

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

# Newspacket

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

November-December 2010



Christmas Bird Count page 7



Heritage Tree Tour page 9



Mara Meadows page 10

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

**P.O. Box 473  
Vernon, B.C. V1T 6M4**

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

**EXECUTIVE**

President	Pam Jenkins 545-0490
Past President	Ray Arlt 542-2058
Vice-President	Rod Drennan 545-4999
Secretary	Kay Bartholomew 542-3977
Treasurer	Ruth Drennan 545-4999
Directors	Margaret Hubble 542-2712 Gail Loughridge 545-7455 Erin Nelson 545-6878 Denis Seymour 542-9670 Fred Wisse 549-5075 Judy Stockdale 1-250-838-6605

**PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES**

Adopt-A-Road	Ray Arlt 542-2058
Birding	Peter Mayfield 549-8478
Bishop Wildlife Sanctuary	Aaron Deans 260-1800
Bluebird Trails	Margaret Hubble 542-2712
Botany	Margaret Hubble 542-2712

Conservation	Denis Seymour 542-9670
EAC-Vernon	Vivian Merchant 549-2913
Education	Wendy Hooke 545-9149
Entomology	Phil Jones 549-1596
FBCN Delegate	Pam Jenkins 545-0490 (sub) Peter Blokker 545-8297
Hummingbirds	Gail Loughridge 545-7455
Land Stewardship	Ann Langer 1-250-547-6153
Newspacket	Harold Sellers 503-2388
Newspaper	Ray Arlt 542-2058
O.C.C.P.*	Jim Bodkin 545-7455
Programs	Peter Stockdale 1-250-838-6605
Public Relations	Ray Arlt 542-2058
Refreshments	Ann Langer 1-250-547-6153 Ginny McLean 542-9948
Socials	Kay Bartholomew 542-3977
Swan Lake	Lyall Webster 275-2661
Telephone List	Robyn Thornton 549-2714
Trips	Pam Jenkins 545-0490
Tea/Coffee	Lyn Smith 542-6520
Ways & Means Website	vacant Keith Bowman editor@nonc.ca
Young Naturalists	Kathy Smith 558-1647

\* Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Plan

# North Okanagan Naturalists' Club



# Newspacket

November-December 2010 Issue  
Vol. 38 No. 5

*OUR COVER THIS ISSUE : Mulleins, Saskatoon bushes and rock faces create an Autumn scene at Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park. Cover photo by Harold Sellers.*

*Newspacket is published five times per year, in January-February, March-April, May-June, September-October and November-December issues. The next deadline is Saturday, December 18th. Copy should be delivered to Harold Sellers, Editor, e-mail [hikerharold@gmail.com](mailto:hikerharold@gmail.com)*

## BC Nature FGM, Langley, B.C., Sept. 30 - Oct. 3

by Pamela Jenkins

BC Nature holds two provincial meetings each year. The AGM is held in the Spring, often in May, where environmental matters and motions are also discussed. The FGM or Fall General Meeting is held in late September or early October and this is where clubs may tell others about their activities. The Langley Field Naturalists hosted this year's FGM.

On Friday morning an early birding trip was to the Brydon Lagoon. Back at the meeting place we heard three speakers: Malcolm Weatherston from the Mountain View Conservation Centre told us how they rescue injured and sick birds and animals; Dr. Mike Pearson talked about endangered species; and Wendy DaDalt from the Metro Vancouver Regional Parks emphasized the many health benefits of getting out in nature and parks, particularly in urban areas.

There were several afternoon trips. One was to Fort Langley and Brie Island and another to an ecological reserve, the West Creek Wetlands. In the evening there was a catered barbeque at Campbell Valley Regional Park and activities offered by Parks people were a camp fire with stories and song, star gazing through large telescopes and owling. We heard a Great Horned Owl and possibly Barred and Screech owls.

Barry Penner, Minister of the Environment, came to address the meeting briefly and suggested there could possibly be more money for parks, but would not elaborate. He also said that parkland had increased from about 6% to 14.6% of our land mass and that management was unable to keep up with this increase. Money is lacking.

