

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

NEWSLETTER
February 2020
Volume 20, number 1

To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing

Long-eared Owl in Salmon Arm Bay (before and after a meal)



photos by Glynn Green

- 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:
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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:

Treasurer: Ted Hillary

Secretary: Michelle Weisinger

Janet Aitken

Pat Hutchins

Sharon Lawless

Dorothy Parks

Janet Pattinson

Gillian Richardson

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

Songbird Committee:

Janet Aitken, Isobel Anderson,

Roger Beardmore, Pat Danforth,

Gillian Richardson, Clare Meunier,

Loretta Prosser, Pat Turner

Weedpull Project: Ed McDonald

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

Larch Hills Interpretive Trail:

Pat Danforth, Dawn McDonald

Maureen Sigston, Anne Caughlan

50th Anniversary Committee:

Joyce Henderson, Pat Hutchinson,

Pat Mearns, Janet Pattinson,

Gillian Richardson

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On our club award, Gary Hunt writes:
(BC Nature Regional Coordinator)

I presented your award at the TRU Foundation Awards Ceremony this evening. It is a wonderful event. About \$800,000 in scholarships were presented to over 6,000 students.

The winner of your scholarship is Michelle Matson. She is a wonderful lady with a very broad interest in nature and conservation. She knows about BC Nature and naturalist clubs from her classmate Vanessa Robinson, who won your club award and the undergraduate scholarship from BC Nature last year.

The department chair of Natural Resource Science Department said that academically, Michelle is their top student in the program right now. With her broad interest in nature and conservation, the faculty knew she was an excellent match for your award.

Michelle said to thank you very much and the money will make a big difference in financing her education.

(We thank Gary for attending the event on our behalf.)

See page six for Michelle and her letter.

The Genesis of the Shuswap Naturalist Club

Founding member Lois Higgins writes:

Salmon Arm was an exciting place in the late sixties. The population was almost 4,000 and with the start of Okanagan College and expansion at the mill, new people were arriving, including my family. Harry and I missed not finding a Naturalist Club. We had spent the previous three years attending the Vernon club. So, we set out to find people to share our interest.

We knew Jim and Mary Mack and the Tapson-Jones, people who were expert birders and botanists. Before long we had an enthusiastic group, all eager to share and learn. We had our own speakers and some from Vernon at our meetings, but my best memories are of the field trips. I was like a sponge soaking up all the new places and their treasures.

To name a few – visiting Neskonlith meadow in all its spring glory (with Mary Lou insisting we learn the Latin names for the flowers), scrambling up Queest Mountain, touring Skimikin Seed Orchard, visiting the rattlesnake dens at the Vernon Coldstream Ranch, and travelling to Seymour Arm where resident John Rivette led a geology tour of the area including showing us a meteorite he had found.

Some of us with young families had naturalist-inspired camping trips. A memorable one was to Vaseux Lake where Steve Canning and his twin sons (now famous biologists) showed us this extraordinary environment and we happily hiked and canoed for days.

One project we embarked on seems very strange today. Canada Geese were disappearing. To assist in their recovery, we installed nesting tubs on the foreshore trees. These trees have since been lost to development. This project seems odd now when we see thousands of geese each year. Did we help?

In addition to starting the Christmas Bird Count, we also had Field Days in the spring, where hikes were organized followed by pot-luck dinners, often at our house. I remember one where we

followed numbered signs on things we were to identify. If they were plants, we got more points for Latin names. This proved challenging with very funny answers at dinner.

I have only mentioned a few names here but countless people both taught and learned in these early years – when we were young and fresh-brained. They all gave a good start to what has become one of Salmon Arm's greatest treasures – the Shuswap Naturalist Club.

We celebrate our 50th Anniversary this year.
Stay tuned as plans are revealed.

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Coming Presentations

Note from Janet Pattinson:

Dr. Art Borkent will be our presenter for the March meeting. He's an expert on insects, particularly those little "no-see-ums". Since insects are among the creatures that have greatly declined in numbers this is a topic of importance.

If any members have ideas for presentations in April and May, we are keen to hear your ideas.

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We'll miss you Sarah

Sarah Weaver and Ken Stengler have moved to Victoria to enjoy the cultural atmosphere of James Bay. Sarah has been involved with our club since 2001 when she was working on her book "Living by Water". She was inspired to write this book because of her residence at Gardom Lake and her concern for protecting shorelines from destruction. She has remained active with "Friends of Gardom Lake".

