

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

NEWSLETTER
February 2019
Volume 19, number 1

To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing

The Fieldfare, Star of the Christmas Bird Count



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

Email address:
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Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3Z7

Member of BC Nature - the Federation of BC Naturalists

Club Executive and Directors

President: Ed McDonald

Vice-President: Gillian Richardson

Treasurer: Ted Hillary

Secretary: Michelle Weisinger

Janet Aitken

Pat Hutchins

Sharon Lawless

Dorothy Parks

Janet Pattinson

Sarah Weaver

Club Committees

Programs: Janet Pattinson

Membership: Ted Hillary

Website & E-mail: Dorothy Parks

Publicity: Loretta Prosser

BC Nature Director: Di Wittner

BC Nature e-news reporter:

Gillian Richardson

Newsletter:

Ed and Marlene McDonald

Historian: Gillian Richardson

Coffee Conveners:

June and Clive Bryson

Pat Turner, Isobel Anderson

Award /Bursary:

Dorothy Parks, Janet Pattinson

SABNES: Janet Aitken (Pres.)

Grebe Count: Di Wittner

Bird House Project:

Roger Beardmore, 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,

Roger Beardmore, Pat Danforth,

Gillian Richardson, Clare Meunier,

Loretta Prosser, Pat Turner

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: Molly Cooperman

Wildlife Rescue:

Di Wittner, Wally Kirkpatrick,

Carla Kirkpatrick, Pat Hutchins,

Roger Beardmore, Ed McDonald

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Weed Pull Number Five

Total bag count over four years: 259

19 hardy volunteers = 50 bags



photos by Janet Aitken

Christmas Bird Count 2018

report by Ted Hillary

The Christmas Bird Count in Salmon Arm this year was held on Sunday December 16. It was not a very nice day, with light rain much of the time and in places a little snow and sleet. Temperatures were from about minus one to plus four. The higher altitudes had some snow coverage while in town it was mostly clear. The wind was, for the most part, nonexistent.

There were 7 parties with 21 participants out birding for a total of 37 hours. Over the day 277 kilometers were driven and 19.5 kilometers were walked. 74 species of birds were seen, just below our long-term average of 75. The total number of birds seen was 9445, the third highest number ever seen. In addition, 7 other species were seen during count week.

By far the most exciting bird seen was a Fieldfare, only the second time this thrush has been recorded in British Columbia. This bird was discovered by Peter's team down Silver Creek. Nan Prittie persisted that it was not a juvenile robin; her husband Roger Beardmore

took some great pictures to confirm the Fieldfare's identity. Over the subsequent week birders have travelled from far and wide to get a glimpse of this rarity.

There were record high numbers for 3 species. There were 2042 Canada Geese; the previous high of 1997 was in 2011. There were 508 American Robins, obliterating the previous record of 203 set in 2002. The count for White-throated Sparrows was 9, the previous record of 6 being set in 2005. One Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen, the first one seen since two were recorded in 2013.

The most common bird seen was the aforementioned Canada Goose. A distant second was the European Starling with 1225 birds, and Mallards coming in at a distant third with 936 birds. Another notable sighting was a flock of over 700 Pine Siskins; this was a no show on our last year's count.

Thank you very much to all who participated in the bird count. Without you, it would not happen. Also, our thanks to June and Sharon, and to all who brought goodies, to help bring a perfect ending to our day.

Bird Count species and their numbers:

**Numbers from count week*

Canada Goose - 2042	Common Merganser - 26	Mourning Dove - 34
Trumpeter Swan - 215	California Quail - 30	Great Horned Owl - 1
Tundra Swan - 2	Ring-necked Pheasant - 23	Great Gray Owl - 1
Gadwall - 96	Ruffed Grouse - 4	Short-eared Owl - 2
American Widgeon - 32	Common Loon - 1*	Belted Kingfisher - 2
Mallard - 936	Pacific Loon - 1*	Downy Woodpecker - 4
Northern Pintail - 1	Horned Grebe - 8	Northern Flicker - 91
Green-winged Teal - 45	Red-necked Grebe - 1	Pileated Woodpecker - 8
Northern Shoveler - 1*	Great Blue Heron - 11	American Kestrel - 1
Redhead - 10	Sharp-shinned Hawk - 3	Merlin - 1
Ring-necked Duck - 10	Bald Eagle - 46	Peregrine Falcon - 1*
Greater Scaup - 2	Red-tailed Hawk - 19	Northern Shrike - 4
Lesser Scaup - 14	Killdeer - 2	Steller's Jay - 3
Harlequin Duck - 2*	Wilson's Snipe - 1	Black-billed Magpie - 145
Bufflehead - 4	Ring-billed Gull - 1	American Crow - 130
Common Goldeneye - 30	Herring Gull - 1	Common Raven - 205
Barrow's Goldeneye - 1	Rock Pigeon - 398	Black-capped Chickadee - 166
Hooded Merganser - 12	Eurasian Collared-dove - 117	Mountain Chickadee - 5

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Shuswap Naturalists' Award



By the Thompson River near Spences Bridge

Each year a Thompson Rivers University student in environmental studies is chosen to receive our club award. We are very pleased to announce that Vanessa Robinson is our 2018 award recipient, a truly worthwhile candidate.