At the evening banquet the speaker was Dr. Frederick L. Bunnell. His topic was species loss, climate change and the near urban naturalist, and he told it just like it is happening.

Much more took place, but this all the space we have in this edition. ❖

## 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. Remember to "lug a mug" for your tea and coffee!

**Wednesday, November 8** - NONC Annual General Meeting, 7:30 pm at the Best Western, Vernon Lodge. Our guest speaker will be Orville Dyer presenting BC Conservation Framework: habitat loss in the Okanagan Valley and North Okanagan species at risk.

**Wednesday, December 1** - NONC Christmas Party with food, fun and surprises, 7:00 pm at the Best Western, Vernon Lodge. Watch for a sign-up notice in the mail mid November, so we can get numbers.

### **Bird Watching Outings:**

Meet at Performing Arts Centre at 9:00 am.

Peter Mayfield 549-8478 for details.

Saturday	November 6th
Sunday	November 14th
Saturday	November 20th
Sunday	November 28th
Saturday	December 4th
Sunday	December 12th

Thereafter at regular intervals until Dec 19th, the date of the Christmas birdcount.

**Sunday, December 19 - The 61st Vernon Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Peter Blokker, 250-545-8297, email: [pfblokker@telus.net](mailto:pfblokker@telus.net)

**Sunday, January 9 - Swan and Eagle Count**  
Jim Bodkin, Coordinator, 250-545-7455 or e-mail [bonvoyage@shaw.ca](mailto:bonvoyage@shaw.ca)

### **Receive the latest NONC news**

Subscribe to our weekly e-mail messages.  
Send Harold Sellers, [hikerharold@gmail.com](mailto:hikerharold@gmail.com), your e-mail address to subscribe.

## Rare Bird Sighting

### **Spotted Redshank at Vanderhoof Bird Sanctuary - June 23, 2010**

by Phil Jones

On trips to Smithers I usually overnight at Vanderhoof, on Highway 16 west of Prince George. While there I visit the Nechako Migratory Bird Sanctuary at the north end of main street in Vanderhoof, and just to the west of the highway bridge. The sanctuary is a widening of the Nechako river with sand bars and shallow water, a good location to see birds in the sandpiper family.

I usually expect to see Yellow Legs and this time it was no exception. There were non-breeding Yellow Legs but one of them had reddish legs! Checking it out in "Sibley" it was an adult non-breeding Spotted Redshank! According to Sibley this is a rare Eurasian visitor. How lucky could I be??!!

When it was feeding close to vegetation in the shallow waters, a few centimeters deep, it would look for prey with its neck craned forward as if it was short sighted, and when prey was spotted it would speed up to chase down the prey. This would only last for less than three seconds. These spurts of action with the associated splashing were quite humorous to watch.

The telephoto lens on my camera was insufficient to capture a good image, so taking a chance it might eventually come closer to the edge of the river and within camera range, I left and returned in less than an hour in early afternoon. What a zoo! Children, teens, adults, and their dogs were wading at their local beach and out across the river! So, of course, the Redshank was long gone.

However, I can't complain. For me this sighting was the highlight of my trip! ❖

## Bluebird Report 2010

by Margaret Hubble, Coordinator

Results for the 2010 season have been very mixed with some Monitors reporting more boxes occupied by Bluebirds and more fledged Bluebirds than last year, while others have reported more boxes with losses due to snake and bear predation and cattle knocking over boxes with eggs and/or young. Overall, Brian and Maryann Petryshen monitoring the Lone Pine Ranch trail had an excellent season with 9 boxes occupied by Mountain Bluebirds producing 36 fledgings and 6 boxes occupied by Western Bluebirds producing 19 fledgings. Ray Arlt's trail along Commonage Road had 18 boxes occupied by Western Bluebirds with 74 young fledging successfully.



above: Western Bluebird eggs

Although nearly everyone has reported back to me early this year, which was great, a few trails have not yet reported fully. However, I have all the Bluebird totals. Numbers have increased from last year for all species.

