

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Newspacket

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September-October 2011



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**North Okanagan Naturalists' Club
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* Federation of B.C. Natuarlists (BC Nature)
** Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Plan

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September-October 2011 Issue
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OUR COVER THIS ISSUE : Three new interpretive signs were installed at Cools Pond this summer, thanks to funding from BC Nature and the assistance of NONC volunteers and RDNO staff.

Newspacket is published five times per year, in January-February, March-April, May-June, September-October and November-December issues. Copy should be delivered to Harold Sellers, Editor, e-mail hikerharold@gmail.com

NONC NOTES by Kay Bart.

Our 'Emblem' correction: While working on the format for the James Grant Award to the B.C. Entomological Society we find we have erred in some information. Thanks to Ward Strong, our well-known entomologist, who pointed out that when I was describing the story about finding the 'bog orchid' with Jim Grant and John Shephard, he was a bit puzzled when I mentioned it as the first 'bog orchid' in B.C. He knew there were others throughout B.C. Bog Orchids are in the genus *Platanthera*. Jim's find was *Liparis loeselii*, the Yellow Widelip Orchid. So we stand corrected and thank Ward for his interest.

Peter & Hylda Mayfield are to be congratulated on being awarded a Regional District Environmental Leadership Award on June 6, 2011. The specialty was Invasive Plants. Our Club is doing well: other members who have won awards are Malcolm Martin, Kay Bart., Margaret Martin, Sharon Lawrence, David Kennedy and the Club as a whole for the Swan Lake Project.

Frank and Mary Paul are congratulated re their 60th wedding anniversary. Frank was the chap who started our 'camping efforts', more or less. He took a group of us for a canoeing trip to the Bowron Lakes but before we could go we had 'canoeing lessons' even to the point of dumping ourselves in Kal Lake and climbing back into the canoes. He was elected our President on October 2, 1968. He won the BC Nature Elton Award in 1992 and was their President at one time...and me as Secretary!!

Congratulations to Jack & Gwen Hairsine who have just celebrated their fifty-fifth wedding anniversary. They are members who brought their family to most of our Summer Camps. Jack was elected NONC President in 1978. He was also our Treasurer for many years. One of my many memories was of he and I spending almost a day looking for 1 cent in our bank balance when we were getting ready for the audit. We were so insistent we were going to get it right. And we did!

Interesting to see an article about 'Fireflies' in the summer version of BC Nature. Members may not have known that Bob McVickar was quoted as having being interested in fireflies. We visited Bob quite often and one night, while there, he asked us if we would like to go 'firefly hunting' and we declined. Now I am sorry, we didn't know he was so serious about this...we missed a good opportunity. Bob was a great chap. ❖

Calendar

Wed., September 7 - NONC meeting at Best Western Vernon Lodge, 7:30 p.m. Our speaker will be Jessica Gosling on "Where do rattlesnakes go on summer vacation?"

Sunday, September 18 – Haney House, south of Salmon Arm, Harvest Celebration – tasting of local foods and wines plus tour of the heritage house, 3 to 6 p.m. Responsible for your own tickets: \$20 in advance from mid-summer on (250-832-5243) or \$25 at the gate. Contact Robyn Thornton 549-2714 by September 4.

October 14, 15 or 16 – Geology Excursion with Jamie Kidston – Phone Ray Arlt 542-2048 by September 26th with your choice of date.

Thursday, November 24 – Winter Bird Walk in Kal Park. Meet 9:30 a.m. in Priest Valley Gym Parking lot. Bring lunch. Contact Margaret Hubble 542-2712.

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Hylde & Peter Mayfield Honored

On Monday, June 6th, the City of Vernon and the North Okanagan Regional District co-hosted the 2011 Sustainability/Environmental Leadership Awards at the Powerhouse Theatre.

Peter and Hylde Mayfield (pictured below) were amongst those recognized, in their case in the Invasive Plants Control category, for their organization of the annual Knapweed Pull at Allan Brooks Nature Centre.



Annual Field Day

by Kay Bartholomew & Aaron Deans

Saturday, May 7, 2011

We were blessed with terrific Field Day weather. About 50 members turned up at the meeting spot at 9:00 A.M. near Sparkling Hill. Apparently no one got lost finding it...good maps Harold!

To begin the day everyone first walked up to the lunch meeting area (directly below Sparkling Hill) and we split up into five groups. Each group was given a GPS (Global Positioning System), a clipboard to record waypoints and observations, and a trail map of the route they were to hike.