Here is her letter:

My name is Vanessa Robinson. I study Natural Resource Sciences at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. I am writing to offer my sincere gratitude for the Shuswap Naturalist Club Award.

I have worked as a tree planter and silviculture surveyor in the Shuswap, Thompson, Nechako, and Cariboo-Chilcotin regions. I was fortunate last summer to do rattlesnake research in the South Okanagan in the White Lake Basin. I am getting involved with the BC Community Bat Project, and I have conducted a few bat counts

as well (I even have an old-school bat detector!). Next season, I will likely be working for Rob Higgins doing invasive ant research.

I just became a member at large for the Kamloops Naturalist Club. I am thrilled to be connected with this group. I occasionally write articles on their website.

At Thompson Rivers, I am lucky to work as a Teaching Assistant in the Dendrology and Grassland Ecology classes. I do my best to invite other interested students to natural history events when they come up at school or elsewhere in the city.

I'm not sure what I'll do once I graduate – I'm leaving that door wide open for the moment!

I'm a plant person, at heart. I am interested in exploring plant-pollinator interactions, and I am currently trying to get a better handle on the process of photosynthesis. But, like most naturalists, I love birding and digging in the soil and guessing at animal tracks in the snow.

I feel so grateful that your club raises money to support post-secondary students engaged in knowing nature. It is generous of your club to invest in future naturalists – perhaps a sort of stewardship in its own right.

For me, I believe that the responsibility to know nature deeply is paramount for anyone whose education is leading them toward work that deals directly with the natural world.

Hope to see you on the trails!
Vanessa Robinson

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Bird Count species and their numbers continued from page 3:

Red-breasted Nuthatch - 26
Brown Creeper – 1
Pacific Wren - 2
Marsh Wren – 1*
Golden-crowned Kinglet - 15
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 1
Townsend's Solitaire - 2
Fieldfare - 1
American Robin - 508

Varied Thrush - 1
European Starling - 1225
Bohemian Waxwing - 498
Snow Bunting - 4
Dark-eyed Junco - 264
White-throated Sparrow - 9
Song Sparrow - 47
Spotted Towhee - 1
Red-winged Blackbird - 152

Cassin's Finch – 1*
House Finch - 9
Pine Siskin - 822
Common Redpoll - 275
Red Crossbill - 4
American Goldfinch - 374
Evening Grosbeak - 75
House Sparrow – 81

Nest Boxes on the Foreshore report by Di Wittner

For the past two years, club members have been refurbishing and adding to the existing bird houses along the foreshore trail and in Peter Janninck Park. With passerines being in serious jeopardy throughout Canada, the club recognizes the importance of protecting this group of birds in particular. These boxes will provide Tree swallows, Violet Green swallows, and Mountain bluebirds with valuable nesting cavities.

In just two years, the numbers speak for themselves.

<u>Year</u>	<u>(Songbird) boxes</u>	<u>Broods successfully fledged</u>
2017	24	9 (37.5%)
2018*	46	29 (63%)

<u>Year</u>	<u>(Waterfowl/Owl/Other) boxes</u>	<u>Broods fledged</u>
2017	4	0
2018*	6	0

**One box was stolen and never recovered. Two boxes were vandalized, but repaired and rehung. Three boxes were flooded and, therefore, unavailable to the birds during nesting season. (Total available started at 50.) Almost ALL boxes have now been raised beyond human reach and above the high water mark.*

Maintaining a nest box route requires time and effort. This includes monitoring the boxes throughout the nesting season and cleaning them

annually. Wasps were a problem in 2017 but keeping the boxes maintained in 2018 resulted in a significantly reduced presence of these aggressive insects. One of the encouraging notes that came from monitoring the houses was the ‘fierce competition’ observed among swallows. With this in mind, plans are underway to add up to fifty new boxes in 2019.

The club would like to thank Molly Cooperman and BC Nature Kids for their help with monitoring and cleaning boxes. It was very satisfying to see our work pay off. **The birds worked much harder than we did!**



Here is a picture of Be Mai, Molly’s son, helping me clean boxes, showing proper safety protocol.

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BC Nature FGM 2018 Report submitted by Janet Pattinson

Central Okanagan Naturalist Club hosted the September 2018 FGM in Kelowna. The first speaker, Nancy Holmes, has a focus in creative writing. She talked about Bee Ambassadors and the group borderfreebees.com/kelowna.