### Total Results 2010:

Total Monitored Nestbox Trails: 17

Total Boxes available: 389

66 boxes used by Western Bluebirds: 359 eggs; 276 hatched; 233 fledged; 11 second nestings

21 boxes used by Mountain Bluebirds: 93 eggs; 81 hatched; 78 fledged; 1 second nestings

100 boxes used by Tree Swallows; 518 eggs; 418 hatched; 326 fledged; 15 second nestings

3 boxes used by Violet-green Swallows; 17 eggs; 17 hatched; 17 fledged

39 boxes used by House Wrens; 179 eggs; 131 hatched; 122 fledged; 2 second nestings

3 boxes used by Black-capped Chickadees; 12 eggs; 12 hatched; 7 fledged

17 boxes used by House Sparrows; 11 eggs; 11 hatched; 11 fledged

5 boxes used by European Starlings; 10 eggs; none hatched or fledged

Tree Swallows had a particularly bad year. Our late spring and lack of flying insects made it very difficult for them to begin nesting and there were a lot of deaths among both the adults and young.

House Sparrows are making their way out into the Commonage and Jack Smith was kept busy trying to keep them away from his nestboxes. I think he must have camped out there to keep on top of their persistent invasions. Many trails had problems with disappearing eggs or young, but unless you plan to camp out there like Jack, it's a real sleuth that can determine "who did it" and find the culprit.

We owe all the monitors a big round of thank yous for their devotion, caring of their trails and the well-being of the birds that come to nest in the boxes each spring. I will leave you with a Bluebird trail story emailed to me by Mike Nicholls, who very responsibly is looking after our longest bluebird trail with only walking accessibility.

Mike writes, "Since the first batch of only 4 MBB occupied boxes out of the 38, there has only been one attempt at a 2nd batch. That was the couple that occupied #33 to start the year. For their 2nd

**continued on page 6**

### **Bluebird Report continued from page 5**

batch they moved down to #31, produced six eggs, but in the following days something came along and knocked the box down, ripping it right off it's back. The nest was on the ground and of course the eggs were gone.....Sad anyway, not to mention annoying and frustrating. But.... The #33 MBB's were troopers and re-occupied #33 and had started another new batch with 3 eggs when I saw them 2 weeks ago. However, this week, an even bigger tragedy struck #33. When I looked in, expecting to see a few eggs and a few very new hatchlings, all I found were 10-12 adult feathers (wing?)....no eggs. It looks like some kind of predator got in there and apparently killed the adult and ate her and the eggs. Weasel? Raccoon? I don't know, but it sure is sad. Yet, almost right next door, at #34, a family of swallows carries on as per normal."

With that Bluebird Trail story! I leave you all in peace until next spring when I hope we can get together again for a "Bluebird" Coffee Party to discuss and share ideas for improving our trails and increasing Bluebirds. ❖

### **Calling all birders: your help is requested for a study of bluebirds!**

I am a graduate student in biology at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. My field is animal behaviour – specifically bird migration – and for the next two years, I will be spending January-August in the Okanagan Valley, studying Western and Mountain Bluebirds.

My project focuses on partial migration, which occurs when some individuals of a species leave the breeding grounds for the winter, while others stay – for example, the population of Western Bluebirds in the Okanagan. We don't have that many partially migratory species in Canada, so the bluebirds of the Okanagan are pretty special.

For my study, I'll be comparing traits between resident and migrant Western Bluebirds, as well as between these partial migrants and the fully migratory Mountain Bluebird. To do this, I will be catching and colour-banding birds in the southern Okanagan starting January 2011.

But the tricky part of this project is going to be figuring out where those birds that I banded during the winter are breeding. So in order for this project to work, I really need the help of the birders of the Okanagan.

You can help by letting me know if you see either:

>Flocks of Western Bluebirds during the winter

>Colour-banded Western or Mountain Bluebirds breeding in the spring

I can be reached by phone (613-494-1217) or e-mail (9cad@queensu.ca). I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your help!

Catherine Dale, PhD Candidate  
Queen's University

### **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.

## Eagle & Swan Count

Sunday, January 9, 2011

All birders and birder wannabes should note that the annual Swan and Eagle Count will be held, as usual, on the second Sunday of January come rain, shine, fog, sleet, hail or blizzard so please mark January 9, 2011 on your calendars.