There were five different hikes ranging from a gentle 1.2km around the resort to a 3km scenic jaunt above Okanagan Lake. Before departing members assigned a GPS were given a brief overview on the basic functions (e.g., waypoint creation) of the handheld unit.

Every group came up with some highlight observations along the way. Some of those included: Yellow-headed Blackbirds, prickly pear cactus, Northern Saw-whet Owl, black bear droppings (not too fresh), porcupine, Western Meadowlark, Cassin's Vireo, Northern Alligator Lizard, wild strawberry and chocolate lily. After lunch most members participated in a Nature Trail set up by Ray Arlt.

At 5:00 P.M. a total of 54 members showed up for dinner and guest speaker, Steven Franklin. Ann greeted everyone at the door and gave out the special tickets, Jo prepared the flowers for the tables, Kay arranged the placements, and Bob and Joyce took care of everybody at the bar. The bar opened at 5:30 P.M... and did very well.

At 6:30 P.M. Pam Jenkins introduced Emcee
September-October 2011



above: hiking at Sparkling Hill

Harold Sellers, who proceeded to draw table numbers to initiate dinner from the buffet.

At 7:25 P.M. Aaron gave the results and highlights of the morning session showing a map with the locations of all the natural history sightings from around the Sparkling Hill trail system.

At 7:45 P.M. Ray went over the Nature Trail questions and prizes were awarded to Marnie Williamson and Ann Langer as well as Adam Moss and Harold. Bob Hebbert won the best poem. Thank you to Hylda Mayfield for procuring the prizes.

At 8:00 P.M. Bob introduced our guest speaker, Dr. Steven Franklin, President and Vice-Chancellor of Trent University. His talk was entitled: Remote sensing, biodiversity, grizzly bear habitat and the future of environmental research.

It was the third time that Steven had delivered a talk to the club. Bob thanked him and presented Steven with a special honorarium.

We managed to clean up and be on our way home by 9:30 P.M. – another great day to remember. ❖

Rare Bird Alert

by Gail Loughridge

ALark Sparrow was spotted on the Bella Vista Range on June 17, 2011 by myself. Not realizing it was a rare species for the North Okanagan, I just put it on my list on the Atlas Breeding Bird Survey for BC and thought nothing more about it.

There was a nesting pair and they were getting right down to the nitty-gritty of raising some young. Lark Sparrows nest on the ground which is where they like to be. They have a distinctive head pattern (chestnut cheeks) with a white corner tail and are a large plump sparrow.

A week later Candis Eikerman emailed me and questioned me on it. I told her I was sure of what I saw after checking numerous bird books for the area. It had been Red Flagged on the Survey so I was to do an in depth report on it. However, Candis decided to come and have a



look for herself. On July 3, 2011, Pat McAllister, Candis and I hiked up on top and we found the pair of them, where I had seen them earlier. What a great find. And it's nice to know that what you thought you saw is what you really saw. Hey!!!

They turned out to be an exciting find. One never knows what you will find when you go out birding. ❖

Bird Watching Outings

Sunday September 25th
Saturday October 1st
Sunday October 9th
Saturday October 15th
Sunday October 23rd
Saturday October 29th



Meet at Performing Arts Centre
at 9 a.m.
Peter & Hylde Mayfield if you
have questions, 549-8478



Hummingbird 2011 Report

story and photo by Gail Loughridge

The experts say that hummingbirds are site specific. And to a certain degree they are. They seem to come back to the same site here in B.C. to breed every year. We only had three returnees this year from previous years; not a large number. We also had another bird we banded on July 7th and recaptured him at the same site on August 6th.

However, this year we have found a big difference in our bi-monthly Humband monitoring sites. The big question is WHY? We could suggest it was the cold wet spring when migrating or it could be habitat loss. Or, other unknown reasons. There have been a lot fewer birds on these sites than other sites I have monitored yearly since 2005, and some new sites added this year.

It was a really slow start to the season this year and we got skunked a few times. And that was really disappointing. We did band 256 birds – 184 Calliope, 59 Rufous and 13 Blackchin (an all-time high for this area). Last year we banded 384 hummingbirds.

We had new and exciting sites that produced the most hummingbirds to be banded and that was encouraging.