When she and Ken moved to Harbourfront, she became an active member of our club, both as a director and working on various projects such as creating a protecting wildlife brochure and working to update our club logo.

We valued her dedication to the environment. Her expertise was always welcome and we will still be able to count on her simply by email.

Salmon Arm Christmas Bird Count, 2019

Report by Ted Hillary:

On Sunday December 22 the annual Christmas Bird Count was held in Salmon Arm. For most of the day foggy conditions prevailed and visibility was poor. Temperatures hovered around zero to a little above. Shuswap Lake was open but the ground was covered with six or more inches of snow.

There were 27 participants in six parties, birding within the 24-kilometer circle surrounding Salmon Arm. Over the day participants spent six and a half hours on foot covering 11.5 kilometers. Over a combined total of nearly 29 hours 314 kilometers were covered by vehicle.

The participants saw a total of 67 species. This is a little under our long-term average. The early cold spell at the beginning of December probably convinced some of the migratory stragglers to head south. This, combined with the poor visibility, were likely a couple of the factors contributing to our lower numbers. The total number of birds seen was 6,880, a respectable number, though also a bit below our long-term average. An additional 7 species were seen during

count week bringing the total for the count period up to 74.

A record high was set for one species: the number of red-necked grebes seen was 16; the previous high was 7 seen in 2004. Other high counts of note were 38 red-tailed hawks (record high of 40 in 2013), and 114 northern flickers (record high of 122 in 2013 also). There was one great gray owl seen in the Grandview Bench area, one American Dipper seen in the Silver Creek area, and one Pacific Wren seen in the Sunnybrae area. A Long-eared Owl was seen on Christmas Island on December 25; we have only had one previous sighting, in 2008.

The European Starling won this year's award for having the highest numbers with a total of 992 seen. The Rock Pigeon followed closely behind with 974 birds. Next in numbers were Bohemian Waxwings with 589 birds and Black-capped Chickadees with 464.

We finished off our day with a very pleasant social at the Seniors' Centre in town. Thank you very much for those who had hot drinks and goodies available for the participants. I also want to thank the group leaders and all the participants without whom we would not have had such a successful count.

Bird Count species and their numbers:

**from count week*

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cackling goose - 2 | Ring-necked pheasant - 35 | Great horned owl * |
| Canada goose - 412 | Ruffed grouse - 2 | Northern pygmy-owl - 1 |
| Trumpeter swan - 184 | Horned grebe - 14 | Great gray owl - 1 |
| Gadwall - 10 | Red-necked grebe - 16 | Long-eared owl * |
| American widgeon - 78 | Rock pigeon - 974 | Short-eared owl * |
| Mallard - 435 | Eurasian collared-dove - 213 | Downy woodpecker - 10 |
| Northern pintail - 35 | Mourning dove - 28 | Hairy woodpecker - 3 |
| Green-winged teal - 8 | Ring-billed gull - 3 | Pileated woodpecker - 3 |
| Greater scaup * | Herring gull - 1 | Northern flicker - 114 |
| Lesser scaup * | Common loon - 1 | American kestrel - 4 |
| Bufflehead - 6 | Great blue heron - 5 | Merlin - 3 |
| Common goldeneye - 24 | Cooper's hawk - 1 | Northern shrike - 3 |
| Barrow's goldeneye - 3 | Bald eagle - 43 adults | Canada (gray) jay - 1 |
| Hooded merganser - 2 | 2 juvenile | Steller's jay - 26 |
| Common merganser - 101 | Red-tailed hawk - 38 | Black-billed magpie - 84 |
| California quail - 52 | Rough-legged hawk - 1 | |

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Enderby/Armstrong Count

Report by Hanne MacKay:

As the new decade began, the Enderby/Armstrong Bird Count took place on Sunday January 5. It was ideal weather for birds and humans alike.

South of the Enderby Cliffs a spectacular event happened right away. Two Townsend Solitaires were seen and heard singing to each other for a few minutes and then a third one was spotted! A great beginning to the day.

Another noteworthy sighting was American Tree Swallows in some deciduous trees on a driveway leading into a dairy farm in the open fields in Armstrong.

On the Round Lake Road an amazing event happened as a light snowfall began. On a large Ponderosa pine tree next to the road we saw a White-breasted Nuthatch and a Red-breasted Nuthatch on the same tree and then heard a Pygmy Nuthatch!

