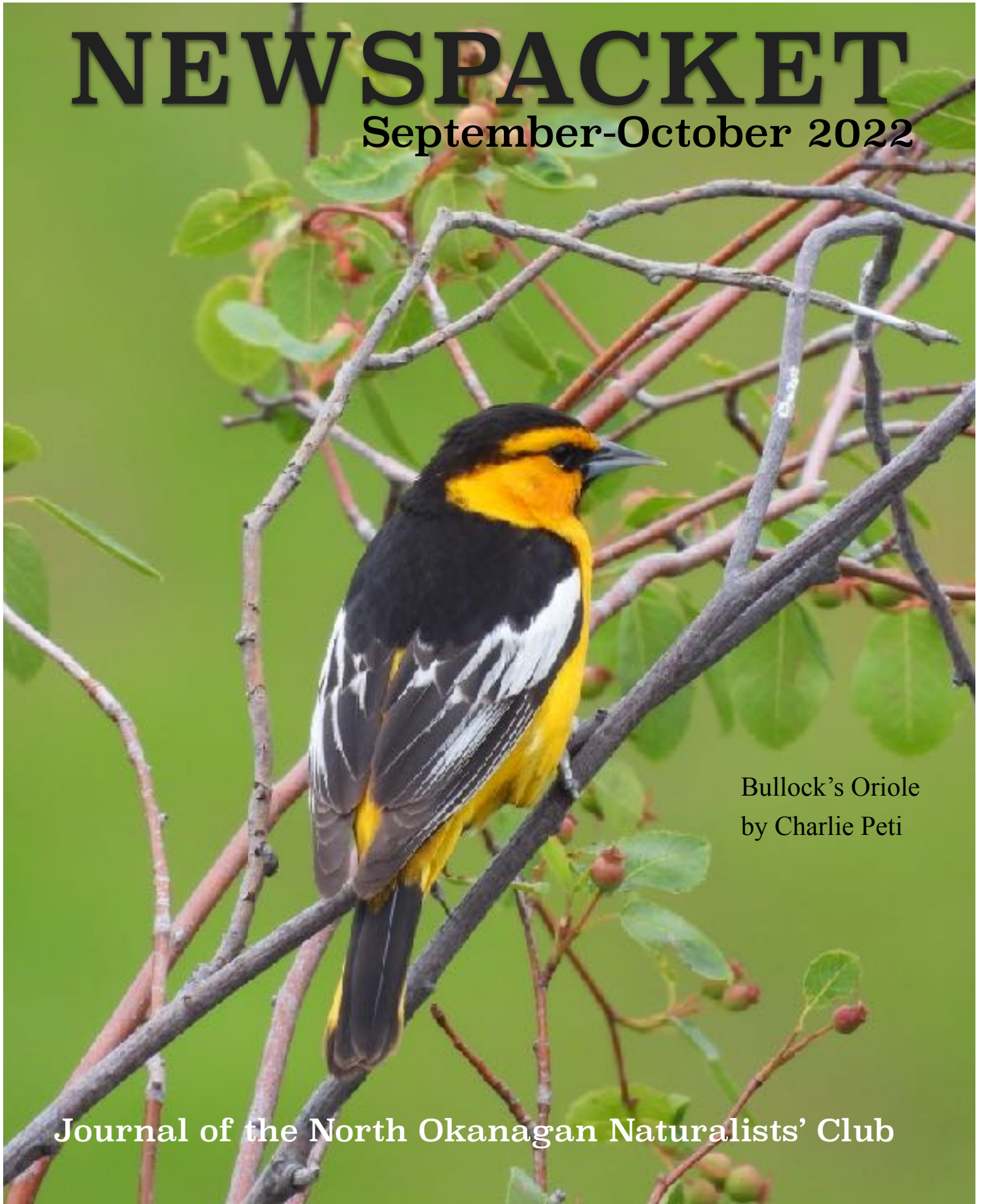


NEWSPACKET

September-October 2022



Bullock's Oriole
by Charlie Peti

Journal of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

NONC

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)

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^ Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

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Hummingbird Wrap-up 2022

by Gail Loughridge, Coordinator

NUMBERS for the Hummingbird Banding Season were definitely down this year, even without the smoke and heat 'bomb' from last year. There could be any number of reasons; smoke from last year, or the heat bomb, or less wild flowers available on the migration up here because of the cool, wet spring this year(all just speculation).

