

Marnie Williamson – President’s Report for NONC Year End September 2020

What an unusual year due to Covid 19, however, although our monthly meetings were cancelled since April, your executive and a few dedicated members have been working behind the scenes on a variety of items. I personally send a huge THANK YOU to all our Executive Members for their time, input, experience, and patience in leading NONC.

Swan Lake Observation Tower – The committee, especially Norbert Maertens, worked diligently all year to decide the location, obtain an architect design, budget, receive quotes and choose a contractor. Pilings were drilled mid October, footings poured later October and construction will begin in November. RDNO financed the project up to \$50,000. NONC with membership approval, is contributing an additional amount up to \$30,000. Thank you to this hard-working committee.

Preservers of Nature Report was compiled by Harold Sellers this spring. In May, the report was delivered to mayors, councillors and senior staff of City, Coldstream and RDNO. It was well received and appreciated. A NONC committee has been struck to continue planning and moving forward with more recommendations. In September, Harold applied for a grant from RDNO North Okanagan Conservation Fund to hire a professional biologist to create a ranking matrix for all local natural areas to help in future conservation planning. We will be notified in February if we are successful. Thanks to Harold for his initiative in writing this report.

Our involvement with RDNO Invasive Weed Advisory Committee no longer exists since John Friesen retired as RDNO Weed Control Officer. RDNO has restructured and not refilled this position. RDNO primary control is on trails and parks. The executive is remaining on top of this situation but appreciates any input and involvement from our membership. Spotting and reporting infestations is one way all of us can participate.

Harold Sellers continues to provide input to RDNO on the Greater Vernon Trails and Natural Spaces Policy and is our representative on this trails committee.

Adopt a Stream - NONC is steward for BX Creek from Deleenheer Rd to 58 Ave, however the Spring and Fall cleanup were cancelled due to Covid 19 protocols. We have applied to the City to become stewards for a second stream on Vernon Creek by CEC Young Natural Area.

Bluebird Trails – The April workshop was cancelled. The fall meeting and AGM of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trails Society were held in Vernon with about 20 attending, including several out-of-town trail monitors. See Newspaper for Margaret’s detailed report. Claude Rioux and Norbert Maertens designed a snake deterrent for nest boxes. A number will be installed on several trails this fall and monitored next year to determine success of the design. Executive approved expenditure for materials.

From May until July, a small, dedicated Hummingbird Banding Group was able to continue the biweekly monitoring station at Susan Latimer’s house in rural Lumby. The station on Okanagan Lake was only visited a few times during the summer. Thanks to the 3 Certified banders, Gail Loughridge, Laura MacPherson and Susan Latimer.

Coldstream Ranchlands Park – In April, the executive submitted a letter to RDNO in opposition to the request by North Okanagan Cycling Society to construct biking trails and access through this sensitive grassland region. RDNO contracted Hill Environmental for an environmental impact review which was completed in August. An archaeological review is forthcoming. RDNO will create a masterplan for this property once the two reports are reviewed and public input is to be part of this process. Please monitor RDNO website for updated developments and we will keep you posted in our enews.

Blue Heron Rookery – After two public hearings, the City of Vernon has reaffirmed that Scotland Contractors must maintain 100m noise buffer during construction, provide qualified environmental monitoring, and mitigate for any disturbance to nesting herons.

Garter Snake concern at North BX Park, Delenheer Rd – we installed protective wood rail fencing around the entrance areas along the hibernaculum. Norbert reused the rails removed when RDNO replaced the fencing around Cools Pond Reserve.

Nature Kids, inactive since February due to Covid and low attendance. Megan McMillan is hoping to reactivate this group this coming winter.

NCNO- Nature Conservancy of North Okanagan Society (previously NOPNAT). Marnie is a director and the NONC representative. Currently there are 6 registered land covenants. A new covenant was in the process but sadly the landowners decided not to continue.

Saturday morning rambles were on hold until mid summer. They are well attended by NONC members and the public at large. Judy Stockdale is the organizer with about 10 members as volunteer leaders. If you wish to lead a Saturday walk, or have an idea of a new area, please contact Judy, judy_stockdale@hotmail.com.

Field Trips/ Outings of 2020 all cancelled due to Covid.

Christmas Bird Count – contact Rick Bonar, set for Sat Dec 20 rick.bonar@hotmail.com

Swan and Eagle Count – contact Rod Drennan, set for Jan 10 rdrennan@shaw.ca

Executive sent Letters to:

1. Greater Vernon Advisory Committee our support in maintaining acquisition of BX Ranch Lands along East Vernon Rd
2. RDNO to support Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail for creation of Kilometer 0 trail head
3. Cherry Ridge Management Committee in support of their application to RDNO for community forest management of Richlands Block by Cherryville.
3. RDNO re: Ranchland Park – a request for environmental study and protection as a natural area and in opposition to upgrade of biking trails and increased recreational use.
4. RDNO, Vernon, Coldstream – copies of report “Natural Areas Protection in North Okanagan’
5. Premier BC, Min Env, Vernon, & GVAC – urging protection of O’Keefe Range Lands currently for sale.

