

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

NEWSLETTER

September 2018

Volume 18, number 2

To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing

Tree Swallows

checking the new boxes in the Nature Reserve



Photo (and box) by Pat Hutchins

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
Publicity: Loretta Prosser
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: Janet Aitken (Pres.)
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, 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

Coming Presentations

Oct. 2- **Jeremy Ayotte** - New developments in his work with Bighorn Sheep.
Nov. 6 - **Geoff Styles** - Reporting on the International Ornithology Conference that he attended in Vancouver this August.
Dec. 4 - **Members Share**

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Still in the mud

weed pull project update

We continue in our effort to rid the bay of woody nightshade. We were seeing good results in what we had done so far, but some of these areas are now showing renewed growth and will need to be revisited.



We tackled the large marshy area between the beaver pond and Christmas Island last October, filling 59 large garbage bags. (This brings the total number of bags of woody nightshade taken to the landfill to 210.)

We knew when we began this that it would be an on-going project, but it is important and we cannot give up. There will be another work session this fall. Come help if you can.

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BC Nature Conference and FGM "Connections"

September 20-22, 2018
Hosted by the Central Okanagan
Naturalists' Club, Kelowna, BC
www.okanagannature.org

Salmon Arm Nature Kids Adopt-a-nest box program

Report by Molly Cooperman, leader:

The Salmon Arm Nature Kids club is always looking for fun ways to connect children with nature. On April 8, 2018, thanks to the help of our local biologist and nature mentor, Di Wittner, we started an “adopt-a-nest box” program.

Di met us at the Salmon Arm Bay foreshore parking lot with lots to share and learn. There were eleven young nature enthusiasts and their parents eager to begin monitoring of nest boxes.

A short introduction of the importance of nest boxes and what makes a good nest box was given. Most of the members were unaware that bird nest boxes have special features to make them safe for birds. There was some discussion as to the reason for our monitoring and we were all eager to go find the nest boxes. Each family agreed to monitor from 2 – 5 boxes over the summer.

Many of the boxes already had tree swallows nesting, which was exciting to find. Students took part in the measurements of how high their boxes were and which direction they were

facing. Families were given data tables to record what they saw, including the date, time, weather, and of course, observations.

The first month it was easy to go visit the box from the trail, but for two months the trail was flooded. After returning in July many boxes were still inhabited.

The club plans to meet with Di again in the fall to help clean out the boxes. We hope to continue this program again, and children can start to learn what it is like to be a citizen scientist.



Young Naturalist measuring the height of the bird box he will be monitoring.

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Removing the Yellow Flag Iris



A small patch of Yellow Flag Iris was discovered east of the boardwalk in the marsh.

Because this species can be very destructive to the eco system, we immediately contacted CSISS (Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society). CSISS has been battling this invader on the Turner Creek Trail and was very keen to tackle it before it made serious inroads into our marsh.

Within days they met with us, trained us in the proper method of dealing with this problem, and we got to work on it the next day.

Pictured here are the five hardy members who dug up, bagged and removed the 35 very heavy bags, which we then took to the landfill. It was very hard work, and we thank Sid Visser, Bob and Sandra Ewert and Jim Hoskins.

Western Grebe Count Salmon Arm Bay

Report by Di Wittner:

Date of count: June 12, 2018

Viewing Location	Adults	Babies
Pierre's Point/River mouth	7	0
Eagle Homes	51	0
Peter Janninck Park	33	0
Wharf east	12	0
Wharf deep water	3	0
Raven/furthest end of trail	8	0
Tappen/Sunnybrae/Canoe	9	0
Totals	123	0

Notes:

- Very calm water and excellent lighting made for good counting!
- Could be hidden nesters making the count low.