We have two sites that we monitor in the North Okanagan, one north of Lumby and the other one off of Westside Rd. on Lake Okanagan.

The Lumby site saw us count 389 birds at the feeders (last year we saw 1289 at the feeders even with the smoke). We banded 102 birds last year and this year we only banded 50.

At the Westside site we counted 77 birds at the feeders (last year we counted 374). We banded 66 birds last year and this year we only banded 28.



Counting the birds seen at the feeders is as important as banding the birds. It gives us a clearer picture of the number of hummingbirds in the area.

As you can see, we had very poor results this year and no one has seen results like this before. Northern BC was the same. However, on the coast, numbers were about the same as last year.



I want to thank all the volunteers for their endeavours this year. It's not much fun sitting out in cool or hot weather waiting for the birds to come to the feeders, and they don't!

I also want to thank the Norths Okanagan Naturalists' Club once again for their continuing financial support.

Note: August 22nd at our house we have an Anna's, a Calliope and a Rufous still coming to our hummingbird feeder and the Honeysuckle. YAY for hummingbirds! - Gail 🍀

Photos contributed by Gail Loughridge and Jack VanDyk

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Sandpipers make their stop in New Brunswick on 7,000-kilometre journey

by Kenn & Yvonne Whyte

WHILE visiting the Bay of Funday in mid-August this summer we had the rare opportunity to see approximately 80,000 semipalmated sandpipers who stop at the Bay of Fundy on their journey from the Arctic to South America.

The Bay of Funday is roughly halfway along their approximately 7,000-kilometre journey. The shorebirds are in the area to eat and build up energy before the next leg of their journey. They stop here to replenish their larder so to speak. They feed on the mud flats at low tide, and they eat and eat and eat and at high tide they roost or rest.

The sandpipers are feasting on corophium, which are small mud shrimp, about the size of a grain of rice.



The name 'Semipalmated' refers to slight webbing between the toes, visible only at extremely close range. Semipalmated Sandpipers are by far the most common sandpiper in central and eastern Canada, particularly in late summer. Flocks of more than 200,000 birds have been recorded in the Bay of Funday during fall migrations.

During their stay, the birds will double their weight. They will then make the journey south non-stop in just over three days.

The tide in the Bay of Funday is very high and moves in quite rapidly. In a short period, the sandpipers gorge themselves then sleep on the beach when the tide is at its highest and in another short

continued on page 5

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Sandpipers continued

period wake up and gorge themselves on the mud flats as the tide recedes.

As the mud flats are nearly covered with water, thousands of semipalmated sandpipers rise up in huge flocks cutting swaths through the air as they weave and dive every which way. The reports posted stated that at one



time it is estimated that there were 1.5 million to 2 million birds. Now more the estimates are in the 500,000 range.

This year we were very fortunate to observe the largest number of sandpipers the guides had observed over the six years they had visited this area. We were able to take photographs of the spectacle, such as these. 🌿

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Grey Canal Trail Shares History

submitted by the Ribbons of Green Trails Society

YOU can now wander along the Grey Canal hiking trail and learn more about its fascinating history. A series of five new interpretive signs have been erected along scenic sections of the current Grey Canal hiking trail.

Discover the visionaries who created this gravity-fed irrigation system. Learn when and how the canal was constructed. Marvel at how water was transported



uphill without pumps. Realize how the Grey Canal transformed Greater Vernon.

