

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

# Newspacket

[www.nonc.ca](http://www.nonc.ca)

March-April 2010

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Available for Spring Occupancy**



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**North Okanagan Naturalists' Club  
(NONC)**

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**March-April 2010 Issue Vol. 38 No. 2**



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*Opinions expressed in Newspacket are solely those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the N.O.N.C. unless so described.*

*Articles and illustrations of natural history, and news and event notices are welcome. Copy should be delivered to Harold Sellers, Editor, e-mail [hikerharold@gmail.com](mailto:hikerharold@gmail.com)*

## **OUR COVER THIS ISSUE**

*Soon Bluebirds and other birds will be back in the North Okanagan, setting up their homes in nesting boxes or dwellings of their own construction. Are you ready?*

## **NONC Notes**

by Kay Bartholomew, Secretary

**CLUB EMBLEM:** On July 1, 1965, Jim Grant, John Shepherd and Kay Bartholomew were wading in the tiny pools of water at Mara Meadows Ecological Reserve, which is near Salmon Arm, when Jim looked down and exclaimed "Oh, look at that." He bent down and looked at a small orchid in the water. It was the first sighting of the 'Bog Orchid' (*Liparis loeselii*) which became our Club emblem.

Joan Heriot designed a lapel pin showing the orchid. For many years she issued one to new members at 50 cents each and kept a great record of the sales.

**ANNUAL FIELD DAY & DINNER** is scheduled for Saturday, May 8th. More details will be out in mid-April with the new trip schedule and more information. Please mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend our special day. It's lots of fun!

It was nice to see members out at the special Memorial Service for Tom Speechly, held at the Women's Institute Hall in the Coldstream on Friday, Feb. 12th. Three ladies from the local Accordion Club played background music. Several of us went home with a lovely small daffodil plant (I'll put mine in the garden). We will miss Tom; he always supplied the music for our social activities. His recitations from works of Robert Service were a highlight of many Christmas parties.

# Welcome home our birds

Thanks to Nature Canada  
www.naturecanada.ca

**Hang nesting material** – birds love wood shavings, short lengths of yarn, burlap threads, wool, cotton batting, or furniture stuffing. Avoid mesh bags that birds may become entangled in.

**Put up a birdhouse** – especially important in neighbourhoods with few wooded areas. Place it out of reach of cats and clean it out in the fall. If you build your own, remember to follow dimensions, exactly for each species.

**Grow native (or naturalized) trees, shrubs, plants.** They provide shelter, places to raise young, and food sources. Good choices include aspen (*Populus*), willow (*Salix*), dogwoods (*Cornus*), Saskatoon berry (*Amelanchier*), sunflowers, Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*), Columbine, bee balm (*Monarda*) [*pictured below*], Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium*), and Asters. White Cedar and White Spruce provide year-round green and good cover. No yard? Try planters.



**Stay close to home.** Plants native to Canada are the best choice because they are hardy, require less watering and little maintenance, attract beneficial insects, and have evolved with local wildlife.

**Put out a bird bath.** This is especially important in winter because most natural water sources are frozen. A plant saucer with textured finish and a stone in the middle is good. Avoid metal in winter. Use hot water to melt ice rather than breaking it into sharp pieces. Place bath in an open area and near a perch. Scrub it weekly and rinse it well if you use soap. ❖

## How to Make Your Own Bird Seed

by Katherine Kally  
eHow Contributing Writer    www.eHow.com

Recipes for making your own bird seed to entice wild birds to your yard can vary greatly, depending on the types of birds you'd like to attract. Most wild birds enjoy black-oil sunflower seeds, which is the basis for this bird seed recipe. Experiment with your own ingredients to find the right mix for your feathered friends.

