

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

NEWSLETTER
September 2017
Volume 17, number 2

To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing

Belted Kingfisher

Long-time resident of the Salmon Arm boat basin



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

Co-Presidents: Ed McDonald
Janet Pattinson

Vice President:

Secretary: Michelle Weisenger

Treasurer: Ted Hillary

Directors: Janet Aitken

Isobel Anderson

Pat Hutchins

Dorothy Parks

Gillian Richardson

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, Marie Fortin,

Hanne MacKay, Dawn McDonald

Young Naturalists:

Geoff and Emily Styles

Fall Outings

Thurs. Sept. 14 – Exploring the town trails and ponds. Plan being out for about 2 ½ hours. Bring snacks or lunch if you'd like to picnic.

9:00 – Arena Parking beside Junglemania

Leaders: Hanne, Marie, Dawn and Pat

Thurs. Sept. 28 - Marmont Ranch at Paxton Valley located north of Falkland. 1 hour 15 minutes from Salmon Arm and a favourite destination of Mike and Pam. Walking on primarily defined easy to moderate trails, a longer day, so bring snacks, lunch and water.

9:00 - SE corner of Piccadilly Mall Parking Lot

Leaders: Mike and Pam Saul

Thurs. Oct. 5 - Meander the trails of the Larch Hills with mushroom specialist Mitch Milgram. If you've got a magnifier or reference guide, bring them along with your usual gear. Bring snacks and a lunch if you'd like to picnic at the chalet before the return trip.

9:15 - Arena Parking beside Junglemania

10:00 - Larch Hills Parking Lot

Leaders: Mitch Milgram, Pat Danforth

Thurs. Oct. 12 - Salmon Arm Bay Foreshore An opportunity to enjoy our local shorebirds. Those interested will meet for a "wind up" lunch at the Prestige Inn afterwards.

10:00 - SABNES Parking Lot / Ed McDonald



Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary outing

Shuswap Wild Wonders 2017

Report by Geoff Styles:

The Shuswap's green spaces were once again graced with quiet, mindful children this past summer as Shuswap Wild Wonders outdoor learning camps entered their sixth year. Our steady growth over these past six summers has led to 82 students connecting with nature through eight different camps. This year we offered an Art camp that joined hiking through nature with various forms of media. We also created an Aboriginal-focused camp in Armstrong where students learned about traditional ways to gather food, how to use plants to create tools and heard various oral legends. Students from grades Kindergarten through Grade 10 learned from well-trained and highly motivated instructors who we are very lucky to have on our team.

Within this framework of growth, however, lies a somewhat hidden story that warms the heart. When we first offered these camps back in 2012, we saw the students who participated belonged to families who already spent lots of time outside. Although the camps offered a unique opportunity for those students to see nature and their relationship with it in different ways, we felt a need to reach those students who were unable, for various reasons, to access nature as these students did.

We therefore created a business sponsorship program in which local businesses, groups or individuals would sponsor students to go to camp by covering the camp fee, thereby removing what is usually the most serious barrier. We put the word out through schools and three years ago had 14 students benefit from this program. Last year another 14 enjoyed an experience outdoors and this year it grew to 17! We were very pleased to hear that the Shuswap Naturalist Club decided to join this support team by donating \$500 to the cause, for which we (and those students) are extremely grateful!

One boy's story in particular sticks to my mind as I was lucky enough to be an instructor in the

Grade 5/6 camp which he attended last summer. At first glimpse he fit the bill of someone who did not spend much time outdoors - untied high-top shoes, baggy shorts, no hat and a backpack that was both uncomfortable and too large for him. Fine for a short walk along Nature Bay or in Little Mountain Park, sure, but we happened to be hiking fully loaded into Mt. McRae south of Revelstoke and staying overnight in the subalpine!

