

NEWSPACKET

M A R C H - A P R I L 2 0 2 0



Bobcat *photograph by Carla Hunt*

About two or three times the size of an average housecat, the bobcat is often mistaken for a lynx, and requires careful examination to distinguish it from its northern relative. The bobcat is smaller in size, its legs are shorter and its black-striped and white-tipped tail is longer than that of the lynx.

Bobcats reside throughout North America, ranging from southern Canada, through the continental United States and northern Mexico.

Bobcats only associate with one another to mate and otherwise live alone. Females have litters of 1-6 kittens, usually raising their young in a den, under a ledge, in a dense thicket or within a hollow log, as other Canadian wild cats do. When males grow up, they go off to establish their own territories far away, whereas female Bobcats usually settle near their mothers. In the wild, Bobcats live 12-13 years, but in captivity can live past 30.

They are great climbers and swimmers that will eat almost any type of prey, and although they are often killed due to a belief that they pose a danger to livestock, they are more inclined to go after small mammals that attack farmers' crops, such as rabbits and mice. Despite its small size, a Bobcat can also take down a deer.

Bobcats are so-named because of their tails. Though many felines have long, sinuous tails, an adult bobcat's averages just 6 to 7 inches in length; the word bobcat is a reference to this stubby appendage. (various references on the internet)

NONC

Birds of the North Okanagan Part 6: Jan. to Feb. 28, 2020

by Chris Siddle

All sightings, unless otherwise noted, were made by Chris Siddle. Sightings of usual or rare birds require documentation in the form of carefully written physical descriptions of the birds or (preferably) photographs. Send your sightings directly to chris.siddle@gmail.com or enter them in the online program ebird.

THIS report period began with a significant snowfall on 30 Dec. adding to the several centimeters already on the ground. Areas like Okanagan Landing received significantly less snow than did the Foothills.

Snow fell steadily through 6 January as well. By 7 Jan. many areas had an accumulation of 0.3-0.5 metres of snow cover, which caused raptors to become more visible as they shifted across the fields and into backyards in search of prey. On 10-12 Jan. more storms contributed significant additions to the snowpack, with more snow predicted from a series of storms to follow in mid-month. February was less snowy, particularly during the last half month which produced some occasional sunny days and daily high temperatures between 2-10 degrees Celsius.

The only Greater White-fronted Goose of the period was reported by Gail Loughridge 7 Jan. over Skyview Rd., Vernon. A single Cackling Goose was photographed with several Canada Geese on Vernon Bay, Okanagan Landing, 21 Feb. During the final week of Feb. pairs of Canada Geese were exploring potential nesting sites such as the top of the Vernon Courthouse and a ledge on the cliff along 32 Ave. west of Alexis Park Drive. The Swan and Eagle count of 12 Jan. was washed out due to poor

visibility. On 17 Feb. 76 Trumpeter Swans were counted at two sites: the snowy corn field at O'Keefe Ranch and the marsh at the north end of Otter Lake. On 25 Feb. the number of swans had increased to 108 at the marsh.

Two-five Gadwalls were found at least three times with Mallards at the Polson Park duck pond in Jan. and Feb. One of the male Gadwalls showed the distinctive brown cap that a small number of North American drake Gadwalls possess. As far as ornithologists know, such individuals are not hybrids but genetic variants, very rare within the species' Eurasian range, slightly less so within its North American range.

Vicky Aitkins and her husband spotted a Gray Partridge, now a very rare species in the North Okanagan, in the parking lot of the Mormon Church on Mission Hill 5 Jan.

As usual during the coldest spell in Jan. California Gulls disappeared from the North Okanagan but returned in variable numbers with warmer weather from mid Feb. onwards. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was photographed at the gull roost at the mouth of Vernon Creek, Okanagan Landing 15 Feb. The next day Kalin Ocana of Kelowna photographed what was probably the same individual at the mouth of Mission Creek, Kelowna. An adult Glaucous Gull, a rare migrant and winter visitor, was photographed at Vernon Creek mouth 21 Feb.

Great Blue Herons are usually uncommon winter residents around unfrozen waters and even standing relatively close to ice fishermen on Swan Lake. In January I saw none in the North Okanagan. It wasn't until 22 Feb. that I saw one flying over the south end of Swan Lake.