### Things You'll Need:

Black-oil sunflower seeds, shelled  
Whole oats  
Corn meal  
Dried fruit  
Food processor  
Storage container

### Instructions

1. Place 4 cups of shelled black-oil sunflower seeds into your food processor and grind it for two seconds on a light setting. No need to pulverize the seeds, just break them up for the birds. Black-oil sunflower seeds are high in fat, and wild birds from jays to finches enjoy the taste. Pour the slightly chopped seeds into a storage container.
2. Pour 2 cups of whole oats into your food processor and grind them exactly as you did the sunflower seeds. You can use any kind of whole oats, such as rye barley oats or wheat, to provide the grain for this bird seed recipe. Pour the oats in the container with the seeds, seal the container and shake it to mix the seeds and the grains together.
3. Add 1 cup of corn meal to the storage container, seal and shake it to mix in the corn meal with the seeds and grains. The mixture is a bit powdery, but the birds and the squirrels will appreciate your efforts.
4. Chop 1 cup of dried fruit into tiny bird size bites. You can use raisins, cranberries, blueberries or apricots. Add the chopped fruit in the storage container, seal it and shake it to blend everything together.

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5. Place some of the bird seed mixture into your bird feeder and watch it disappear.

### Tips & Warnings

Store any bird seed in a cool, dry place in a container that is completely sealed. Rodent-proof metal cans work best for storing bird seed for extended periods.

Always check your bird seed for mold before you place it in your feeder. Mold can appear overnight in bird seed that's been stored for too long or in a moist environment.

## Feed the Birds

(to the tune of Row Row)

Feed, feed, feed the birds  
In the wintertime  
When the days are dark and cold  
Food is hard to find  
Feed, feed, feed the birds  
Till the spring has come  
Scatter birdseed on the snow  
Feeding birds is fun.

by Jackie Silberg

## Bluebird Workshop

**Saturday, March 27th**  
**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon**  
At Kay Bart's home.



Margaret Hubble is organizing this but is in Australia at the moment. So, if you would like to attend let Kay know please. She will keep a list. Now is your chance to learn more about our project. Phone 250-542-3977 evenings...no answer...keep trying.

## Calendar

**NONC** meets on the first Wednesday of the month from September through May inclusive, starting at 7:30 pm, at The Best Western Vernon Lodge, 3914 32nd Street, Vernon.

### Bird Watching Outings:

March 7th & 13th

March 21st & 27th

Meet at Performing Arts Centre at 9:00 am.

Peter Mayfield 549-8478

**Sunday, March 7** - Earth Hour. Turn off your lights, 8-9 pm.

**Tuesday, March 23** - Invasive Plants Workshop. See page 8 for details.

**Saturday, March 27** - Knox Mountain & Mission Creek Greenway birding and moderate hiking. Bring a lunch. Meet 9:30 am Priest Valley parking lot. Contact Robyn Thornton 549-2714.

**Saturday, March 27** - Bluebird Workshop  
- see details at left

**Wednesday, April 7** - April NONC meeting.

**Saturday, April 10** - Alpaca Farm Tour, Oyama area. Cost \$7 each. Bring a lunch. Will do some birding as well. Meet 9:45 am Priest Valley parking lot. DEADLINE Monday, April 5th. Contact Robyn Thornton 549-2714.

**Thursday, April 22** - Earth Day. 2010 is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Watch The Morning Star for details of a free event in downtown Vernon.

**Saturday, May 8** - Field Day & Dinner. Details to come.

**May 13-16** - BC Nature Spring conference & AGM, Kamloops. [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca)

## NONC Goes Snowshoeing

Thursday afternoon February 11th, nine NONC-ers, Fred & Ina Wisse, Bob & Joyce Hebbert, Susan Spiller, Gail Loughridge and Jack & Lyn Smith met at the Priest Valley parking lot to carpool up to Sovereign Lakes. Robyn Thornton met us up at the Lodge ready to try out snowshoeing for the first time. It was snowing lightly when we arrived but picked up as we went. It was magical with the snow-laden trees and our brightly coloured togs being dusted with white as we wound our way through the trees

on the Trapline and Meadow Trails. We had hoped to follow the Ridgeline Trail but it was closed as the Olympic Biathlon athletes were still training there. On the way back we split into two groups with some of us opting for a shorter route back and the others soldiering on via the longer Trapline. It was so much fun we decided to do a follow up snowshoe expedition the following Thursday on the Outdoors Club Trails. Maybe we will see some wildlife there. We can always dream.