As his journey wound from his dark basement to the craggy peak of Mt. McRae, those in our camp were touched by his positive attitude, willingness to 'just go a little further' and comments he made as we crested new ridges where splendid views opened up. The students around him quickly realized his situation, and became a support team in themselves. They offered encouragement, guided him on how to set up a tent, included him in discussions of the natural beauty we were surrounded by and on the last day actually divided up the contents of his heavy backpack between themselves so he could make our destination. After three days in the subalpine and heat, the crew was happy to return to the parking area where cars and rest were awaiting. I'll never forget what happened next.

As students milled around and happily removed their packs from their backs, this boy came, last, into the area. Students everywhere burst into applause and surrounded him offering high-fives, water and smiles. What an experience for someone whose parents said "never left the basement"! He felt so proud of himself for what he had accomplished, and the whole family showed up in the parking lot back at Bastion to welcome the intrepid hiker home, pride evident on their faces, too.

With support like what the Shuswap Naturalist Club and other groups gives each year towards this program, stories like these are beginning to happen in every camp. As our number of students and families grow each year, stories like these give us hope that nature will be a bigger part of life for families in the Shuswap both now and into the future.

BC Nature Conference and AGM "Canyon to Alpine"

Lillooet, BC, May 4-6

Report by Mike and Pam Saul

The Directors' Meeting held late Thursday afternoon ran smoothly, all agenda items cleared over a "light supper".

An evening video presentation on butterflies was well received.

Mike went on the early morning birding on Friday and the first bird spotted was a Chuckar. Besides the birds there were several Mountain Goats seen climbing along the rock faces of the mountains close to the road.

After breakfast Mike went on the field trip "Backcountry Birding with Ian Routley". Ian is a local physician and his knowledge of where to find the local birds is without equal. To illustrate, when we went to find the Long-Billed Curlews, we almost stepped on a female sitting on four eggs. We also looked at two Golden Eagle nests on a mountainside but the birds were not observed.

Pam's choice of field trip was the tour of Spray Creek Ranch owned by naturalists Tristan & Aubyn Banwell. The 260 acre organic farm is 15k south of Lillooet set on rolling benchland with spectacular views of the Fraser River far below.

The party of 15 toured the ranch on a haybale wagon and enjoyed a home grown lunch of beef, vegetables and fruit. The pasturelands are being restored using ecologically sound principles to meet organic certification requirements.

Heritage breeds are used and all are pasture raised and they include meat & layer chickens, turkeys, pigs and 500 head of Red Angus cattle. Grazing in the Ponderosa Pine zone has been discontinued to allow it to return to the wild. A wonderful day!

The evening video presentation "Grasslands – Whispers in the Wind", was very good.

On Saturday morning we were welcomed to the Bridge River Indian Band Centre about 15 minutes north of the town. The two main video presentations by two Registered Professional Biologists were on Fishers and Wolverines, and both were outstanding.

After a very nice lunch catered by a member on the Band, the A.G.M. got underway. Following the usual legalities and reports the motion to increase dues by \$2 was discussed at some length. It was finally carried unanimously.

There were eight resolutions debated and seven were carried, some after much discussion, and some fairly heated arguments.

The most controversial motion was regarding the B.C. Government policy of killing Grey Wolves to protect Mountain Caribou. A motion to table was defeated. A friendly amendment to re-phrase wording so that it did not point fingers at the newly to-be-elected government by a Shuswap Naturalist representative was carried unanimously. The motion as amended was eventually defeated, 54 in favour, 26 opposed and 12 abstained. It therefore failed to meet the required 65% majority required.

After the dinner on Saturday several awards and presentations were made.

The final video was "Lillooet Flora & Fauna" by Ian Routley and was very interesting.

We both thoroughly enjoyed the visit to Lillooet and the experience of another well organized and very interesting AGM. We look forward to attending the 2018 AGM at U.B.C. hosted by Vancouver Natural History Society May 10 – 13.