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Date of count: July 17, 2018

Start time: 7:15 am
End time: 11:50 am

Viewing Location	Adults	Babies
Sandy Point	5	0
Eagle homes west	0	0
Peter Janninck Park	19	11
Wharf	98	54
Beaver pond platform	36	11
Raven/furthest end of trail	8	4
Viewing platform	35	14
Tappen/Sunnybrae/Canoe	0	0
Totals	201	94

Notes:

- Total count: **295** (July count 2017 = 352; July count 2016 = 315)
- Glad the adult numbers are up from June; they must have been hiding on nests.
- Noticed immediately, low juvenile percentage compared to previous years. (Lots of 'childless' adults out there.)
 - Ratio of juveniles to adults in July 2018 = 47%
 - Ratio of juveniles to adults in July 2017 = 62%
 - Ratio of juveniles to adults in July 2016 = 60%
- Counted 4 young still on parents' backs. At a distance, these were difficult to see so there may be a few more I missed. Fingers crossed.
- Significant range in age from tiny babies on parents' backs to sub-adults. Majority in juvenile stage, not yet diving.
- Boaters – canoes, kayaks, and motor boats – caused massive scattering by 10:30 am. Two canoes paddled right into a cluster of grebes, (Idiots!) numbering at least 30 birds, so there may be a slight miscount there.
- Of note: Counted 6 loons in Tappen Bay.

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Date of count: Aug 21, 2018

Start time: 7: 20 am at Bird Viewing Platform
End time: 11:27 am at Sunnybrae boat launch

Viewing Location	Adults & Juveniles (together)
Sandy Point	67
Wharf	31
Beaver walkway (mostly deep water)	107
Bird viewing platform	57
Tappen Bay/Sunnybrae Park	10
Sunnybrae/Canoe	0
Totals	272

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The Salmon Arm Arts Centre is also concerned about the decline in songbirds and will be hosting an Exhibition April/May 2019. We hope to piggy-back on this and host a 'Song Bird Symposium' in June 2019.

In collaboration with Runaway Moon Theatre, Enderby/Armstrong, we were part of 'Birds on Parade' on August 20 at Jack Poole Plaza in Coal Harbour. This Vancouver Bird Festival event was held in conjunction with the 27th International Ornithological Congress (see birdsonparade.com). Our flock of stilt walking birds and some ground birds represented our region. Kathy Stubbington and Aidan Sparks spearheaded our group, assisting with the bird costumes and teaching how to walk on stilts. This Bird Stilt Chorus grows out of past projects in Enderby, and at Vernon's Allan Brooks Nature Centre. In Salmon Arm, we focused on songbirds! Thanks to Pat Hutchins for building the necessary stilts.

Our BC Nature Kids chapter is helping to create Bird Friendly Habitat—bird boxes/ plants /bird feeders. 55 bird houses are now up on the foreshore and will be monitored by the group. Thank you, coordinators Di Wittner and Molly Cooperman, and the volunteers from the Shuswap Naturalist Club who built the bird boxes. A number of them had to be 'rescued' and moved higher up the posts due to high water. We hope to raise more this fall.

Janet Aitken writes:

"Save Shuswap Songbirds" is a NEW, joint project with SABNES and the Shuswap Naturalist Club. We believe that greater awareness is needed to save our songbirds as their numbers are declining at an alarming rate. It is difficult to imagine a world without bird song. We would like to encourage community support by focusing on what we can do here in the Shuswap to support our songbirds.

We have just been awarded a grant from the Shuswap Community Foundation for our work with songbirds. Our 'Save Shuswap Songbirds' Committee plans to create a number of posters and signs with messaging and photographs to alert the public to ways they can help protect songbirds. SABNES would also like to create some new signs along the foreshore to raise public awareness of wildlife, in general. Look for our new logo around town. As you know, our Shuswap Naturalist Club has some amazing photographers including Clive Bryson and Pat Hutchins who are willing to share their photos for the signage.

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Western Grebe Count

continued from page 4

Notes on the August 21st count:

- Total count: 272
- After two weeks of being thwarted by smoke, boaters, etc., conditions very good this morning. Excellent stillness, very little boat activity, many birds at rest – made for very good counting.
- Smoke caused limited viewing across long distances but the positive factors more than compensated.
- Noted a few young birds but most grebes were adult in size.