Our most exciting news this year was a report from Fort Davis, Texas that one of our Vernon, B.C. birds banded 3 years ago was caught in July. This is exciting news, as we now know that birds do travel through Texas from here

to their wintering grounds. Also, the last two years a hummingbird banded in Dunster, B.C. was captured at the same place. Amazing birds!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the North Okanagan Naturalist Club for sponsoring this scientific-based project. Without this support all this information and data would not be available.

I would also like to thank the Humband Network Monitoring sites, the Paul's and the Hammerl's, for allowing us to come to their homes so early in the morning, twice a month and band the wee birds. And finally, I would like to thank each and every volunteer new and old for their time and effort to make this yearly project possible. THANK YOU EVERYONE.

One last note. I will be giving an update on the Hummingbird Banding Project here in the North Okanagan, on Wednesday, October 5, 2011 at the Best Western, at the North Okanagan Naturalist monthly meeting. Hope to see everyone there. ❖



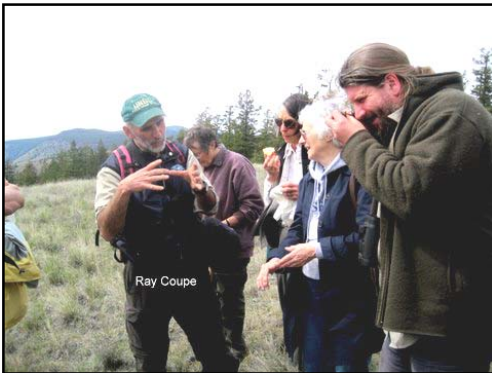
BC Nature AGM

Williams Lake
May 11-16 2011

by Pamela Jenkins

One of the BC Naturalists clubs hosts the AGM each May. This year it was held in Williams Lake. Participants made their own overnight reservations and meetings were held at a Thompson Rivers University campus, a converted secondary school building.

A pre-conference trip was offered to Churn Creek Park. Sixty participants went in three different groups of twenty to three areas in the park. Ray Coupe, one of the authors of 'Plants of the Southern Interior', was one of the leaders of my group. The other was a biology professor, Rob Higgins, whose specialty was Ants.



above: Ray Coupe with his group

Before we reached the park we had stopped at Alkali Lake to look at the waterbirds, which included a pelican, mergansers, cinnamon teal, ruddy ducks, scaup and lots of Canada geese.

We hiked over dry rolling grasslands to a point where we could see the gulch carved out by the Fraser River. Ray had many stops to identify various plants. He particularly wanted us to see a native grass, red three awn grass. He also pointed out needle and thread grasses.

On Friday there were early morning birding trips. I chose to go to Scout Island, which has a man-made road connection, so you can drive to the start of the trails. The evening before I had hiked to it from my motel with other participants. Walking and looking, we saw many types of ducks, but also swallows, warblers, chickadees, gold finches and other birds.

After breakfast at the motel we drove out to Thompson Rivers University (TRU) for the morning presentations.

The first Friday morning presentation was by Karen Wiebe, a professor from UNBC in Prince George. She is studying the Northern Flicker, which includes the red and yellow shafted types. These birds are primary cavity nesters, creating holes for themselves, which other birds or small animal species may use at a later date. Karen has about 900 cavities, which she monitors, together with some of her students, around Riske Creek.

The next speaker was Professor Rob Higgins telling us about his ant research. He has studied ants in Malaysia and Borneo. He told us that ants are global, found in the tropics and the Arctic and Antarctic. The only places with no native ants are Hawaii and Iceland. We have about 90 species in BC. A European ant has invaded North Vancouver. Bears find ants a good food source.

Another speaker was Ordell Steen, a Regional Ecologist for the Ministry of Forests. He spoke of the ecosystems on the plateau between the Coast Mountains to the West and the Cariboo Mountains to the East. A montane forest connects the North and South with Interior Douglas Fir, which has upswept branches. The trees have thick bark and are fire resistant. The pointed crowns ensures that snow falls off.

The Southern extent of the Northern cedar hemlock forests is just South of Quesnel and

the whole area is quite diverse with lots of varied habitat. He said that pelicans nest at Stum Lake, which is also called Pelican Park.

The final speaker was a local fisheries biologist. He mentioned Chilko Lake with two Provincial Parks and thousands of kilometres of sandy shore line. In the northern park you may see grizzlies. It is extremely sensitive and affected by any climate change, with numerous beautiful bays, accessible by boat.