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BC Nature Conference and FGM "Lake, Grasslands and Forests"

Vernon, BC September 21-24

Hosted by the North Okanagan
Naturalists' Club

Western Grebe Count Salmon Arm Bay

Report by Di Wittner:

Date of count: June 3, 2017

Start time: 8:45 am

End time: 12:50 pm

Viewing Location	Adults	Babies
Sandy Point south	2	0
Eagle homes west	141	0
Peter Jannink Park	62	0
Pier east/close in	22	0
Pier deep water	19	
Raven/furthest end of trail	8	0
Tappen/Sunnybrae/Canoe	0	0
Totals	254	0

Notes:

- Concentration of nesting grebes in high water behind Eagle Homes lot. Very cool to watch them incubating and building!
- Very calm water and excellent lighting made for good counting!

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Date of count: July 23, 2017

Start time: 8:05 am

End time: 12:20 pm

Viewing Location	Adults	Babies
Sandy Point south	4	2
Eagle homes west	0	0
Peter Jannink Park	32	27
Pier	106	61
Beaver pond platform	17	10
Raven/furthest end of trail	58	35
Tappen/Sunnybrae/Canoe	0	0
Totals	217	135

Notes:

- Total count: **352**
- Late morning boating activity in Sandy Point area chased grebes back toward

Peter Jannink Park in the time between leaving PJ Park and my arrival at Sandy Point. I know I missed a few because of it.

- Wave action toward the end of the count may also have interfered.
- Should have started at 5 am so water would remain calm throughout and before vacationers were out of bed!
- Was able to speed up count (hence accuracy) by violating a few speeding laws on my bike, along the Foreshore Trail. Oh what fun!
- A lone adult loon with juvenile in Tappen Bay! Trust the other adult is there somewhere but good to see a baby!

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Date of count: Aug 19, 2017

Start time: 6:45 am

End time: 10:17 am

Viewing Location	Adults & Juveniles (grouped together)
Sandy Point Bay	44
Peter Jannink Park	0
Pier (west & deep)	75
Pier (east & deep)	79
Bird viewing platform	35
Raven end of trail	53
Tappen Bay	7
Sunnybrae Park	3
Sunnybrae/Canoe	0
Total	296

Notes:

- Total count: **296**
- Whitecaps and wave action in deep areas probably resulted in missed birds
- Started early to avoid boating activity, a definite plus.
- 15 loons in Tappen Bay area! Whoohoo!!!

Note that this is our 28th annual grebe count.

Shuswap Naturalists' Award

Gillian Richardson writes:

The Academic Award which we present each year to a Thompson Rivers University student in environmental studies is given in memory of a Club member. The 2017 award will honour Leslie Stoddart, a member from Blind Bay.

After moving here from Langley, Leslie joined the Shuswap Naturalist Club in 2012 as her interest grew in the natural history of this area. She enjoyed the variety of speakers at our meetings and always got a special kick out of President Ed McDonald's sense of humour. She landscaped her garden which bordered the Balmoral Bluffs forest in Blind Bay to create a quiet, colourful oasis, and filled it with flowers, shrubs, a waterfall and feeders to attract birds, in particular. But, to her delight, deer and sometimes bears wandered through as well. I remember her excitement at seeing a moose mama and calf in her yard. Leslie and I often compared sightings of ruffed grouse and hummingbirds. She participated in the Club's nest box monitoring program; one of her boxes successfully fledged chickadees. In 2014, she helped to organize the silent auction for the BC Nature FGM in Salmon Arm.

Besides her passion for nature, Leslie had a varied background of skills. She served as a volunteer firefighter in Port Kells (Surrey), worked for the Sanitation Department and Water Meters in Vancouver, as a sorter for Canada Post, and for 8 years was co-owner of the Langley City Antique Mall. But it was her experience working for several years at local garden centres that was reflected in her own artistic garden design. Leslie loved to travel, visiting Europe, Central America, Japan and Haida Gwaii.