Lyn Smith  
Photo by Gail Loughridge



### A Living Memory

A donation to the James Grant Fund is a positive way to remember a departed friend or relative. A card will be sent to the family concerned. The gift would be a fitting tribute to anyone who has loved the world of nature. The fund is used for environmental education.

Please make cheques payable to the James Grant Fund and send to North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, Box 473, Vernon, BC V1T 6M4.

## Young Naturalists' Club

by Joan Cooke

As usual the Young Naturalists have been busy these last couple of months. November and December were all 'birdy' with a chance to build fantastic recycled pop bottle bird feeders, designed by a NONC member, and a visit to the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary. Just recently we've had feedback from one of the Young Naturalists indicating that she has to fill her feeder up at least twice a week!

Our membership appears to have reached a nice stable number with 17 families and 32 children registered for 2010. This usually translates to anywhere from 12 to 18 kids at each outing and usually 8-10 parents or grandparents.

2010 started with a January outing to Kalamalka Provincial Park and a walk/scavenger hunt leading us to Turtle's Head Point. We had fabulous weather and the mud and ice cooperated also! The Young Naturalists found many different bird nests, some indications of spring, while also picking up some of the litter en route. We are now looking forward to our February event at which an Aboriginal Support Worker from School District #22 (Vernon) will be leading us in a drum circle.

## Snow Sculpture Viewing Trip

by Jim Bodkin

One of the highlights of Vernon's winter carnival is the fabulous snow carving that takes place in the centre of the Silver Star ski village. This year, the 50th anniversary of the winter carnival, six intrepid NONCers took in the prize award ceremonies on Sunday, January 31, 2010.

The six included two ex-skiers, Kay Bartholomew and Anne Langer; two cross country skiers, Lin and Jack Smith, and two downhillers, Gail Loughridge and Jim Bodkin. Pam the Pres was conspicuous by her absence...she apparently lost track of time while communing with snow ghosts elsewhere on the mountain.

First prize was awarded to Rubic's Cube. The judges were impressed by the difficulty of supporting the

weight of the cube just by some finger tips. These winning snow sculptor's received \$1000 cash, were interviewed by CHBC emcee Mike Roberts, were featured on the local TV channel that evening and got a free trip to the Quebec winter carnival to take part in the Canadian snow sculpting national championship contest.



Second prize (\$500) and the people's choice award went to the elaborate snow sculpture of several horses and a lady. This was reminiscent of a style more popular several years back. Isn't it just incredible what these artists can sculpt from an 8 foot cube of hard packed snow? Gail and I watched the start of the sculpting process when we were up skiing on Friday. The specialized tools they have and the way they place grid reference marks on the snow cubes is quite fascinating to watch. They carve around the clock under floodlights at night to have their masterpieces ready for judging on Sunday. All this for something that with luck, might only last for a week!

My personal preference was the White Elephant. It did not win any awards; not even an honourable mention. I guess I just marveled at how spectacular it was with the elephant's trunk reaching up about 15 feet into the sky.

In all there were six sculptures this year and, since this was the BC provincial championships, entry was by qualification only. No duffers were accepted. You needed to experience them up close in person and walk all around them to appreciate them fully and realize how dwarfed you are by their massiveness. ❖

## Invasive plants focus of workshop

The Morning Star, February 15

**N**orth Okanagan residents are being asked to join the fight against invaders.

The North Okanagan Regional District and the Invasive Plant Council of B.C. will hold a second workshop (the first was Feb. 23rd) on March 23.

Dalmatian toadflax, knapweed and hound's tongue are examples of some of the invasive plants you may see in the North Okanagan.

Invasive plants, often called noxious weeds, were introduced to our area from other countries without their natural predators. They are adapted to produce prolific seed, enabling them to quickly spread and dominate natural or landscaped sites.

Invasive plants spread in many ways, including hitch-hiking on vehicles and equipment, wildlife, farm animals, pets and humans. Aggressive horticultural species have escaped from gardens and can invade parks and nearby natural areas.

The workshop will provide information about the introduction and spread of invasive plants.

Among the other topics will be reporting invasive plant infestations and implementing effective management programs.