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Birds of the North Okanagan continued

R. Tammi spotted two harriers near The Rise on 22 Feb. where a steep southern exposure had enabled the snow cover to melt.



below : An adult Bald Eagle at one of its two nests near the mouth of Coldstream Creek. Bald Eagle pairs often have an alternate nest that they use alternate years. While this individual was digging in the snow in this nest, its mate was perched near the other nest which is closer to Postill Road. 22 Jan.

above: An adult Glaucous Gull, a rare visitor from the Arctic, at the gull roost, Okanagan Landing, 21 Feb. 2020. The Glaucous Gull is among the largest gulls in the world, subsisting in the Arctic on Polar Bear leavings, dead whales, eggs and young of colonial nesting seabirds, and other choice items.

A pair of adult Golden Eagles were soaring together above the Bella Vista range west of Okanagan Landing 25 Feb. This species is actually quite uncommon in the North Okanagan and is over reported based upon misidentified juvenile Bald Eagles. Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks virtually disappeared with the coming of the heavy snow in mid Jan. Presumably both species found the frozen snow cover of mid Jan. onwards difficult to penetrate in their search for mice and voles.



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Birds of the North Okanagan continued

Jack VanDyk discovered a very striking partially albino Red-tailed Hawk along 15th Ave. 30 Dec. According to Brian Wheeler, raptor expert and author of *The Raptors of the West*, partial albinism is fairly common among Red-tails. Leucistic birds will show a lightening of normally dark areas, producing a “shadow” effect of normal plumage patterns, whereas albinism produces unpatterned white areas.

Only one Peregrine Falcon was reported, by Jack VanDyk 20 Jan., along 46th Avenue. Tiny numbers of American Kestrels were somehow able to scrounge a living from roadsides along routes like Old Kamloops Rd.

An American Three-toed Woodpecker was along Whitevale Road between Learmouth and Dure Meadow Road 9 Jan. (Scott Thompson).

Visiting birders got very lucky spring arrivals on 27 Feb. spotting not only the first Violet-green Swallows (3) at Vernon Bay, Okanagan Landing, but also the first Say's Phoebe near Adventure Bay (Roger Beardmore; John Woods).

The Blue Jay at Stepping Stones continued throughout the period (Tracy Lutz-Noel, many observers). Claire Christensen photographed the Blue Jay as did Jack VanDyk in Jan.

Western Bluebirds routinely winter in the South Okanagan. Two along Bench Row Road and 6 on Tavistock Road, Adventure Bay, in late February (Jack VanDyk) could be considered spring arrivals.

In spite of the absence of wild fruit and mountain ash berries, Bohemian Waxwings still occurred throughout the North Okanagan, though likely in lower than usual numbers.

Although in decline across North America, Evening Grosbeaks seemed slightly more common in the North Okanagan than in the last few years, with small numbers seen at Lumby (Scott Thompson) and Otter Lake, as well as north of Armstrong. A flock of ten males made a very brief visit to my feeders near Silver Star and Star roads on 26 Feb. Pine Grosbeaks were reported in the lowlands in about normal numbers all winter. A female-type Purple Finch, a rare winter visitor, appeared for a few minutes at 6131 Silver Star Road 31 Jan. After stating in my last report on 27 Dec. that Pine Siskins were rare this winter, two showed up in my backyard on 30 Dec. Thereafter 2-3 continued in my yard off and on through the winter. Jack VanDyk had as many as 30 at his feeding stations by early Feb. A single Common Redpoll appeared the afternoon of 11 Jan. at 6131 Silver Star Road and one was at Pottery Road Feb.

A visit to Swan Lake Nature Reserve Park on 3 Jan. revealed that American Tree Sparrows were feeding like a flock among tall weeds between the parking lot and the creek crossing. Twenty-nine were counted at one time. Thereafter the species became much harder to find. One spent part of Feb. at Jack VanDyk's feeders on Pottery Road.

A single Yellow-headed Blackbird was photographed along Powerhouse Road, (presumably at the Armstrong landfill) 10 Feb. (Jack VanDyk). 🌍

WHAT'S IN A NAME?**Wilson's Snipe**

The name “snipe” is derived from “snite,” a variant of “snout,” and refers to the long bill of the bird. Its common name commemorates the American ornithologist Alexander Wilson.

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2020 North Okanagan Swan and Eagle Count

Sunday, January 12th

by Rod Drennan

Vernon Area Count Co-Coordinator

THE Swan and Eagle Count is a citizen science program that occurs mid-January each year. The North Okanagan Naturalists' Club contributes to the tally of Swans and Eagles annually. The count monitors the current population status of these birds in southern interior British Columbia. The 2020 count was 40th year for Swans and 26th year for Eagles.