Compared to the Christmas Bird Count this is a piece of cake. You only need to be able to identify two kinds of Eagles...Bald and Golden, and two kinds of Swans...Trumpeter (pictured below) and Tundra, and be able to tell the adults from the juveniles.



A core group of regulars turns out each year but newbies are both welcome and appreciated. If the weather cooperates it can be a lovely day-outing or you may get to regale your cronies with hair-raising tales of skating rink roads, pea soup fog or drifting snow...with the ice getting slipperier, the fog thicker and the snow piling up closer and closer to your armpits on each re-telling!

The count area covers most of the North Okanagan, with one group going as far north as Sicamous, another to the south end of Mabel Lake via Lavington and Lumby and yet another group counting from Enderby through Kingfisher and out to Mabel Lake. In the Vernon area several groups scout the north end of Kalamalka Lake, November-December 2010

Vernon Arm of Okanagan Lake and the Head of the Lake area.

Participating is good fun, helps keep the winter blahs at bay, gives you bragging rights as a volunteer citizen scientist, makes a needed contribution to our avian data research base, keeps NONC a viable club and, quite simply, is the "right" thing to do.

If you want to take part either contact your intrepid leader from previous years or give me a shout.

Jim Bodkin  
Swan and Eagle Count Coordinator  
250-545-7455 or e-mail [bonvoyage @shaw.ca](mailto:bonvoyage@shaw.ca)

## Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 19, 2010

The 61st Vernon Christmas Bird Count will take place Sunday, December 19. Please mark your calendars as we will need lots of people to participate. Last year we had over 40 hardy souls braving the weather! If you can't move away from your house, then you can perhaps observe the birds around your feeders and count the birds from your warm livingroom! If you think you like to take part (maybe for the first time!) please contact me.

Peter Blokker  
250-545-8297 or email: [pfblokker@telus.net](mailto:pfblokker@telus.net)



above: White-breasted Nuthatch

## Swan Lake Nature Reserve

by Lyall Webster

The North Okanagan Regional District (NORD) has completed the roadwork from Old Kamloops Road and down the sloped portion of the land, ending at the flat, but still well west of the weir. Two gates have been installed, one near the Anderson honey shop, the other at the end of the road which stops in a small parking area. This improved road will be the limit of vehicular traffic for the public, the existing farm track up to BX Creek being restricted to service and emergency vehicles only.

The road has been graded to eliminate some of the steep sections and wet areas and is about 27 feet wide, with a gravel surface and base and provided with ditches and culverts - looks very solid. A boundary to the road is provided along its entire length by rustic style wood rail fencing on the side facing the nature reserve. The photo looks approximately south-east towards the highway.



A work party was held on October 26: caged the trees planted this spring; removed the watering hoses for the winter and pulled out some of the dead plants. Thanks to volunteers Ray Arlt, Adam Moss, Kay Bartholomew, Lyall Webster and Denis Seymour.

A cleanout of BX Creek will be done soon, after

a mini log-jam near the railway bridge is cleared - we are working with NORD on this.

Our committee will be meeting with NORD to discuss work for next year. Hopefully there will be money in their budget to start trail work on the south side of BX Creek and we will be pushing for this. ❖



above: inside the Swan Lake bird blind  
(photo by Ronda Furlan)

## Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary

by Aaron Deans

We are looking forward to breaking ground on a new grounds project next spring at the bird sanctuary. Our plans are to convert a large area of lawn and two adjacent perennial beds into a Native Plant and Xeriscape Garden.

Currently we are fundraising for the project, which will enhance the amount of native wildlife habitat and reduce the overall watering needs at the sanctuary. The project will feature over 50 native species and 1200 individual plants. New walking trails are planned to wind through the garden, with new bird feeding stations, water features, benches for viewing, and a gazebo that may accommodate small groups for meetings and wildlife viewing.