Down the road further, a Downy and a Hairy Woodpecker were spotted on either side of the same trunk of a tree.

Some of our usual birding partners were not able to come on the count but it was wonderful to meet the Coneybears from Armstrong and to have Bill Grainger and John Wood join us with such incredible knowledge. Gillian remarked, "I learned so much today. It was wonderful!"

Salmon Arm Observer, January 13, 1971



BIRDWATCHERS. On the job, participating in the second bird count sponsored by the Shuswap Naturalists Club are Mrs. Andy Collier and Bobby Hesterford, seen keeping an eye pointed in the Salmon Arm West area.

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North Shuswap Count

A note from Rick Howie:

Thank-you to those from your club that helped out on the North Shuswap Count. The Great Gray Owl that was found in your zone may be a new bird for the history of the count. A second one was reported out past Celista as well. We had 57 species, a bit low, but considering our limited number of participants, a respectable effort.

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Salmon Arm species count continued:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| American crow - 225 | American dipper - 1 | Pine siskin - 137 |
| Common raven - 124 | European starling - 992 | American goldfinch - 137 |
| Black-capped chickadee - 464 | Varied thrush - 23 | Dark-eyed (Oregon) junco - 139 |
| Mountain chickadee - 9 | American robin - 37 | Dark-eyed (slate-coloured) junco - 9 |
| Chestnut-backed chickadee - 6 | Bohemian waxwing - 589 | White-crowned sparrow * |
| Golden-crowned kinglet - 6 | Cedar waxwing * | White-throated sparrow - 6 |
| Ruby-crowned kinglet - 1 | House sparrow - 164 | Song sparrow - 64 |
| Red-breasted nuthatch - 39 | Evening grosbeak - 29 | Spotted towhee - 5 |
| Pacific wren - 1 | House finch - 363 | Red-winged blackbird - 102 |
| Marsh wren - 1 | Cassin's finch - 9 | |

Shuswap Naturalists' Award Winner



Here is the letter from Michelle:

I would like to say a huge thank you to the Shuswap Naturalist Club for awarding me the Shuswap Naturalists' award. I am so grateful and honoured, and it is hard to express how much of a support this award is for me. Since this award was given in honour of Marg Wrench this year, I would like to send a special thank you to her family and friends; it sounds like she was a very valuable member of your community.

My name is Michelle Matson, and I am a student in the Natural Resource Science program at Thompson Rivers University. I have really enjoyed the couple of Naturalist club events I have been to here in Kamloops and I wouldn't be surprised to find myself as a member of one of the local naturalist clubs in the next few years. The primary reason why I am in Natural Resource Science is because I find all aspects of the natural world so fascinating and from what I understand that is what BC Naturalist Clubs, like yours, are all about. Even the small educational events that naturalist clubs hold can have a big impact on the community. For example, I was a part of the TRU LEAP Shuswap trip this fall when your club hosted a bus full of university students for a short bird watching walk on the docks in downtown Salmon Arm. My friend and I were one of the few local students on that trip and for many of the international students it might have been the first time they had ever heard of birding and it was

definitely the first time they ever saw an otter. I know that I wasn't the only one on that bus who thought the nature walk was the highlight of the whole trip. Connecting people to nature is a powerful thing, and it is something that we are so privileged to be able to do here in our corner of the world.

Since everything I learn about our environment captures my attention, it has made it challenging for me to decide on a focus within natural resources that I would like to commit to as a career. Somehow I have convinced myself that I am going to pursue a career in fisheries, wildfire management, wildlife and forestry all at the same time. So I may not know exactly what I want to do after I graduate, but I do know that I am definitely in the right program. Also, I hope that such a diverse background will help me in my future career, whatever it is, to learn to manage our environment on a more wholistic ecosystem level.

I switched from Biology into Natural Resource Science after my first year at TRU and it was the best decision I ever made. How could I not enjoy a program where I get to take two entire classes only learning about trees!? I love telling people that I spent 120 hours in class studying nothing but trees, because they don't believe that there is even that much to learn about our conifers and deciduous trees in BC. But the reality is that we didn't cover anywhere near everything there is to know in those 120 hours, and I hope that I get to keep learning new things about our forests every day for the rest of my life.