The signs include numerous archival photos, mainly from the Museum of Greater Vernon, which provide stunning glimpses into the past and bring this former irrigation canal to life.

The interpretive sign project was initiated by the Ribbons of Green Trails Society. As successful applicants of the RDNO Greater Vernon Trails & Natural Spaces grant, 46% of the sign funding was

provided through the grant. The rest of the funds were provided as in-kind donations from volunteers.

Two local businesses, Tambellini Design Studio and Speed Pro Signs, were hired to create and install the appealing, well-constructed signs.



Since 2005, the Ribbons of Green Trails Society has been working to create a public, continuous hiking trail system along or near the Grey Canal. This 50 km trail would encircle the entire valley from Coldstream to Okanagan Lake, allowing users to appreciate the significant contributions made by our predecessors. Several sections of the trail remain to be constructed.

“The Grey Canal Trail is an iconic trail system which showcases Greater Vernon’s new label of ‘Trail Capital of BC’”, states Ingrid Neumann, Ribbons of Green Trails Society director involved with the signs’ creation.

Check out the Ribbons of Green website (www.ribbonsofgreen.ca) for more information, maps, directions, history, and photos on the Grey Canal Trail. 🌿

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New Trail Additions

by Harold Sellers

THE Regional District North Okanagan (RDNO) has completed a couple of new trails and extended trails this past Summer. The maps here show the locations.

The trail shown at right also includes a new parking and access opportunity. This is at a new water reservoir built by RDNO on the hillside above Baker Hogg Road, north of L&A Road. Parking for 3 or 4 cars is possible beside the building. The short, 270 metre, trail then climbs the hill to connect with the existing Grey Canal Trail section between McLennan and Glenhayes roads.

An extension of the popular Turtle Mountain section of the Grey Canal Trail was completed in August. 380 metres of new trail were built west of Turtle

Mountain Boulevard, extending the trail west to Davison Road.

Access is possible from Turtle Mountain Boulevard or from Davison Road, where a parking lot will be built in the future.

