

# Legg, Peter George

(1913 – 1994)



Below the sometimes gruff and no-nonsense superficial layer dwelt a naturalist who contributed generously in his way to the well-being of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club and the interests of natural history in general. He saw unattended needs and undertook them, contributing more personal time to these activities than might have been realized.

Loss of Peter's father late in WW I made early life difficult. A great burden was placed on his mother who must have been the one person largely responsible for Peter's wide interest in nature, literature, pictorial art, cryptic crossword puzzles, music and his need to be busy and productive.

Long involvement with Vernon Outdoors Club made for an easy transition to the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club which he joined in its founding year, 1951. An early club task was taking on production of the monthly newsletter. In those days it involved running off more than 200 copies of each of the eight pages (occasionally 10) on a Gestetner duplicating machine, a long and tedious process for those involved, followed by collating and stapling the pages together. Eventually as Editor he would canvas for submissions of interesting items from members and trip accounts from leaders to give variety to Newspacket contents. In the 1970s he also served a term as President of NONC.

During the late 1960s, the International Survey Program was formed to encourage countries of the world to protect examples of significant terrestrial ecosystems. In 1971 this resulted in the establishment of BC's first set of units under the Ecological Reserve Program. NONC had been actively involved in proposing suitable candidate areas and Peter volunteered to take on the task of visiting each (and those added later) and monitoring their condition and potential risks on an annual basis. As many as eleven separate units were involved in the NONC coverage region resulting in a great deal of unpaid time and driving, often under rough conditions. He provided annual written reports and also attended ER meetings in Victoria, building up a strong association with personnel of the ER Program. He received acknowledgement of his work as Warden of the Year in 1988.

Around the same era, Peter also became the representative of the North Okanagan club at meetings of the Federation of British Columbia Naturalist Clubs which, in those days before conference calls and computers, took considerable time and travelling expense, all of which he donated to the Federation. In addition to meeting discussions and policy deliberations, the Federation (now BC Nature) drew up work papers on subjects of special concern and current importance asking various board members to produce reports. Peter compiled at least one - on the subject of uranium mining and development in this province - and possibly others. In 1988 he received the highest award given by the Federation, the Elton Anderson Award, for his work and dedication over many years of service.

With his field experience through Vernon Outdoors Club, Peter planned and led many club day trips as well as introducing 'overnighters' of varying length. Over the years his Toyota Explorer

did yeoman service. He would study maps to find and follow the height of land to an interesting destination. As his own preferences were quite adventurous he found Club summer camps formal and organized. As a result he gathered a loose group of members that enjoyed one or two annual backpacking expeditions of up to 9 nights, often with memorable if unintended results. His was always the heaviest pack containing extras and surprises that helped raise mealtime pleasure.

As a field naturalist Peter was competent to his own level of knowledge and at least one member remembers his helping her with plant identifications during day trips. Photography for his own enjoyment was an additional pursuit and he was a regular participant in club work parties, some of his own arrangement. The attempted drainage ditch at Mara Meadows was one favourite project wherein a series of horizontal board barriers were constructed at intervals along its length to prevent accumulated water flow from developing into a main drainage. Manhandling heavy timbers across the wet fen raised problems causing him to introduce winter deliveries to a nearby point, then sledding the supplies across the snow to the next season's work sites.

Peter continued such activities to the very end. He had started an annual program to rid the original surveyed and cut boundary line at Mara Meadows of invading trees and shrubs to restore its definition. Few others would have considered this task but it was one typical of his own dedication and work ethic.