The North Okanagan count zone covers four areas with a total of seven different routes throughout our region. Seventeen people took part in this count.

The routes are covered by different groups with one group going as far north as Sicamous, another to the south end of Mabel Lake via Lavington and Lumby and a third group counting from Enderby through Kingfisher and out to Mabel Lake. In the Vernon area three groups scout Kalamalka and Okanagan lakes, going as far as south Oyama and Carr's Landing. The Commonage and Coldstream are also patrolled.

The count numbers are compiled with others from the BC Interior and elsewhere and form a database used by university students and graduate ornithologists in various bird research programs.

Below are 10 years of Swan & Eagle Counts in the North Okanagan. 

Year	Bald Eagle			Golden Eagle	Trumpeter Swan			Tundra Swan
	Adult	Immature	Total	Adult	Adult	Immature	Total	Adult
2020	101	47	148	0	137	11	148	0
2019	145	63	208	2	102	15	117	0
2018	100	25	125	2	109	9	118	0
2017	139	45	184	8	143	16	159	1
2016	134	35	169	1	123	37	160	0
2015	88	51	139	2	89	27	116	0
2014	102	44	146	0	78	7	85	0
2013	104	42	146	0	43	13	56	0
2012	100	52	152	0	103	36	139	0
2011	96	26	122	0	120	24	144	0

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Easter Lilies in Cherryville?

by Margaret Mackenzie

AS a child living in Coquitlam (near Vancouver), each Easter my friend Shirley and myself would walk out our backyards into a mixed forest of fir, maple, alder and cedar, and pick handfuls of trilliums which we brought back and placed in vases. It became a tradition with us. We didn't know the correct name for them then and called them Easter Lilies.

Years later Shirley had moved to Cherryville and she was the one who first told me there were trilliums growing at the Shuswap River Picnic Site near her farm. The two of us would take an annual walk through the small park and enjoy seeing the lovely 3-petalled white flowers scattered throughout the woods just as we had in our childhood days. There was one big difference though from when we were children. We didn't pick a single one! Like many plants in the Lily family, trilliums die when any part of the plant, including the flower, is picked.

Trillium ovatum or Western Trillium, is the only common species found in BC, but it is just one of several dozen species of trillium found in North America. Western Trillium is mainly found on the

coast but here and there south of the Shuswap Lakes and in the East Kootenay, you can find trilliums growing at low to mid-elevations and in moist to wet woods or open seepage areas. Travelling on a road from Grand Forks to Edgewood in late May one year, I was surprised to find a few along the road edges. On the same trip we stopped at a small pond or two near the summit before Cherryville and found more trilliums.



Trillium ovatum is in the family Liliaceae. Some taxonomists have placed the genus in a separate family called Melanthiaceae but I've not seen the change in our own BC Government taxonomy site yet. So for our purposes here we will leave Trillium in the Lilly family. Trillium comes from the Latin meaning "in 3's" referring to the leaves, petals, sepals and stigmas.

Here in the interior once the snow leaves the ground, a short thick stem erupts from stout rhizomes with a whorl of usually three large green leaves, then a short stalk topped with three large distinct white petals and three smaller greenish sepals beneath. (In botany things aren't always as they seem and the three large "leaves" are in fact photosynthetic bracts rather than leaves. There are no