- Didn't count total loons but noted quite a few all the way from Sandy Point to Sunnybrae Park. Same goes for Red-neck Grebes.

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Wildlife rescue group

On July 29, Di Wittner gave five club members a two and a half hour session on the proper procedures in dealing with injured wildlife, who to contact and how to handle the injured animal. More information to follow.

BC Nature AGM May 2018

Report by Janet Pattinson:

It was beautiful spring weather in Vancouver for the BC Nature AGM hosted by the Vancouver Natural History Society as they celebrated their 100th birthday! It was held at UBC, an excellent setting for enjoying talks on nature topics and close to many spots for field trips.

The theme for the event was: Promoting Health in Nature, Past, Present and Future. Experts in forestry pointed out the health benefits of spending time in the forest and the value of the “urban forest”.

I went on a field trip to a pair of rejuvenated streams in Pacific Spirit Park. Streams in the whole of Vancouver have been relegated to drainage pipes but the Salish Creek and Spanish Banks Creek have been “daylighted”, meaning that instead of being in culverts they are now open, though the channels have been modified. Some fish have either been added to the streams or have found the streams themselves.

Another field trip I took was to the UBC farm which follows an “organic” form of agriculture, though the limited space is used for a selection of market crops such as fruit and vegetables. However, they do have some chickens - very pretty!

The final talk of the event, given at the Saturday banquet, was about bees. Lori Weidenhammer, a very enthusiastic bee person, showed us pictures of many varieties of native bees and talked about the plants they especially like. She considers the introduced honey bees to be a risk to the native bees. She is greatly in favour of planting native bushes and wildflowers to help out the bees which are greatly in danger due to the agricultural use of Neonics. She has written a book with everything you need to know about native bees!

Overall it was a very successful event. All are invited to next year’s AGM in Cowichan Valley.



photo by Pat Hutchins

A book review by Ed:

Listening to the Bees

by Mark Winston & Renee Sakliken

I purchased this book mid-June after hearing it reviewed on CBC. In it Mark writes the scientific narrative and Renee provides a lyrical interpretation with her poetry.

The narrative begins in 1974 with Mark working in the Yucatan Peninsula, studying the amazing work of the dung beetle. He is ready to spend his life studying the beetle when word gets out that the African “killer” honeybees have accidentally been introduced in South America, and so his quest to study bees begins.

Mark mentions the plants that attract bees, and he stresses the toxic interaction between pesticides and bees. This is especially true when it comes to the use of neonics in the practice of monoculture. After 40 years of research, Mark Winston is considered one of the foremost authorities on bees, and he gives a compelling case for the worrisome implications of mass bee die-off for agriculture.

There are more than 20,000 species of bees. They can be divided into two classes – those having short or long tongues. This determines the plants from which the bees will gather their nectar.

Renee is poet laureate for the city of Surrey. Don’t expect the “tintinnabulation of the bees, bees, bees”. The poetry in this book is modern in style, with words stressing what she believes to be the important message of the narrative.

Shuswap Naturalists' Award

The Academic Award which we present each year to a Thompson Rivers University student in environmental studies is given in memory or honour of a Club member. This year the award will be given in honour of Eric Grayston, our first member to pass the 100-year-old mark.



Eric was born in Alberta in September of 1917. While still very young, he and his family moved to a farm in the Deep Creek area. When not helping on the farm, he took great pleasure in climbing all over the hills and mountains that surrounded him.

He tells of a time when he was out hiking and came across the carcasses of two moose, shot and left, apparently killed for no reason. This left a lasting impression on him and created his desire to protect wildlife.

As an adult he worked for the CPR in an office in Coquitlam. Upon retirement he returned to the Salmon Arm area. He says he came back for the hills and mountains, he so missed hiking in them.

Eric became a member of the club in 2000 and remains a member still. We enjoyed him at the meetings, and his wisdom and sense of humour are appreciated still.