If you would like to know more about what is planned or are interested to make a donation or be involved please contact us. ❖

## Heritage Tree Tour

by Harold Sellers

Thanks to Pat McAllister who led approximately 20 people on a very enjoyable tour of trees in Vernon and Coldstream on Saturday, September 25th. The weather was perfect, with the sun shining and the temperature rising to 20 degrees.

Starting out from our meeting location at the Polson Cineplex, we soon stopped at the BC Hydro building to look at examples of Little-leaf Linden.

Then it was on to Postill Drive to look at Northern Catalpa trees, with their large leaves and long pods.



November-December 2010

At the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary we were introduced to Bur Oak, English Oak, Ohio Buckeye and Douglas Fir.

Then it was back in the cars and off to the Tassie property where several Scarlet Oaks lined the driveway. Down by Coldstream Creek was perhaps the oldest Ponderosa Pine in the area (see picture lower left). We also enjoyed watching spawning Kokanee Salmon in the creek.



*above: Pat's preparation for planning her route and identifying trees*

We drove by an unidentified Elm tree on the Garrlick property.

On Kalamalka Road, opposite Friesen's, we looked at the long row of Amur Maples, turning a lovely red for autumn.

Then it was on to the final stop, at the Webster farm, where we saw a huge Carolina Poplar and the Katsura-Tree, a very uncommon tree to conclude our tour.

Following lunch we all made our way home or on to our next activity. ❖



*above: Katsura-Tree leaves*

Newspacket

Page 9

## Mara Meadows

by Pamela Jenkins

Trip Date: July 9, 2010

John Coffey is now the warden at Monica Meadows. Not more than 10 people can ever invade the meadows at one time, in order to preserve what is there.

At one point I had 14 people who had indicated they would like to go. In the end, six of us drove out from Vernon to meet John and Tom at the junction of Grandview Bench and Edgar roads. Judy arrived a bit later and invited us back to her place below Enderby cliffs to eat our lunch.

John led us towards the Larch Hills ski area parking lot. We took a right turn just before the parking area and drove on various gravel roads until we reached a road closed to traffic and now with a ground cover. We parked and followed this road almost to the end, but took a more overgrown track which led down to the meadows, passing a track into the woods, which we used later to access the marshes. First John went down to the end of the road to the meadows near the beaver dam which creates this wet area, in order to take a water level measurement. He did this at several places on our adventure.



We returned to the almost-a-trail through the woods. I got quite scratched wearing shorts. Then we entered the wet area, which was quite uneven and we needed to step carefully. Lots of

cotton grass was blowing below some willows. There was one deeper patch to wade through. One of my feet got sucked under and I almost fell. I did get an uncomfortable wet seat! Three people had to pull me out after I was able to back my leg out of the blockage. After that, although still wet, the route was easier.

On the route in we had seen lots of lovely wild flowers, including a Pink Pyrola, and once in the marshes we saw Kalm's Lobelia. We also spotted a Twayblade or liparis loeselii, our club emblem. In 1965, Jim Grant, together with Joan Heriot and Kay Bartholomew, had noticed this plant, not usually found this far West.

Further into the meadows near a very wet area, which John described as quicksand, we found more Sundew plants. The sundews seen earlier had been difficult to see or photograph, but these were magnificent and I got some good pictures (see photo at left).

Years ago, before this area was protected, someone had created a drainage channel across the marsh. Luckily the beavers have maintained their dam, so the meadows are preserved. We followed the drainage channel, but had to return to the route where we had entered the meadows recrossing that deep part safely.

Back at the cars we took our wet shoes off and ate our lunches before driving back.

Participants were: John Coffey, Tom Crowley, Ann Davis, Pamela Jenkins, Ann Langer, Gail Loughridge, Greta MacDougal, Susan Spiller, Judy Stockdale.

Later Tom sent me a list of some of the flowers seen. Gail sent me a list of birds seen or heard. I had seen the Killdeer, Violet Green Swallows and other birds. Gail mentioned a Sora, a Western Wood Pee Wee, a Swainson Thrush, a Wilson Snipe, and Black Capped Chickadees, Tree Swallows and other more common birds. ❖