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Marnie Williamson – President Report for NONC AGM 2019 November 6, 2019

Field Trips/ Outings of 2019 – were widely attended and enjoyed by all. First trip was in April with trip to Chase-Neskonlith meadows to see the Avalanche Lily and spring wildflowers. In early May a small group delighted in an overnight trip to see the Spawning Gerrard Rainbow trout in Trout Lake, West Kootenays. Larch Hills in Spallumcheen was another May outing. Claude Rioux led a trip to Salmon Arm to view Western Grebe courtship rituals in June and then again in Sept to spot returning migrants. Bluenose Mountain was explored by a small group in June. Revelstoke Meadows in the Sky was another overnight trip led by Charles Peti. Sadly, rain and fog prevented any mountain views. Silver Star mountain offered the wildflowers. Rose and Swanson Mountain exploration in Oct was new this year and led by Rod and Ruth Drennan. Rim Rocks were also visited in Oct by a small group that discovered further logging in the area near the trail. We look forward to repeating these outings next year and have thoughts on a few new ones. If you have any ideas for other trips, please contact the executive.

Swan Lake

1. Ducks Unlimited in Feb finished construction of 2 new ponds on their reserve land located on the east side of the reserve. This wetland was developed as compensation for the highways Stickle Road upgrade and new road access across BX Creek behind Rona.
2. Location of Bird Hide was determined and the committee is continuing to investigate construction plans for an observation tower since a hide can not be constructed within the riparian area.
3. Committee provided BC Min FLNROD background records of observations and species to provide information for their ecological report of Swan Lake Wildlife Mgmt Area
4. Committee (with many thanks to Harold) submitted Swan Lake Reserve Master Management plan to RDNO for review. This updates the current plan from 2011

NOPNAT – North Okanagan Parks and Areas Trust changed their name to Nature Conservancy of North Okanagan Society. Marnie is a director and the NONC representative. Currently there are 6 registered land covenants and one in process.

Marnie is NONC representative on RDNO's Kal Lake-Coldstream Creek Watershed Protection Committee, which meets every fall.

Rod Drennan, Marnie, Margaret are NONC representatives on RDNO Invasive Weed Species committee which meets once a year.

Harold Sellers provided input to RDNO on the Greater Vernon Trails and Natural Spaces Policy and is our representative on this trails committee.

Adopt a Stream - NONC was accepted as steward for BX Creek from Deleenheer Rd to 58 Ave. We conducted a spring and fall clean up in which a small group from Nature Kids attended.

We granted \$1000 to Mike Dunn, RP BIO for an eDNA study on rattlesnakes in North Okanagan. (We hope he will return as a guest speaker and review his findings)

Plaques dedicated to Kay Bartholomew and Jim Grant as NONC founders were designed by Norbert and installed on benches in Swan Lake Park

Margaret McKenzie organized a Bluebird workshop in April. This year a group of about 8 blue birders attended the fall meeting and AGM in Kelowna of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trails Society. Margaret's detailed report is in Newspanet.

From beginning of May until mid July, the dedicated Hummingbird Banding Group visited 3 permanent banding sites every 2 weeks. We now have 3 Certified banders, Gail Loughridge, Laura MacPherson and Susan Latimer.

Several members participated in Birdathon in May. NONC received about \$450 from Bird Studies Canada from the donations.

Pat McAllister gave a birding talk at Enderby Library in Feb 2019

Nature Kids, we continue to support with Marnie as main contact. Megan McMillan had a baby boy in Sept and has temporarily stepped down as leader. Doris Alcantara is helping with admin. Nature mentors are needed.

BC Nature Federation – Spring AGM attended by Rod & Ruth, and Pam. Fall AGM attended by Pam

Saturday morning rambles continued throughout the year and were well attended by NONC members and public at large. Primarily led by Harold Sellers, Norbert Maertens with other members stepping when requested.

Executive sent Letters to:

- City of Vernon encouraging a review and solution to the urban deer problem
- Greater Vernon Advisory to support keeping the BX Ranchlands along East Vernon Road as public property for preservation of nature trails, green space and agricultural potential.
- City of Vernon for a creation of a neighbourhood park on Turtle Mountain in regards to a zoning amendment application
- Mable Lake Community Centre to support proposal for creation of an interpretive centre on Shuswap River

Finally – a Huge THANK YOU to all our Executive Members for their time, input, experience, and patience in leading NONC.