Today he lives in his own home where he feeds birds and tends his vegetable and flower garden. He will make you a cup of coffee if you visit him. He is very good at identifying the birds

and says they are not shy to tell him when they have finished their seed.

Eric is an excellent example of a person who loves nature and wants future generations to also have the opportunity to enjoy it.

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Nature on Radio

From Janet Pattinson:

Since our springtime decision to promote Nature on Voice of the Shuswap Community Radio several members have stepped forward to participate in the venture.

We started off with four reports by Di Wittner. She provided the community with the research to back up our concerns regarding the dogs in the Nature Bay marsh area as well as details about migratory birds and the grebes.

Ed McDonald talked about the marsh and the keystone species there.

Gillian Richardson started off our project to Save our Shuswap Songbirds with comments on the joys of watching the birds and why we should be doing what we can to keep them amongst us! We anticipate a follow up on that topic.

Geoff Styles told the listening audience all about his Wild Wonders camps this summer. We are hoping to have some further news on the Outdoor School as it gets rolling.

Jeremy Ayotte talked about the Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology and bats.

Molly Cooperman is booked to tell us about Nature Kids and the Adams River Salmon.

Many thanks to all of those volunteers for giving their time and insights. If you have some ideas about topics for our Nature Reports or for our meeting presentations, I would be keen to hear from you. I'm at 250 835 2270.

CKVS (FM 93.7)

Friday 6:00 PM, repeated Monday at noon
(alternate weeks, more or less)

Naturalists' Club Outings

Fall 2018

Note from Dawn McDonald:

Our outings coordinators have prepared the fall schedule with high hopes that the weather will be cooperative. Our flora and fauna have struggled through our hot smoky days as well, and we are all happily awaiting the welcome relief of cooler fall weather.

We have included another Saturday outing with Kyle this fall and look forward to that.

Since the weather was too dry last year for Mitch Milgram's mushroom walk we hope this fall will bring the necessary rains. If you've got a magnifier or reference guide, bring them along with your usual gear. Bring snacks or a lunch if you'd like to picnic at the chalet before the return trip.

The foreshore outing gives us an opportunity to enjoy our local shorebirds. Those interested will meet for a "wind up" lunch at the Prestige Inn afterwards.

We are eagerly anticipating wandering our happy trails this fall and hearing the news from your summer experiences.

Outing Schedule:

Thurs. Sept. 13 – Turtle Valley and Lakes
9:00 - SE corner of Piccadilly Mall Parking Lot
Leaders: Hanne, Marie, Dawn and Pat

Sat. Sept. 22 - Enderby River Walk
9:00 - Arena Parking beside Junglemania
Leader: Kyle Fitzpatrick

Thurs. Oct. 4 - Meander the trails of the Larch Hills with mushroom specialist Mitch Milgram.
9:15 - Arena Parking beside Junglemania
10:00 - Larch Hills Parking Lot
Leaders: Mitch Milgram, Pat Danforth

Thurs. Oct. 11 - Salmon Arm Bay Foreshore
10:00 - SABNES Parking Lot
Leaders: Roger Beardmore, Ed McDonald



Report by Pat Turner:

There seem to be fewer turtles basking on logs or swimming in McGuire Lake this summer. The highest total so far was 22 turtles on April 22nd. The count was down to 14 on May 14th and only 4 on May 28th. After that, several counts of zero. Possibly our long hard winter was very hard on the turtles.

Whether the hot spell at the end of May had them thinking it was high summer and time to trundle off downhill across road and railroad to join friends and relations in Shuswap Lake, only the turtles know.

The high-water level in the big lake made it difficult to access the trail beyond Christmas Island, a favourite place for turtles to sun themselves on rocks and logs, so I've not seen nearly as many turtles on that stretch of trail as last year. Some turtles like the logs among the reeds on the channels made by the beavers, but these are not easy to see.

One happy note, though, is that there appears to be a large number of very small turtles.

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"To know nature and keep it worth knowing"