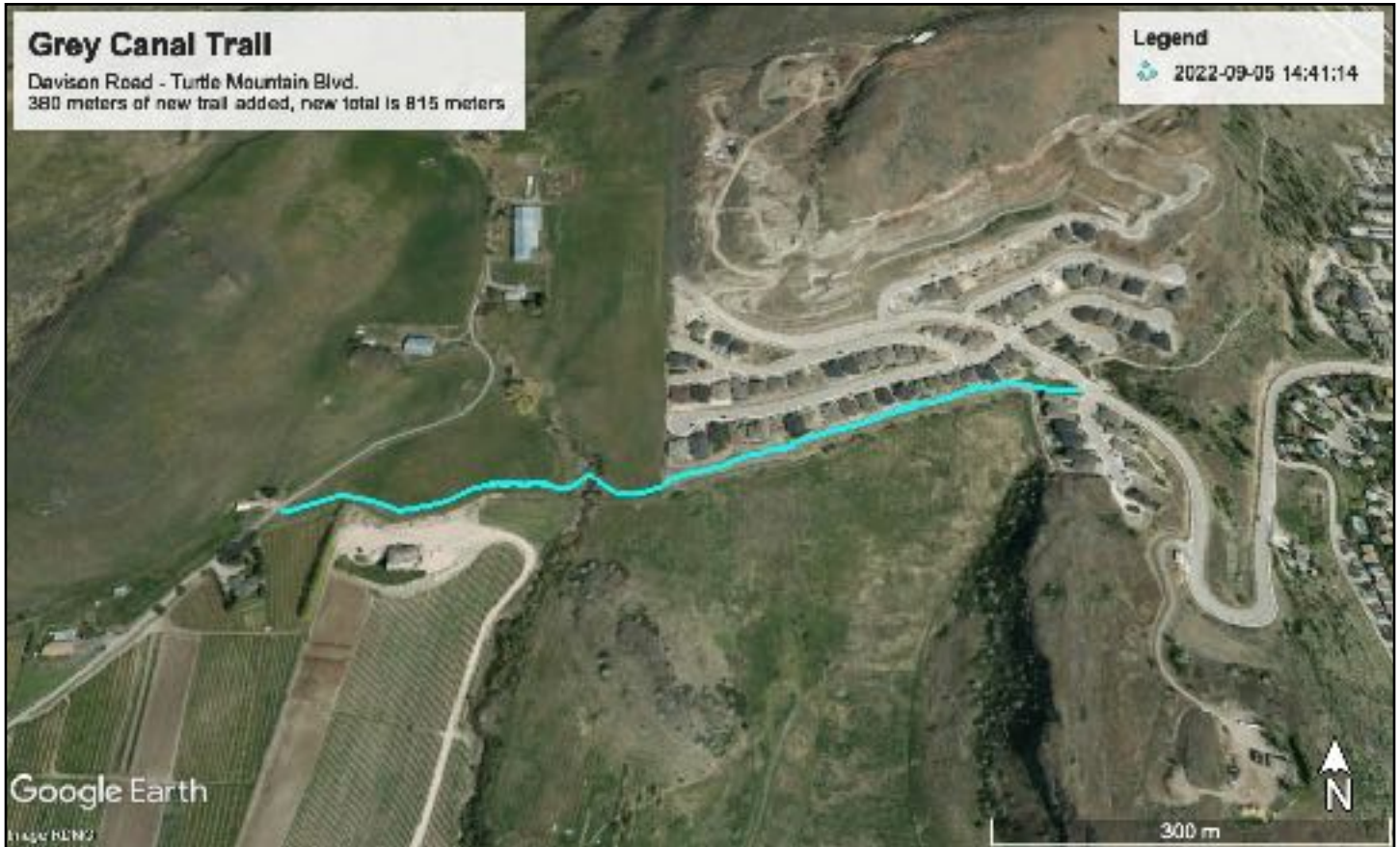


The Baker Hogg trail is natural surface... a bit weedy in fact at this time... and fairly steep. The Turtle Mountain extension is flat, surfaced with fine crushed stone, and has a short boardwalk in the Tassie Creek ravine. Both trails will aid nature and vista viewing.

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New Trails continued



right: boardwalk and view of Okanagan Lake from new trail

For those who wonder when the Grey Canal Trail will be completed from above Davison Orchard and Turtle Mountain (and everyone has been asking!), there now remains but one small piece to build. This will connect the existing trail that ends above the orchard to the new trail that has reached Davison Road. Approval is needed from the Agricultural Land Commission and this has been very slow in coming. Hopefully construction will take place in 2023. 🌱



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Pine Siskins

by Margaret MacKenzie

THIS summer, on our Bluebird Trail, we watched Pine Siskins swaying on the tops of the faded Arrow-leaved balsamroot flowers. I was curious as to what they were doing and opened up a dead flowerhead and found it packed with small thin dark seeds that look very much like Nyjer (Niger) seed that siskins and goldfinches love to eat at bird feeders in winter.

Here are some photos of a Pine Siskin feeding on the seeds of the dead flowerheads of Arrow-leaved balsamroot. (Balsamorhiza sagittata)

A wild grassland area such as found on the walk to Cosens Bay in Kalamalka Provincial Park, once was covered in Balsamroot and wild bunch grasses. Now it is covered with the invasive Sulphur Cinquefoil and St. John's Wort. Our disappearing grasslands means the disappearance of wild bird seed and a great food source loss for all our seed-eating birds and animals. This is another reason to feed seeds, such as sunflower and nyjer, to our wild birds who spend the winter here with us.

The entire Arrow-leaved balsamroot plant was an important food used by Interior First Nations Peoples historically and the

seeds were shaken out of the dried flower heads and ground into a flour. The young leaves can be eaten raw or steamed and the roots soaked, roasted, and then dried. Deer and elk graze on the plant and no doubt many other small animals forage on the seeds and leaves too.