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Field Trips/ Outings of 2018 – were widely attended and enjoyed by all. First trip was in April with trip to Chase-Neskonlith meadows to see the Avalanche Lily and spring wildflowers. Then Salmon Arm Bay in May with Don Cecile and Claude Rioux to view Western Grebe courtship rituals which were mostly missed as the grebes were too far out on the lake. Birders returning later in May had better success. In May a group headed off on a 4-day excursion to South Okanagan. In late May the day long trip to Hullcar, Armstrong and Enderby was very enjoyable and the orchids were spectacular. Enderby Cliffs were challenged, and Silver Star mountain offered the wildflowers. Rim Rocks were visited in Sept to a glorious sunny day and fall display. Adams River Salmon Arm Trip although disappointing in sightings, was educational to the plight of our returning Sockeye and Chinook salmon populations. Cancelled was the Yeoward Mountain due to road conditions and Revelstoke Meadows in the Sky because of smoke and lack of attendance. We look forward to repeating these outings next year. If you have any ideas for other trips, please contact the executive.

Sadly, this year we said goodbye to 2 long standing members. Peter Blokker in Jan, and Kay Bartholomew in Feb. This led to the subsequent removal of all NONC historical files and minutes from Kay's house. The sorting is ongoing at Ruth & Rod Drennan house. Also, an ongoing project by Rod is the collation of the Historical minutes of our society. On Oct 14, Norbert lead a very meaningful ceremony to spread the ashes of Malcom Martin at the Lily Pad/Buck Hill Ecological Reserve on Bluenose Mountain. Malcom was a warden for many years. Was attended by about 12 NONC members. Thank you to Norbert for providing this goodbye.

Swan Lake –In August, Swan Lake crown foreshore was finally declared a Wildlife Management Area by BC Min Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations. We hope to see an actual management plan in the near future. Our rejuvenated Swan Lake Committee reopened dialogue with Keith Pinkoski, of RDNO, particularly concerning relocation of the bird blind. We remain in contact with Ducks Unlimited regarding re-establishment of BX Cr channel and construction of berm or new ponds in the south east portion of the park.

Osprey Pole was replaced on Kaminski Property in early April, and osprey were observed perched on the pole throughout the summer. Hopefully nesting will occur next year. Fall of 2017, planted trees on Kaminski property under direction of HCT – survival status is unknown.

NOPNAT – North Okanagan Parks and Areas Trust – Marnie was accepted as a director and as NONC representative. Currently there are 6 registered land covenants and one in process.

Valhalla Wilderness Society showed their video 'Primeval Enter the Incomappleux, in Purcell & Selkirk mountain ranges. We offered support for the creation of an Inland Temperate Rainforest Park and for protection of Woodland Mountain Caribou.

Harold Sellers provided input to RDNO on their Sub-Regional Open Space and Trails Policy, and is our representative on this trails committee.

Marnie is NONC representative on RDNO Kal Lake-Coldstream Watershed Protection Committee, which meets at every spring.

Early spring, we participated in the Bio Survey of Thomas Hayes Ecological Sanctuary organized by Armstrong/Spallumcheen Trails Society and ABNC. Contact with this group will continue.

Pat McAllister presented course on beginner bird identification at our Vernon Library

Margaret McKenzie and Claude Rioux organized a Bluebird workshop in April where 48 people attended including a group from Central Okanagan. This year was a successful year even though smoke prevailed. Margaret's report in Newspanet.

From beginning of May until mid July, the dedicated Hummingbird Banding Group visited 3 permanent banding sites every 2 weeks. We have 2 Certified banders, Gail Loughridge and Laura MacPherson. Susan Latimer has applied for her banding license.

In early June, Chris Siddle volunteered to provide the consultant Associated Environmental a list of bird species frequenting the new BX Ranchlands Linear Park by East Vernon Road. Associated was commissioned by RDNO to conduct a background plant and wildlife study of park.

BC Nature Federation – Spring AGM attended by Marnie, Rod & Ruth, Fall AGM attended by Pam while Marnie only attended the actual meeting

Saturday morning rambles continued throughout the year and were well attended by NONC members and a public at large. Primarily led by Harold Sellers, Norbert Martaens with other members stepping when requested.

Executive sent Letters of Support to:

- RDNO- to encourage the remaining portion of the BX Ranchlands (located along East Vernon Road) be kept in public hands. This area is separate from that which is now designated as a linear park.
- RDNO – to support the establishment of a North Okanagan conservation fund from fees collected on development permits
- Min Env & Climate Change Strategy – regarding concerns of declining Mountain caribou in the Selkirk and Purcell herds and the failure of the 2007 Govt Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan.
- Armstrong Wetlands Group – support for preservation of wetlands in Armstrong area through stewardship and conservation.
- RDNO – Power boating regulations on Lower Shuswap River to encourage a lower speed limit for boats and elimination of towing skiers, tubers and boarders
- This week – a letter to Mike Dunn in support of his application to Habitat Conservation to fund a study on environmental DNA collection and analysis of snake DNA around snake dens in Okanagan, Thompson and Similkameen area

Finally – a Huge THANK YOU to all our Executive Members for their time, input, experience, and patience in leading NONC. Special Thanks to Joan Wilkinson, Pat McAllister and Claude Rioux who are stepping down from the executive. We will continue to see them as engaged & active NONCers.