The workshop will be at the NORD office at 7 p.m. but advance registration is required.

For more information or to register, call 250-309-6745 or e-mail [outreachOK2@invasiveplant-councilbc.ca](mailto:outreachOK2@invasiveplant-councilbc.ca).

Resource: The Invasive Plant Council of B.C., <http://www.invasiveplantcouncilbc.ca/>

## Make your own bird seed column

by Kathy Bottger

[http://bottger.typepad.com/pondering\\_the\\_world/2010/01/bird-seed-columnmake-your-own.html](http://bottger.typepad.com/pondering_the_world/2010/01/bird-seed-columnmake-your-own.html)

**A**while back I needed another bird seed column for my column feeder. Holy cow! Those things are expensive, well over \$20 each for the large ones. I figured I'd better find out how to make my own.

First I went looking on the web and only found one site that gave a recipe for them. It had a fair amount of lard (for the fat/suet content) and a lot of cornmeal. It also failed miserably, since the melted lard made the mixture too gooey and it never solidified. On the second try, I cut the amount of lard in half and eliminated the cornmeal. It still didn't work. As I was working with it, I realized that it's basically just like Rice Krispies treats--it needed a sugar syrup component that would solidify and glue it together.

After much trial and error, here is my no-fail method for making your own bird seed columns:

What you need:

- 1 c. sugar
- 1 c. corn syrup
- 1 c. peanut butter
- 6 cups bird seed mix
- plastic wrap
- 2 quart container (like for Costco potato salad)
- section of 1" PVC pipe cut to depth of container

This cools and hardens quickly, so make sure everything is set up before mixing the sugar syrup and seed mixture.

Line a 2-quart plastic container with plastic wrap. Wrap the PVC pipe with plastic wrap. Put bird seed in a very large mixing bowl.

In a saucepan, mix sugar and corn syrup and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook for 3 minutes; add peanut butter and mix in. Immediately turn the sugar mixture into the bird seed and quickly mix in.

It will start getting stiff right away.

Put the plastic-wrap covered PVC pipe into the container, and start spooning the bird seed mixture into the container around the pipe, packing it down. Continue with all of the bird seed mixture, packing it down.

Allow to cool and harden for 3-4 hours. Remove the PVC pipe; remove the seed column from the container and unwrap. Place the seed column on your feeder.



**BACK ISSUES of Newspacket**  
may be found at [www.nonc.ca](http://www.nonc.ca)

## You Are Invited to the BC Nature 2010 AGM and Convention in Kamloops

**May 13 to 16, 2010**

**Grasslands, Past, Present and Future**

Hosted by the **Kamloops Naturalist Club** at  
**Thompson Rivers University**  
Full details at [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca)

### **Thursday Special Pre-conference tour**

Highland Valley Copper Mine grasslands and  
wetlands reclamation

### **Friday**

- "One percent and Shrinking, Grassland Conservation in BC", Bruno Delesalle and Dr. Andrew Harcombe
- "Critters in Grasslands", Dr. Karl Larsen and Rick Howie
- "Managing Grasslands on First Nations Reserve Lands", Kamloops Indian Band and Dr. Wendy Gardner
- "Hot, Dry Forests – Future Grasslands?", Dr. Andre Arsenault and Ralph Heinrich
- "Looking Ahead", Dr. Tom Dickinson

### **Friday Field Trips**

- Lac du Bois Protected Area • Kamloops Indian Reserve • Ord Road to Dewdrop Flats
- Knutsford Ranches • Six Mile Lake • Agri. Research Stn. Tranquille

### **Wine and Cheese Social**

**Chris Harris**, renowned BC photographer who recently published "Spirit in the Grass"

**Astronomy:** survey the heavens from the TRU Observatory. This is an optional activity.

### **Saturday**

#### **Early morning birding**

**Meetings: BC Nature Directors and Young Naturalists Committee**

**Field Trips:** Some or all from Friday's list. Friday sign up required.

#### **BC Nature Annual General Meeting**

#### **No-host Happy Hour**

**Banquet and awards Keynote speaker:** Dr. Lauchlan Fraser, Research Chair TRU, "Grasslands in our World – a global perspective"