth

Reading this page, you will see how many members are willing to serve in so very many ways. We express our sincere thanks to all.

I would like to thank Janet Pattinson for her service last year as co-president and Clive Bryson for his years as director.

Also, thank-you to Gillian Richardson for filling the VP void, and Sharon Lawless and Kyle Fitzpatrick for their willingness to join the club executive as new directors. Their wisdom and enthusiasm will be much appreciated.

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An American Dipper

graces us in the Salmon River



photo by Roger Beardmore

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Membership:

It's that time of year again, time for us to pay our dues, and Ted Hillary is happy to receive our money.

Membership fees cover a membership in BC Nature, the BC Nature magazine plus our club's liability insurance. We keep about \$5 from a single and \$10 from a family membership to help with our own club expenses.

Dues are: Single - \$25 Family - \$30

Shuswap Naturalists' Award

Gillian Richardson reports:

On November 23, Joanne Jarvis (Leslie Stoddart's sister) and I were delighted to attend the Foundation Awards evening at TRU to present our 2017 Academic Award to Aaron Mann. Currently in his third year at TRU, it is Aaron's ambition to study environmental law. It's clear from his letter to the Club that he has an enduring passion for the outdoors. The impressive display of his photographs on Flickr show the extent of his skill and his eye for nature. Check them out!



Aaron writes:

"I would first like to say that I am extremely grateful to receive this award. It is very humbling to have been chosen for this award based on the amazing qualities of Leslie Stoddart. I will continue to pursue my environmental studies with an enthusiasm for learning. Please let the members of the club know that I am thankful for their support.

I am currently 20 years old and in my third year of the Bachelor of Natural Resource Science at Thompson Rivers University. I grew up just outside of Kamloops at Paul Lake, where I spent my childhood observing nature, fishing, biking, hiking, canoeing, and dabbling in photography. I believe that being exposed to nature from a young age set me up for an active outdoor lifestyle. I chose to stay at home for university, and the Natural Resource Science program was a perfect fit. I find the courses to be very

interesting, and have taken many concepts from them and applied them to my everyday life. I have plans to finish my degree here, then apply to law school in the hopes of becoming an environmental lawyer. In my spare time, I continue to enjoy outdoor activities and have become an avid photographer.

Please feel free to browse some of my photography work at the Flickr link below:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/137463963@N07/page2/>

Again, I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of me for this award."

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Club Outings 2018

Dawn McDonald writes:

If you journeyed with the Outings group last year you may have seen the immense oak tree at Bishop Wild, heard the grumbling of the wood duck paddling through the swollen spring waters at Tappen or followed the flight of a red hawk in the Paxton Valley. Besides viewing the spectacles that our area rolls out before us, our group of naturalists love to search for and to share those many "ordinary miracles" that feed our soul and inspire us to be better stewards of our universe.

The Outings Committee is poised with pencils sharpened and heads together to bring you another year of favourite walks and new trails. Luckily we have great mentors and enthusiastic recruits helping us experience delicious sights. We are always thankful for members like Ed McDonald, Dorothy Parks and Hanne Mackay who lead us on moderate level trails. This year we are planning to take advantage of Kyle Fitzpatrick's enthusiasm and knowledge on the walks. We are also going to open up some Saturday hikes for those who work or who want to include family. Save some time on your calendar from mid April to mid June. It's going to get busy. Get ready for the big reveal of our 2018 programme coming soon.

Christmas Bird Counts of 2017

Club members participated in four bird counts this winter. We sincerely thank all for their effort.

Salmon Arm Count

Report by Ted Hillary:

This year the Christmas Bird Count in Salmon Arm was held on Sunday, December 17. Weather-wise it was quite a good day, with clear visibility. The snow held off until after three when the day was finished and it was becoming too dark to see anything. There were 23 participants in six parties, with the keenest starting at 6:30 in the dark, hoping without success to get some owls. Temperatures ranged from minus three to a balmy plus two. Over the day 339 kilometers were driven and 13 kilometers were on foot, with a combined total of nearly 40 hours.

A total of 71 species was seen, one better than last year. An additional 7 species were observed in count week. The total number of birds seen was 9855, considerably better than last year's 7069.

The most common bird was the Bohemian Waxwing with 2620 individuals; this substantially surpassed our previous record of 2021 set in 2003. It was nice to have seen so many for the numbers have been down a bit for the past several years. Canada Geese were a distant second with 1720, and starlings in third place with 1055. There were "only" 233 Eurasian Collared-doves, more than outnumbered by the 666 Rock Pigeons.

Notable sightings included a Yellow-billed Loon, feeding in the Lake between Canoe and Sunnybrae in almost the same place where one was spotted last year. West of the wharf feeding along the waterline toward the mouth of the River were 126 Green-winged Teal. An additional 6 were seen in the Sunnybrae area for a total of 134. The previous high of 125 was

set way back in 1988. Another record set was the 114 California Quail seen; the previous high was 94 seen in 2006. There were also 98 Northern Flickers, a goodly number.