Quesnel Lake is a very high deep lake, maybe the 8th deepest lake in the world, with a rich fish industry. He also urged for protection of Churn Creek and the Horsefly park and river.

On Friday afternoon there were several trips to choose. I went to see the Upper Grasslands above the Farwell and Chilcotin Rivers. Rob Coupe was also on this trip showing us grasses and the difference in vegetation in gullies on the hillsides.

The car driver took her car load down to the Farwell Canyon, where there had once been a homestead. A road led over to the Gang Ranch.

After dinner on our own, we returned to TRU for desserts and a relaxing slide show presentation by Chris Harris, illustrating his recently published book "Motherstone: British Columbia's Volcanic Plateau". The show was set to music, so all we had to do was enjoy and absorb.

It rained all day on Saturday, but I still managed early morning birding with Phil Ranson, who had once been a NONC president, but now works in Williams Lake. We met above Williams Creek on the edge of town. At one spot we could see osprey and bald eagles perched on trees and observing us, thinking we were crazy to be out in the rain. We saw some water birds on the creek.

Some people were able to go on morning trips, but directors and executive needed to attend meetings both in the morning and afternoon. It was good to discover that BC Nature is no longer financially distressed.

BC Nature is concerned about the lack of funding for BC Parks, even after it had been promised. Therefore we must all write letters to government officials.

Vivien Birch Jones from Lillooet will be our next Regional Director. Don Guild has taken the Parks and Conservation areas position.

The Fall meeting will be in Tsawwassen September 29 - October 2. The 2012 AGM will be in Kelowna. Read about other camps and activities in the BC Nature magazines.

All the foods served at this AGM were collected and made locally, keeping it both wholesome and natural.

The guest speaker following a lovely natural banquet was Wayne Sawchuk, who showed pictures of his 25 years exploring the Muskwa-Kechika mountainous terrain of North Eastern BC. I could feel the wetness of the area in some of his pictures.

The cloud cover was low on Sunday morning, almost convincing me to drive home, but I had found a place on the Horsefly trip with Barry Booth of TLC. He is based in Prince George, but monitors his Horsefly area.

We drove out to Horsefly, where there is a store and a few houses, before proceeding past a campsite and along the Horsefly River on a gravel road. The valley has been grazed and farmed for a long time. Some of the natural ox bow bends and flood plains have been adapted for farming. The Land Trust has acquired some of this land to attempt to restore it to its natural state, by planting natural trees and shrubs to

hasten the process. We stopped at one of his sites to eat our lunch, before walking across his bumpy trenched rows planted with suitable trees and shrubs. Only a few evergreens had taken, so there were many spaces with no growth. In some places he had plastic sheets and had planted experimentally, to see if there was a better method. Views of the snow-covered Cariboo Mountains in Wells Gray Park were an attractive site.

Later on we stopped to walk down to the river at another site. A dike had been breached to allow an oxbow to re-establish itself. A grove of Black Cottonwood is very wet and almost flooded. Barry said it is one of his favourite places to visit when in full foliage later on.

Our last stop on this trip was to walk on a trail down to the Horsefly Falls.

Jack and Lyn Smith were also at the conference. We enjoyed Chinese food together that evening, then had another dusk walk around Scout Island. This time we saw widgeon, cinnamon and blue winged teal, bufflehead, red necked grebes, yellow rumped and orange crowned warblers and other birds when we walked to the end of the island.

Monday morning it was raining again. Some planned to explore the Horsefly area they had missed on Sunday, before the 4-1/2 hour drive from Williams Lake back to Vernon. ❖

Naturalist Humor

Definition of a Bird Watcher
a currency trader who keeps an eye
on the Canadian currency (the loon).

(thanks to V.E. (Vivian) Merchant)

EASY TICK REMOVAL

via Terry Hurst

This method works in those places where it's sometimes difficult to get to with tweezers: between toes, in the middle of a head full of dark hair, etc.

Apply a glob of liquid soap to a cotton ball. Cover the tick with the soap-soaked cotton ball and swab it for a few seconds (15-20). The tick will come out on its own and will be stuck to the cotton ball when you lift it away. This technique works well and is much less traumatic for the patient.

Unless one is allergic to soap, this method would not be harmful in any way.

Below: a picture of our longtime member Wendy Hooke who recently rode a horse on her 90th birthday - photo: Peter Mayfield