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Easter Lilies in Cherryville?
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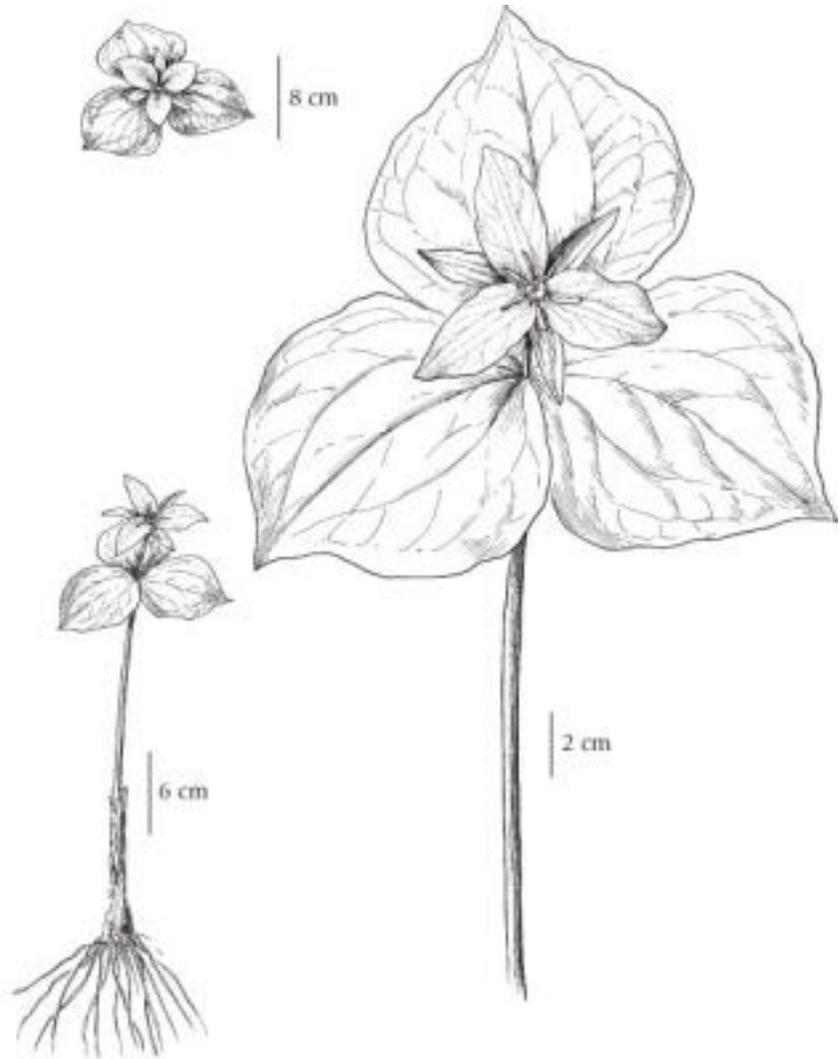
leaves!). At the centre of the flower are three stigmas and six stamens.

The fruits produced are green berry-like capsules with wing-like ridges and the seeds are sticky with an oily substance that ants like. Hence, the means of seed dispersal is by ants! In the shadows of the forest floor ants are numerous and lucky for trilliums that ants favour them. The ants collect the seeds and take them back to their nests where they eat the appendages or feed them to the larvae and then discard the remaining seeds on their rubbish pits. (Did you know that ants have rubbish pits? That's another story, another time!) Wild Ginger and Bleeding Heart are other flowers that can be spread by ants.

If anyone would like to see our local wild Trilliums growing, please get in touch with me and we can go and see these special wild flowers growing at the BC Hydro Shuswap River Picnic Area this spring. Or just check it out yourselves, usually early in May. Take a drive past Lumby and just before Cherryville you will see the sign for the BC Hydro site. 🌍

Trillium photo with permission by Lydia Dani

sketch from *Illustrated Plants of British Columbia*



Trillium ovatum var. *ovatum*

The White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), also known as the wake-robin and the white lily, was officially adopted as the Province of Ontario's floral emblem in 1937.

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Bird Friendly Coffee

by Harold Sellers, with help from the internet

At our January NONC meeting, our guest speaker introduced us to Bird Friendly Coffee, certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

BIRD Friendly coffee helps preserve habitat for forest creatures in Latin America including our migratory songbirds. Coffee that is certified Bird Friendly grows in an agro-forest. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) certifies that these forests provide good habitat for wildlife.

All Bird Friendly coffee is first certified organic, and then goes much further adding standards for shade cover, plant species diversity, canopy structure, required buffer zones, leaf litter cover and much more. These are all necessary for wildlife to flourish.

In Latin America, where most of our migratory songbirds spend their winters, deforestation for agriculture is happening at an alarmingly fast rate. Forests are mowed down for monoculture and the impact on wildlife is devastating. Huge declines in our migratory songbirds are noticeable to those of us old enough to remember the plentiful songbirds of only 20 years ago. Purchasing Certified Bird Friendly coffee supports those growers who valiantly maintain the front-lines of the resistance to this overwhelming destruction.

Sometimes the phrase “Shade Grown” is used on coffee labels as if it were equivalent to Bird Friendly. Unfortunately, this is like accepting “natural” as equivalent to “organic”. While Bird Friendly coffee is indeed “shade grown”, we need to go a bit deeper if we want to ensure our good will hits the target. It isn’t the shade that provides the

habitat but the fact that Bird Friendly farms are functioning, biodiverse, forest ecosystems.

Sales of Certified Bird Friendly coffee also help to fund the research performed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. This research advances the understanding of migratory birds that we need in order to preserve them for future generations. Look for the seal on the bags when you buy your coffee.