For detailed list of species and numbers, see club website: www.shuswapnaturalists.org



The Queen's visit surprised and delighted the revellers at the bird count wind-up. She praised and encouraged us in our work, and gave us a new appreciation of the royal swan.

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North Shuswap Count

Report by Rick Howie:

Breezy and snowy conditions greeted the 14 hardy observers who set out for our annual Christmas Bird Count on December 21 this year. Temperatures hovered around -10°C for the day with the snowfall easing off by early afternoon.

Conditions kept many birds under cover for the day, but somewhat surprisingly, we tallied 57 species and 1568 individual birds. This was quite a decent count for variety of species, but the number of individuals was down considerably from past counts where numbers have exceeded 3000 birds. Teams scoured five different zones within the 12 kilometers radius circle centered on the nature house at Shuswap Lake Provincial Park.

Mara Meadows Reserve

Report by Jeremy Ayotte:

The far-reaching benefits of ecological reserves in British Columbia were realized this past summer when Tim Pankhurst, the lead botanist for England's Conservation Strategy for *Liparis loeselii* or the Yellow wide-lipped orchid came to visit Mara Meadows. Across the UK, the presence of *Liparis loeselii* is an indicator for healthy wetlands and Tim travelled from England to Mara Meadows to collect data on these orchids growing in a natural fen. Calcareous upper valley fens such as Mara Meadows are common in England but have been heavily managed by people for 100's of years. During his visit to Mara Meadows, Tim collected information on the floristic, geomorphological and biotic characteristics of the plant assemblages around where *Liparis loeselii* grows in Mara Meadows to inform his work back in the UK.

Here are a few excerpts from his report dated December 14, 2017:

*In UK, very large populations can occur where the plant grows as an epiphyte on tussock-forming Cyperaceae, such as *Schoenus nigricans*, *Carex elata* and *C. appropinquata*. These species form much larger and taller tussocks, which might be better described as tufts rather than tussocks; accordingly clumps at Mara (and also at Clyde Fen, AB) tend to be much smaller and have a higher flowering rate than is common in UK. UK fens tend also to have been managed by mowing (or controlled grazing) which involves the removal of litter. Many of the stands at Mara were found growing through a thick but moderately open litter layer which would act to suppress growth. Such shading also suppresses flowering but this is much greater for stands growing within large tussocks; the flowering rate at Mara of 69% is much higher than the average flowering rate in the UK which over the last two years has been 29%. This substantially compensates for the lesser vegetative expansion but also provides an explanation for wide population fluctuations, year to year.*

*Most plants were observed growing as epiphytes in moss, itself growing as an epiphyte on other vegetation, a circumstance quite typical for this taxon in the UK. However, at all other sites I visited in BC, plants were growing on the ground, albeit in a substrate of glacial flour deposited during spate-flow events along rivers. This material is porous and provides similar wicking action to the mosses and fibrous vegetation tussocks, protecting the orchid against dessication, which it cannot tolerate. The mosses concerned, in this case *Campyllum stellatum* and *Scorpidium revolvens* all occur in the UK and are indicative of quality, low-nutrient, calcareous fen conditions. *Liparis* is also known to grow as an epiphyte on other species of 'brown moss', in the genera *Campyllum*, *Scorpidium*, *Drepanocladus*, *Calliergonella*, *Calliergon*, *Palustriella* and *Cratoneuron*, but all reports of it growing on *Sphagnum* which have been subsequently checked have been found to be in error (with plants growing on brown mosses which have been subsequently colonised by *Sphagnum*, usually as a consequence of changing hydrochemical conditions).*

*The vegetation where *Liparis* occurs at Mara has a similar structure and composition to its UK stations; there are many species which occur in both regions and they occur at similar abundances, relative to the species which are not shared.*

Tim Pankhurst, Regional Conservation Manager
– East of England

So, we can ALL thank those visionaries that helped protect this natural upland fen back in the 1970's, adding Mara Meadows to the list of Ecological Reserves that were established for:

- the preservation of representative examples of British Columbia's ecosystems;
- the protection of rare and endangered plants and animals in their natural habitat;
- the preservation of unique, rare or outstanding botanical, zoological or geological phenomena;
- the perpetuation of important genetic resources; and
- the scientific research and educational uses associated with the natural environment.

Gardom Lake Update

Report by Sarah Weaver:

Naturalists know that Gardom Lake is unique in this area. The lake used to be a hidden gem, but it seems to definitely becoming more well-known. Despite its popularity, it still has a diversity of wildlife, and has a peaceful quality hard to find at low elevations in the busy Shuswap (due in part to the ban on all gas-powered motors).