Sadly, Leslie passed away in February, 2017 at age 65, after a brave and dignified battle with ALS. She inspired her many friends with a cheerful, compassionate spirit, and enthusiasm for learning. These are qualities a student who receives the academic award in Leslie's name

will do well to emulate in their pursuit of environmental studies.



Gillian and Leslie out counting birds.

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Coming Presentations

As arranged by Janet Pattinson:

October 3 - Janet Brown – on Grizzly Bears

November 7 - Dave Ramsey & Barry Wilson

Report on their environment project for students. This is the project to which we lent our support last year.

December 5 - Mike and Pam Saul

Share pictures and stories from their trip to New Zealand

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The weed pull project plan:

The program to eliminate woody nightshade from the Salmon Arm marsh continues. Of major concern now is the area from the beaver dam to Christmas Island, probably requiring several more weed pulls. (We have removed 150 large bags of the invasive weed so far.)

High water kept us out this spring but, along with the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, we have set a new date for October. Mark Wednesday, the 18th on your calendar and come out to help if you can.

Ants and Termites and a mysterious rain

Joyce Henderson writes:

I was privileged to spend 17 days in February and March on a birding tour to Costa Rica with Eagle Eye Tours, a Nelson company.

Birding in Costa Rica holds many surprises, one being a natural phenomenon that I didn't even know existed - an ant swarm.

The army ants that I watched have their home beside a log or some protected place. Thousands of ants just form together into a ball with the queen and eggs in the middle. The outside layers of ants go out every day to forage for food. These massive movements are called ant swarms, a main line of black moving bodies with smaller lines breaking off in all directions. Birders love this phenomena as there are dozens of birds following the swarm - getting their meal. They eat the bugs that are trying to get away from the ants. The particular swarm that I saw was along the path - so all the birds were easy to see as they were close by, not deep into the forest.

A second story is about being in the right place at the right time. We had left the hotel around 3:00 to do some late afternoon birding, saw a rainbow eucalyptus tree with lots of bird activity, so stopped to investigate. The first rainfall of the season had happened the night before. Apparently when the first rainfall happens, the termite queens and drones leave their nest to go off to set up new colonies. There was a hole at the base of this particular tree with all the bird activity, where a mass of termites was streaming out. About 12 birds were on the ground, just picking off the termites as they left the hole. The rest of the birds were catching the termites as they flew off, a real feast for all. We watched for 50 minutes.

Afterwards we counted up the bird species - total - 31!!!. Of course there were many birds of the same species, so you can imagine all the activity. The next day when we drove past there was not a bird near the tree.



Report by Pat Turner:

The painted turtles at McGuire Lake and in the Salmon Arm Bay appear to be maintaining their population levels. In 2014 when we first started counting them, the record count was 16 turtles on September 11th, a warm, sunny, calm day. Turtles appear to like this weather, they certainly do not like very hot or cool and windy days. In the pond in front of the Prestige Inn, the record so far this year is 19, on a similar day as in May. Since the fountain has been turned on we haven't seen a single turtle there.

Turtles do like Shuswap Lake and can be seen swimming near the wharf and sunbathing on rocks and logs in front of the Prestige Inn. Quite often they are seen basking on logs in the beaver ponds and channels and along the Nature Trail. Here they often sit on rocks and seem unworried as long as humans do not get too close, or paddle in the water to get a better look. Dogs that get too close cause the turtles to slip silently into the water and swim away quickly. Humans that stop and point do not seem to worry turtles so much, if not too noisy.

The record count for 2017 at McGuire Lake was 26 turtles, again on a warm, sunny, calm, not too hot day. The overall record for this lake was counted by my daughter (who used to work near McGuire Lake) on April 21st, 2016. During her lunch hour walk around the lake she saw no less than 50 turtles! Once again it was a warm, not hot, calm, sunny day. Unfortunately, she has changed jobs so we won't get this help any more.

The kind person who put up the notices "Turtles Migrating" along Lakeshore Road may have helped save some of the turtles from being run over by speeding cars, and his help is appreciated.