I am also in the co-op program at TRU, which has given me many opportunities to get some more practical experience outside of studies. I worked at the Agriculture Canada research centre in Lacombe, Alberta this past summer as a cereal pathology research assistant. The complicated title essentially means that I got to work in research on breeding barley and wheat resistance to different fungal diseases. It was a great opportunity and spiked my interest in the possibility of one day doing my own research.

Thank you again for this award!

Michelle

Good Year for Swallows on the Foreshore!

Report by Di Wittner:

The summer clean out of nest boxes along the foreshore revealed a treasure trove of good news. The number of successful broods was nearly double that of 2018, with fifty-five fledged nests of swallows alone. Without more comprehensive monitoring, it is impossible to tell how many were tree swallows and how many were violet-greens since both species build the same type of nest and leave the same compact mess behind. The few monitors that participated over the summer observed both species making use of the boxes.

Since 2016, we've yet to see a successful duck nest; two were started then abandoned in 2019. On a more positive note, we were thrilled to discover bats had moved into one of the bat boxes! Furthermore, a pair of bluebirds fledged young in one of the boxes at the Raven end of the trail.

One mystery nest baffled us. The size and make-up of the nest was like no other; we were unable to identify the occupants as they had long since fledged.

2019 Results

Total boxes available April 1st: 92

- Successful swallow broods: 55
- Successful chickadee broods: 4
- Successful bluebird broods: 1
- Unknown species: 1
- Invasive species (house sparrows): 1
- Flying squirrel: 1 (probably a temporary occupancy)
- Notable 1: Two duck nests were started then abandoned prior to egg-laying
- Bonus: One bat box was occupied!
- Unfortunate addendum: Three boxes went missing

Over the next three to four years, we will continue to collect data to determine if the number of boxes has reached carrying capacity.

With a few simple modifications we may be able to increase occupancy without increasing the number of boxes. For example, do the birds show a preference for directional aspect or height from the ground?

The expansion of the nest boxes along the foreshore and in Peter Jannink Park was a community effort. Many thanks to the following for their contributions!

- MakerSpace
- BC Nature
- BC Naturalists Foundation
- Warner Rentals
- Rona

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Pat Hutchins and Cathy Meakes, digging the holes for the poles -



photo by Roger Beardmore

and here comes Roger with the posts.



photo by Di Wittner

Reading, Reflecting and Getting Ready

Dawn McDonald writes:

Another day of Snowmageddon and another year's passing has me retreating to my chair to read books and reflect on golden memories of our walks this past year.

I hope you were there when we spied the Mountain Bluebirds and specterlike Curlews near Neskonlith Lake or saw the bumblebees thriving in the Shooting Stars. Did you see the meadows of golden Arrow-leaved Balsamroot under Red-tailed Hawks and hear the choir of Meadowlarks on the Beaver Lake Rd? Were you able to stand on lofty perches and look down at the panorama from the Fly Hills where moose tracks can be found near the Yellow Violets and Anemones? Did you discover the granite cliffs and Natural Waterslide at Ashton Creek with us? Did you see the giant hornet nest or hear the call of the quiet space by Marie's little creek? Were you there to feel the power of the Giant Cedars on the Eagle River or drink in the beauty of Great Blue Herons playing statues surrounded by a fire of fall leaves on the waterfront? Were you able to discover the many mushroom varieties hidden like jewels in the Larch Hill Forests or to search in mossy flower beds along the Old Sicamous Road? Then you, like I, can cherish these sights, sounds and smells in these long winter nights.

As this wonderful gift of snow freshens our rivers and brings us to spring, we will once again be heading back to our favourite spots and searching for new sights with the Outings Committee. We'll be meeting soon to come up with a Spring Agenda. Feel free to send us your ideas and don't miss another wonderful season with us.

'Angry Bird' thwarted and saved



This Great Horned Owl is one of the rescue birds we took to the Kamloops Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. It had impaled itself on a fence on a farm near Mara while trying to catch a rabbit for its dinner. Its wound healed; it was released, and so it is one of our success stories.

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Membership dues for 2020

Single - \$25 Family - \$30

This includes 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.

Ted Hillary reminds us that for most of us our dues are now due and payable. If you joined during the year, your membership pay date will be one year from that date.

BC Nature Conference and AGM

Similkameen Spring

May 28 - 31

Hosted by Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists in Princeton, BC
meetings and speakers at Riverside Centre