By the way, what is Nyjer seed? One thing does lead



to another on the computer and I found out that it is a *continued on page 10*

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Pine Siskins continued

bright yellow sunflower-like flower called *Guizotia abyssinica* originally from the highlands of Ethiopia and grown commercially for its seed and nutritional oil. Nyjer seed is also referred to as thistle seed but it isn't related to thistles at all. 🌱



NONC Monthly Meeting, Wednesday, October 5th

7:00 pm, in the Emerald Room at The Schubert Centre for Seniors, 30th Ave., in downtown Vernon. Members and non-members welcome.

Special Presentation: The Bald Eagle

Our guest speaker will be Dave Hancock from the Hancock Wildlife Foundation in Surrey.

The Hancock Wildlife Foundation, with the support of many other local conservation organizations and in cooperation with Simon Fraser University, has the responsibility of understanding where an estimated 35,000 wintering eagles come from and where our 1000 nesting birds go to after breeding.

The Foundation's mandate is to use the Internet in general and live streaming wildlife video in particular to promote the conservation of wildlife and its habitats through science, education, and stewardship.

Information at <https://hancockwildlife.org>

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Double-crested Cormorant

Phalacrocorax auritus

Source: Atlas of the Breeding Birds of British Columbia

www.birdatlas.bc.ca

THE Double-crested Cormorant is a large, conspicuous and gregarious waterbird that forms breeding colonies along both Pacific and Atlantic coasts of North America, and in freshwater wetlands from the Great Lakes to the Great Plains and Great Basin. It winters along North American coasts and in the United States' Southern Coastal Plains. Two subspecies likely occur in British Columbia, *P. a. albociliatus* along the coast and possibly *P. a. auritus* in the interior. The location of *P. a. albociliatus* colonies is quite fluid within its southern British Columbia to Baja California and inland range.

Ten coastal colonies were recorded during the Atlas, all in the Salish Sea of the Georgia Depression Ecoprovince. Changing occupation of nest sites since records began in 1959 is a feature of Double-crested Cormorant breeding biology: the change is most apparent on Mandarte Island where pairs have fluctuated between 137 and 1100 pairs between 1983 and 2009.

In the interior, nesting occurs at two widely separated breeding colonies: Leach Lake in the Kootenay River valley, where breeding was first recorded in 2003, and increased to about 100 pairs

by 2008; and Stum Lake in the Cariboo, where breeding was first recorded in 1993, and increased to at least 25 nests in 2008. An Atlas sighting of two cormorants during the breeding season at Swan Lake in the Peace River lowlands suggests nesting nearby.

Double-crested Cormorant nest sites in British Columbia include bare rock, trees, pilings, bridges, and hydro-electric towers. On the coast this species often associates with other seabirds requiring similar

nesting habitats, and perhaps benefits from early warning of approaching danger. Coastal cormorants associate with Glaucous-winged Gulls, Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots. Double-crested Cormorant colonies in the interior are associated with Great Blue Herons and American White Pelicans.



Researchers recommend that the

coastal subspecies *P. a. albociliatus* be managed separately from other Double-crested Cormorants. They suggest that the coastal subspecies relocates colonies in response to local food supplies. Another factor might be disturbance and predatory attacks from Bald Eagles. 🌿

Here in the Okanagan, Double-crested Cormorants are occasionally seen in small numbers at our lakes.
Photo by Suzanne Pask

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Thank you to Wayside Press of Vernon which prints our hard copies of Newspacket.

Copy for publication should be sent to Harold Sellers, Editor, by e-mail hikerharold@gmail.com.

 Find us on **Facebook** 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. 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, \$20 for a student and \$50 for a couple or family. Every member should also complete a Waiver form, available at our website membership page.

Name(s): _____

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