We also heard about major reclamation projects in the Kelowna area and some field trips visited those areas. One fellow from the US talked about conservation work in an area called

the sagelands which stretch from Oregon north into the Okanagan valley of BC. He collaborated with hunters in getting an underpass to allow wildlife to move under a freeway in Washington state.

The executive of BC Nature engaged in a discussion of ways to deal more effectively with all the work that needs to be done. Currently there is a work overload for volunteers and the office manager. We will be hearing more on that topic.

The AGM for 2019 will be held in Cowichan.

Naturalist Club Outings

Dawn McDonald

While watching a TV western about an army officer returning a dying old chief to his homeland, I was struck by the old man's teaching that in his culture their words for "Hello" means "I see you". He explained this as looking into your soul and seeking to understand what is important to you. I have often wondered why we want to know the names of the plants and animals that we meet on our walks so this idea resonated with me. From learning the identity and the taxonomy of flora and fauna we can better understand how they are thriving, their needs and their ecosystems. We wonder if they are indigenous, migrants, or refugees. We count their noses and recognize the threats to their species. With our access to knowledge now we can become much better informed by knowing the names of plants and animals around us. Apologies to Miss Stein but a rose is more than a rose.

As the warming sun will beat back the winter snows we prepare for our Spring Outings. Come

join the quest of discovering little violets on the forest floor and golden sunflowers as they greet an azure sky. Breathe in the tang of Ponderosa forests warming in the sunshine and listen for the beautiful bird calls announcing the promise of spring. Together we can "see" and try to understand nature, fellow naturalists and the interdependence of humans and their environment.



photo by Hanne MacKay

Mitch Milgram, sharing his knowledge of mushrooms with club members, as together they meandered the Larch Hills trails.

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BC-Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey

Gillian Richardson

The 19th year of the BC-Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey will soon be underway (March, in the Okanagan). In 2018, 91 volunteers surveyed 52 routes, detecting 168 owls. Participants are assigned a route of at least 14.4 km, and make 10-30 stops situated about 1.6 km apart to listen for owls. The routes are surveyed between a half hour after sunset and midnight, with each stop lasting for two minutes. Details recorded and submitted to the Coordinator include species heard, distance and direction from the stop, any traffic or other noise and weather conditions. Observations of grouse or nightjar species are welcome, as their distribution and abundance are poorly understood.

Also, if you frequent the Okanagan region in June and would like to help out with the survey for Flammulated Owls (listed as Special Concern under the Species at Risk Act, and blue listed in BC) please let the Co-coordinator know.

For more information or if you wish to join the survey project, contact Graham Sorenson, BC Projects Coordinator at 604-350-1988 or BCvolunteer@birdscanada.org.

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Club membership dues for 2019:

Single - \$25 Family - \$30

This includes 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.

Mara Meadows Reserve

report by Jeremy Ayotte

It was a relatively quiet year in the Meadows. We had a few June visits from Naturalist groups including the Central Okanagan Naturalists, the North Okanagan Naturalists and even a Naturalist group from Vancouver. I also guided in a group of Grade 7 and 8 kids as part of the Shuswap Outdoor Learning Foundation's Wild Wonder summer camps.

The Meadows continue to delight as always, with its orchids and cranes. There appeared to be a single pair of sandhill cranes again choosing to spend their summer in the fen meadows, stalking snails and frogs to round out their varied, omnivorous diet.

BC Parks staff made several visits and moved the long-term water level data logger to a location where it is suspended in more water and less silt, as we've had some erroneous results over the years. An invasive plant technician with the Ministry also conducted a survey of the Meadows, who found a few sporadic patches of hawkweed along the north side of the fen, but there were no new invasive plant spraying or removal efforts this year.

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Look deep into nature, and you will understand everything better.

Albert Einstein

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Mountain Lady's Slipper

Cypripedium montanum

Anne Cauglin

This lovely wild orchid grows in my back yard, to my immense delight. Fortunately I live where it likes to grow. The Mountain Lady's Slipper is one of the eight or so orchids that grow in the area of the Okanagan/Shuswap/Monashee and Similkameen regions, at elevation or at bog level. They are at their best in April and May.

It grows about 60cm tall and as the name suggests, the lower petal forms a pouch shaped lower lip. There are one to three flowers per stem, white with purple markings and they have a faint but sweet fragrance. The genus name, *Cypripedium* is from the Greek *kupris* for Aphrodite and *pedilon* for slipper.

According to Nancy Turner, the Nlaka'pmx and Secwepemc called this plant 'buck' because the lance-shaped sepals resemble antlers. The Okanagan called them 'moccasins' and used the steeped stalks and leaves as medicine. It is said that pregnant women would drink the concoction to ensure having a smaller baby.



As most guide books caution, although some people try to transplant and cultivate this lovely plant, it prefers its wild nature. Please leave these now rare plants alone. Enjoy the magic and the mystery of the pale colours and delicate blossoms with respect.