<<<<< >>>>>

Following the talk, your editor began to scan the store shelves of Vernon. Although bird friendly coffee can easily be ordered off the internet, was anyone selling it?

I found only ONE brand, Paradise Mountain, at Nature’s Fare. Roasted and packaged near Calgary, a 1 kg bag of whole beans sells for \$16.99.



Watch for this logo for SMBC Bird Friendly Coffee. 

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CAUTION! Ground Nests

by Claude Rioux

Editor's Note: Claude provides us with some good cautionary advice here, as we approach nesting season for many birds.

MAY 2018 — This past Wednesday while walking the Vernon Hill bluebird trail, we were startled when a Vesper Sparrow (VESP) flew off from ground cover along the path and acted injured to lead us away.

We soon discovered where the VESP had made a nest and laid an egg in a small Lupine clump right on the path.

This reminded me that I had wanted to write a message letting people know to take care when walking through fields with Lupine and clumps of grass, that there might be a nest hiding in the middle



of that clump. To avoid stepping on nests and their eggs, it's best to walk around or over the clumps.

Here are some shots, showing how well-camouflaged the nests and birds can be in the Lupine clumps and what might be hidden within. 🌍

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Preorbital Gland in Deer

*Observations while walking the dog
V.E. Merchant, July 4, 2019*

WALKING the dog, about a week ago, I came across two mule deer, beside the road. I stood about six to eight feet away from them for about 20 minutes, in which I talked to them. They paid no attention to me; indeed, they paid more attention to the dog (a small poodle-cross) than they did to me. At one point, one of the deer charged the dog, a feint more than a charge. The dog was on a leash and couldn't go anywhere anyway.

One of the deer had a "gland" on its face just forward and a bit below the eye. In fact two glands, one on each side. The glands slowly opened and closed, exposing some flesh coloured stuff inside the gland. It was about 2.5 cm long and one cm in breadth. I had never seen this before, but this was the only time I'd been this close to a deer.

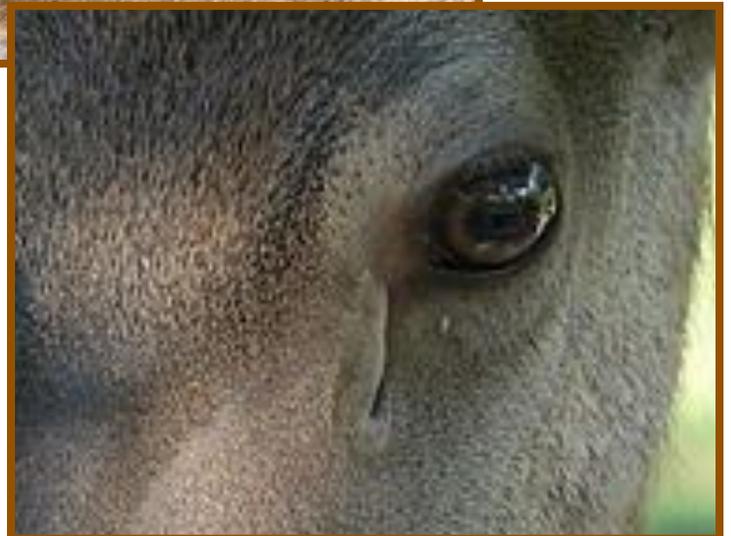
Unfortunately, I had no camera. The other deer did not seem to have the glands, but a dark coloured line on the face at about the same location.

Subadult male red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). The preorbital gland is closed in this photograph, copied from Wikipedia. (Photographer and location unknown)

"The Mammals of British Columbia" by Ian McTaggart Cowan and C.J. Guiguet says of deer of the Genus *Odocoileus* (American Deer) of which the Mule Deer is a subspecies, "a Suborbital pit in front

of the eye is of unknown function". No further detail is given .

Wikipedia has quite a description under the heading "Preorbital Gland", including a pictures of the head of a male red deer showing glands very similar to those that I observed. 🌐



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North Okanagan
Naturalists Club

MONTHLY MEETINGS

On the first Wednesday of the month (September through May), we hold a meeting for members and visitors at the Schubert Centre (starting in May). Start time, 7:00 pm. Guest speakers, club news, refreshments.

NONC MEMBERSHIP

Clip or copy this form to begin or renew a membership with the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. The form is also available on our website. Annual dues are \$35 for an individual and \$50 for a couple or family. Every member should also complete a Waiver form, available at our website membership page.

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