Water Quality

One of the reasons the lake is unique is its water quality. Compared with Shuswap Lake, or even the more similar White Lake, Gardom is further advanced in the natural lake “aging” process.

The high nutrient values point to the extreme importance of a watershed approach to managing runoff to the lake.

The charts below compare Gardom Lake with White Lake.

Of the two lakes, Gardom has much higher levels of Chlorophyll *a*, Total Phosphorus and Nitrogen. Secchi Disk spring measurements are comparable, but the fall measurement shows reduced clarity for Gardom. (2016 data. Source: Shuswap Watershed Council).

Yellow Flag Iris

Each June the Society organizes an event to control this invasive aquatic plant, in partnership with the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society. Volunteers cut the plants while they are in bloom, before they can form seed heads.

As much of the plant as possible is cut off below water. This hampers its ability to photosynthesize. All the foliage removed is taken to the landfill.

CSIS maps show that we are making a difference. This is good news!

Loons, Boaters and Kayakers

In 2017 the Gardom Lake loons hatched two eggs; one chick was lost due to unknown reasons. The second chick was observed until the end of the summer.

Watercraft, particularly kayaks and paddleboards, are threatening to loons.

- Leave plenty of space around loon nests and around parents with chicks.
- Watch their body language and listen to their calls to learn when you may have approached too closely. **BACK AWAY** if the loon displays any of the following:
 - Head down. (Loon feels threatened, may leave the nest.)
 - Neck stretched. (Loon is concerned; evaluating the situation.)
 - Rearing up in water, wings spread or clasped against body, feet rapidly paddling. (Loon feels threatened.)
 - Vocalizing when you are close or approaching. (Loon feels threatened.)

[Source: Canadian Lakes Loon Survey brochure “Loons on our Lakes”]

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Ocean Spray

– *holodiscus discolor*

Anne Caughlin shares:

What a lovely appellation for this plant that grows in our dry interior and yet looks like a roll of waves from the sea. The genus name is derived from the Greek *holo*, which means whole and *discus* for disk – referring to the placement of the flower parts. *Discolor* means two and might refer to the fact that the creamy flowers turn brown.

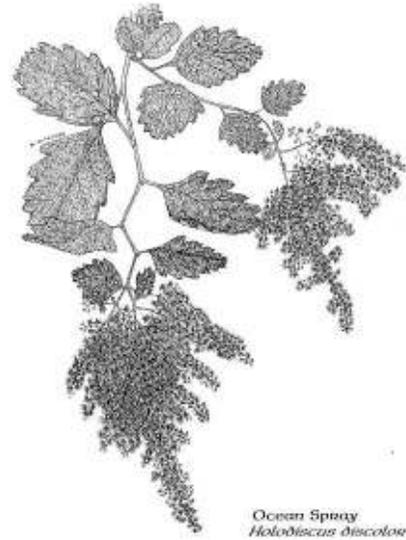
The wood of this plant is very hard and strong and can be used for arrows, harpoons, awls, digging tools, anchor pins for tents and numerous other uses reflecting one of its common names of 'ironwood'. It does not burn easily and therefore also good for cooking utensils or roasting spits.

Nancy Turner notes that many British Columbia Interior Peoples dug roots with a tool known as a *patsa* - pronounced *pa'cha* in Secwepemc or *pee'cha* in Okanagan. From 30-120 cm long - it had a curved, pointed tip and a short crosspiece handle at the top. Ocean Spray was widely used for this purpose along with Black Hawthorn and the handles were made of Mule Deer or Elk antler. The '*patsa*' is still in use as it is a very efficient tool for digging roots and bulbs. According to Lewis Clark, pioneer woodsman of the Northwest Coast knew the older wood of Ocean Spray to be so hard it was used as pegs in barn construction. Clark himself saw an entire barn built without nails, their place taken by pegs of this wood.

References:

Food Plants of Interior First Peoples by Turner 1997

Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest: from Alaska to Northern California by Clark 1976



Ocean Spray
Holodiscus discolor

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Gardom Lake Report continued:

Lake Usage

The Society is interested in developing a scientific model for studying recreational use of the lake. Our anecdotal observations are that the lake is becoming more heavily utilized, but we need good data to show this. Anyone with ideas, and a willingness to lead a project?

Help needed

You can help the work of the Society in a variety of ways:

- Consider buying a membership (\$10 individual, \$15 family). Forms are on the website www.gardomlakestewards.org
- Volunteer for activities such as the Yellow Flag Iris event.
- Join our Board of Directors.
- Follow us on Facebook and let others know about our work.

BC Nature Conference and AGM

Promoting Health in Nature: Past, Present & Future

May 10 - 13

Hosted by Vancouver Natural History Society meetings and accommodation @ UBC

